

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEX ROLE AND SEX ORIENTATION IN HOMOSEXUAL MEN

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It has been suggested that sex role and sex orientation are identical, and that deviation from the norm on one will mean deviation on the other. Twenty homosexual men were matched with the same number of heterosexual men on age, education and socioeconomic level and administered the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) Masculinity-femininity and California Psychological Inventory (CPI) Femininity scales. No significant differences were found between the two groups on these scales. It was concluded that sex role has no necessary correlation with sex orientation, and that high femininity scores on the MMPI and the CPI should not be taken as evidence of male homosexuality.

A number of writers have suggested that male homosexuals adopt, either consciously or unconsciously, the feminine role; the psychoanalytic view suggests (Hewitt, 1961; Morgenthaler, 1970) that homosexuality in males is a disturbance of male identity and an adoption of feminine behaviour. This would appear to conflict with the findings of Dickey (1961), who found that subjectively adequate homosexual men tended to associate with the dominant masculine norms of their culture and showed no evidence of any feminine identification. Hooker (1965) similarly noted that an individual's acceptance of his homosexuality often led to an increased expression of masculine norms. It has been pointed out by Constantinople (1973) that deviation from the norm of one's sex in sex role (masculinity or femininity) does not imply deviation in sex orientation (homosexuality). Nevertheless, a number of test constructors have incorporated the belief that sex role and sex orientation deviations are identical. Grygier (1957) states this as a major assumption of the psychometrics of homosexuality. The same assumption is made by Manosevitz (1970) in his revision of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) *Mf* scale for detection of homosexuals, although less than 25 percent of the items were significantly associated with homosexuality. Even so, Cubitt and Gendreau (1972) found these items gave a misclassification rate of 35 percent. Thus in spite of the assumptions made by some writers in both the psychometric and psychoanalytic fields, there is some evidence to suggest that sex role may not necessarily correlate with sex orientation.

It has been further suggested by Brown (1957) that male homosexuals fall into the categories of either active or passive in terms of their identification, and consequently sexual activity, with the opposite sex. However, Hooker (1965) has pointed out that identification with the opposite sex bears no relationship to patterns of preference for

sexual activity, with only 20 percent of her sample falling into either activity. Philipp (1968) noted a similar situation in a New Zealand sample. In view of Brown's distinction, sample distribution would be expected to be bimodal, in terms of activity or passivity, in the present study.

The hypothesis that sex role is the same as sex orientation (homosexual or heterosexual) was tested, and the assumption that male homosexuals are either active or passive in sexual activity was also examined. Donnelly's (1970) finding that homosexuals in New Zealand are highly similar to their overseas counterparts was looked at and confirmed in the present study.

METHOD

Twenty university-educated men present at a national conference of homosexual movements were administered the MMPI *Mf* scale and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) *Fe* scale. All were overt, and presumed well-adjusted homosexuals. A form requiring information on age, educational level (years at university and number of papers passed), socioeconomic level (labourer, skilled workman, clerical-sales, managerial-professional, other), position on the Kinsey scale (Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin 1948), and sexual activity preferences (more than one preference could be expressed), was also completed by the subject. The purpose of the research was not stated, and no subject was familiar with either the MMPI or the CPI. Confidentiality of the study was stressed. Those who did question the purpose of the research were told it related to response range on two American attitude scales. The same form requiring identical information, excepting sexual activity preferences, was filled out by 120 first-year psychology students at Massey University, and 20 of these were matched with the homosexuals on age, education level, and socioeconomic level. This group was then administered the MMPI *Mf* and CPI *Fe* scales. The mean age for homosexual subjects was 24 years, ranging from 18 to 53 years, and the mean age for the students was 24 years, ranging from 18 to 55 years. All the homosexuals rated five or six on the Kinsey scale, all the students, one. Sex role was defined as score on MMPI *Mf* and CPI *Fe* scales of masculinity-femininity, and sex orientation as self-rating on the Kinsey scale.

Scores on the MMPI and CPI were analysed separately. A two-tailed *t* test (matched sample, small N) was computed for each inventory. Point-biserial correlations were then computed in order to assess the magnitude of the effect.

RESULTS

The differences between the homosexual and the student groups proved insignificant at $.30 < p < .40$ ($t(19) = 1.13$) for MMPI *Mf* scale, and at $.80 < p < .90$ ($t(19) = .21$) for CPI *Fe* scale. Both

fell far short of the significance level ($p < .05$) previously set. Mean scores on the MMPI were 34.5 (homosexuals) and 33.3 (students), and on the CPI 19.7 (homosexuals) and 20.7 (students). Point-biserial correlations for both scales showed the same trend. Reference to Freidman's (1972) table for magnitude of effect showed that the difference between the two groups on the MMPI was so small ($r_{pb} = .25$) as to require a similar design with an N of 100 (i.e. 200 subjects) to provide a significant difference at $p < .05$. The point-biserial correlation for the CPI was so small ($r_{pb} = .04$) that magnitude of effect was not obtainable from the table.

Analysis of the preferred sexual activity of homosexuals showed a trend towards a lack of preference for either active or passive activity, with five preferring active and one passive. Half the group recorded equal preference for both, and 12 preferred oral and other mutual activities.

DISCUSSION

The results seem to be quite clear in supporting the suggestion that sex role is not the same as sex orientation. If the two were the same, there would be a significant difference between the scores of the homosexual and heterosexual subjects on the two scales of masculinity-femininity. However, since no difference was obtained, it is important to be satisfied that these results did not occur through poor design, or lack of power in the tests used.

Allied to sampling difficulties is the restriction of small N Loney (1972) noted that the range of N in six studies of normal homosexuals was 20 to 43. Even with replication, the effect of nonrandom sampling and small N tends to limit generalization. Limitations occur in the characteristics of the MMPI *Mf* and CPI *Fe*, scales. The comment that masculinity-femininity scales tend to embody items which reflected the roles of stereotyped midwestern Americans in the 1940's (Grygier, 1957; Constantinople, 1973) suggests that they may not be an adequate measure of sex role. Responses on MMPI have been shown to be affected by age, education and socioeconomic level. These factors were controlled for. It has further been suggested (Grygier, 1957) that scores may vary in terms of whether the individual is active or passive in sexual activity. The results show that only 30 percent of the homosexuals have a preference for either. This is very similar to the percentages noted by Hooker (1965) and Philipp (1968)—20 percent and 43 percent respectively. The sample would appear unbiased in this respect. Data on activity preference seem fairly compatible with those of Hooker and Philipp in terms of subjects with no preference for either active or passive roles, 50 percent in the present study, 46 percent (Hooker) and 37 percent (Philipp). The percentages of subjects in the passive category were identical in the present study (5 percent) and Hooker's study. There were insufficient observations in

the passive category to allow comparison of scores with those in the active category. These data would appear to support the observation of Hooker (1965) that male homosexuals do not fall into the categories of active or passive, since the majority in the present study, 60 percent, prefer other activities or both roles without preference. Consequently Brown's (1957) suggestion that male homosexuals are either active or passive in sexual activity preference is not supported by the data. The high degree of similarity between the data of Hooker (1965) and the present study support the observation of Donnelly (1970) that the New Zealand male homosexual is similar to his overseas counterpart.

Both Dickey (1961) and Hooker (1965) mentioned that adjustment in homosexuals led to a tendency to adopt the male norms of the society. It could well be that this is a factor operating in the present sample. The homosexuals were all members of a publicly "Gay" organization, a point which would suggest a fair level of adjustment to their homosexuality.

The findings of the present study have considerable implications for any theory of male homosexuality. As Constantinople (1973) suggested, deviation from the norm of one's sex role has no implications for deviation in sex orientation. It has now also been demonstrated that deviation in sex orientation does not necessarily imply deviation from the norm in sex role. On the measures of sex role obtained, there was no significant difference between the homosexual and heterosexual groups as would have been expected if homosexuality was, as had been suggested, a disturbance of the male identity and adoption of a female one. The data further demonstrate that sex role and sex orientation cannot be considered identical, and that a high femininity score on a test should not be diagnosed as homosexuality. Thus the popular stereotype of a homosexual as a male with feminine behavioural and psychological characteristics has proved to be as much a stereotype in psychology. But to suggest that *all* homosexuals are not different from heterosexuals in masculinity-femininity characteristics would be to go beyond these data. While sex role, as measured by personality inventories, may have no necessary implications for sex orientation, it is to be expected there will be some situations where this may not hold.

Nevertheless, as long as any theory of homosexuality continues to make broad generalizations without recognizing that the variations amongst homosexuals are as wide in range as those amongst heterosexuals, then that theory will have very little validity and restricted scientific value.

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