

Romantic and Sexual Relationships of College Students by Sexuality

Mia Milne, Department of Sociology

Overview

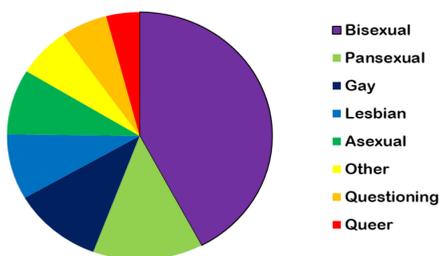
Different types of relationships are associated with different risk behaviors and health outcomes (Mark, Garcia, & Fisher 2015). A large body of research has found gender differences in relationship preferences with men preferring uncommitted, casual relationships more than women (Peterson & Hyde 2011). However, the relationship preferences of sexual minorities has been understudied. The current study attempted to find out how relationship preferences and experiences differ by gender and sexuality through an online survey that was distributed to over 4,000 students aged 18 or older at a medium sized university.

Respondents

1,007 responses were collected

- Gender: Male (50%), Female (45%), Transgender (1.2%), Non-Binary (1.9%), Other (1.9%)
- Sexual Identity: Heterosexual (75.5%), Bisexual (10%), Pansexual (3.3%), Gay (2.7%), Lesbian (2.1%), Asexual (2.1%), Questioning (1.4%), Queer (1%), Other (1.6%)

Identities of Sexual Minorities



Explanation

Sexual minorities may show different preferences than heterosexuals due to differences in relationship dynamics or different norms in the LGBTQ+ community. People who identify as a non-binary gender or sexual identity may have a higher preference for and engagement in open/polyamorous relationships due it being a non-binary type of relationship.

I plan to explore these possible mechanisms in future research.

Impact

Previous research had not explored the relationships preferences of sexual minorities who are not LGB or who are gender minorities. Findings about preferences among these groups can be helpful information for researchers, therapists, and others who interact with people in these communities.

References

- Mark, K. P., Garcia, J. R., & Fisher, H. E. (2015). Perceived emotional and sexual satisfaction across sexual relationship contexts: Gender and sexual orientation differences and similarities. *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 24(2), 120-130. doi:10.3138/cjhs.242-A8
- Petersen, J. L., & Hyde, J. S. (2011). Gender differences in sexual attitudes and behaviors: A review of meta-analytic results and large datasets. *Journal of Sex Research*, 48(2-3), 149-165.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Dr. Richard Simon for his assistance and mentorship throughout the project. Thanks also to everyone who participated in the survey.

Key Findings - Preferences

Men and women had different preferences in most categories but among sexual minorities most preferences were similar.

People who identified as transgender, non-binary, bisexual, pansexual, or queer were more likely to prefer an open relationship compared to heterosexual men and women.

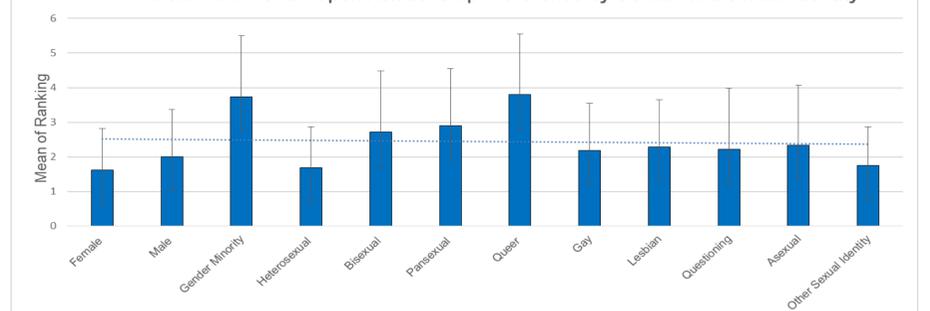
reference categories are male and heterosexual *Significant at p.<.05 **Significant at p.<.01 ***Significant at p.<.001

	Linear Regression Analysis for Romantic Preferences					
	Long-term Committed	Short-term Committed	Long-term Not Committed	Short-term Not Committed	Open/Polyamorous	Single
	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)
Gender Identity						
Female	.057(.055)	.349(.084)***	-.410(.081)***	-.061(.070)	-.420(.085)***	.469(.098)***
Gender Minority	-.463(.151)**	-.049(.229)	-.622(.221)**	-.244(.189)	1.254(.231)***	.124(.267)
Sexual Orientation						
Bisexual	-.127(.088)	-.495(.134)***	-.037(.129)	-.200(.110)	.926(.135)***	-.067(.156)
Pansexual	-.207(.156)	-.044(.238)	-.216(.230)	-.319(.197)	.677(.239)**	-.294(.277)
Queer	-.788(.278)**	-.020(.424)	-.016(.410)	-.080(.350)	1.048(.427)*	-.172(.493)
Gay	-.021(.162)	.324(.246)	-.316(.238)	-.288(.203)	.112(.248)	.162(.286)
Lesbian	-.110(.185)	.064(.282)	.144(.273)	-.180(.233)	.451(.284)	-.384(.329)
Questioning	-.340(.224)	-.515(.340)	.257(.329)	.440(.281)	.204(.343)	-.056(.396)
Asexual	-.560(.185)**	-.492(.282)	-.181(.272)	-.483(.233)*	.192(.284)	1.501(.328)***
Other Sexual Identity	-.299(.209)	-.047(.317)	.130(.307)	-.144(.262)	-.244(.320)	.644(.370)
+controls						
R Squared	0.088	0.074	0.056	0.044	0.206	0.071

reference categories are male and heterosexual *Significant at p.<.05 **Significant at p.<.01 ***Significant at p.<.001

	Linear Regression Analysis for Sexual Preferences					
	Monogamous	Casual w/ Strangers	Casual w/ Acquaintances	Casual w/ Friends	Polyamorous/Open	Have No Sex
	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)	b (S.E.)
Gender Identity						
Female	.194(.068)**	-.438(.079)***	-.187(.065)**	-.171(.085)*	-.333(.098)***	.936(.112)***
Gender Minority	-.215(.184)	-.439(.214)*	-.501(.178)**	-.756(.232)***	1.220(.258)*	.701(.304)*
Sexual Orientation						
Bisexual	-.142(.107)	-.238(.125)	-.135(.104)	.064(.135)	.924(.156)***	-.484(.177)**
Pansexual	.274(.191)	-.390(.222)	-.326(.185)	.019(.240)	.742(.278)**	-.325(.315)
Queer	-.759(.340)*	.260(.396)	-.366(.329)	.017(.428)	1.012(.495)*	-.170(.561)
Gay	.143(.198)	-.261(.230)	.028(.191)	-.100(.249)	.229(.288)	-.040(.326)
Lesbian	-.270(.227)	.081(.264)	-.338(.219)	-.100(.249)	.731(.330)*	-.209(.374)
Questioning	-.475(.273)	.053(.318)	.242(.265)	-.047(.285)	-.216(.398)	-.213(.451)
Asexual	-.517(.226)*	-.279(.263)	-.618(.219)**	.607(.344)	-.246(.329)	2.162(.373)***
Other Sexual Identity	-.319(.225)	.124(.297)	.025(.247)	-.505(.285)	.867(.371)*	-.355(.421)
+controls						
R Squared	0.067	0.087	0.09	0.061	0.15	0.261

Mean Rank for an Open Relationship Preference by Gender and Sexual Identity



Reported Relationships

Logistic regression analyses (not pictured) found the following differences between genders and sexual minorities.

- Women were more likely to have had relationships that were long-term committed or monogamous
- Women were less likely to say they have not had any romantic or sexual relationships
- Gender Minorities, bisexuals, and lesbians were more likely to have had a romantic open/polyamorous relationship
- Bisexuals, pansexuals, queer, and lesbians were more likely to have a sexual open/polyamorous relationship
- Gay and bisexual men were more likely to have had casual sex with a stranger, friend, or acquaintance