

Domains Related to Four Single/Relationship Options among Sexual Minorities Raised  
Conservatively Religious

G. Tyler Lefevor, Ronald L. Schow, A. Lee Beckstead, Marybeth Raynes, Nathaniel T.  
Young, & Christopher H. Rosik

G. Tyler Lefevor, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology  
Rhodes College  
2000 N. Parkway  
Memphis, TN 38112  
Phone: (901) 843-3595  
Fax: (901) 843-3427  
lefevort@rhodes.edu

Ronald L. Schow, Ph.D.  
Kasiska Division of Health Sciences  
Idaho State University  
Pocatello, ID 83209  
Phone: (801) 230-8492  
ptn15@aol.com

A. Lee Beckstead, Ph.D.  
Private Practice  
1433 South 1100 East  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84105  
Phone: (801) 556-8110  
Fax: (888) 203- 8291  
leebeckst@yahoo.com

Marybeth Raynes, LCSW, LMFT  
Private Practice  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
801-531-7389  
Marybethraynes@gmail.com

Nathaniel T. Young, B.S.  
School of Public and Environmental Affairs  
Indiana University  
801-380-8405  
Nate.t.young@gmail.com

Christopher H. Rosik, Ph.D  
Link Care Center & Fresno Pacific  
University  
1734 W. Shaw Ave.  
Fresno, CA 93711  
Phone: (559) 439-2647 (x142)  
Fax: (559) 439-4712  
christopherrosik@linkcare.org

### Abstract

Sexual minorities raised conservatively religious often make relationship decisions in a context of conflicting needs and expectations. We examined group differences in a sample of 452 sexual minorities who were equally satisfied in one of four single/relationship options to promote self-determination and to understand how each group might differ from the others. Single and celibate individuals more often reported homonegative beliefs, religiousness, sex-negativity, and conservative values. Single but not celibate individuals more often reported a stronger sex drive, sex-positivity, homo-positive beliefs, non-religiousness, and liberal values. Those in mixed orientation relationships more often reported a bisexual orientation, homonegative beliefs, children being important, fears of disappointing family, religiousness, and conservative values. Those in same-sex relationships more often reported strong same-sex orientation, sex-positivity, homo-positive beliefs, non-religiousness, and liberal values. These findings indicate characteristics of individuals satisfied in each option that may provide a needed reference group for therapists to help clients explore self-determination in making life decisions.

*Keywords:* mixed orientation relationship, celibacy, LGBTQ, sexuality, religion, internalized heterosexism

*Public significance statement:* This study found that sexual minorities who are satisfied being single and celibate, single but not celibate, in mixed orientation relationships, and in same-sex relationships differ consistently in their sexuality, homo-positivity/negativity, religiousness, moral values, and importance placed on family. These findings provide a tentative understanding of the characteristics that may differentiate a sexual minority satisfied in one single/relationship option from another, which may help guide therapists who are tasked with helping clients navigate tension between sexuality and faith.

## Domains Related to Four Single/Relationship Option among Sexual Minorities Raised Conservatively Religious

Sexual minorities with a conservative religious background—which likely implies a conservative sexual ethic—often experience intense intrapsychic conflict in their attempts to navigate what they perceive to be competing identities (Crowell et al., 2015; Dahl & Galliher 2009; Dehlin et al., 2015), leading many to seek therapy (Lefevor et al., 2018). We define sexual minorities to include individuals who experience some degree of same-sex sexual attractions and identify with a range of labels—including lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB), same-sex attracted (SSA), and heterosexual (e.g., Carrillo & Hoffman, 2017)—or who use no label at all. Therapists who work with sexual minorities are tasked to juggle helping clients promote healthy attitudes toward same-sex sexuality (O’Shaughnessy, 2018; Rosik & Popper, 2014) as they discourage ineffective or harmful practices (American Psychological Association [APA], 2009; Bradshaw et al., 2015), respect diversity (APA, 2017) and preserve client self-determination.

When working with sexual minority clients with a conservative religious background, therapists must often help their clients navigate intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural conflicts between their religious and sexual identities to facilitate authenticity and well-being (Lefevor, Sorrell, et al., 2019). As sexual minorities from conservative religious backgrounds may have distinct experiences and values from others, therapists need to be attuned to the unique challenges, harms, and resilience experienced by these clients (Beckstead & Morrow, 2004; Dehlin et al., 2014). Because clients—in their search for a satisfying single/relationship option—may ask therapists to help them understand which particular single/relationship option may be right for them, it is important that therapists understand the characteristics of those who report being satisfied in common single/relationship options. Better understanding these nuances

between options may help therapists not unwittingly perpetuate harms by advising sexual minorities to seek out single/relationship options that they have not made an informed decision to pursue (APA, 2009).

To this end, we present data examining a sample of 452 sexual minorities who report satisfaction in one of four common single/relationship options and a framework of domains to consider when examining differences between these individuals. In the spirit of promoting client self-determination and avoiding harm, we ask, “Which domains reliably differentiate individuals satisfied in one single/relationship option from those satisfied in another?”

### **Four Common Single/Relationship Options**

Many conservative religious denominations have explicitly prohibited same-sex sexual relationships (Herman, 2007). Although sexual minorities raised in conservative religions often leave their birth religion or congregation for one that affirms same-sex relationships (Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000) or leave religion altogether (Lefevor et al., 2018), some continue to engage with their faith (Kissil & Itzhaky, 2015). Those who remain engaged with conservative religions report a variety of reasons for doing so, including maintaining family relationships or community membership, ideological commitment, belief in the veracity of the religion’s teachings, and the positive benefits of religious participation (Barnes & Meyer, 2012).

Maintaining close ties to conservative faith may lead sexual minorities to describe their sexuality and pursue relationships differently than those who are not religiously affiliated (Lefevor, Sorrell et al., 2019). There appear to be four common ways that sexual minorities raised in conservative religions pursue relationships: being single and celibate (SC), being single and not celibate (SNC), being in a mixed orientation relationship (MOR), and being in a same-sex relationship (SSR). We define celibacy to be a *commitment* to abstain from having sex with

others (regardless of actual sexual behavior; Sipe, 2008). We define mixed-orientation relationship (MOR) following Kays et al. (2014) as “a heterosexual couple in which one partner experiences same-sex attraction and the other does not” (p. 512). A same-sex relationship (SSR) indicates a same-sex couple in which both partners experience same-sex sexual attractions. As such, we understand both MORs and SSRs to be romantic relationships and not only friendships between individuals. Thus far, researchers have largely asked *which* of the four options is most conducive to positive mental health and flourishing. Two large-scale studies have found that people who are in a same-sex romantic relationship tend to report the most positive mental health and flourishing of the four options, while those who are single (regardless of whether they are celibate) report the least positive mental health and flourishing (Dehlin et al., 2014; Lefevor, Beckstead et al., 2019).

In a sample of 1,782 participants, somewhere between 40% and 80% of people in single/relationship options other than a same-sex relationship reported satisfaction with their option (i.e., SC, SNC, MOR), while somewhere between 28% and 36% of people in these single/relationship options reported depression scores at or lower than the average person in a same-sex relationship (Lefevor, Beckstead et al., 2019). Very little work has examined the characteristics of this substantial group of individuals who are satisfied being single or in a mixed orientation relationship. Further, although framework has been developed for identifying important domains in making heterosexual relationship decisions (e.g., Hawkins et al., 2008; [www.relateinstitute.com](http://www.relateinstitute.com)), we are unaware of any extension of this work to sexual minorities or proposed domains on which to compare those in various options (e.g., religiousness, sexual attraction). Given that therapists are tasked to promote client self-determination while not doing harm (APA, 2017) and that many clients may be questioning and/or dissatisfied with their

single/relationship option, therapists must have a nuanced understanding of the characteristics of those who are satisfied in a variety of single/relationship options.

### **Domains to Consider**

The majority of research studying how sexual minorities with conservative religious backgrounds make relationship decisions reduces this process to two theoretically “competing” domains: sexuality and religion. Rodriguez and Oullette (2000), and those who have used their framework (e.g., Dehlin et al., 2015; Pitt, 2009), suggested that individuals use various identity-management strategies that prioritize religious identity, sexual identity, both, or neither to make relationship decisions. Other researchers have used cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) to focus on the dissonance individuals experience when engaging in same-sex sexual behaviors or participating in religious settings (Lefevor, Blaber et al., 2019; Mahaffy, 1996). These researchers also focus their inquiry primarily in the domains of sexuality and religion to understand the dissonance experienced by individuals that may relate to relationship decisions.

Although individuals’ sense of religious and sexual identity is clearly important to understand how they make relationship decisions, they are not the only domains that sexual minorities consider, nor are they unidimensional. Despite the lack of nuance in the literature surrounding relationship decision making among sexual minorities, both sexuality (Lefevor, Park et al., in press) and religiousness (Hill & Edwards, 2013) are commonly understood to be multifaceted constructs in the religion and sexuality literatures. We extend Rodriguez and Oullette’s (2000) thinking by integrating research that discusses the multidimensionality of sexuality and religiousness as well as research that suggests two additional domains that may play an important role in how individuals make relationship decisions: homo-positivity/negativity and the importance of family.

**Sexuality.** A person's sexual orientation may be understood as the degree and direction of their sexual attractions (APA, 2009), which can influence the person's behaviors, identity and other sexuality aspects, including desire, fantasies, emotional preferences, romantic preferences, social preferences, and expectations of sexual fluidity (Klein, 1993). How sexual minorities from conservative religious backgrounds experience each of these facets—and not only sexual identity—may affect their choice of single/relationship option. Indeed, the degree to which individuals experience sexual attraction to women and men may affect their likelihood of being satisfied in a same-sex or mixed orientation relationship (Legerski & Harker, 2017). Preference for male or female partners may be governed not only by individuals' sexual attraction but also by the presence or lack of sexual aversion (Beckstead, 2012; Dehlin et al., 2019). Further, the degree to which sexual minorities expect their sexual attraction to shift—which may be maintained by underlying views of same-sex attraction as environmental rather than biological (Dehlin et al., 2014)—may influence decisions about the viability of pursuing a mixed orientation relationship. Further, the degree to which sexual minorities experience sexual desire and the importance they ascribe to that desire may vary across individuals (Lippa, 2009) and may be particularly important to consider for sexual minorities vowing celibacy (Freeman-Coppadge & Horne, 2019).

**Religiousness.** Like sexuality, religiousness is a multifaceted construct that includes religious belief, behavior, and worldview (Hill & Edwards, 2013). Though understanding religion in terms of religious identity or affiliation may be helpful (e.g., Pitt, 2009), a more nuanced examination may better describe the aspects of religiousness that are important for sexual minorities from conservative religion in making relationship decisions. Engagement with religious communities (Lefevor, Blaber et al., 2019) and affiliation (Dehlin et al., 2014) have

been linked with differences in single/relationship option among sexual minorities with those who are single and not celibate or in same-sex relationships reporting less religiousness. Other aspects such as intrinsic religiousness (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989) and orthodoxy (Dehlin et al., 2015) may also reliably differentiate among single/relationship options, particularly given that both celibacy and mixed orientation relationships are often undertaken based on religious principles.

In addition to nuancing the study of religiousness by examining multiple facets of religiousness, it may also be important to examine the influence of conservative moral values on single/relationship option decisions. Research in moral psychology has found that politically conservative and liberal individuals make moral decisions by relying more or less strongly on a set of five moral foundations (Haidt, 2012). Where liberal individuals assess morality primarily on issues related to harm/care and fairness/reciprocity, conservative individuals base their assessments on issues related to ingroup/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity in addition to harm/care and fairness/reciprocity (Haidt & Graham, 2007). Further, conservatively religious people tend to favor values promoting social order such as authority, tradition, conformity, and to dislike values promoting self-enhancement such as hedonism, achievement, and power (Rosik et al., 2013; Saroglou et al., 2003). Because many consider making decisions about single/relationship options to be morally relevant, it is likely that individuals who are satisfied in more conservative relationship options (SC, MOR) have a characteristically different profile of moral values than those satisfied in more liberal relationship options (SNC, SSR).

**Homo-positivity/negativity.** Though not included in Rodriguez and Oullette's (2000) framework, individuals' beliefs and perceptions about their same-sex attractions may impact both their mental health and the types of relationships they pursue (i.e., homo-

positivity/negativity; Newcomb & Mustanski, 2010). Although some sexual minorities' homonegative beliefs can represent principled religious convictions rather than shame or self-loathing (e.g., Hallman et al., 2018), structural or external homonegativity may keep other sexual minorities from embracing a sexual minority identity and pursuing same-sex relationships (Hatzenbuehler, 2009). Sexual minorities with an insecure, anxious attachment to their parents are more likely to fear judgment based on their orientation and less likely to identify with or interact with others in the LGB community (Mohr & Fassinger, 2003), which may hinder them from developing a same-sex relationship. As the result of exposure to structural homonegativity, many sexual minorities internalize negative beliefs about same-sex sexuality (Meyer, 2003). The extent to which an individual has internalized positive or negative beliefs about their same-sex sexuality may affect their desire to engage in same-sex sexual encounters and relationships (Mohr & Fassinger, 2003). Prior research has found that individuals in mixed orientation relationships or who are celibate have more internalized negative beliefs about same-sex attractions than those in other single/relationship options (Lefevor, Beckstead et al., 2019).

**Family.** Family bonds and expectations within conservative religions can be strong and frequently value heteronormative conceptions of family (i.e., husband, wife, and children). The expectations placed on an individual by their family of origin and by their cultural norms, including the individual's desire for a heteronormative family, may lead some sexual minorities to enter mixed orientation relationships (Legerski & Harker, 2017). Other sexual minorities may reject heteronormative conceptions of family in favor of same-sex relationships, stronger networks of friends who are thought of as a "family of creation", or both (Riggle et al., 2010). Regardless of whether sexual minorities reject these conceptions, an individual's desire for a child-centered family life may also guide their choice of single/relationship option.

## **The Present Study**

Although the domains of sexuality and religion appear to be important domains used by sexual minorities in making relationship decisions (Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000), they do not appear to be comprehensive. We suggest that sexual minorities from conservative religions use at least four core domains to make relationship decisions that can be organized in the acronym SHRF: sexuality, homo-positivity/negativity, religiousness, and family. At present, we are unaware of any work that has examined the differences between sexual minorities across the four common single/relationship options on any of these four domains. Further, it is important that such an investigation be conducted among individuals who are equally satisfied with their option so that differences may be understood as the systematic differences between individuals who are satisfied with their life path rather than as indicators of dysfunctional life choices. Sexual minorities making relationship decisions may consequently employ the results to understand how well they compare to those who are satisfied in a given option along each of the four domains. Further, as therapists aim to promote client self-determination while not doing harm to clients (APA, 2017), therapists may also benefit from a stronger understanding of the characteristics of those who report being satisfied in each option.

Because of the lack of literature examining individuals who are satisfied in each of the four options, we developed a broad research question with one rather general hypothesis. Our research question was, “How do individuals who are single and celibate (SC), single and not celibate (SNC), in mixed orientation relationships (MOR), and in same-sex relationships (SSR) differ in four key domains: sexuality, homo-positivity/negativity, religiousness, and importance of family.” We hypothesized that significant differences would emerge between groups, such

that people who were satisfied in one option were likely characteristically different than those satisfied in another.

### **Method**

Because there has yet to be an investigation of *any* set of domains that might differentiate individuals who choose one of the four options over another, the aims of our current study were theory generating rather than theory confirming. Our literature review indicated at least 4 domains that may be important to examine in the context of relationship decision making; however, each of those domains may be comprised of several subdomains. As such, we tended toward overinclusion, testing a variety of items (34 total) and subdomains (10 total) to see how well they discriminated between the four options. Furthermore, our literature review indicated several subdomains (e.g., moral values) and items (e.g., the importance of heteronormative family) for which validated scales do not exist. Consequently, where possible, we used validated scales to assess relevant domains and created new scales, typically adapted from the literature that suggested these domains may be important, for constructs that lack validated scales.

### **Survey Design**

A diverse research team was created with respect to political ideology, single/relationship status, sexual identity, religiousness, and gender. Initial versions of the survey were based on Beckstead's grounded theory (2001) and the research team's collective experience working with gender and sexual minorities from conservative religious backgrounds. To ensure comprehensiveness and coverage, 30 diverse scholars provided feedback on early versions of the survey and two pilot studies were conducted ( $N = 81$ ,  $N = 366$ ), both of which assessed the extent to which participants felt that the survey represented their experiences accurately. The final version of the survey consisted of 97 questions. Detailed information about the research

team and development of the survey can be found in Lefevor, Beckstead et al. (2019). In total, 84% of the participants in our final sample reported that their viewpoints and direction in life were well represented in the survey.

### **Procedure**

Approval was obtained from Idaho State University Institutional Review Board prior to commencing the study. Participants also provided informed consent after reading a description of the risks and benefits of participation prior to participation. Participants were gathered over a 10-month period (September 2016 – June 2017) through announcements in a variety of forums including news outlets, affinity groups, community centers, and local mental health providers as well as through snowball sampling. To ensure we obtained a sample in a variety of single/relationship options, we deliberately oversampled in affinity groups comprised of individuals from conservative social environments. All announcements included direction to complete the survey through a website designed for the study, directing participants to the Survey Monkey platform. A more complete description of the various places sampled can be found in Lefevor, Beckstead et al. (2019). In total, 18.9% of participants reported hearing about the study from a news media outlet, 14.2% heard about the study from a mental health provider, 46.9% from an affinity organization or website, and 30.0% from a friend or family member.

### **Participants**

To be considered in analyses, participants must have (a) been at least 18 years of age; (b) experienced same-sex attractions at some point in life; (c) identified their single/relationship option as SC, SNC, MOR, or SSR; and (d) completed the survey. A total of 1782 participants met these criteria. Previous work using this dataset examined differences in single/relationship option satisfaction between single/relationship options (Lefevor, Beckstead et al., 2019) and

found satisfaction to be highest in SSRs, followed by MORs, and then the two single groups. Because we were interested in comparing those who were satisfied in their single/relationship option rather than asking if there were differences in satisfaction, we selected only a “satisfied sample” for analysis from these 1782, matching participants on satisfaction between the various single/relationship options. Doing so yielded a final sample of 452 participants with 113 in each single/relationship option. Within each option, 21 reported being *slightly satisfied*, 71 being *satisfied*, and 21 being *very satisfied* in their single/relationship option. Participant demographics mirrored the larger sample (see Lefevor, Beckstead et al., 2019) and are reported in *Table 1*. Overall, our sample was largely male (68.4%), White (90.0%), US-based (90.3%), urban/suburban (79.4%), religiously affiliated (78.8%) and educated (69.5% bachelor’s degree or higher) and were on average 39.22 ( $SD = 14.76$ ) years old.

### **Measures**

Given that this was the first investigation of its kind, we did not strive for a comprehensive coverage of the four domains. Rather, guided by previous literature, we selected items that represented constructs believed to differentiate individuals in each of the four single/relationship options. This approach allowed us to tap a variety of aspects of each of our four domains. However, it also limits the generalizability of our findings (as many of the items were single-items that were created for this study). Given questions of reliability and validity, we focus our understanding of our results on the meaning of specific items rather than the larger constructs they may represent. Although we have created subdomains, we emphasize that these are merely to group items and do not represent the coverage of that domain. Additionally, given that our sample had diverse ways of experiencing their sexuality (e.g., SSA vs. LGB), we created

or adapted questions to best match our population (see *Table A.1* in Appendix A for a full description of which items were created for the present survey and the work they were based on).

**Sexuality.** Participants were asked to think of the type of men and women they are aesthetically attracted and/or emotionally attracted and rate the degree of sexual attraction and aversion to those men and women. Degrees of sexual attraction and aversion were measured separately on a Likert scale from 1 (None, around 0%) to 7 (Very strong, around 100%). Overall sexual behaviors, attractions, and fantasies were measured using Kinsey et al. (1948) Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale on a 7-point scale from *exclusively heterosexual* to *exclusively homosexual* with two additional non-scored options of *asexual* and *you don't have an option that applies to me*. Participants were grouped on whether they reported an LGBQ (coded as 1) or another (e.g., heterosexual, same-sex attracted, ex-gay; coded as 0) identity.

Following Dehlin et al. (2015), we assessed beliefs about the etiology of same-sex attraction and fluidity through three questions, on a 7-point Likert scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*: “Experiencing same-sex attraction is biological in origin and not subject to change,” “Experiencing same-sex attraction is primarily environmental in origin, developed through childhood experiences with parents, peers, or other early relationships,” and “I believe I will experience in the future shifts/fluidity in my sexual attractions.”

We assessed four different beliefs related to eroticism through responses to four questions, each reported on a 7-point Likert scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Participants reported their feelings of (a) neutrality toward eroticism, “I feel neutral about sexual intimacy. I can take it or leave it,” (b) the acceptability of masturbation, “I feel it’s okay for me to masturbate,” (c) their sex drive, “When I think of a very attractive person, I easily become

sexually aroused” (Lippa, 2009), and (d) their disgust around sexuality, “I think sex, whether with a man or woman, is mostly dirty, scary, and/or disgusting.”

**Homo-positivity/negativity.** We assessed the degree to which individuals internalized attitudes about their sexuality through a scale and two items. First, we used the three-item internalized homonegativity subscale from the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale (Mohr & Kendra, 2011). The authors report a test-retest reliability of .92 for this subscale with the Cronbach’s alpha for the present study being .89. We also included the following questions, assessed on a 7-point Likert scale: “It is wrong for a person to have sex with someone of her or his same sex, regardless of the level of commitment” and “I experience self-acceptance about my same-sex attractions.”

We included two items related to experiences individuals had with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender (LGBT) community. These items do not represent internalized homo-positivity/negativity, rather they are grouped together because they reflect the way in which others treat individuals based on their sexuality. These items were assessed on a 7-point scale from *Never (around 0% of the time)* to *Always (around 100% of the time)*: “I feel valued and supported for experiencing SSA/being LGBT+” and “The out/open-LGBT community has felt like a supportive community for me.”

**Religiousness.** Religiousness is a multidimensional construct that includes religious behaviors, beliefs, and traits (Hill & Edwards, 2013). We included three variables that were related to religion: conservativeness, frequency of service attendance, and intrinsic religiosity. Participants reported their current church/religious activity on a 5-point scale from *stopped attending to engage in my religion’s activities/attend at my place of worship more than once a week*. They also reported the conservativeness of their current religious viewpoint, with groups

being theologically conservative (coded as 1) or not (0). Participants reported intrinsic religiosity through response to the statement adapted from Gorsuch and McPherson (1989): “My whole approach to life is based on my religion/spirituality,” on a 7-point Likert scale.

Participants reported how much importance they placed on eight values on a 7-point scale from *none* to *very strong*. Haidt (2002) has demonstrated six of these values to hold roughly equal salience for conservative religious individuals: authority, fairness, kindness, liberty, loyalty, and sanctity (see also Saroglou et al., 2003). We also assessed two additional values that may differentiate those who are celibate from others: long-suffering and pleasure (Sipe, 2008).

**Family.** Five variables were assessed that related to the importance participants placed on the heteronormative family. Participants indicated the importance they placed on having children and a child-centered family life on a 4-point Likert scale from *not important to me* to *very important to me* as well as the degree to which they desired a committed partnership with men or women in which “to bond emotionally and share the ups and downs of life” on a 7-point Likert scale from *strongly don't want it* to *strongly want it*. Participants also indicated how appropriate they saw children being raised by same-sex parents on a 5-point Likert scale from *completely inappropriate* to *completely appropriate* and indicated their agreement with the statement, “I am afraid of disappointing my family for experiencing SSA/being LGBT+,” on a 7-point Likert scale from *never (around 0% of the time)* to *always (around 100%)*.

### **Analysis Plan**

We conducted analyses in a two-step fashion to best answer our research questions. We used ANOVA to examine the main effects of single/relationship option on each of the indicator variables presented above. Although these variables are grouped in the four domains, we emphasize that this grouping was done after the survey was created, and thus the list of variables

in a particular domain should not be interpreted to be a comprehensive coverage of the domain. When significant main effects were present, we calculated Cohen's *d* between single/relationship options to understand the magnitude and direction of differences. When calculating Cohen's *d*, we report either comparisons using composite means combining conservative (SC, MOR) and liberal (SNC, SSR) options or the range of values obtained from multiple comparisons found by comparing a single option (e.g., SC) with all other options (e.g., SNC, MOR, SSR) depending on whether group means were separate or clustered. We adopted a conservative significance value of  $p < .01$  to reduce the risk of a type-I error. Missing data was handled by listwise deletion from analyses involving the variable of interest as less than .1% of cells had missing values.

### Results

We first tested the relationship between demographic variables and single/relationship option to determine if there were covariates we needed to control for. We found that education,  $\chi^2(12) = 18.97, p = .089$ , gender,  $\chi^2(9) = 5.27, p = .810$ , ethnicity,  $\chi^2(24) = 22.60, p = .543$ , and the degree to which participants felt they had resolved conflict between their sexuality and religion,  $F(3, 448) = 1.24, p = .294$ , did not differ by single/relationship option. Although not significant at the  $p < .01$  level, we found that state/country of residence,  $\chi^2(15) = 29.19, p = .015$ , urbanicity,  $\chi^2(9) = 20.10, p = .017$ , age,  $F(3, 448) = 3.06, p = .028$ , may relate to single/relationship option. To address the potential for covariation, we conducted analyses of covariance using these variables as covariates and compared them to analyses without covariates. Both  $F$  and  $\eta^2$  values were largely unchanged between analyses. Because all of these potential covariates technically did not meet standards for significance as determined for this analysis ( $p < .01$ ), unmoderated analyses are presented here.  $F$  and  $\eta^2$  values for ANCOVAs can be found in online supplemental material.

## Sexuality

Analyses of the relationships between our single/relationship options and the 34 variables examined indicated that of the 34 variables examined, 21 evidenced medium or larger effect sizes (Cohen, 1988). *Table 2* displays group means, standard deviations, the results of hypothesis tests, and measures of effect size. These trends are displayed graphically in *Figure 1*.

Analyses for variables related to sexual orientation and identity (same-sex attraction, same-sex aversion, other-sex attraction, other-sex aversion, Kinsey score, and LGBTQ identity) indicated that single/relationship option significantly predicted each variable ( $p < .001$ ). The SC group reported more same-sex aversion ( $d = 0.30$  to  $0.70$ ) and less same-sex attraction ( $d = 0.23$  to  $0.82$ ) than any other group. We found that the MOR group evidenced more other-sex attraction ( $d = 0.25$  to  $0.69$ ), less other sex aversion than any other group ( $d = 0.24$  to  $0.50$ ), and a lower Kinsey position ( $d = 0.40$  to  $1.09$ ). The SNC and SSR groups reported more same-sex attraction ( $d = 0.59$ ), more other-sex aversion ( $d = 0.35$ ), less other-sex attraction, ( $d = 0.36$ ), less same-sex aversion ( $d = 0.46$ ), a higher Kinsey position ( $d = 0.66$ ), and more frequent LGBTQ identification ( $d = 1.34$ ) than the SC and MOR groups.

Single/relationship option also significantly predicted ( $p < .001$ ) all three variables clustered as beliefs about the origin and fluidity of same-sex attractions: seeing a biological basis for same-sex attractions, seeing an environmental basis for same-sex attractions, and expectations of sexual fluidity. The SC and MOR groups reported greater expectations for changes in their sexual attractions ( $d = 0.52$ ) and stronger beliefs that same-sex attraction is environmental ( $d = 0.74$ ) but weaker beliefs that same-sex attraction is biological in origin ( $d = 0.88$ ) than the SNC and SSR groups.

Variables assessing beliefs related to eroticism were also significantly related to single/relationship option: the importance of eroticism, the acceptability of masturbation, sex drive, and sexual disgust ( $p < .001$ ). The SC group reported feeling that eroticism was less important ( $d = 0.50$  to  $0.63$ ), being less likely to see masturbation as acceptable ( $d = 0.55$  to  $1.83$ ), experiencing less sexual drive ( $d = 0.25$  to  $0.49$ ), and seeing sex as disgusting ( $d = 0.57$  to  $0.85$ ) than was reported in any other group. The SNC and SSR groups reported seeing masturbation as more acceptable ( $d = 1.31$ ) more than the SC or MOR groups.

### **Homo-positivity/negativity**

Analyses for variables related to internalized homonegativity (internalized homonegativity, experiencing self-acceptance about same-sex attractions, and seeing same-sex sexuality as wrong) indicated that single/relationship option significantly predicted each variable ( $p < .001$ ). The SC and MOR groups had more internalized homonegativity ( $d = 0.79$ ), saw same-sex sexuality as more wrong ( $d = 1.69$ ), and experienced less acceptance about their same-sex attractions or LGBQ identity ( $d = 0.41$ ) than the SNC and SSR groups with the SC group seeing same-sex sexuality as more wrong ( $d = 0.53$  to  $2.34$ ) than any other group.

Both of the variables associated with experiences around sexual identity were related to single/relationship option: finding the LGBT community supportive and feeling valued as a sexual minority. The SSR and SNC groups reported feeling more valued for being LGBT+/SSA ( $d = 0.43$ ) and more like the LGBT community was supportive ( $d = 1.09$ ) than the MOR and SC groups.

### **Religious and Moral Values**

Variables related to religion were all significantly related to single/relationship option: religious belief, religious practice, and intrinsic religiosity ( $p < .001$ ). The SC and MOR groups

reported more orthodox approaches to religion ( $d = 1.36$ ), much more frequent religious activity ( $d = 1.61$ ), and more intrinsic religiosity ( $d = 0.89$ ) than the SNC and SSR groups. Furthermore, the SC group was the most orthodox ( $d = 0.36$  to  $1.25$ ) and most intrinsically religious ( $d = 0.57$  to  $1.27$ ).

Several of the variables associated with moral values were related to single/relationship option including authority, long-suffering, loyalty, pleasure, liberty, and sanctity ( $p < .001$ ). Fairness,  $F(3, 448) = 3.74$ ,  $p = .014$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$ , and kindness,  $F(3, 448) = 2.27$ ,  $p = .095$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .02$ , were equally valued across single/relationship option. The SNC and SSR groups placed similar amounts of importance on authority, long-suffering, loyalty, pleasure, liberty, and sanctity. The SC and MOR groups valued sanctity ( $d = 0.98$ ), long-suffering ( $d = 0.72$ ), and authority ( $d = 0.74$ ) much more and pleasure ( $d = 0.39$ ) much less than the SNC and SSR groups. Furthermore, the SC group valued sanctity ( $d = 0.68$  to  $1.45$ ), loyalty ( $d = 0.33$  to  $0.52$ ), long-suffering ( $d = 0.40$  to  $0.94$ ), and authority ( $d = 0.34$  to  $1.02$ ) much more and liberty ( $d = 0.24$  to  $0.42$ ) much less than any other group.

### **Family**

Variables associated with the importance of a heteronormative family (the importance participants placed on having children, the appropriateness of children for an SSR, fear of disappointing family, and the desire for same- or other-sex companionship) were significantly related to single/relationship option ( $p < .001$ ). The MOR group valued children and a child-centered life ( $d = 0.88$  to  $1.08$ ) and reported more fears of disappointing family ( $d = 0.27$  to  $0.44$ ) than any other group. The SC group desired other-sex companionship more than any other group ( $d = 0.29$  to  $0.45$ ). The MOR and SC groups saw children to be less fit for SSRs ( $d = 1.17$ ) than did the SSR and SNC groups. Groups did not differ in their desire for same-sex companionship.

To facilitate the understanding of our large number of analyses, we constructed *Table 3*. This table reports group differences by single/relationship option for the 21 dependent variables that evidenced a medium or larger effect size (Cohen, 1988). We categorized each group (SC, SNC, MOR, SSR) as low, medium, or high on a variable based on whether the mean for that group fell in the bottom, middle, or top third of potential answers on a variable. For example, for items measured on a seven-point Likert scale, responses potentially ranged from 1-7 (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Means from 1-3 (strongly disagree to slightly disagree) would be considered “low,” means from 3-5 (slightly disagree to slightly agree) would be considered “medium,” and means from 5-7 (slightly agree to strongly agree) would be considered “high.”

### **Discussion**

We found consistent differences in several domains between participants satisfied in four common single/relationship options with an average of a medium-to-large effect size (average  $\eta^2 = .11$ ; Cohen, 1988). These differences can be grouped in four domains: sexuality, homo-positivity/negativity, religiousness, and family. Because previous research has examined sexuality and religion unidimensionally as the primary contributors to relationship decision making (Pitt, 2009; Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000), we extend current thinking by discussing how individuals in each of the four single/relationship options vary across dimensions of the two “primary” domains, as well as the way individuals vary across two additional domains proposed: homo-positivity/negativity and family. In our discussion, we focus primarily on the characteristics of individuals in each of the four options as our primary goal is to provide a framework for therapists to use when thinking about sexual minorities from conservative religious backgrounds and to become more familiar with these characteristics of individuals satisfied in a variety of single/relationship options.

### **Single and Celibate**

Psychological, spiritual, and social benefits and harms to celibacy vary based on the motivations and characteristics of the individual involved (Freeman-Coppadge & Horne, 2019). In the present study, we found that participants who were satisfied being celibate evidenced less sexual attraction to any gender, less interest in sex, and more sexual aversion to same-sex others than any other group. Though it is difficult to discern whether these feelings preceded or resulted from celibacy, one interpretation of our findings is that diminished eroticism may facilitate satisfaction with celibacy (Creek, 2013).

Celibate participants reported more homonegativity than other groups, which may represent their convictions about the moral impermissibility of same-sex sexual behavior. Internalized homonegativity may also reinforce celibacy given that internalized homonegativity is associated with discomfort around same-sex attractions, which would be necessary to build same-sex relationships (Newcomb & Mustanski, 2000). As some people are able to achieve celibacy for some time but most are unable to maintain lifelong celibacy (Sipe, 2003), external homonegativity and strong same-sex sexual aversion may help sustain celibacy by keeping celibate individuals isolated from potential same-sex sexual partners. Celibate individuals also expressed the strongest beliefs that same-sex attraction was environmental in origin and expectations for future fluidity, which may also reflect their hope that celibacy will be a temporary condition for them (Sipe, 2003).

Celibate sexual minorities were the most religious and morally conservative of all participant groups in our study, evidencing a conservative pattern of moral values (e.g., increased importance for sanctity and authority coupled with an equal preference for kindness and fairness relative to others; Haidt & Graham, 2007). That single and celibate individuals tended to be more

religious and conservative than those in MORs may be indicative of the need to have strong internal motivation to pursue celibacy (Sipe, 2008) and concurs with research finding that celibacy is most often religiously motivated (Griffin, 2018; Sipe, 2008).

### **Single, not Celibate**

Individuals may be single and not celibate for a variety of reasons including seeking sexual experiences but not a committed relationship, pursuing but not finding a relationship, and compartmentalizing religious and sexual identities in a way that precludes relationships (Coyle & Rafalin, 2001). Although individuals who are SNC could engage in same-sex and mixed orientation sexual relationships, our sample of SNC individuals was comprised mostly of same-sex oriented individuals. SNC participants reported predominant same-sex attraction and were often LGBTQ-identified. Overall, SNC individuals did not expect fluidity of their attractions and reported the strongest sex drive of any group. Given that sexual activity is a distinguishing factor in being SNC, it is unsurprising that they experienced more sexual desire than any other group.

SNC participants reported generally homopositive views, including finding comfort and value within the LGBT community. Given that SNC individuals are open to sexual or romantic interactions, by definition, engagement with the LGBT community may provide both a source of social support and potential partners. Having more homo-positive views may also facilitate sexual and romantic relationships, which may relate to satisfaction with one's option as SNC, particularly as SNC individuals reported similar desires for partnership to others in the sample.

Unlike celibate participants, SNC participants were unlikely to be religious and evidenced a liberal pattern of moral values (e.g., placing a higher relative value on kindness and fairness and less on authority, loyalty, or sanctity; Haidt & Graham, 2007). Given that all SNC

individuals in our sample had a religiously conservative background, it is likely that many participants shifted their religiousness and moral values since childhood.

### **Mixed Orientation Relationships**

Individuals report a variety of reasons for entering in MORs including attempts to change sexual orientation, religious observance, conformity to family pressure, and a desire for children (Higgins, 2002; Legerski et al., 2017) as well as a variety of ways of navigating disclosure of same-sex or bisexual orientation (Buxton, 2001; Swan & Benack, 2012). In the present study, we found that relative to other groups, those satisfied in MORs reported more bisexual sexual orientation (i.e., more other-sex attraction, less other-sex aversion, and less same-sex attraction) and had expectations for future fluidity in their sexual orientation. Experiencing more other-sex attraction and less other-sex aversion may be particularly important for those in MORs, particularly as they report experiencing erotic desires similar to other groups but do not see masturbation as acceptable. Though it has been noted that sexual minority partners in MORs who endure frequently show bisexual patterns of attraction (Buxton, 2001), it is underemphasized in the larger social narrative around MORs and reinforces bisexual erasure and invisibility (Ghabrial & Ross, 2018).

Similar to those who are celibate, sexual minority partners in MORs evidenced more homonegative views and reporting feeling more distanced from the LGBT community. Homonegative views may help distance sexual minorities in MORs from the possibility of same-sex relationships (Newcomb & Mustanski, 2000), which may reinforce their relationship choice.

Where all other groups reported equal priority on children and a child-centered family, those in MORs placed much more importance on this life goal. Individuals in MORs particularly reported fears about disappointing their families for being a sexual minority, likely because some

research has found that those in MORs may have children (Lefevor, Beckstead et al., 2019) and fear disrupting their family structure. For many sexual minorities from conservative religions, being in an MOR is the most direct and socially sanctioned route to having children (Higgins, 2002; Legerski et al., 2017).

Those satisfied in MORs also reported being largely religious and morally conservative. Since many people enter MORs because of firmly held religious convictions (Hernandez et al., 2011; Legerski et al., 2017), engaging more strongly with their faith community may center them in their reasons for being in an MOR, leading to satisfaction with being in an MOR. Further, holding morally conservative values such as sanctity and authority while placing less value on pleasure may lead individuals raised in conservative faiths to decide to enter an MOR instead of an SSR.

### **Same-Sex Relationships**

A substantial number of sexual minorities from religious backgrounds seek committed same-sex relationships with just over 10% of LGBT adults in the U.S. being married to a same-sex spouse and another 6.6% living with a same-sex partner (Gallup, 2017). In the present study, we found that those satisfied in SSRs were the most same-sex oriented of all the groups, evidencing the least other-sex attraction, most other-sex aversion, and highest Kinsey scores. They also evidenced relatively little expectation for fluidity and held erotic desire to be important. Given this profile, engaging in an SSR may be ego-syntonic and satisfying (Dehlin et al., 2014).

Individuals satisfied in SSRs reported predominantly homo-positive views, both externally (e.g., being valued by others for being LGBT) and internally (e.g., seeing children as appropriate for an SSR). Given that all participants had a conservative religious background and

likely initially held more homonegative views (Barnes & Meyer, 2012), it may be that those in SSRs developed more homo-positive views.

Of all the groups, individuals in SSRs tended to be the least religious and evidence morally liberal patterns of values. This pattern has been noted elsewhere (Dehlin et al., 2014), and given the opposition of many conservative religions to same-sex relationships, it is hardly surprising (Herman, 2007). Similar to homo-positivity, these trends may reflect an adaptation to circumstance, potentially fueled by desire to engage with same-sex others. In perhaps a way opposite to that experienced by individuals in an MOR, distance from religious belief and practice may reinforce sexual minorities' decisions to engage in an SSR.

### **Limitations and Future Directions for Research**

We found distinct patterns in several domains across four single/relationship options that indicate that participants who are satisfied in one option are different from those satisfied in another and that those differences can be organized along four domains (SHRF). We aimed to provide therapists and clients with accurate information about those who are satisfied in a variety of single/relationship options; as such, we are not able to provide any conclusions about the relationship between each of the options and positive mental health and flourishing (c.f., Lefevor, Beckstead et al., 2019; Dehlin et al., 2014). We were also not able to identify *why* participants report being satisfied in their respective options. Our analyses were exploratory and do not represent a comprehensive coverage of any of the four domains explored—rather they are organized into four domains to help the reader make sense of the many variables examined. Further, because our data were cross-sectional in nature, we are unable to tell whether individuals choose certain options because they evidence a certain profile across our domains or

if engaging in an option changes an individual's profile across the domains. Future longitudinal work is needed to address these questions.

In addition to these caveats, we acknowledge several limitations inherent in our dataset. Our participants were a particular "type" of sexual minority from a conservative religious background (largely White, male, and Mormon), and we acknowledge that the experiences of women of color, White evangelicals, and others are quite distinct from those we report; as such, we caution strongly against an application of our results outside of the context in which they were collected. On the other hand, our results may generalize reasonably well to sexual minorities from other relatively homogenous American-born conservative traditions that, like Mormonism, have a strong emphasis on religion as both a faith tradition and worldview like Jehovah's Witnesses or Seventh Day Adventists. Although great efforts were made to ensure a representative sample, particularly with respect to political ideology, we ultimately relied on a convenience sample that may have introduced bias into our data, particularly as individuals across all options may have been likely to present themselves in a positive light. Due to our unique population and the exploratory nature of our study, many of the measures we employed were developed for this study and lack established psychometric properties. Although we based many questions on valid instruments, it is unclear how the constructs and questions we created relate with those that they were based on. We also did not assess moderating variables that may be important (e.g., the liberality of the sexual ethic of participants' communities of origin). Future work should expand on the tentative domains proposed using validated scales.

### **Clinical Applications and Implications**

Given the relatively little theorizing that has been done examining how sexual minorities from conservative religious backgrounds make relationship decisions, our work may be

particularly helpful to clients, therapists, and supervisors. First, and perhaps most importantly, our findings highlight the need for therapists to adopt a stance of cultural humility when working with sexual minorities from conservative religious backgrounds. We found that individuals who are satisfied in each of the four single/relationship options differ substantially from each other in important ways. Given that it is unlikely that psychologists have personally experienced all (let alone any) of the four single/relationship options, psychologists who work with sexual minorities from conservative religious backgrounds may need to be particularly aware of the biases they bring with them to that work. Our results may help both conservative and progressive psychologists to understand characteristics of individuals who tend to be satisfied in a variety of single/relationship options. As supervisors and therapists gain a stronger understanding of the characteristics of individuals who are satisfied in each path, they may be more able to check any biases they have about which path will be “best” for a given client. We encourage psychologists to explore and acknowledge which single/relationship options they may hold biases against so they can be present with clients to help them both avoid harm and maximize self-determination.

We have organized our findings in four domains—sexuality, homo-positivity/negativity, religiousness, and family (SHRF)—as a useful mnemonic for therapists and clients. We encourage therapists to explore each of these domains with sexual minority clients who come from conservative religious backgrounds in helping clients to understand themselves and make life decisions that fit for them. Both clients and therapists may benefit from understanding the characteristics of individuals who are satisfied in one of the four options, particularly if the client is considering that option. For example, a client for whom religiousness is important but who has a strong sexual drive and little homonegativity may benefit from understanding the challenges

this may present if the client pursues a celibate path. Clinicians can explore what that client may need to adapt to live satisfactorily in that option or which options may fit the client better.

### **Conclusion**

Therapists who work with sexual minorities from conservative religious backgrounds may practice more ethically and therefore effectively as they become informed about the domains related to positive mental health and flourishing within various single/relationship options. We found that sexual minorities pursuing four single/relationship options differed consistently in four domains: sexuality, homo-positivity/negativity, religiousness, and family. From these differences, we identified characteristics of people satisfied in each of the four single/relationship options that may guide both therapy and future research. We encourage therapists and researchers alike to continue to pursue rigorously a deeper understanding of the way in which clients' religious and sexual identities may impact their choices of single/relationship options and their mental health and flourishing within those options.

*Table 1.* Sample demographics.

Sample Size	452
Female	26.3%
Male	68.4%
Transgender	1.7%
Other gender	3.1%
Race/ethnicity	
African American/Black	0.7%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.2%
Asian American/Asian	2.0%
Hispanic/Latino/a	2.4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.9%
White	90.0%
Multi-ethnic/other	4.0%
State/Country of Residence	
Northeast	5.8%
Midwest	5.3%
South	13.7%
West	61.0%
Utah	43.1%
International	9.7%
Urbanicity	
Rural	8.6%
Urban	35.2%
Suburban	44.2%
Metropolitan	11.9%
Highest Level of Education	
Less than High School Diploma	0.4%
High School Diploma	23.9%
Associates Degree	6.2%
Bachelor's Degree	35.0%
Graduate Degree	34.5%
Current Religious Affiliation	
Evangelical Protestant	4.0%
Mainline Protestant	7.7%
Catholic	3.8%
Mormon	50.2%
Jehovah's Witness	0.7%
Other Christian/Multiple	7.9%
Jewish	0.7%
Buddhist	0.9%
None/Unaffiliated	24.1%

Table 2. The relationship between single/relationship option and four domains.

	SC	SNC	MOR	SSR		
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$
<b>Sexuality</b>						
<b>Sexual orientation/identity</b>						
Other-sex attraction	2.46 (1.83)	2.35 (1.77)	2.93 (1.89)	1.81 (1.28)	7.73	.05
Same-sex attraction	4.76 (2.05)	6.17 (1.29)	5.20 (1.76)	5.81 (1.59)	14.66	<b>.09</b>
Other-sex aversion	3.79 (2.27)	4.38 (2.32)	3.25 (2.18)	4.25 (2.27)	5.48	.04
Same-sex aversion	2.49 (1.87)	1.64 (1.36)	1.97 (1.60)	1.43 (1.02)	10.37	<b>.07</b>
Kinsey score	4.51 (1.78)	4.99 (1.34)	3.85 (1.51)	5.28 (1.08)	20.38	<b>.12</b>
LGB identity	0.35 (0.48)	0.90 (0.30)	0.41 (0.49)	0.89 (0.31)	63.07	<b>.30</b>
<b>Beliefs about the origin and fluidity of SSA</b>						
Biological basis	3.94 (1.98)	5.79 (1.37)	4.77 (1.86)	5.88 (1.40)	34.05	<b>.19</b>
Environmental basis	4.46 (1.86)	2.70 (1.66)	3.70 (1.82)	2.81 (1.80)	24.32	<b>.14</b>
Expected fluidity	3.09 (1.15)	2.48 (1.34)	2.89 (1.22)	2.21 (1.23)	12.00	<b>.07</b>
<b>Beliefs related to eroticism</b>						
Neutral about intimacy	3.37 (1.67)	2.57 (1.54)	2.42 (1.66)	2.40 (1.42)	9.67	<b>.06</b>
Masturbation acceptable	3.07 (1.85)	5.85 (1.66)	4.18 (2.14)	6.04 (1.35)	72.38	<b>.33</b>
Sex drive	4.05 (1.82)	4.87 (1.49)	4.58 (1.68)	4.48 (1.66)	4.63	.03
Sexual disgust	2.41 (1.67)	1.57 (0.91)	1.59 (1.14)	1.33 (0.67)	18.75	<b>.11</b>
<b>Homo-positivity/negativity</b>						
<b>Experiences around sexual identity</b>						
LGBT community supportive	2.74 (1.84)	5.19 (1.73)	3.25 (2.01)	4.80 (1.76)	41.96	<b>.24</b>
Valued for being LGBT	4.27 (1.98)	4.89 (1.68)	3.80 (1.91)	4.75 (1.64)	7.72	.05
<b>Internal homo-positivity/negativity</b>						
Internalized homonegativity	3.80 (1.59)	2.65 (1.62)	4.14 (2.00)	2.61 (1.50)	21.89	<b>.14</b>
Same-sex sex wrong	5.22 (2.10)	1.67 (1.62)	4.03 (2.35)	1.33 (1.05)	102.69	<b>.45</b>
Self-acceptance about SSA	4.07 (0.83)	4.33 (0.74)	3.96 (0.96)	4.37 (0.72)	6.80	.04
<b>Religious and Moral Values</b>						
<b>Variables related to religion</b>						
Conservativeness	0.52 (0.50)	0.06 (0.24)	0.39 (0.49)	0.04 (0.21)	43.48	<b>.22</b>
Religious practice	4.27 (1.17)	2.40 (1.62)	4.10 (1.18)	1.75 (1.23)	102.20	<b>.40</b>
Intrinsic Religiosity	6.25 (1.20)	4.23 (2.08)	5.37 (1.82)	4.16 (2.00)	33.09	<b>.19</b>
<b>Moral values</b>						
Authority	5.09 (1.45)	3.51 (1.65)	4.56 (1.69)	3.72 (1.71)	22.83	<b>.13</b>
Long-suffering	5.96 (1.11)	4.56 (1.79)	5.44 (1.46)	4.65 (1.64)	21.69	<b>.13</b>
Loyalty	6.27 (1.07)	5.84 (1.34)	5.90 (1.18)	5.65 (1.31)	4.96	.03
Pleasure	4.90 (1.46)	5.44 (1.12)	4.94 (1.44)	5.40 (1.13)	5.56	.04
Kindness	6.38 (0.98)	6.62 (0.70)	6.59 (0.68)	6.55 (0.68)	1.35	.02
Liberty	5.69 (1.25)	6.17 (1.02)	5.97 (1.04)	6.14 (1.10)	4.49	.03
Fairness	5.63 (1.32)	5.85 (1.19)	5.80 (1.13)	6.14 (0.96)	3.73	.03
Sanctity	6.04 (1.06)	3.89 (2.01)	5.05 (1.76)	3.84 (1.86)	42.42	<b>.22</b>
<b>Family</b>						
<b>The importance of heteronormative family</b>						
Importance of children	2.59 (1.35)	2.80 (1.37)	3.78 (0.76)	2.70 (1.33)	21.73	<b>.13</b>
Desire for other-sex companionship	4.64 (1.82)	3.87 (2.07)	4.09 (1.88)	3.82 (1.82)	4.12	.03
Desire for same-sex companionship	5.52 (1.68)	6.06 (1.36)	5.81 (1.45)	5.66 (1.62)	2.37	.02
Appropriateness of children	2.77 (1.56)	4.58 (0.98)	3.62 (1.42)	4.69 (0.84)	59.87	<b>.30</b>
Fear of disappointing family	3.37 (2.38)	3.35 (2.26)	4.40 (2.47)	3.74 (2.38)	4.78	.03

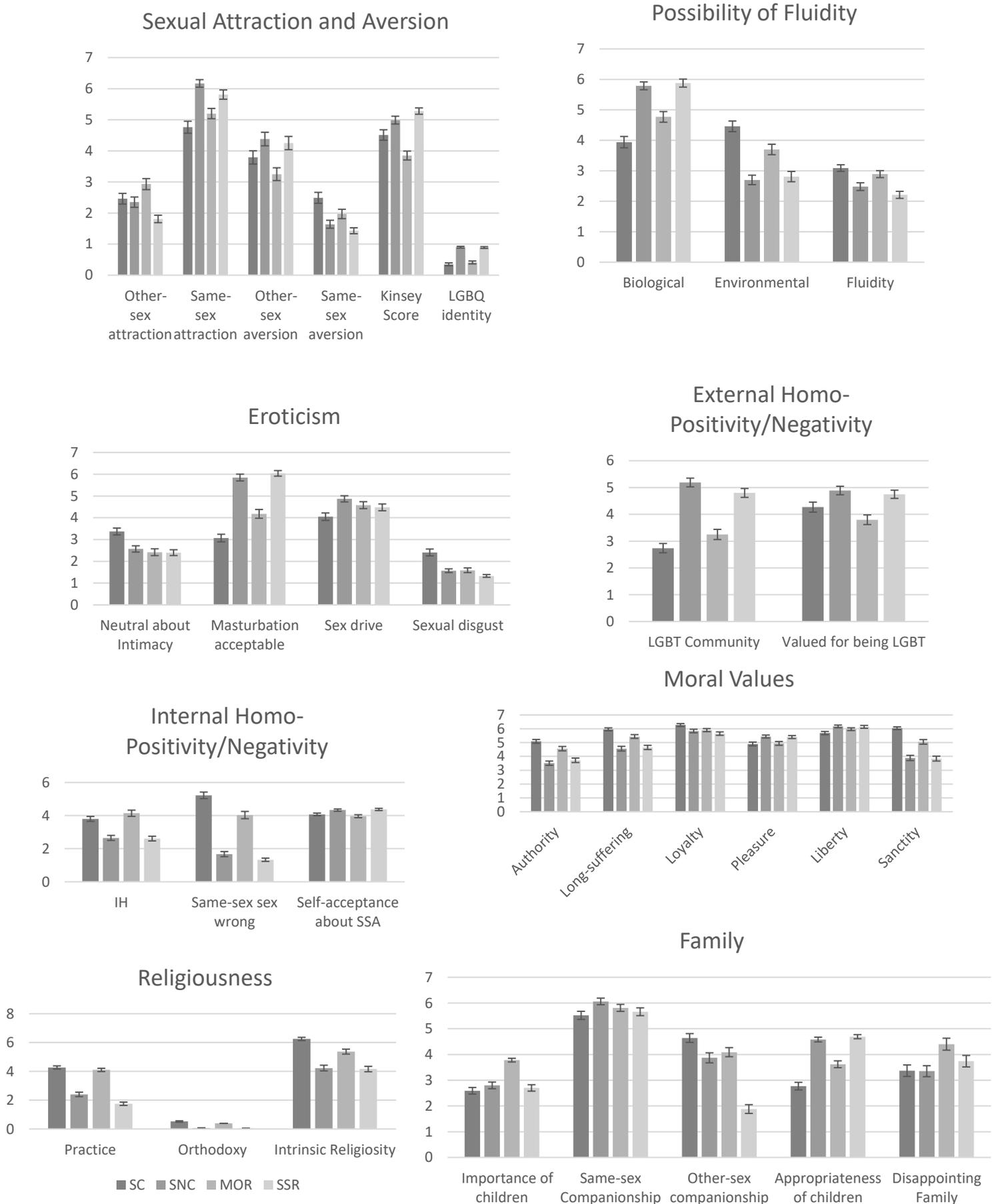
Note: all *F*-values significant,  $p < .01$ ; bolded values indicate medium or larger effect sizes (Cohen, 1988)

Table 3. Average degree to which participants in four single/relationship options report variables

Construct	SC	SNC	MOR	SSR
<b>Sexuality</b>				
Same-sex Attraction	Medium	High	High	High
Same-sex Aversion	Low	Low	Low	Low
Same-sex Kinsey Score	High	High	Medium	High
LGB Identity	Low	High	Medium	High
Biological Basis	Medium	High	Medium	High
Environmental Basis	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
Expected Fluidity	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Neutral about Intimacy	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Masturbation Acceptable	Medium	High	Medium	High
Sexual Disgust	Low	Low	Low	Low
<b>Homo-positivity/negativity</b>				
LGBT Community Supportive	Low	High	Medium	Medium
Internalized Homonegativity	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
Same-sex Sex Wrong	High	Low	Medium	Low
<b>Religious and Moral Values</b>				
Conservativeness	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
Religious Practice	High	Medium	High	Low
Intrinsic Religiosity	High	Medium	High	Medium
Authority	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Long-Suffering	High	Medium	High	Medium
Sanctity	High	Medium	High	Medium
<b>Family</b>				
Importance of Children	Medium	Medium	High	Medium
Appropriateness of Children for an SSR	Medium	High	Medium	High

Note: SC = single and celibate, SNC = single, not celibate, MOR = mixed orientation relationship, SSR = same-sex relationship, Low = bottom 33% of potential response values, Medium = middle 33% of potential response values, High = top 33% of potential response values

Figure 1. The relationship between single/relationship option and eight subdomains



## References

- American Psychological Association. (2009). *Report of the APA Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Response to Sexual Orientation*. Washington, DC: APA.
- American Psychological Association. (2017). *Ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Barnes, D. M., & Meyer, I. H. (2012). Religious affiliation, internalized homophobia, and mental health in lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 82, 505. doi: 10.1111/j.1939-0025.2012.01185.x
- Beckstead, A. L. (2001). *The process toward self-acceptance and self-identity of individuals who underwent sexual reorientation therapy* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (Accession No. 2001-95022-072)
- Beckstead, A. L. (2012). Can we change sexual orientation? *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 41, 121-134. doi:10.1007/s10508-012-9922-x
- Beckstead, A. L., & Morrow, S. L. (2004). Mormon clients' experiences of conversion therapy: The need for a new treatment approach. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 32, 651-690. doi: 10.1177/0011000004267555
- Bradshaw, K., Dehlin, J. P., Crowell, K. A., Galliher, R. V., & Bradshaw, W. S. (2015). Sexual orientation change efforts through psychotherapy for LGBTQ individuals affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 41, 391-412. doi: 10.1080/0092623X.2014.915907
- Buxton, A. P. (2001). Writing our own script: How bisexual men and their heterosexual wives maintain their marriages after disclosure. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 1, 155-189. doi:10.1300/J159v01n02\_06.

- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Coyle, A., & Rafalin, D. (2001). Jewish gay men's accounts of negotiating cultural, religious, and sexual identity. *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality, 12*, 21–48. doi: 10.1300/J056v12n04\_02
- Creek, S. J. (2013). “Not getting any because of Jesus”: The centrality of desire management to the identity work of gay, celibate Christians. *Symbolic Interaction, 36*, 119-136. doi: 10.1002/symb.58
- Crowell, K. A., Galliher, R. V., Dehlin, J., & Bradshaw, W. S. (2015). Specific aspects of minority stress associated with depression among LDS affiliated non-heterosexual adults. *Journal of Homosexuality, 62*, 242–267. doi: 10.1080/00918369.2014.969611
- Dahl, A. L., & Galliher, R. V. (2009). LGBTQ young adult experiences of religious and sexual identity integration. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling, 3*, 92-112. doi: 10.1080/15538600903005268
- Dehlin, J. P., Galliher, R. V., Bradshaw, W. S., & Crowell, K. A. (2014). Psychosocial correlates of religious approaches to same-sex attraction: A Mormon perspective. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health, 18*, 284-311. doi: 10.1080/19359705.2014.912970
- Dehlin, J. P., Galliher, R. V., Bradshaw, W. S., & Crowell, K. A. (2015). Navigating sexual and religious identity conflict: A Mormon perspective. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research, 15*, 1-22. doi:10.1080/15283488.2014.989440
- Dehlin, A. J., Galliher, R. V., Legerski, E., Harker, A., & Dehlin, J. P. (2019). Same- and other-sex aversion and attraction as important correlates of quality and outcomes of Mormon

- mixed-orientation marriages. *Journal of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Family Studies*, 15, 22-41. doi:10.1080/1550428X.2017.1416721
- Freeman-Coppadge, D. J., & Horne, S. G. (2019). "What happens if the cross falls and crushes me?" Psychological and spiritual promises and perils of lesbian and gay Christian celibacy. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 64, 486-497. doi: 10.1037/sgd0000341
- Ghabrial, M. A., & Ross, L. E. (2018). Representation and erasure of bisexual people of color: A content analysis of quantitative bisexual mental health research. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 5(2), 132-142. doi:10.1037/sgd0000286
- Gallup (2017). *Gallup U.S. Daily, June 20, 2016-June 19, 2017* [Data set]. Gallup, Inc.
- Gorsuch, R. L. & McPherson, S. E. (1989). Intrinsic/extrinsic measurement: I/E-revised and single-item scales. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 3, 348-354.
- Griffin, C. H. (2018). The Anthropological Witness of Celibacy. *Scripta Theologica*, 50(1).
- Haidt, J. (2012). *The righteous mind*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Haidt, J., & Graham, J. (2007). When morality opposes justice: Conservatives have moral intuitions that liberals may not recognize. *Social Justice Research*, 20, 98-116. doi: 10.1007/s11211-007-0034-z
- Hallman, J. M., Yarhouse, M. A., & Suárez, E. C. (2018). Shame and psychosocial development in religiously affiliated sexual minority women. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 46, 3-21. doi: 10.1177/0091647117748450
- Hawkins, A. J., Carroll, J. S., Doherty, W. J., & Willoughby, B. J. (2008). A Comprehensive Framework for Marriage Education (CoFraME). In D.J. Bredehoft & M.J. Walcheski

- (Eds.). *Family life education: Integrating theory and practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 43-58).  
Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations.
- Hatzenbuehler, M. L. (2009). How does sexual minority stigma ‘get under the skin’? A psychological mediation framework. *Psychological Bulletin*, *135*, 707-730. doi: 10.1037/a0016441
- Herman, D. (2007). *The antigay agenda: Orthodox vision and the Christian Right*. University of Chicago Press.
- Hernandez, B. C., Schwenke, N. J., & Wilson, C. M. (2011). Spouses in mixed-orientation marriage: A 20-year review of empirical studies. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *37*, 307-318. doi: 10.1111/j.1752-0606.2010.00202.x
- Higgins, D. J. (2002). Gay men from heterosexual marriages: Attitudes, behaviors, childhood experiences, and reasons for marriage. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *42*, 15–34. doi: 10.1300/J082v42n04\_02
- Hill, P. C. & Edwards, E. (2013). Measurement in the psychology of religiousness and spirituality: Existing measures and new frontiers. In K. I. Pargament, J. J. Exline, & J. W. Jones (Eds.), *APA handbook of psychology, religion, and spirituality (Vol. 1): Context, theory, and research* (pp. 51-77). Washington, DC, US: APA.
- Kays, J. L., Yarhouse, M. A., & Ripley, J. S. (2014). Relationship factors and quality among mixed-orientation couples. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, *40*, 512-528. doi: 10.1080/0092623X.2013.788107
- Kinsey, A.C., Pomeroy, W.E., & Martin, C.E. (1948). *Sexual behavior in the human male*. Philadelphia, PA: Saunders.

- Kissil, K., & Itzhaky, H. (2015). Experiences of the marital relationship among Orthodox Jewish gay men in mixed-orientation marriages. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies, 11*(2), 151-172. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2014.900659>
- Klein, F. (1993). *The bisexual option*. New York: Haworth Press.
- Lefevor, G. T., Beckstead, A. L., Schow, R. L., Raynes, M., Mansfield, T. R., & Rosik, C. H. (2019). Satisfaction and health within four sexual identity relationship options. *The Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy, 45*, 355-369. doi: 10.1080/0092623X.2018.1531333
- Lefevor, G. T., Blaber, I. P., Huffman, C. E., Schow, R. L., Beckstead, A. L., Raynes, M., & Rosik, C. H. (2019) The role of religiousness and beliefs about sexuality in well-being among sexual minority Mormons. *The Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000261>
- Lefevor, G. T., Park, S., Acevedo, M. J., & Jones, P. J. (2020). Sexual orientation complexity and health-related outcomes: Is sexual orientation discordance useful? *The Journal of Homosexuality*.
- Lefevor, G. T., Park, S., & Pedersen, T. (2018). The impact of minority stress on the mental health of sexual and religious minorities. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health, 22*, 90–104. doi: 10.1080/19359705.2017.1418696
- Lefevor, G. T., Sorrell, S. A., Kappers, G., Plunk, A., Schow, R. L., Rosik, C. H., & Beckstead, A. L. (2019). Same-sex attracted, not LGBTQ: The implications of sexual identity labelling on religiosity, sexuality, and health among Mormons. *The Journal of Homosexuality*. doi: 10.1080/00918369.2018.1564006
- Legerski, E., & Harker, A. (2017). The intersection of gender, sexuality, and religion in Mormon mixed-sexuality marriages. *Sex Roles, 78*, 482-500. doi:10.1007/s11199-017-0817-0

- Legerski, E., Harker, A., Jeppsen, C., Armstrong, A., Dehlin, J. P., Troutman, K., & Galliher, R. V. (2017). Mormon mixed-orientation marriages: Variations in attitudes and experiences by sexual orientation and current relationship status. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies, 13*, 186-209. doi: 10.1080/1550428X.2016.1159163
- Lippa, R. A. (2009). Sex differences in sex drive, sociosexuality, and height across 53 nations: Testing evolutionary and social structure theories. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 38*, 631-651. doi: 10.1007/s10508-007-9242-8
- Mahaffy, K. A. (1996). Cognitive dissonance and its resolution: A study of lesbian Christians. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 35*, 392-402. doi: 10.2307/1386414
- Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin, 129*, 674-697. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.129.5.674
- Mohr, J. J., & Fassinger, R. E. (2003). Self-acceptance and self-disclosure of sexual orientation in lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults: An attachment perspective. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 50*, 482. doi: 10.1037/0022-0167.50.4.482
- Mohr, J. J., & Kendra, M. S. (2011). Revision and extension of a multidimensional measure of sexual minority identity: The Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 58*, 234. doi: 10.1037/a0022858
- Newcomb, M. E., & Mustanski, B. (2010). Internalized homophobia and internalizing mental health problems: A meta-analytic review. *Clinical Psychology Review, 30*, 1019-1029. doi: 10.1016/j.cpr.2010.07.003

- Riggle, E. D., Rostosky, S. S., & Horne, S. G. (2010). Psychological distress, well-being, and legal recognition in same-sex couple relationships. *Journal of Family Psychology, 24*, 82. doi: 10.1037/a0017942
- Rodriguez, E. M. & Ouellette, S. C. (2000). Gay and lesbian Christians: Homosexual and religious identity integration in the members and participants of a gay-positive church. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 39*, 333-347. doi: 10.1111/0021-8294.00028
- Rosik, C. H., Dinges, L. J., & Saavedra, N. (2013). Moral intuitions and attitudes toward gay men: can moral psychology add to our understanding of homonegativity? *Journal of Psychology & Theology, 41*(4), 315-326.
- Rosik, C. H., & Popper, P. (2014). Clinical approaches to conflicts between religious values and same-sex attractions: Contrasting gay-affirmative, sexual identity, and change-oriented models of therapy. *Counseling & Values, 59*, 222–237. doi: 10.1002/j.2161-007X.2014.00053.x
- Saroglou, V., Delpierre, V., & Dernelle, R. (2003). Values and religiosity: A meta-analysis of studies using Schwartz's model. *Personality and Individual Differences, 37*, 721-734. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2003.10.005
- Sipe, A. R. (2003). *Celibacy in crisis. A Secret World Revisited*. New York: Routledge.
- Sipe, A. R. (2008). Celibacy today: Mystery, myth, and miasma. In K. Pedersen (Ed.) *Asceticism today* (pp. 545-562).
- Swan, T. B., Benack, S. (2012). Renegotiating identity in unscripted territory: The predicament of queer men in heterosexual marriages. *Journal of GLBT family studies, 8*, 46-66. doi: 10.1080/1550428X.2012.641371

## Appendix A

Table A.1

Items proposed to differentiate between single/relationship options and their sources

Domain	Subdomain	Item	Is item created for this survey?	Work that this item is based on
Sexuality	Sexual orientation/identity	Other sex attraction	No	Savin-Williams (2006)
		Same-sex attraction	No	Savin-Williams (2006)
		Other-sex aversion	Yes	Dehlin et al. (2019)
		Same-sex aversion	Yes	Dehlin et al. (2019)
		Kinsey score	No	Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin (1948)
		LGB identity	No	Savin-Williams (2006)
	Possibility of fluidity	Biological basis	No	Dehlin et al. (2015)
		Environmental basis	No	Dehlin et al. (2015)
		Expected fluidity	Yes	Bradshaw et al. (2015)
	Eroticism	Neutral about intimacy	Yes	Lippa (2009)
		Masturbation acceptable	Yes	Lippa (2009)
		Sex drive	Yes	Lippa (2009)
		Sexual disgust	Yes	Lippa (2009)
Homo-positivity/negativity	External homo-positivity/negativity	LGBT community supportive	Yes	Lin & Israel (2012)
		Valued for being LGBT	Yes	Lin & Israel (2012)
	Internal homo-positivity/negativity	Internalized homonegativity	No	Mohr & Kendra (2011)
		Same-sex sex wrong	Yes	Mayfield (2001)
		Self-acceptance about SSA	Yes	Mayfield (2001)
Religiousness and moral values	Religiousness	Orthodoxy	No	Dehlin et al. (2015)
		Religious practice	No	Koenig & Büsing (2010)

		Intrinsic religiosity	No	Koenig & Büssing (2010)
	Moral values	Authority	No	Haidt & Graham (2007)
		Long-suffering	Yes	Haidt (2012)
		Loyalty	No	Haidt & Graham (2007)
		Pleasure	Yes	Haidt (2012)
		Kindness	No	Haidt & Graham (2007)
		Liberty	Yes	Haidt (2012)
		Fairness	No	Haidt & Graham (2007)
		Sanctity	No	Haidt & Graham (2007)
Family	Importance of heteronormative family	Importance of children	Yes	Lefevor et al. (2019)
		Desire for other-sex companionship	Yes	Klein (1993)
		Desire for same-sex companionship	Yes	Klein (1993)
		Appropriateness of children	Yes	Mayfield (2001)
		Fear of disappointing family	Yes	Mayfield (2001)

Table A.2.  $F$  and  $\eta^2$  values for analyses of covariance with age, state/country of residence, and urbanicity as covariates and single/relationship option as the independent variable.

	$F$	$\eta^2$
<b>Sexuality</b>		
Sexual orientation/identity		
Other-sex attraction	7.99	.06
Same-sex attraction	12.63	.08
Other-sex aversion	5.63	.04
Same-sex aversion	9.67	.07
Kinsey score	17.78	.11
LGB identity	56.02	.29
Possibility of fluidity		
Biological basis	30.51	.17
Environmental basis	20.54	.12
Expected fluidity	13.08	.08
Eroticism		
Neutral about intimacy	7.64	.05
Masturbation acceptable	75.33	.34
Sex drive	5.21	.03
Sexual disgust	17.57	.11
<b>Homo-positivity/negativity</b>		
External homo-positivity/negativity		
LGBT community supportive	39.28	.23
Valued for being LGBT	5.56	.04
Internal homo-positivity/negativity		
Internalized homonegativity	25.76	.15
Same-sex sex wrong	110.71	.43
Self-acceptance about SSA	6.70	.04
<b>Religious and Moral Values</b>		
Religiousness		
Orthodoxy	39.41	.21
Religious practice	93.28	.39
Intrinsic Religiosity	31.57	.19
Moral values		
Authority	20.60	.12
Long-suffering	21.94	.13
Loyalty	5.27	.04
Pleasure	4.60	.03
Kindness	1.73	.01
Liberty	4.26	.03
Fairness	3.81	.03
Sanctity	41.18	.22
<b>Family</b>		
The importance of heteronormative family		
Importance of children	22.62	.13
Desire for other-sex companionship	3.35	.02
Desire for same-sex companionship	1.85	.01
Appropriateness of children	48.30	.26
Fear of disappointing family	4.81	.03

## References

- Bradshaw, K., Dehlin, J. P., Crowell, K. A., Galliher, R. V., & Bradshaw, W. S. (2015). Sexual orientation change efforts through psychotherapy for LGBTQ individuals affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 41*, 391-412. doi: 10.1080/0092623X.2014.915907
- Dehlin, J. P., Galliher, R. V., Bradshaw, W. S., & Crowell, K. A. (2015). Navigating sexual and religious identity conflict: A Mormon perspective. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research, 15*, 1-22. doi:10.1080/15283488.2014.989440
- Dehlin, A. J., Galliher, R. V., Legerski, E., Harker, A., & Dehlin, J. P. (2019). Same- and other-sex aversion and attraction as important correlates of quality and outcomes of Mormon mixed-orientation marriages. *Journal of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Family Studies, 15*, 22-41. doi:10.1080/1550428X.2017.1416721
- Gorsuch, R. L. & McPherson, S. E. (1989). Intrinsic/extrinsic measurement: I/E-revised and single-item scales. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 3*, 348-354. doi: 10.2307/1386745
- Haidt, J. (2012). *The righteous mind*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Haidt, J., & Graham, J. (2007). When morality opposes justice: Conservatives have moral intuitions that liberals may not recognize. *Social Justice Research, 20*, 98-116. doi: 10.1007/s11211-007-0034-z
- Kinsey, A.C., Pomeroy, W.E., & Martin, C.E. (1948). *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Philadelphia, PA: Saunders.
- Klein, F. (1993). *The bisexual option*. New York: Haworth Press.

Koenig, H. G. & Büssing, A. (2010). The Duke University Religion Index (DUREL): A five-item measure for use in epidemiological studies. *Religions, 1*, 78-85. doi:

10.3390/rel11010078

Lefevor, G. T., Beckstead, A. L., Schow, R. L., Raynes, M., Mansfield, T. R., & Rosik, C. H.

(2019). Satisfaction and health within four sexual identity relationship options. *The Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy, 45*, 355-369. doi: 10.1080/0092623X.2018.1531333

Lin, Y. & Israel, T. (2012). Development and validation of a psychological sense of LGBT community scale. *Journal of Community Psychology, 40*, 573-587. doi:

10.1002/jcop.21483

Lippa, R. A. (2009). Sex differences in sex drive, sociosexuality, and height across 53 nations:

Testing evolutionary and social structure theories. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 38*, 631-

651. doi: 10.1007/s10508-007-9242-8

Mayfield, W. (2001). The development of an internalized homonegativity inventory for gay

men. *Journal of Homosexuality, 41*, 53-76. doi:10.1300/j082v41n02\_04

Savin-Williams, R. C. (2006). Who's gay? Does it matter? *Current directions in psychological*

*science, 15*, 40-44. doi: 10.1111/j.0963-7214.2006.00403.x