



We appreciate your generosity in sharing your life experiences with us. As winter sets in, we would like to send greetings and thanks to all who have shared their stories with us. We hope you enjoy this newsletter, as it provides you with an update on Project STRIDE, a little bit more about the study, and also shares some of the preliminary information we've found.

What is the study about?

Project STRIDE is a public health study looking at stress, identity and mental health in diverse populations and communities here in New York City. This project is funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, which is part of the National Institutes of Health. We are conducting the study at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. The lead researcher of the study is Dr. Ilan Meyer, an Associate Professor with extensive experience in minority health research.

In Project STRIDE we look at how social stressors affect health and well-being, and on how individuals and groups cope with

these stressors, focusing on minority populations. In particular, the study explores how identities related to sexual orientation, ethnoracial identity, and gender affect health. For example, whether the strength of one's closeness to a self-identified community can increase or decrease the negative effect of stress. Our goal is to interview 528 individuals by February 2005, then conduct follow up interviews with these persons one year after the first. Participants are compensated for both interviews.

Where we met you (and other participants)

We take great efforts to represent the diversity of New York City communities in the study. In order to ensure that we interview a diverse group of people, Project STRIDE recruiters go to many places to talk to potential volunteers, such as various organizations, events, public gatherings, and bars and clubs.

To help diversify recruitment venues, we met participants at organizations, coffee houses like Starbucks, and other public spaces such as Washington Square Park, the streets of the Villages, and Barnes & Noble Bookstores. We want to cover the whole city in our recruitment efforts, so if you can recommend other places that you think will be beneficial, please let us know!

As you may recall, at the end of the interview, we ask participants to invite up to three of their friends or acquaintances to

participate in the study. This is called "snowball recruitment." The purpose of this type of recruitment is to increase the diversity of people in the study by reaching out to those who may not attend the places we have recruited from. That is, they may not go out as much, or maybe they don't hang out in parks or coffeehouses. Snowball recruitment is very important so that the study avoids a bias. We appreciate all the participants who've helped up with this type of recruitment so far.

If you have not yet referred three people, you still can! Please call or email us (contact info is on the back page). As a thank you, after we interview a person you refer, you'll receive a \$10 Starbucks gift card.

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Editors: Jessica Auerbach
Gabriel Galindo

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STRIDERS Allegra and Gabe

What we've done so far

Between the beginning of Project STRIDE (February 2004) and December 2004 we have interviewed 439 individuals. Including yourself, this diverse group of people, has been very generous in sharing their stories and life experiences. In selecting participants for the study we aim to represent several groups of people so that we can examine differences among groups. Specifically, we recruit equal numbers of women and men, Blacks, Latinos and Whites, lesbian, gay, and bisexuals (LGB) and heterosexual, and individuals in age groups 18 - 30 and 31 - 59.

People sometimes wonder why we don't include all those who want to participate in the study. For instance, why not include those who are younger than 18, people of other ethnoracial backgrounds, or those who don't live in NYC? These people can bring very important and interesting issues to study. However, one project cannot study everything that is interesting and important to everyone. The reasoning behind this is that research has to define very clear study questions and the research methods must relate to these questions. There must also be a large enough number of people within each group to allow for the required statistical analyses to be meaningful.

This limits what can be done in any study, including ours. Therefore, researchers select certain areas to be studied and focus on examining those issues carefully. In a sense, this is similar to taking a snapshot of Times Square: One has to select the focus of the photograph and try to convey its story well. The photo is good as long as it accurately tells a story, even if it doesn't show us everything that was interesting at the time it was taken. Researchers define groups that can represent some of the diversity of issues that the study addresses, and using this information, try to give the clearest answers to the research questions.

Who participates?

As of early December, we've interviewed 224 (51%) men and 215 (49%) women, and the others were 31–59 years old. By the time we finish the study, the numbers we are now interviewing more women. Chart 1 gives you a breakdown of the numbers we are now interviewing more women. Chart 1 gives you a breakdown of the numbers we are now interviewing more women. 375 (85%) of our participants so far identified within the LGB community. While conducting research studies can prove difficult, it was important for our study to in

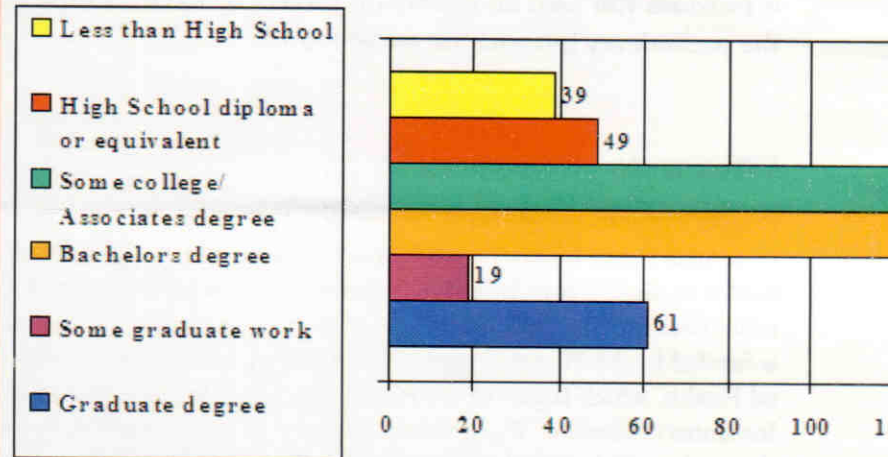


Chart 2: Level of educational attainment of participants (number of participants)

graduate work, or have received their master or doctoral degree. Given the diversity of the study, participants had opportunities to continue their education past the high school level. All five boroughs of New York City are represented in the study. Chart 1 shows that while most participants live in Manhattan, while Brooklyn and the Bronx also show considerable representation, the study's recruitment efforts did not focus on Staten Island, only a small portion of our participants live there. This will prove useful as we will be able to consider the various resources available to participants in each borough.

Familial relationships of STRIDE participants

We at STRIDE talked with people about whether they are in relationships and if they have children. 199 (45%) of the people we've interviewed d

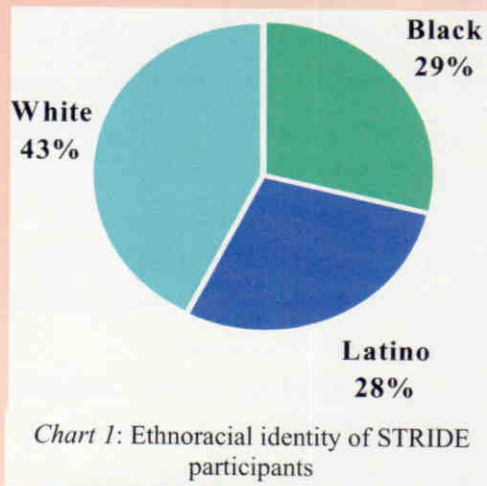


relationship with a partner. Of those in a relationship, 100 (50%) of participants are recognized as a partner. 100 (50%) of participants reported having been together for 4 years or more. 100 (50%) of participants currently live together with their partner. 100 (50%) of participants are married or registered partners. The views involved LGB individuals and their relationships might change as our research involves heterosexual individuals are different. In terms of children, 70 (16%) of participants have children who currently live with them. 70 (16%) of participants your life who would be able to provide support. In general, most participants name their network of friends and

men. 117 of the men and 119 of the women were between the ages of 18–30. In the interviews we will have equal numbers of men and women. To balance out the sample as to where we are as far as the ethnoracial background of our participants.

As previous studies have shown that recruiting sexual minority persons into a study begins recruitment into these populations. Having attained sufficient numbers in our study, our efforts will now focus on recruiting heterosexual individuals.

As one of the recruitment requirements, all Project STRIDE participants have lived in New York City for a minimum of two years. About half (47%) have lived here their entire life (208 persons), with 231 people moving here as adults. 365 (83%) of the participants were born here in the United States; the rest from many other nations, including Mexico, Greece, Italy, the Dominican Republic, England, Italy, Germany and Colombia, to name a few. We also asked participants about the countries connected with their ethnic background: the majority of participants said the United States followed by Puerto Rico.



General characteristics of those interviewed

The average age of STRIDE participants was 32 years old, with a range of 18-58. With respect to education, the majority of our participants have pursued coursework past the high school level. As can be seen in Chart 2, 60% of those interviewed reported either some completion of college coursework, or attainment of either an Associates or Bachelors degree. An additional 16% of our participants reported the completion of some college coursework. In this uniquely diverse and urban metropolis of New York City, it is not surprising that nearly three-quarters of our population are of diverse ethnicities. As our study sought to recruit individuals to represent all diversity of New York life, it was important for us to depict the percentage of individuals residing in each of the boroughs. As can be seen, the majority of participants are from Manhattan. Because our recruitment goal was to represent this borough. This information is important to our participants.

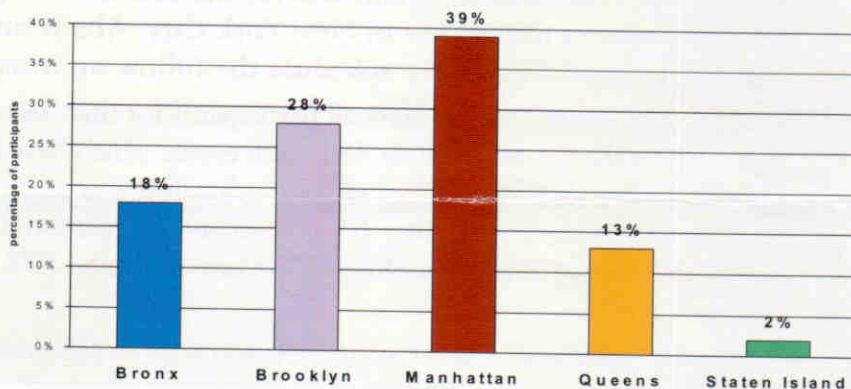


Chart 3: Associated borough of STRIDE participants

...e., “feel a special commitment to someone”), 199 persons, 94% say that they and their partners are in an intimate relationship with other individuals. Nearly half (48%) report that they have been in a relationship for nearly a year, with an additional 22% having been in a relationship for less than a year. 40% of the people in relationships say they are in a committed relationship with their partner, yet only 25 individuals report that they are in a committed domestic partnership. As most of these individuals are in committed relationships, it will be interesting to see how these numbers shift to heterosexual persons, and also during the follow up interview. That is, whether LGB persons and heterosexual persons differ with respect to intimate relationships.

Of those interviewed so far report having a child either biologically or through their partner. 32 of these individuals report that they have a child with them. As you might remember, during one section of the interview we asked for you to identify individuals in your social network who can assist you with various life issues, such as borrowing money, looking for advice, and help when you are sick. On average, participants have 4-6 individuals in their social network. However, some participants (67; 15%) named 10 or more persons in their social network.

Reflections on the interview

The interviews can be extensive, but are often emotionally rewarding. We ask about a lot of life experiences that sometimes are hard to talk about or that people don't often discuss with others. Jason, a Project STRIDE interviewer, shared his thoughts about listening to participants, "It has been great talking with our participants and hearing their stories. I have found many of their insights and experiences to be inspiring."

At the end of each interview we ask participants for feedback about the interview and of the interview process. Some Project STRIDE participants have also shared some of their reflections on the study with us. To the right you can see some of the comments we have heard.

*"It made me look into myself—
which I don't normally do"*

*"It was constructive
for me"*

*"It gets to the basics— to the rest of
the serious issues
that can occur in
our community"*

*"I enjoyed reflecting on who I
am as a person"*

*"I liked thinking about my relation-
ship to communities"*

"I faced things I try to run away from"

"I liked getting things out and expressing myself"



As the project continues we will begin to analyze data about health and we will also have reports and articles regarding the findings of Project STRIDE. By doing this we will generate information that will help in the understanding of the life experiences of people here in NYC. This includes how we cope with daily stressors, what kinds of health issues we have, and what re-

sources we use and that are available to us. This information will help build further resources for communities facing discrimination and struggle, in particular for the various minority communities here in New York City. About one year after your first interview we will begin to contact you to schedule the follow up interview.

Like last time we will compensate all participants for their second interview (which will not last as long as the first interview as it mainly deals with events which have happened since the first time we spoke with you). We are excited about talking with you again, hearing how you've been, and learning what changes took place in your life. If your contact information has changed, please call or email us so we can be sure to stay in touch with you. We here at Project STRIDE thank you for all your efforts and support!

Feel free to get a hold of us at anytime. If you want to tell us about your experience with Project STRIDE, and maybe be

published in upcoming volumes of this Newsletter, please write to us (as always, we will not publish your name and keep all information confidential).

We look forward to talking with you again!

Phone: 212-342-1282
Email: stride@columbia.edu
600 West 168th Street
5th Floor
Department of Sociomedical
Sciences
New York, NY 10032