The Relationship Between the Number of a Woman's Sexual Partners, Endorsement of Double Standards, and Self-Esteem

by Alisa Dreyer

Background Literature

A study conducted by Eshbaugh & Gute (2008) on casual sex found that female participants were more likely than men to feel regretful, shameful, and experience self-doubt following the experience.

Sanchez et al. (2005) claimed that women who endorse gender norms are likely less sexually autonomous and engage in a lower number of casual hookups.

Sanchez et al. (2005) claimed in their research that "Restrictive gender norms, which undermine women's power, competence, and agency, help account for women's higher rates of depression, poorer standardized scores, and higher discontent with sex" (p. 1446).

Budge et al. (2016) stated that members of the LGBTQIA+ community perform traits that primarily conform to the norms of their gender and traits that conform to the gender roles of another gender, which is considered a phenomenon called "gender-role flexibility."

Sexual Scripting Theory

This theory posits that socially constructed norms impact sexual behavior, attitudes, and feelings. It supports the idea that people draw from existing social narratives for how to behave, think, and act in regards to sexual scripts. These norms change over time

Hypothesis 1:

In women, as the number of sexual partners increases, self-esteem decreases.
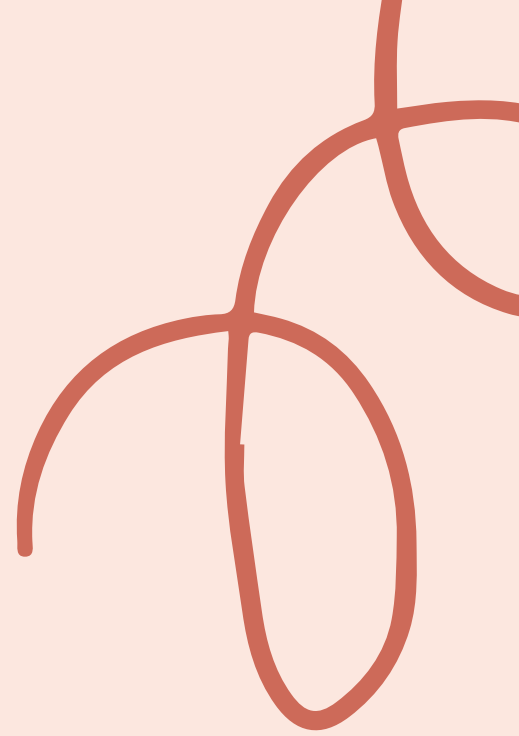
Hypothesis 2:

IIn women, as the number of sexual partners increases, endorsement in double standards decreases.

Hypothesis 3:

In women, as the endorsement in double standards increases, self-esteem decreases.

Hypothesis 4:

Heterosexual women will have an increased endorsement in double standards than bisexual women.

Participants

13 females participated in this study (100%)

Mean age: 20.31 years old (sd = .947)
Range of ages: 18 – 22

Sexual orientations:
10 (76.9%) identified as heterosexual
2 (15.4%) identified as bisexual
1 (7.7%) identified as pansexual

Race/Ethnicity:
6 (46.2%) self-identified as White.
1 (7.7%) self-identified as Asian.
3 (23.1%) self-identified as Hispanic/Latinx.
1 (7.7%) self-identified as Black/African American.
1 (7.7%) self-identified as Middle Eastern.
1 (7.7%) self-identified as White and Hispanic/Latinx.

Tools/Measures

Self-esteem was measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965).
This scale uses a Likert-like response format.
A higher score indicates higher self-esteem.
Test/retest reliability was .82 to .85.
Construct validity was -.64 with anxiety, -.54 with depression, and -.43 with anomie.

Tools/Measures cont'd

Endorsement in double standards was measured by the The Scale for the Assessment of Sexual Standards among Youth (Emmerink et al., 2017).
The scale uses a Likert-like response format.
A higher score indicates more agreement with double standards.
Test/retest reliability was .89 to .90.
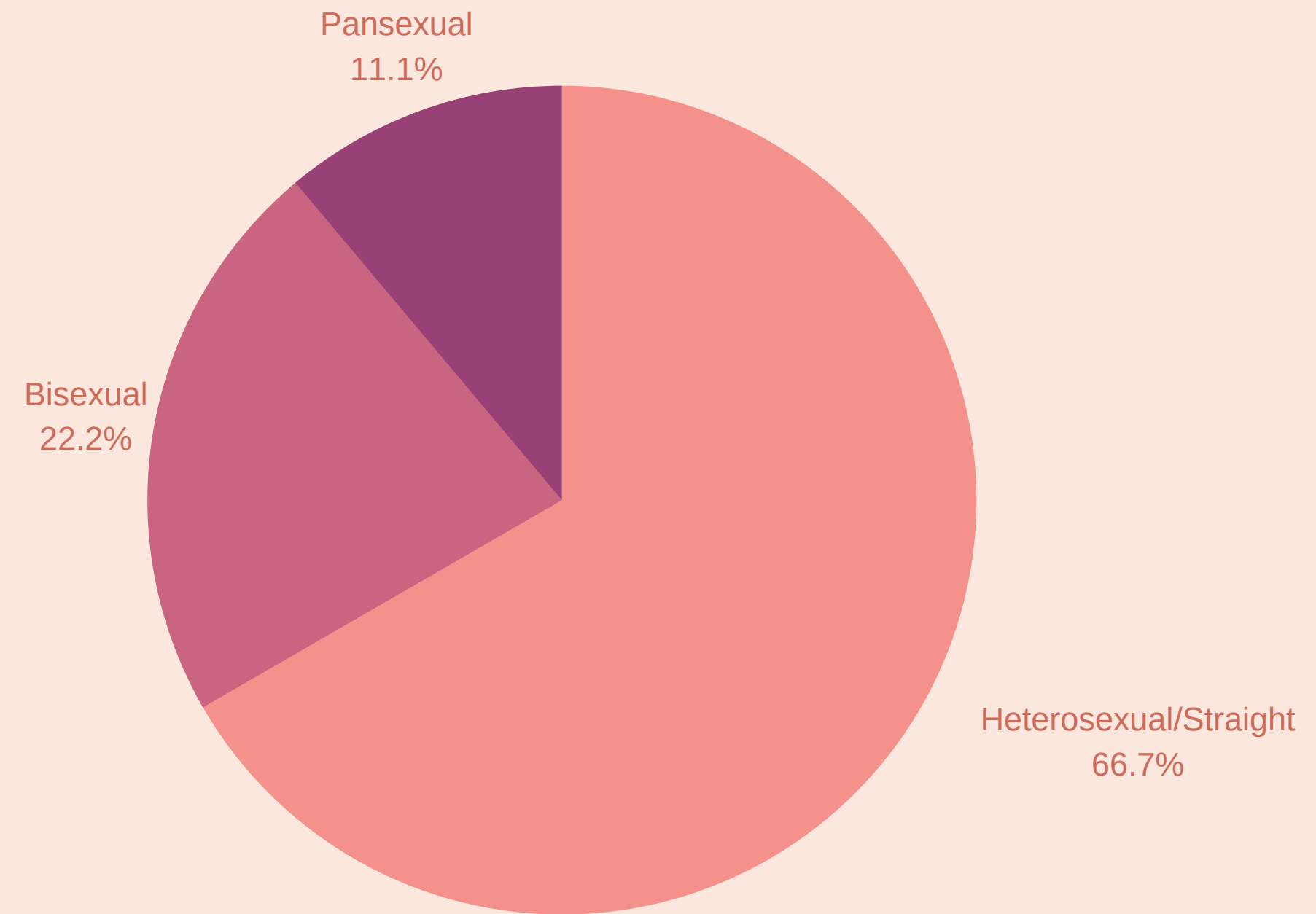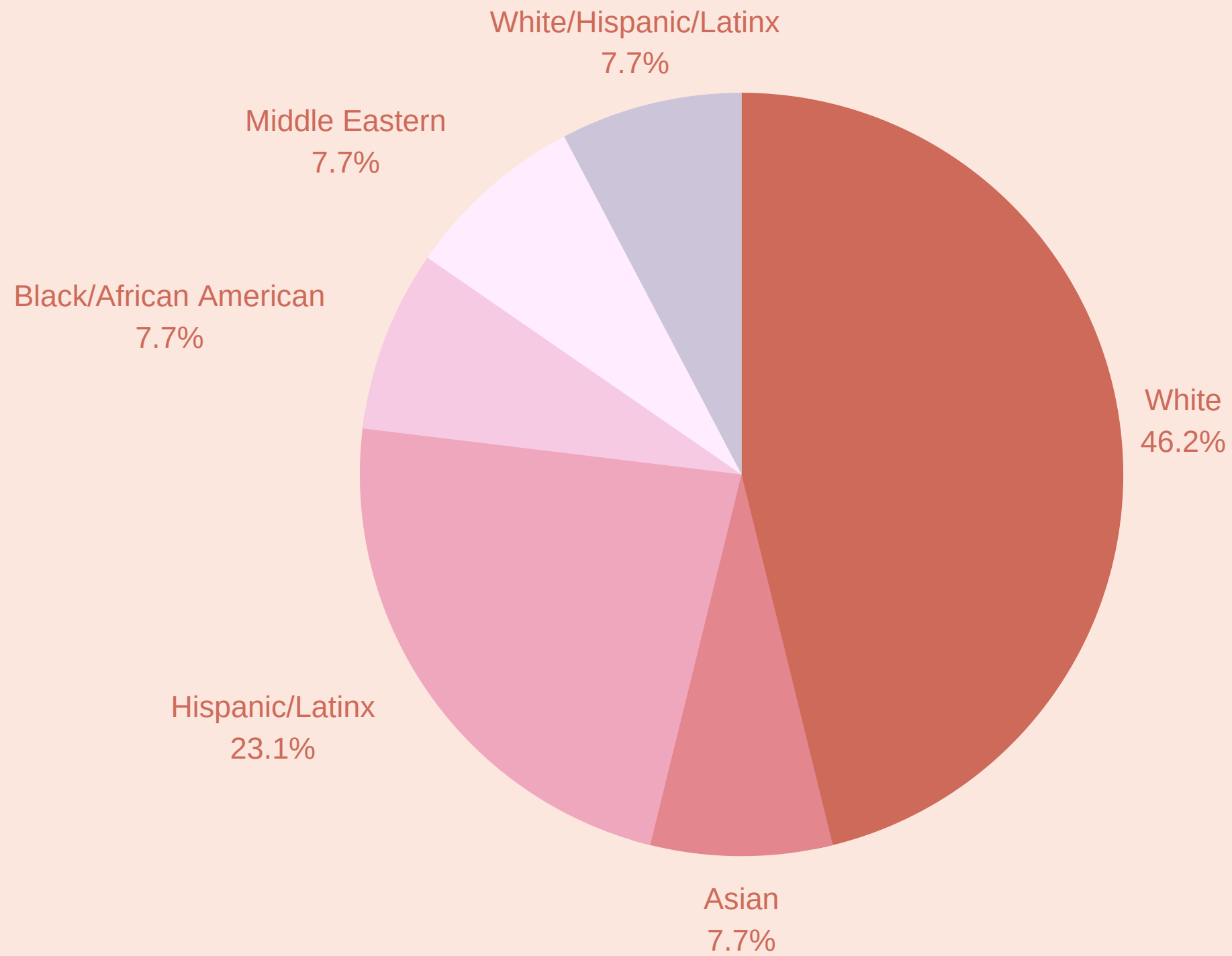Construct validity was .70.

Procedures

One condition – everyone received the same survey

Convenience sampling through text messaging female-identifying friends during the evening on a weekday.

Used a Google Form that provided all questions and scales titled "Gender Roles" but not provided information on the purpose of the survey.

Demographics

White/Hispanic/Latinx
7.7%

Middle Eastern
7.7%

Black/African American
7.7%

Hispanic/Latinx
23.1%

Asian
7.7%

White
46.2%

Pansexual
11.1%

Bisexual
22.2%

Heterosexual/Straight
66.7%

Demographics Cont'd

N = 13

Mean age: 20.31 years old (sd = .947)
Range of ages: 18 - 22

12 (92.3%) participants scored highly on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and 1 (7.7%) scored lower on the scale.
Approximately half of the participants scored highly on the The Scale for the Assessment of Sexual Standards among Youth.

Hypothesis 1:

In women, as the number of sexual partners increases, self-esteem decreases.

Scores above 25 on Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale indicated higher self-esteem. The obtained range was 24-37.

The mean number of sexual partners was 22.85 (SD = 53.721)
The mean score on the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale was 31.8462 (SD = 4.27875).

There was not a statistically significant correlation between the number of sexual partners and self-esteem (r = -.225, p = .461).

Hypothesis 2:

In women, as the number of sexual partners increases, endorsement in double standards decreases.

Scores above 47.5 on The Scale for the Assessment of Sexual Standards among Youth indicated higher endorsement in double standards.
The obtained range was 19 – 46.

The mean number of sexual partners was 22.85 (SD = 53.721).
The mean score on the Scale for the Assessment of Sexual Standards among Youth was 27.6923 (SD = 8.52823).

There was not a statistically significant correlation between the number of sexual partners and endorsement in double standards (r = –.271, p = .370).

Hypothesis 3:

In women, as the endorsement in double standards increases, self-esteem decreases.

Scores above 47.5 on The Scale for the Assessment of Sexual Standards among Youth indicated higher endorsement in double standards.
The obtained range was 19 - 46.
Scores above 25 on Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale indicated higher self-esteem.
The obtained range was 24-37.

The mean score on the Scale for the Assessment of Sexual Standards among Youth was 27.6923 (SD = 8.52823).
The mean score on the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale was 31.8462 (SD = 4.27875)

There was not a statistically significant correlation between the endorsement in double standards and self-esteem ($r = -.125$, $p = .685$).

Hypothesis 4:

Heterosexual women will have an increased endorsement in double standards than bisexual women.

Scores above 47.5 on The Scale for the Assessment of Sexual Standards among Youth indicated higher endorsement in double standards.
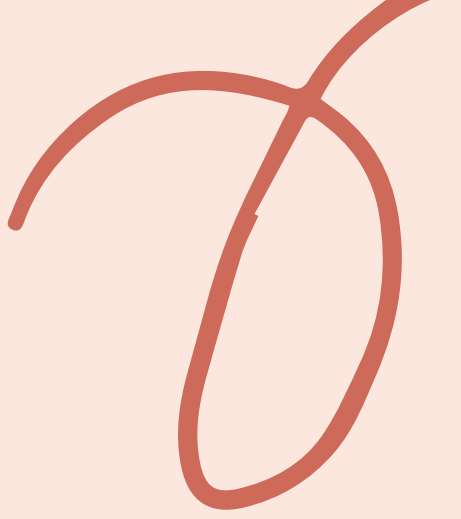The obtained range was 19 – 46.
10 (76.9%) identified as heterosexual and 2 (15.4%) identified as bisexual.

The mean score on the endorsement in sexual double standards for the heterosexual women was 26.8 (SD = 7.09930)
The bisexual women scored an average of 36.5 on the measure of double standards (SD = 13.43503).

There was not a significant difference between the heterosexual and bisexual women in terms of score on the Scale for the Assessment of Sexual Standards among Youth, $t(10) = -1.573$, $p = .172$

Discussion

None of the hypotheses were statistically significant.

Some problems included the current pandemic, the use of convenience sampling, and trying to get female-identifying participants that were bisexual.

Future studies should compare men, women, and gender non-binary participants. It should also involve a much larger and more diverse sample. There should be participants that represent different sexual orientations as well. Lastly, the study should investigate differences between people of different races, ethnicities, abilities, socioeconomic backgrounds, education, religions, and age.

Questions?