

## **Bachelor's thesis review – Opponent's evaluation**

Title: *Primary Sexual Experiences and Sexual Orientation*

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The thesis explores the idea that the quality of primary sexual experiences and the gender of the partner in the first sexual experiences influence the sexual orientation of individuals. The question was well formulated and well supported by the reviewed scientific literature. I found the research question courageous and important from the individual, clinical, and societal perspectives as well.

### **Theoretical part**

Overall, the structure and the dept of the literature review was written satisfactorily, the 15 pages of references signify that the author was well-versed in the background knowledge necessary for studying the question. The theoretical part was clearly the strong point of this thesis, it was fairly well structured, and diverse topics were touched on to provide a good overall picture on the current state of knowledge.

The only topic I was missing was the mentioning of the hypothesized association between experienced sexual abuse and sexual orientation. It was touched very briefly and not explained as a possible strong sexual experience (though the author did measure perceived control of first sexual activity). Further, I was missing references for the operant and classical conditioning, and a more structured analysis of the comparisons between human and animal studies on sexual behavior. Similarly, the mentioning of the orgasm rating scale was very out of structure and perhaps unnecessary as well, since the scale was not used in the analysis. But these were minor issues.

### **Empirical part**

The empirical part was relatively short and its structure did not follow the IMRaD structure. There was no clear Methods section; within the Participants section the author explained in detail the limitations of the study; the discussions of results were provided within the Results section. Limitations, discussions, future directions should be part of the Discussion. Regrettably, there was no mention of the ethical considerations, such as an ethical permission acquired from the institutional review board. It is not clear if an ethical approval was obtained prior the data collection. This should be of high importance considering the nature and sensitivity of the topic.

Probably a more structured explanation of the analyses could have helped the analytical process as well. For example, it was not clear why and how the canonical correlation was performed. I am also unsure if the performed tests indeed allowed for the conclusions made. For example, the regression analyses and the ANOVAs were performed on the total sample, even though the sex of the partner had different meaning for male versus female participants. Interaction

terms between the participant and the partner sex were not included – that would have allowed for testing moderation effects. That is, fantasy with a male partner had different meaning for gays, lesbians, heterosexual men and women, but this was not accounted for in the tests. This was a very important caveat of the analyses and unfortunately as such the conclusions made cannot be taken into account. I found other inconsistencies too in the Results, for example in Tables 5-7 it was not explained why some rows were marked with asterisks and got no results reported there. Perhaps some sample size issues emerged? It was not clear to me what was the average score reported in Table 8? Average responses for yes/no questions? It was not clear to me how that explained sexual fluidity. More details would be needed to interpret those results. Overall, I think a more nuanced and substantially simplified analysis would have made great service for the hypothesis testing. It would be more meaningful than handling the whole sample without any differentiations (i.e., sex, orientation).

Eventually, for the mentioned reasons, the Discussion was rather brief (probably partly because a lot of discussion was mentioned in the Results and limitations in the Participants). I was also missing a mentioning of the limitations of the cross-sectional design. Although the gender and quality of the first sexual experience could explain some positive predictions for future sexual behavior, it was not considered that the sexual orientation itself also predicts the gender of the first sexual experience. That is, it is not surprising that gays were more likely having a gay first sexual experience, that experience was more satisfying for them, and afterwards they were also more likely continuing to perform gay activities. Correlation is not causation, and I think this was not articulated enough.

### **Summary**

Overall, the research question and data was interesting and valuable, although it was not clear if ethical permission was obtained for the data collection. This data would allow to test so many important questions and I think it would be worth pursuing in a more detailed fashion. The theoretical part was very well written. The empirical part felt rushed and not well thought out. For these reasons I recommend the grade very good (2) assuming that these issues will be improved during the defense.

In Prague, 3 August 2023

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