

Title: Gender, sexuality and relationships in young Hispanic people.

Running head: Sexuality in young Hispanic people.

Authors

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Abstract

This study explores the relation between gender differences and sexuality among young Hispanic people. Eight hundred and forty young people from Spain and Mexico filled out a self-administered questionnaire about sexuality (sexual experience, sexual orientation and sexual relationships) and gender (self-identification). Men in both Spain and Mexico more commonly report the practice of masturbation and vaginal sex, and are more likely to be unfaithful than women. Women in both countries report more steady partners and longer length of relationships. There were greater gender differences for Mexican men and women than for Spanish men and women, in terms of sexual frequency, sexual orientation, infidelity, etc. Therefore, gender may play an important role in young people's sexuality, more so in Mexico than Spain.

Keywords

Gender differences; sexuality; relationship; Hispanic young people.

## Introduction

Gender plays an essential role in human sexuality, in particular, in terms of sexual frequency (Zimmer-Gembeck & Helfand, 2008), rules of relationships (Yahyaoui, El Methni, Gaultier & Lakhdar-Yahyaoui, 2013) and experiences in sexual orientation (Morrison, Morrison & Franklin, 2009).

According to Social Structural Theory, these gender differences would be associated with sociocultural influences on men and women. Men and women would experience their sexuality differently because of social pressure that varies across countries and cultures (Schmitt & the International Sexuality Description Project, 2005). In this sense, Singh, Wulf, Samara and Cuca (2000) revealed a relation between gender differences and sexuality among young people, across 14 countries. As a result, men and women in societies with a great gender role differentiation showed more differences in sexual frequency than people did in more gender-equal societies. Similarly, young people have reported more tolerance for sexual activities, homosexuality and diversity of relationships in more gender-equal societies (Nierman, Thompson, Bryan & Mahaffey, 2007; Rodríguez-Arauz, Mealy, Smith & DiPlacido, 2013). Previous studies have supported the influence of gender differences on sexuality among young people from different cultures. However, they have not evaluated whether these gender differences also influence young people's sexuality across similar cultures.

Young Hispanic people from Mexico and Spain share cultural values about gender differences (Ballester, Gil, Giménez & Edo, 2010; Torche, 2015). Nevertheless, the two countries contrast on gender inequality (UNDP, 2014). In this context, the main purpose of this study is to explore sexuality (sexual activity, sexual orientation and relationships) among young Hispanic people from countries with dissimilar levels of gender differences (Spain and Mexico).

## Method

### Participants

Eight hundred and forty youths and young adults participated in this study: 500 from the town of Castellon (Spain) and 340 from Mexico City (Mexico). The average age, ranging from 17 to 26 years, was 19 (S.D. =1.83); 402 were men (48%) and 438 were women (52%). One hundred and sixty-five men (48.5%) and 175 women (51.5%) were from Mexico and their average age was 19.03 years (SD=2.22). In Spain, 237 men (47.4%) and 263 women (52.6%) participated; their average age was 18.99 years (SD=1.50). There were no statistically significant age ( $t=-0.374$ ,  $p=.709$ ) or gender ( $\chi^2=0.077$ ,  $p=.781$ ) differences between the two groups. All participants belonged to the middle class and came from urban areas. They studied at secondary schools and colleges of higher education, in both Mexico City (Mexico) and the town of Castellon (Spain).

### Procedure

After obtaining authorization from the Ethical Committees of the respective participating centers of learning, in both countries, researchers explained the purpose of the study emphasizing the anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary nature of this process. This participation was an activity performed outside of school hours in order to prevent any kind of pressure on participants. Once they had agreed to take part, they gave their informed consent and self-administered the questionnaire in a classroom, which took them 20–30 minutes. To minimize socioeconomic differences between the two countries, the centers of learning were in similar urban areas with comparable incomes.

Altogether one thousand and forty young people gave us their informed consent in Spain (57% of the total) and Mexico (43% of the total). However only 80.8% of them (840 participants), 59.5% of the Spaniards and 40.5% of the Mexicans, met the selected eligibility criteria: being from Mexico or Spain, ranging in age between 17 and 26 years old, and filling out the instrument completely. Therefore, the database had no missing data. Finally, in the case of Spain, 83% of young people participated (88% men and 78% women), while in the case of Mexico 78% of young people participated (83% men and 73% women).

### Measurement

The ENSI-Sexual Scale (Ballester, Gil & Giménez, 2007) explores sexual behavior, sexual orientation and sexual relationships. The Scale contains 10 items related to both previous and present experience, type of sexual practices, same-sex relationships, infidelity, being in a relationship (yes/no question), sexual frequency (Likert scale from 1 – relationships on a weekly basis – to 3 – relationships on an annual basis), sexual orientation (multiple-choice questions), number of partners (respondents are asked to indicate a number) and length of the relationship (the length of the relationship to be indicated in months).

The psychometric properties include a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.620 (internal consistency) and the correlation value of 0.840 by test-retest reliability (Ballester et al., 2007). This instrument has been included in previous studies, showing reliability for Spanish and Mexican populations (Giménez-García, Ballester-Arnal, Gil-Llario, Cárdenas-López & Duran-Baca, 2013). The internal consistency for this study was 0.68.

### Analyses

Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS-19. First, the characteristics of the participants were examined to check for possible dissimilarities. Second, Chi square and t-tests were carried out in order to examine gender differences in each country (Spain and Mexico). To calculate the effect size, we used OR or Hedges' analyses. In order to examine the potential influence of gender and country variables on sexual constructs, the logistic regression was developed for dichotomic variables, while co-variance analysis was applied to the others. For the logistic regression, dichotomic values were assigned for two independent variables, gender (0=feminine, 1=male) and country (0=Mexican, 1=Spanish), whereas the age variable was maintained.

## Results

Regarding sexual experience, Spanish men and women reveal similar percentages while Mexican men exceed Mexican women in previous sexual experience (see Table 1). In addition, more men than women have experience in sexual practices, such as masturbation, oral sex and anal sex. The most important difference is revealed in masturbation for the two groups, Spain and Mexico.

Logistic regression analysis revealed that gender influenced some sexual variables, such as: previous sexual experience ( $B=2.07$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), weekly ( $B=0.55$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ) and monthly practice ( $B=1.68$ ;  $p \leq .003$ ), masturbation ( $B=5.73$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), mutual masturbation ( $B=1.70$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), oral sex ( $B=1.98$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), anal sex ( $B=1.72$ ;  $p \leq .003$ ) and petting ( $B=2.31$ ;  $p \leq .039$ ). Similarly, country reveals an influence on sexual experience, in particular, in variables such as: previous sexual experience ( $B=7.21$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), present sexual experience ( $B=2.95$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), weekly ( $B=2.43$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), monthly ( $B=0.52$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), and annual practice ( $B=0.61$ ;  $p \leq .016$ ), masturbation ( $B=1.44$ ;  $p \leq .020$ ), mutual masturbation ( $B=2.72$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), vaginal sex ( $B=3.83$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), oral sex ( $B=1.60$ ;

$p \leq .002$ ), anal sex ( $B=0.67$ ;  $p \leq .035$ ) and petting ( $B=0.07$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ). Age had an influence on some variables such as: previous sexual experience ( $B=1.24$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), present sexual experience ( $B=1.25$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), weekly ( $B=1.23$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ) and annual practice ( $B=0.72$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), masturbation ( $B=1.10$ ;  $p \leq .020$ ), mutual masturbation ( $B=1.14$ ;  $p \leq .002$ ), vaginal sex ( $B=1.31$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ), oral sex ( $B=1.19$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ) and anal sex ( $B=1.12$ ;  $p \leq .011$ ). However, this factor usually had a lower weighting than country or gender.

Concerning sexual orientation, most of these participants identified themselves as heterosexuals followed by lower numbers of bisexuals and homosexuals. In particular, Mexican women exceed other participants for same-sex relationships. In this sense, logistic regression analysis showed an influence of gender on bisexuality ( $B=0.40$ ;  $p \leq .018$ ) and same-sex relationships ( $B=0.47$ ;  $p \leq .014$ ), as well as an influence of country on homosexuality ( $B=0.33$ ;  $p \leq .014$ ), heterosexuality ( $B=2.66$ ;  $p \leq .002$ ), bisexuality ( $B=0.24$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ) and same-sex relationships ( $B=0.38$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ). Age has not revealed any relations with sexual orientation. In addition, Mexican young people have shown significant statistical differences for self-identification and same-sex relationships, revealing gender modulation by OR ( $OR=4.66$ ;  $CI=1.86, 11.64$ ).

Insert Table 1 about here

Regarding relationships, women from both countries more frequently report being in relationships and in longer relationships than men do. Conversely, men from the two groups more frequently report being unfaithful and having a higher number of partners than women do. The last difference showed a medium value both for Spanish ( $d=0.5$ ;  $CI=0.37, 0.75$ ) and for Mexican young people ( $d=0.5$ ;  $CI=0.30, 0.73$ ). According to logistic regression, gender reveals an influence on being in a relationship ( $B=0.45$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ) and being unfaithful ( $B=1.72$ ;  $p \leq .001$ ) and, according to co-variance analyses, an association with length of relationship and number of partners (see Table 2). In

addition, nationality (being Spanish or Mexican) may modulate being unfaithful ( $B=0.23$ ;  $p\leq.001$ ) and the length of relationship according to the co-variance analysis. Age is related to being in a relationship ( $B=1.12$ ;  $p\leq.007$ ), length of relationship, and number of partners.

Insert Table 2 about here

## Discussion

In line with past studies (Giménez-García et al., 2013; Gil et al., 2010), our findings support gender differences on sexuality among Hispanic young people. In this sense, men have usually reported more experience in sexual practices. Moreover, men have revealed a higher number of partners and being more unfaithful, as previous studies have also reported (Martins et al., 2016). In agreement with Mathes, King, Miller and Red (2002), more women have reported being in a relationship and having more steady partners. In particular, differences between men's and women's infidelity is greater in Mexican young people.

Concerning sexual orientation, in line with Gil et al. (2010) and Moral (2014), more Mexican and Spanish young people identified themselves as heterosexual, followed by lower percentages as being homosexual and bisexual. However, differences between Mexican men and women are higher than between Spanish men and women. Thus, Mexican women identified themselves as bisexual and homosexual more frequently than Mexican men did. These findings are in line with more reports of homosexual fantasies and desires by Mexican women compared to Mexican men (Moral, 2010). Additionally, this situation would support past findings about the emergence of lesbian sexuality in Latin-American countries (Whitam, Daskalos, Sobolewski & Padilla, 1998).

These results suggest that gender may influence the sexuality of Hispanic young people, in particular, for young Mexicans. In this sense, the influence of patriarchal cultures may be greater on sexuality if they display a stronger sex-role ideology and gender differences (Eisenman & Dantzker, 2006; Pacheco et al., 2007).

Some limitations should be noted in these results. In this study, as well as others that use self-reported surveys, we should consider social desirability. The validation of the ENSI-Sexual Scale (Ballester et al., 2007; Giménez-García et al., 2013) took this aspect into account. Another limitation of this study is that representative sampling methods were not employed. The extent to which these findings may be generalizable to populations of Hispanic youth is unknown. Therefore, future studies need to involve representative samples of both populations.

Our findings support the idea that gender may modulate young people's sexuality, in Mexico more than in Spain. It would be interesting to study attitudes toward sexuality among other Hispanic cultures in Latin and South America.

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Table 1. Gender differences in sexual behavior, sexual orientation, same-sex and relationship in Spain and Mexico.

| Variables                            | Spain            |                  |                         |     |       | Mexico          |                  |                         |     |       |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----|-------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----|-------|
|                                      | Men (%)          | Women (%)        | Differential analyses   | df  | p     | Men (%)         | Women (%)        | Differential analyses   | df  | p     |
| Prev. sex. exp. <sup>a</sup>         | 96               | 94               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =0.87  | 1   | .350  | 82.4            | 64.3             | Chi <sup>2</sup> =13.26 | 1   | <.001 |
| Pres. sex. exp. <sup>b</sup>         | 81               | 84               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =1.06  | 1   | .303  | 64.9            | 60               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =0.83  | 1   | .360  |
| Weekly pract <sup>c</sup>            | 56               | 71               |                         |     |       | 42              | 46               |                         |     |       |
| Monthly pract <sup>d</sup>           | 27               | 16               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =12.98 | 2   | .002  | 37              | 31               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =0.80  | 2   | .669  |
| Annual pract <sup>e</sup>            | 17               | 13               |                         |     |       | 21              | 23               |                         |     |       |
| Masturbation                         | 81               | 39               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =86.33 | 1   | <.001 | 72              | 33               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =52.09 | 1   | <.001 |
| Mutual masturb. <sup>f</sup>         | 74               | 62               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =7.96  | 1   | .005  | 53              | 38               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =8.53  | 1   | .004  |
| Vaginal sex                          | 83               | 92               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =7.68  | 1   | .006  | 71              | 64               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =1.97  | 1   | .160  |
| Oral sex                             | 78               | 56               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =26.50 | 1   | <.001 | 62              | 51               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =3.81  | 1   | .051  |
| Anal sex                             | 22               | 10               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =12.83 | 1   | <.001 | 23              | 19               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =7.60  | 1   | .383  |
| <b>Petting</b>                       | 6                | 4                | Chi <sup>2</sup> =1.59  | 1   | .206  | 71              | 27               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =4.99  | 1   | .025  |
| Heterosexual                         | 94.5             | 97.3             |                         |     |       | 96              | 83               |                         |     |       |
| Homosexual                           | 3                | 0.4              | Chi <sup>2</sup> =5.18  | 2   | .075  | 1               | 2                | Chi <sup>2</sup> =11.17 | 2   | .004  |
| Bisexual                             | 2.5              | 2.3              |                         |     |       | 3               | 15               |                         |     |       |
| Same-sex                             | 5                | 4                | Chi <sup>2</sup> =0.24  | 1   | .624  | 4               | 16               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =12.53 | 1   | <.001 |
| Being in a relation                  | 49               | 72               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =27.17 | 1   | <.001 | 55              | 63               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =2.02  | 1   | .155  |
| Being unfaithful                     | 20.3             | 13.2             | Chi <sup>2</sup> =4.43  | 1   | .035  | 53              | 39               | Chi <sup>2</sup> =6.32  | 1   | .012  |
| Number of partners<br>$\bar{x}$ (SD) | 5.09<br>(6.72)   | 2.32<br>(2.53)   | t=5.99                  | 454 | <.001 | 4.59<br>(6.58)  | 2.02<br>(2.81)   | t=4.73                  | 337 | <.001 |
| Length of relation<br>$\bar{x}$ (SD) | 19.99<br>(17.39) | 22.70<br>(16.15) | t=-1.39                 | 301 | .165  | 6.40<br>(11.86) | 11.45<br>(20.32) | t=-2.47                 | 268 | .014  |

<sup>a</sup> Prev. sex. Exp: Previous sexual experience.

<sup>b</sup> Pres. sex. Exp: Present sexual experience.

<sup>c</sup> Weekly pract: frequency of sexual practice between 1 and 3 times per week.

<sup>d</sup> Monthly pract: frequency of sexual practice between 1 and 3 times per month.

<sup>e</sup> Annual pract: frequency of sexual practice of 5 or fewer times per year.

<sup>f</sup> Mutual masturb.: mutual masturbation.

Table 2. Differences of sexual behavior across gender and countries with dissimilar gender inequality index adjusted by age.

| Variable           |                 | F     | Df | p     | Partial $\eta^2$ | R <sup>2</sup> |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------|----|-------|------------------|----------------|
| Number of partners | Corrected model | 24.85 | 4  | <.001 | 1.00             | .11            |
|                    | Age             | 37.70 | 1  | <.001 | 1.00             |                |
|                    | Country         | 1.41  | 1  | .235  | .221             |                |
|                    | Gender          | 47.03 | 1  | <.001 | 1.00             |                |
|                    | Country*Gender  | .094  | 1  | .759  | .061             |                |
| Length of relation | Corrected model | 41.53 | 4  | <.001 | 1.00             | .23            |
|                    | Age             | 66.32 | 1  | <.001 | 1.00             |                |
|                    | Country         | 95.89 | 1  | <.001 | 1.00             |                |
|                    | Gender          | 15.04 | 1  | <.001 | .972             |                |
|                    | Country*Gender  | 0.027 | 1  | .870  | .053             |                |