

SEXUAL BEHAVIORS AND SEXUAL WELLBEING IN SEXUALLY ACTIVE SEXUAL MINORITY AND HETEROSEXUAL ADOLESCENTS

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BACKGROUND

- An increasing number of adolescents are reporting identities in line with **complex, nuanced and multi-gendered attractions**, such as pansexuality (Savin-Williams, 2021).
- It is important to understand **similarities and differences** across identities that are considered under the sexual minority umbrella (Price-Feeney et al., 2019), as distinctions regarding sexual wellbeing have been documented (Lorenz, 2019).
- This could inform interventions among sexually diverse individuals and address the **specific needs of all** (Kaestle, 2019), and **monosexism*** as well as **heterosexism*** can be countered (Flanders et al., 2017).

*Monosexism is the belief that people can or should only be attracted to and engage in relationships with one gender.

*Heterosexism is the assumption that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to other sexualities.

AIM

We examined how sexual minority adolescents are similar or different from their heterosexual peers in terms of **sexual behaviors** (age at first sexual activity, number of sexual encounters, frequency of oral sex and manual stimulation) and **sexual wellbeing** (sexual satisfaction, function, and distress)



RESULTS

Differences between sexual orientations (heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, lesbian/ gay, heteroflexible and questioning) regarding the variables of interest were tested with Chi-Square and Kruskal-Wallis tests in SPSS v25.

SEXUAL BEHAVIORS

No significant differences were observed between sexual orientations regarding age at first sexual activity, number of sexual encounters, as well as frequency of giving and/or receiving oral sex and manual stimulation.

SEXUAL WELLBEING

Adolescents who identified as **questioning** their sexual orientation had significantly **lower sexual satisfaction** than heterosexual individuals only.

Those who identified as **questioning** their sexual orientation or as **heteroflexible** had significantly **greater sexual distress** than heterosexual adolescents only.

There were **no significant differences** between any groups' **sexual function**.

IMPLICATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

The **absence** of significant differences regarding **sexual behaviors** could be explained by the **homogeneity in participants' age and developmental stage** (Savin-Williams, 2011).

Findings regarding **sexual wellbeing** contribute to the **dearth of research** concerning questioning youth and are consistent with previous research showing that youth who are questioning their sexual identity (Price-Feener et al., 2019) as well as heteroflexible youth (Fish & Pasley, 2015) can report **poorer mental health outcomes than their lesbian/gay, bisexual, pansexual and heterosexual peers**.

For **clinicians or sex educators**, findings support the importance of **normalizing sexual exploration, encouraging authenticity and promoting the acceptance of one's identity**.

Findings support the relevance of examining distinctions between sexual identities grouped under the sexual minority umbrella term (Wang & Feinstein, 2020). **Future studies** could explore similarities and differences between **cisgender and gender diverse** adolescents regarding their sexual wellbeing.

METHOD

Measures

Sexual satisfaction: Global Measure of Sexual Satisfaction

Sexual function: Arizona Sexual Experiences Scale

Sexual distress: Sexual Distress Scale

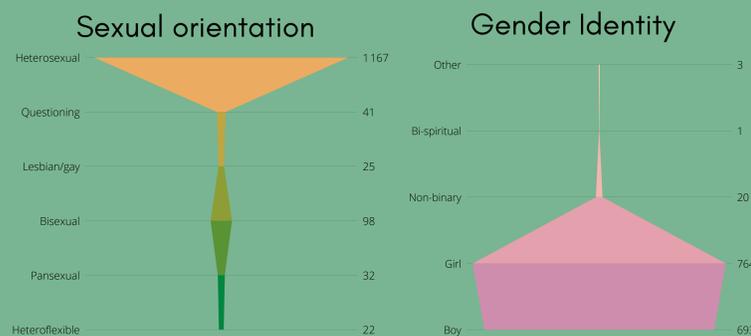
Procedure

Teens were recruited from rural and urban regions of Québec, CAN. They completed a 40-minute survey on electronic tablets during class. They received a \$10 gift card for participating.

(For more details regarding the procedure, see Girouard et al., 2021)

Participants

1419 sexually active adolescents* in 11th grade (Mage=16.46, SDage=0.56).



*Being sexually active was defined as having previous experiences with oral sex, manual sex or penetrative sex.