

1 Introduction

Vulvodynia: A **chronic pain** condition which affects the female external genitalia and as a result, often **interferes with sexual activities.**

(Binik, Pukall, Reissing, & Khalifé, 2001)

It is likely that there are **multiple causes** such as inflammation, immunologic factors and genetic predisposition.

Approximately **16% of women** will experience vulvodynia (Harlow & Stewart, 2003)

Most common cause of painful intercourse in young adult women (Meana, Binik, Khalifé, & Cohen, 1997)

No published studies have explored vulvodynia in lesbian, bisexual or other sexual minority women

2 Research Questions

Does vulvodynia affect **sexual functioning** in lesbian and bisexual women?

Does vulvodynia affect **relationship satisfaction** in lesbian and bisexual women?

3 Method

89-item, Anonymous, On-Line Survey

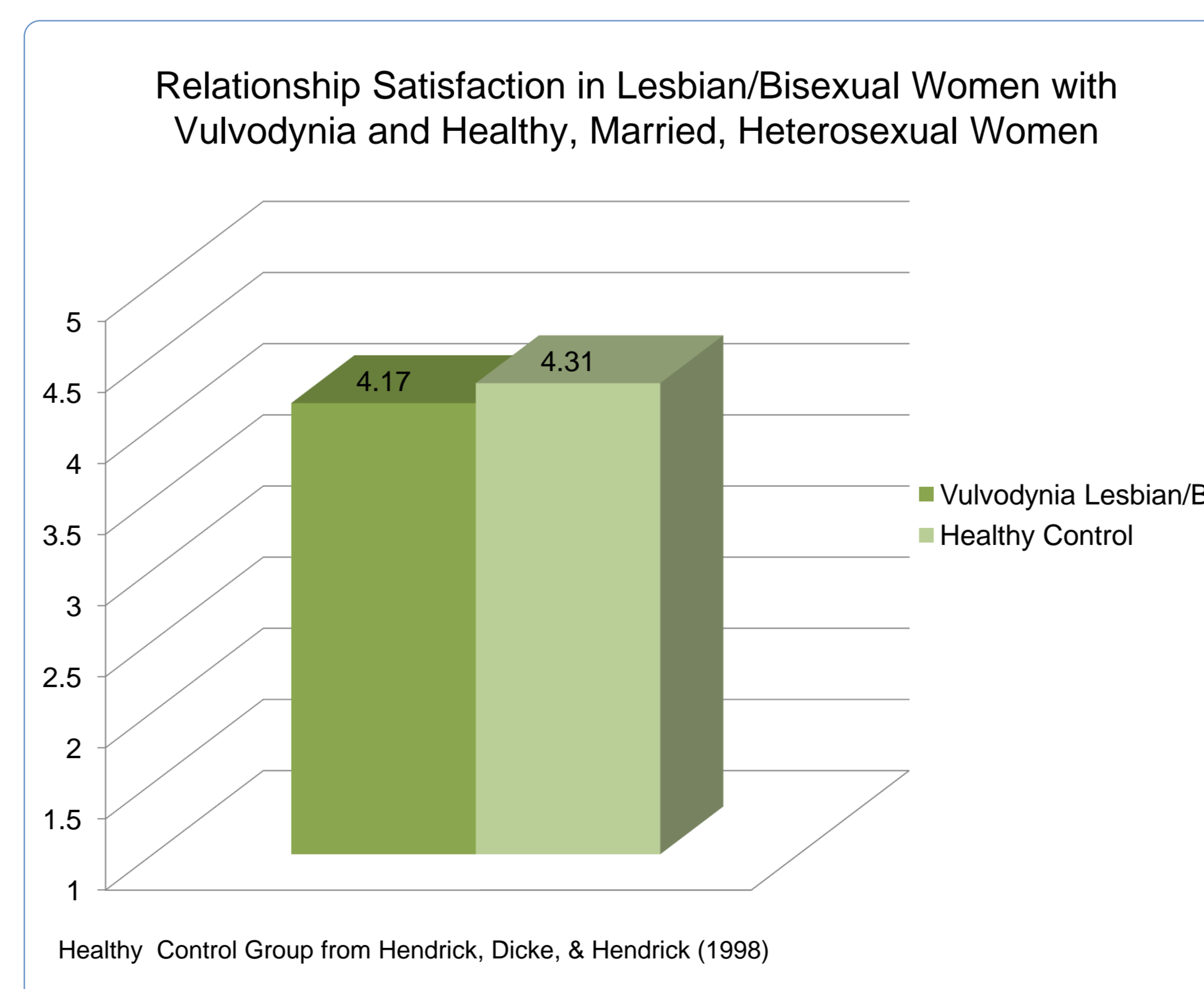
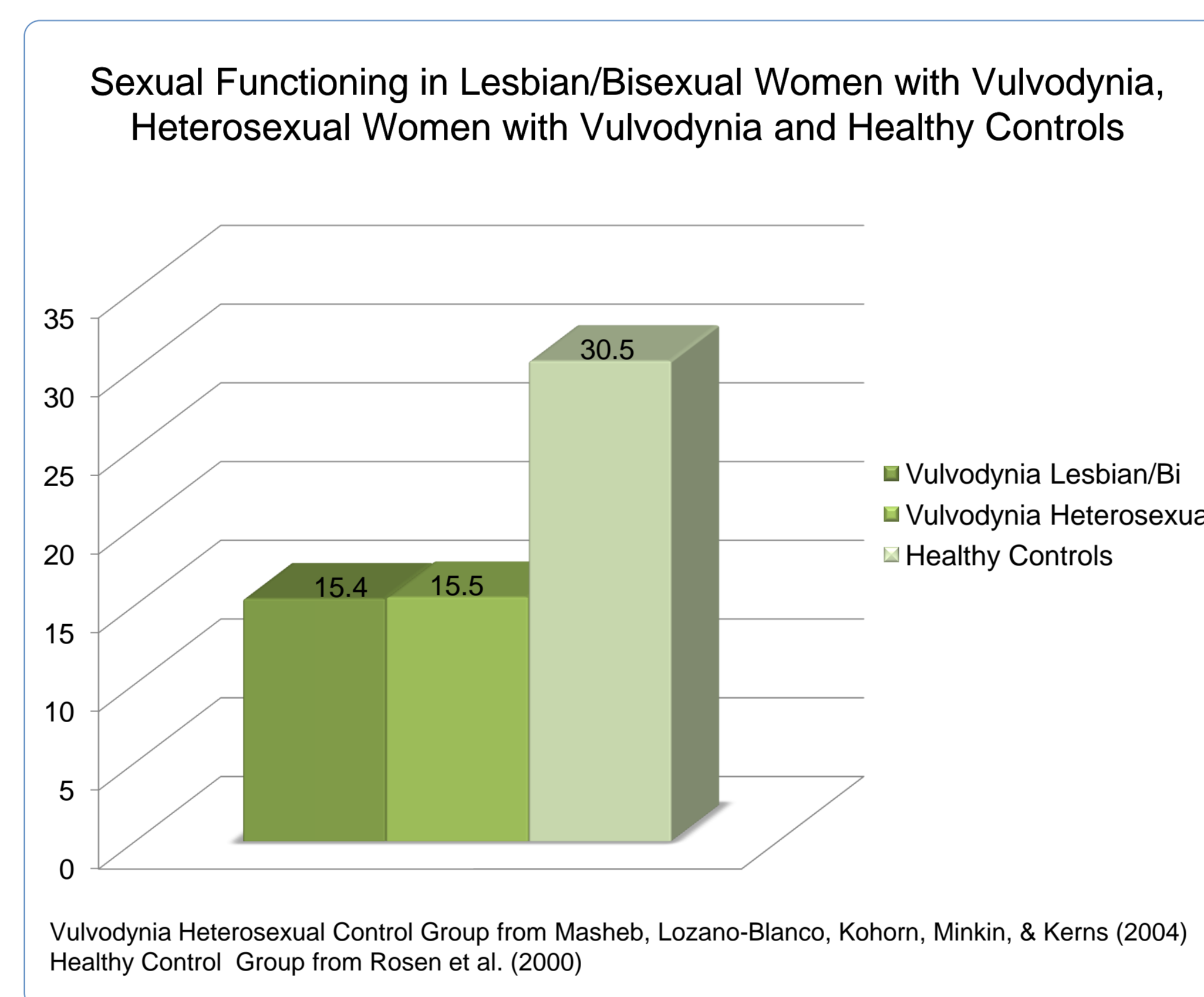
Questions on:

- The Current Experience of Vulvo-vaginal Pain
- Gynaecological History
- Sexual Functioning (FSFI; Rosen et al., 2000)
- Relationship Satisfaction (RAS; Hendrick, 1988)
- Demographics

4 Participants

Demographics (n = 25)			
Age		Relationship Status	
Mean	29.19	With woman	9
Range	18.75-57	With man	10
Sexual Orientation		Mean	4.5 years
Lesbian	9	Range	.08 – 19.42 years
Bisexual	16	Children	3
Duration of Pain		Method of Conception	
Mean	7.54 years	In Vitro	2
Range	2-30 years	Adoption	1
Health Care Consults		Ethnicity	
Mean	4.16	Caucasian	22
Range	0-17	South Asian	3

5 Results



6 Conclusions

Lesbian and bisexual women **are experiencing** vulvodynia.

Sexual functioning (i.e., desire, arousal, lubrication, orgasm, satisfaction, pain) is **significantly affected.**

Level of sexual functioning is comparable to heterosexual women with vulvodynia.

Relationship satisfaction is **not affected** and is comparable to healthy, married heterosexual women.

7 Implications

For Health Care Providers:

- Not all women who seek treatment for sexual pain are heterosexual.
- Vaginal penetration may still be an important component of a lesbian or bisexual woman's sexuality.

For Research:

- Penile-vaginal intercourse may not be a suitable outcome measure.
- No longer necessary to limit treatment studies to heterosexual women.

References

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