

The Effects of Sexual Orientation on Perceptions of Relationship Stability, Commitment, and Sexual Satisfaction

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Introduction

Relationship Quality of Individuals of Different Sexual Orientations

- There are no significant differences between heterosexual and homosexual individuals when assessing relationship stability (Gottman et al., 2003)
- Research found significant gender difference between gay and lesbian individuals when assessing relationship desire; men are more sexually compulsive and romantically obsessed (Missildine et al., 2005)
- There is no significant difference between heterosexual and homosexual individuals regarding sexual satisfaction; however, each sexual orientation used relationship length and intimacy to assess sexual satisfaction (Carvalheria & Costa, 2015; del Mar Sánchez-Funtez & Sierra, 2015)

Social Perception of Different Sexual Orientations

- Strong historical past of stereotypes and prejudice surrounding the LGBTQ+ society.
- “One-time” rule states that if an individual participates in homosexual activity once, they are automatically gay (Flanders & Hatfield, 2014); also known as the “totally gay” effect (Yost & Thomas, 2012)
- Bisexual men are perceived most negatively compared to homosexual and heterosexuals (Eliason, 2001; Flanders & Hatfield, 2014; Yost & Thomas, 2012)
- Potentially due to homosexual stereotypes and the “one-time” rule, bisexuals are perceived more likely to transmit an STI, no matter the relationship make up (Spalding & Peplau, 1997)

Hypotheses

- The heterosexual couples will score the highest in all three relationship predictors (stability, commitment, and sexual satisfaction); the three predictors will be positively correlated
- The couple consisting of a bisexual female and heterosexual male will score second highest in all three relationship predictors; the three predictors will be positively correlated
- The homosexual female couple will follow with sexual satisfaction being rated highest, negatively correlated with commitment
- The homosexual male couple will follow with commitment being rated highest, negatively correlated with sexual satisfaction
- The bisexual couples consisting of a bisexual female and a homosexual female and a bisexual male and a homosexual male will have significantly low rating in all three relationship predictors compared to heterosexual and homosexual couples
- The couple consisting of a bisexual male and heterosexual female will receive the most negative perceptions in all three relationship predictors.

Method

Participants

- Participants were students enrolled in a Psychology course at Albright College, participating for extra credit.
- $N = 32$ (30 females, 1 male, 1 other)
- Ages of 19–49 ($M=20.66$)
- Ethnicity:
 - Heterosexuals (20 White/Caucasian, 2 Black/African American, 1 Asian, 1 Mixed)
 - Homosexuals (2 White/Caucasian)
 - Bisexuals (3 White/Caucasian, 1 Black/African American, 1 Hispanic/ Latino)
 - 1 other

Materials and Procedure

- This study was a within-subjects design.
- There was one independent variable, manipulated by describing the sexual orientation and sex composition of 7 different couples:
 - Heterosexual
 - homosexual male
 - homosexual female
 - bisexual male and heterosexual female
 - bisexual male and homosexual male
 - bisexual female and heterosexual male
 - bisexual female and homosexual female
- Participants rated each couple on three dependent variables: 1) stability of the relationship 2) each partner’s commitment to the relationship and 3) each partner’s sexual satisfaction in the relationship

Sexual Orientation Stimuli



Heterosexual Couple

- James and Olivia have been dating for almost a year. James’ previously been with 4 other women, 2 of which he has been in at least a 6-month relationship with. Olivia has been with 3 other men, 1 of which she has been in a relationship with.

Homosexual Couples

Male

- Joey and Brad have been together for just under a year. Previously, Joey has been with two other men, both in which has lasted about 7 months. Brad has also been with two other men, one in which he was in a relationship with.

Female

- Samantha and Julia have been with each other for almost a year and a half. Samantha was previously in a relationship with another woman for 8 months and an additional 2 women prior. Julia has been with a total of 4 women, two of which she was in a romantic relationship with.



Bisexual Couples

Bisexual Male and Heterosexual Female

- Aaron and Holly have been dating for just about one year. Aaron has previously been in a romantic relationship with 1 woman and 1 man for about 5 months. Holly has been in a romantic relationship with 2 men for just under half a year each and 1 additional man as well.

Bisexual Male and Homosexual Male

- Jake and Austin have been together for just under a year. Previously, Jake has been with one other man and one other woman, both in which has lasted about 7 months. Austin has also been with two other men, one in which he was in a romantic relationship with.

Bisexual Female and Heterosexual Male

- Erin and John have been together for just under a year. Erin has been in 3 prior relationships, two of which were with women and one with a man, all for about 5 months. John has also been in a romantic relationship with two other women prior to the current relationship.

Bisexual Female and Homosexual Female

- Hannah and Caity have been together for almost a year and a half. Previously, Hannah has been with two other men and one other woman all lasting an average of 8 months. Caity has also been with two other women that she had a romantic relationship with.

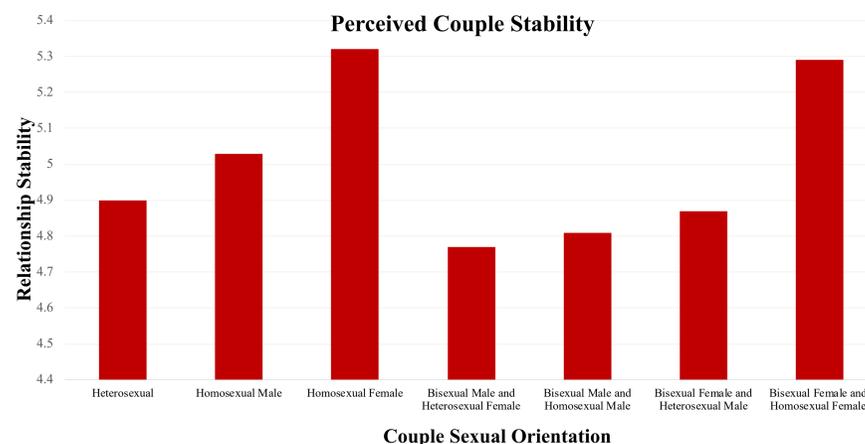


Results

In order to see if there was a difference between the perception of each couple, a 1-Way Repeated Measures ANOVA was used to measure the difference between perceived relationship stability among 7 different couples. Four 2-Way Repeated Measures ANOVAs were used to measure the difference between partners in either a same-sex or opposite-sex relationship based on commitment and sexual satisfaction.

Relationship Stability

- There was a significant difference in perceived relationship stability between couples, $F(6, 180)=2.300$; $p=.037$



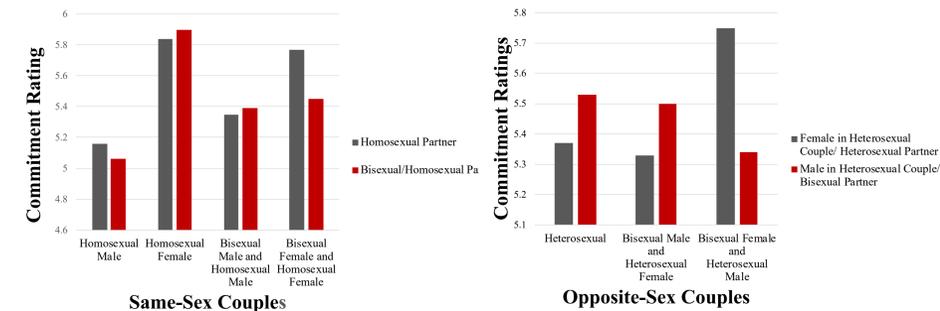
Commitment

Same-Sex Couples

- There was no main effect between partners; $F(1,30)=.740$, $p=.396$
- There was a main effect on commitment ratings in same-sex couples; $F(3,90)=7.250$, $p=.000$
- There was no interaction; $F(3,90)=2.289$, $p=.084$

Opposite-Sex Couples

- There was no main effect between partners; $F(1,31)=.010$, $p=.919$
- There was no main effect between commitment ratings in opposite-sex couples; $F(2,62)=.514$, $p=.601$
- There was an interaction; $F(2,62)=10.469$, $p=.000$. The female partner in the heterosexual couple and heterosexual female partner in a relationship with a bisexual male were perceived as less committed compared to their partners. However, the heterosexual male partner in a relationship with a bisexual female was perceived significantly more committed to the relationship than the bisexual female partner.



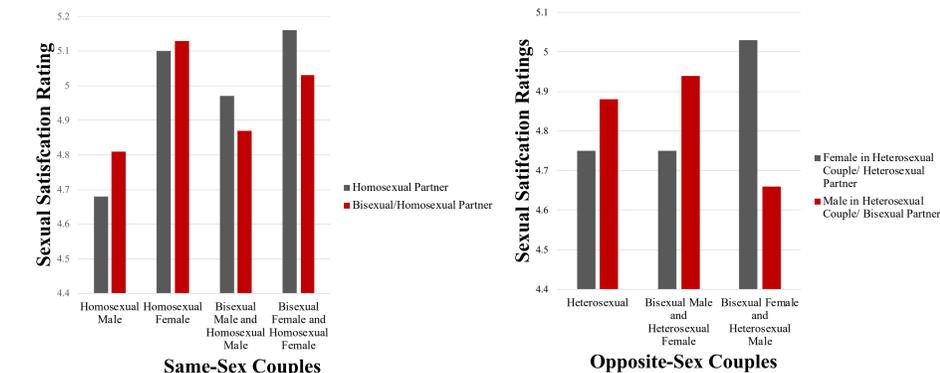
Sexual Satisfaction

Same-Sex Couples

- There was no main effect between partners; $F(1,30)=.069$, $p=.794$
- There was no main effect on sexual satisfaction ratings in same-sex couples; $F(3,90)=2.514$, $p=.063$
- There was no interaction; $F(3,90)=1.608$, $p=.193$

Opposite-Sex Couples

- There was no main effect between partners; $F(1,31)=.040$, $p=.842$
- There was no main effect on sexual satisfaction ratings in opposite-sex couples; $F(2,62)=.015$, $p=.985$
- There was an interaction; $F(2,62)=5.909$, $p=.004$. The female partner in the heterosexual couple and the heterosexual female in a relationship with a bisexual male were perceived as less sexually satisfied. However, the heterosexual male partner in a relationship with a bisexual female was perceived significantly more sexually satisfied than the bisexual female partner.



Discussion

- Contrary to my hypothesis, the heterosexual couple was not perceived highest in stability. Moreover, both homosexual couples were perceived as more stable than the heterosexual couples. However, the homosexual female couple and the bisexual couple consisting of a bisexual female and homosexual female were perceived as the most stable. Similar to my hypothesis, the bisexual couple consisting of a bisexual male and heterosexual female were perceived as the least stable followed by the other bisexual male couple consisting of a bisexual male and homosexual male.
- Contrary to my hypothesis, there was only a significant interaction between partners in opposite-sex relationships on both commitment and sexual satisfaction. There was only an interaction between partner in the couple consisting of a bisexual female and a heterosexual male. On both scales, the heterosexual male in the relationship was perceived as more committed and sexually satisfied than the bisexual female partner.

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