Sexual Orientation, Partner Preferences and Sex Drive

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Abstract

This study investigates the relation between sex, sexual orientation, sex drive and partner preferences from an evolutionary perspective. The data were gathered using an online cross sectional survey in the Dutch and English language amongst 800 respondents. The results for heterosexuals are largely in line with existing knowledge in evolutionary psychology and are enriched with results for bisexuals and homosexuals. For heterosexuals previous findings were reconfirmed in that heterosexual men preferred partner characteristics indicating good fertility and that heterosexual women preferred resource related characteristics indicating better parenting prospects. Along the Kinsey spectrum from exclusively heterosexual to exclusively homosexual these evolutionary differences between men and women were not always present. For women sexual orientation has no significant effect on partner preferences. For men however, the importance of the partner characteristics evolutionary preferred by men decreases and the importance of the partner characteristics evolutionary preferred by women increases. Also, it was hypothesized that the relation between sexual orientation and partner preferences might be mediated by an increasing intrinsic drive to procreate along the spectrum, based on evolutionary theories (Zietsch, et al., 2008). To measure the intrinsic sex drive, the sex drive questionnaire of Waterink (2011) has been translated into English and validated by comparison of the results to the Dutch results. The intrinsic sex drive does not increase significantly across the sexual orientation spectrum, nor does it mediate the relation between sexual orientation and partner preferences. The intrinsic sex drive does mediate the relation between a person’s sex and the perceived importance of the partner characteristic indicating fertility. The intrinsic sex drive is on average higher for men than for women and it is highest for bisexuals, both for men and women.

Keywords: sexual orientation, sex drive, partner preferences