

Adjustment of Homosexual and Heterosexual Women: A Cross-National Replication

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British homosexual and heterosexual women were evaluated on the same adjustment inventories used with two similar U.S. groups. The results of both studies were quite parallel, and the findings again supported similarities rather than differences in adjustment between homosexuals and heterosexuals.

KEY WORDS: homosexuality; females; heterosexuality; mental health; psychological adjustment.

INTRODUCTION

In 1913 Brill concluded that "I no longer entertain any doubts that homosexuality is compatible with perfect mental and physical health" (p. 336). Stekel (1930), on the other hand, noted that "My experience during the past few years absolutely confirms my belief that homosexuality is a psychic disease . . ." (p. 443). Today the controversy concerning the adjustment of homosexuals is still unresolved (Bell, 1975). The extremely small number of objective studies thus far conducted that systematically evaluate the adjustment of homosexual vs. heterosexual women (Siegelman, 1972b) prompted the author to conduct the present replication study. In the first inquiry (Siegelman, 1972b) conducted in the United States (hereafter called "the U.S. study") 82 homosexual women were compared to 133 heterosexual women on several instruments measuring 12 areas related to mental health. The same instruments used in the U.S. study were employed to evaluate the British subjects in the current investigation.

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METHOD

Subjects

The 61 homosexual women in the present study could not of course be considered a random or representative sample, but they were drawn from several nonclinical sources. The writer placed advertisements in two London newspapers, the *Spectator* and the *New Statesman*, asking for homosexual volunteers to complete a questionnaire. Homosexual members of the Albany Trust in London were asked by the director to participate in the present study. Subjects were also obtained from three lesbian organizations, The New Group, Kenric, and Arena 3. The homosexuals described themselves as exclusively or predominantly homosexual in orientation. The 49 heterosexual women were either undergraduate or graduate students at Stevenage College in Hertfordshire, women contacted through personal friends of the author, or members of a British organization called the Cosmo Group. They all described themselves as exclusively heterosexual. The subjects completed the questionnaire anonymously and mailed it back to the writer.

Demographic comparisons between the homosexuals and the heterosexuals can be found in Table I. The two groups did not differ in age, socioeconomic level of parents, education of subject, education of father, education of mother, percent not in therapy now, and percent never in therapy. No differences were found between the two groups, in addition, on the Crowne and Marlowe (1960) Social Desirability Scale (SDS), which was given in order to evaluate the possible contamination of giving socially desirable responses on the various adjustment instruments. Point-biserial correlations between the adjustment variables and

Table I. Comparison Between Homosexuals and Heterosexuals on Demographic Variables

Variable	<i>N</i> ^a		M or %		SD		<i>t</i> or χ^2
	Ho ^b	He ^c	Ho	He	Ho	He	
Age	61	49	33.59	36.67	6.94	10.31	1.87
Education of subject	54	46	14.30	14.35	3.76	4.04	0.07
Education of father	46	41	11.39	11.71	4.04	3.85	0.37
Education of mother	47	41	10.43	11.22	3.22	3.94	1.04
Socioeconomic level of parents	41	41	12.49	11.88	4.15	3.99	0.68
Not in therapy now	51	46	94%	96%			0.02
Never in therapy	40	41	74%	85%			1.36
SDS	58	46	14.69	14.13	4.56	4.84	0.60

^a*N* is different for some variables because of missing data.

^bHomosexuals.

^cHeterosexuals.

homosexuals vs. heterosexuals were computed in order to assess the *amount* of association between the variables and the groups (Cohen, 1965).

Instruments

The questionnaires used to measure adjustment were the Scheier and Cattell (1961) Neuroticism Scale Questionnaire (NSQ), which includes the scales of Tendermindedness (I), Depression (F), Submission (E), Anxiety (Anx.), and Total Neuroticism (Total NSQ); the Alienation and Trust scales of Struening and Richardson (1965); the Dignan (1965) measures of Goal-Directedness, Self-Acceptance, and Sense of Self; a Dependency scale by Comry (1964); a Nurturance test by Harvey *et al.* (1966), and a Neuroticism (Neur.) measure by McGuire (1966). These adjustment scales, as well as the SDS and the socioeconomic index, are described in detail by Siegelman (1972a).

The generalized Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 reliability estimates (Tryon, 1957) for the total British sample ($N = 110$) were $I = 0.63$, $F = 0.50$, $E = 0.66$, $Anx. = 0.72$, $Total\ NSQ = 0.80$, $Alienation = 0.63$, $Trust = 0.68$, $Goal-Directedness = 0.58$, $Self-Acceptance = 0.53$, $Sense\ of\ Self = 0.76$, $Dependency = 0.77$, $Nurturance = 0.83$, $Neur. = 0.72$. The correlations between the SDS and the adjustment variables for the homosexuals were $I = 0.11$, $F = 0.06$, $E = 0.03$, $Ans.$

Table II. Comparisons of Adjustment Variable Scores Between Homosexual and Heterosexual Women

Variables	N^a		M		SD		t	$r_{12,3}^b$
	Homo-sexual	Hetero-sexual	Homo-sexual	Hetero-sexual	Homo-sexual	Hetero-sexual		
NSQ								
Tenderminded	60	48	11.70	13.46	3.51	3.18	2.69 ^d	0.25 ^d
Depressed	60	48	9.38	10.04	3.19	2.64	1.15	0.11
Submissive	60	48	11.78	12.48	4.14	3.54	0.93	0.09
Anxious	60	48	10.47	11.58	4.25	3.65	1.44	0.14
Total NSQ	60	48	43.33	47.58	9.24	7.80	2.54 ^c	0.24 ^c
Non-NSQ								
Alienated	61	49	15.33	15.14	4.27	3.65	0.24	-0.02
Trusting	61	49	16.75	17.27	5.30	4.98	0.52	0.05
Goal-directed	61	49	33.80	31.33	6.76	5.39	2.09	-0.20
Self-accepting	61	49	22.26	20.16	5.30	3.78	2.34 ^c	-0.22 ^c
Sense of self	61	49	16.67	16.45	2.84	2.82	0.41	-0.04
Dependent	61	49	14.92	15.12	6.45	6.06	0.17	0.02
Nurturant	60	49	19.17	19.00	3.54	3.34	0.25	-0.02
Neurotic	59	49	24.27	25.65	6.13	5.77	1.20	0.12

^a N differs for some variables because a few subjects did not complete all scales.

^bPartial correlation.

^c < 0.05 , two-tailed.

^d < 0.01 , two-tailed.

= -0.23, Total NSQ = -0.11, Alienation = -0.19, Trust = 0.37, Goal-Directedness = 0.30, Self-Acceptance = 0.21, Sense of Self = 0.05, Demanding = -0.13, Nurturance = 0.17, Neur. = -0.29. The correlations between the SDS and the adjustment variables for the heterosexuals were I = -0.06, F = -0.04, E = 0.38, Anx. = -0.33, Total NSQ = -0.00, Alienation = -0.16, Trust = 0.28, Goal-Directedness = 0.26, Self-Acceptance = 0.40, Sense of Self = 0.11, Dependency = -0.16, Nurturance = 0.44, Neur. = -0.41. Except for two factors, the correlations for the two groups were similar and so the effect on mean score comparisons would not be appreciable. The considerably higher correlations on E and Nurturance for the heterosexuals could bias their scores upward.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results for the British samples noted in Table II are strikingly similar to the findings in the U.S. study. In both studies the homosexual women scored lower than the heterosexual women on Total NSQ and higher on Goal-Directedness and Self-Acceptance, and there were no significant differences for Depression, Anxiety, Alienation, Trust, Sense of Self, Dependency, Nurturance, and Neuroticism. The only difference between the two studies was that in the U.S. research the heterosexuals had higher scores on Submissiveness, while in the British study the heterosexuals had higher scores on Tendermindedness. The correlations between the adjustment variables and the two groups in the British investigation again agreed with the *t* test results.

In both the British and U.S. studies the similarities between the comparison groups far outweighed the differences, and the most general finding was that homosexual women do not differ from heterosexual women on many adjustment categories. The tendency for homosexual women to be more goal-directed and more self-accepting may be associated with being single. Most of the heterosexuals (68%) but, as one would expect, only a few homosexuals (6%) were married. Goal-Directedness and Self-Accepting are two of three scales comprising the "Ego-Identity" dimension described by Dignan (1965). The "Ego-Identity" scales include the orientations of "awareness of what one stands for, where he is going, and self-assertion to achieve goals . . . self-appraisal, and subsequent self-acceptance" (Dignan, 1965, p. 47). Perhaps being single fosters greater "Ego-Identity" in women because they pursue goals and interests more autonomously and with greater zeal as they are usually self-sufficient. Most women in both groups were working (homosexuals, 95%; heterosexuals, 83%), but the sense of identity may be stronger in homosexuals who work independently in contrast to many heterosexual women who may perceive their work as secondary to their husband's occupation.

The present study extended the general findings of the U.S. research, but because the British sample was small and select the results should be generalized only to similar women.

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