

Research**Human Sexuality Attitudes in Hispanic Males and Females**

Russell Eisenman*

*University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Department of Psychological Science, Edinburg, Texas 78539-2999, USA***Abstract**

Sexual attitudes were studied in 130 university students, at University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, a Hispanic-serving university in the Rio Grande Valley, in Texas, near the Mexican border. Males and females rated their level of agreement to 38 items on a 1-to-5 scale, in a revision of a previously used sexual attitudes scale. For the most part, these students agreed with one another, but there were some important differences, with males being more permissive than females on some items. Both males and females reported that they would be jealous if their partner had sexual intercourse with someone else, and if their partner got emotionally involved with someone else. For the sexual intercourse item, females were significantly more jealous. These findings contradict Buss's evolutionary psychology theory of jealousy [1]. Possible explanations for the findings are presented.

Introduction

Researchers have looked at sexual attitudes or behavior in racial and ethnic minorities [2-9]. Minority people have to judge things while drawing on emotions and information from at least two perspectives, the majority culture and their own culture, while the majority person may only have to employ one perspective. Another important individual difference is gender: differences between males and females. Gender differences would seem to reflect a variety of cultural, biological, and social influences.

In the present study, we are interested in the sexual attitudes of male and female Hispanic college students at a university near the Mexican border. We use the term "Hispanic" because that is the most popular term used here. In other parts of the United States, "Latino" is considered more acceptable and "Hispanic" may even be seen as unacceptable. The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) has the second largest population of Hispanic students in the nation (second only to Florida International University, in Miami), and 90% of the undergraduate students attending UTRGV are Hispanic. Most of the students at UTPA are bilingual, at least to some degree. Most live in the Rio Grande Valley area of the United States, which is also 90% Hispanic, although a few live in Mexico, and commute to classes.

UTRGV is part of the University of Texas system, and is the school in that system designated to be the system's number one Hispanic-serving institution. That, and its location near the Mexican border, and in the Rio Grande Valley region, helps explain why UTRGV has the largest number of Mexican American students of any university in the nation. Florida

International University, in Miami, has a large Cuban student body.

Evolutionary Psychology

An excellent perspective for understanding biological matters is evolutionary psychology theory. Evolution is the unifying theory in biology. Evolution has also come to be very important for the field of psychology, and may possibly be the number one theory today in psychology, having gained much recent popularity in the field.

From an evolutionary psychology standpoint, men and women have different needs, as they try to maximize the survival of themselves and of their offspring into future generations. For men, the optimal strategy to insure their genes going into future generations is to impregnate as many women as possible, leading to a permissive attitude toward sex. Also, men should seek out partners who have youth, health and beauty. Women, on the other hand, get pregnant, and could not effectively employ the male strategy. Their passing on their genes to future generations is best assured by finding a male companion who possesses status and money, and who will invest in taking care of her and her offspring. Thus, women should be less permissive about sex than men, and should be more selective in who they wish to have sexual relations with. All of this is unconscious [10], in that people do not necessarily consciously recognize these desires. In fact, they may try to go against them, such as by using birth control to prevent pregnancy. But, at the very least, even when humans do not engage in overt behavior that fits with evolutionary psychology predictions, they should have attitudes shaped by the evolutionary realities of adaptation and natural selection [11-15].

***Corresponding Author:** Russell Eisenman, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Department of Psychological Science, Edinburg, Texas 78539-2999, USA, E-mail: russell.eisenman@utrgv.edu

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Jealousy

Another important area worthy of study is the emotion of jealousy. Jealousy often results in people doing things that they might not otherwise do were they not jealous.

But, if people consistently do the same thing(s) when jealous, then it would not seem to be an artificial aspect of their behavior, but perhaps something central to who they are. We might never see it when they are not jealous, but, when they are jealous, certain predictable behaviors may take place. It may even be that jealousy is inherent to human beings and has certain survival value, as it results in the person trying to protect their investment with another.

Buss [1,16] has pointed out that males and females are often made jealous by different things. Males are jealous of their partner having sexual intercourse with someone else, because the act could result in his raising children who are not his. Thus, he would invest time, effort, and expense in a child or children who would not spread his genes into future generations. On the other hand, females are more jealous of their partner's emotional investment in another woman, and are less threatened by sexual intercourse, per se. Emotional investment in another woman could mean that the male will now give less time and resources, due to his involvement with someone new. In other words, the male may not provide as much care or commitment to the woman and her children. In the present study we had one question each on jealousy stemming from intercourse and on jealousy stemming from emotional involvement.

Do Hispanic students follow the same pattern found in other research, where males are more permissive about sex than females? If so, would this be true to a great degree, or only for a few items? Would the Buss jealousy perspective be found with these Hispanic students? If not, then Buss's theory is challenged and might have to be revised, perhaps to say it is only true for some samples but not for others. These were some of the questions we were interested in, as well as in beginning to understand sexual attitudes of Hispanic students. A previous study [3] showed some differences between male and female college students, but failed to support Buss's evolutionary psychology theory of jealousy [12, 16]. Would the present findings be the same or different?

Method

A sexual attitudes scale devised by M. Dantzker and R. Eisenman was used. It has been noted that the golden rule of survey research is to use a questionnaire that has already been established in order to avoid the problems associated with establishing validity and reliability [18]. We fulfill this goal somewhat by having used this attitude questionnaire previously [3] and finding some gender differences with Hispanic college students. Regarding reliability, Dantzker and Eisenman [3] obtained a Chronbach Alpha of .55. To study sexual attitudes, a 42-item questionnaire was originally developed. The statements were reviewed by both researchers as well as by a psychology colleague who specializes in attitudinal research

and who had recently completed a study on college students' use of the Internet as it pertains to sex. It was agreed that on its face, the statements would measure what was being sought, the students' perceptions regarding a variety of sexual activities and behaviors. Dantzker and Eisenman [3] employed the 42-item sexual attitudes scale.

For the present study, four items that, from a factor analysis, showed little relationship to the overall scores on the sexual attitude scale, were eliminated, giving us a 38-item sex attitudes scale; however, the change also found a slight decrease in the Chronbach's Alpha from .55 to .52. The statements were set up for response on a Likert scale of 1-to-5 (1 representing strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree). For this study, we changed the midpoint of 3 to mean "Doesn't Matter," since we thought that might best reflect what subjects mean if they choose the midpoint. Previously we had labeled the midpoint "Not Sure" and subjects often wrote in "Doesn't Matter," so this seems to reflect better what the midpoint means to subjects at this university.

Participants

The survey was distributed in three Psychology courses, taught by their researcher instructors, who read out loud the consent paragraph at the top of the survey to all the students before letting them read it to themselves. To preserve anonymity, the consent form was handed in separately from the sex attitudes survey, i.e., it was placed in a separate pile. Students were advised participation was strictly voluntary and that there would be no consequences for not participating. Some demographic questions appeared on the survey, as well as 38 items on sexual matters. Upon completing the survey the students were asked to either leave it on their desk or return it directly to the instructor.

From the three courses a total of 130 surveys were distributed and returned. There were 60 males and 70 females in the sample. For ethnicity, 118 identified themselves as Hispanic, 8 as non-Hispanic, and 4 did not answer this question. Thus, the sample was overwhelmingly Hispanic. The 130 surveys were coded, entered into an SPSS database, and analyzed, using nonparametric Chi Square to assess the gender differences.

Results

To examine the relationship by gender for each statement, a nonparametric Chi Square was used, degrees of freedom=4 ($df = \text{rows} - 1 \times \text{columns} - 1$), using SPSS. A 2x5 Chi Square was employed (2 genders: male or female x the 5 items on the 1-to-5 scale). Comparing the mean scores for each statement by gender, a statistically significant difference for 19 of the 38 statements was found. The results are shown in Table 1, below.

Among the 19 statistically significant differences of the means by gender, 8 found males to be more agreeable to the statement than females. These statements included the idea that:

- Premarital sex is acceptable for males
- Oral sex before marriage is acceptable

Table 1

SEXUAL PERCEPTIONS by Gender

Strongly agree 5	Agree 4	Doesn't Matter 3	Disagree 2	Strongly disagree 1
Statement Means			Males	Females
			3.23	2.70*
			2.64	2.59
			3.27	2.69**
			2.40	2.52
			3.24	3.38
			2.93	3.26
			2.85	2.43*
			2.46	2.54
			3.29	2.87
			2.98	3.75**
			2.84	3.83**
			3.55	4.30**
			4.38	4.73**
			3.80	4.54**
			3.42	3.27
			2.67	2.60
			1.59	1.23*
			4.04	4.07
			2.43	2.20
			1.79	1.31**
			2.38	3.31**
			3.41	2.60**
			2.66	3.43**
			2.50	3.32**
			2.66	3.13*
			2.28	2.87
			2.63	2.87
			2.34	2.14
			2.02	2.06
			3.11	2.21**
			3.39	3.03
			2.32	2.88**
			4.48	4.76*
			3.36	3.60
			4.36	4.48
			3.27	2.89
				3.66
			3.43	
			2.61	1.83**

*The difference between the means was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

**The difference between the means was statistically significant at $p < .01$.

Males should have sexual experience prior to marriage

Forcing a person to have sex if spouse is OK

Marriage should not stop person from having sex with other people

“Topless clubs” are acceptable places for adult entertainment

Condoms interfere with the pleasures of sex

Prostitution should be legalized in all states

Females agreed with 11 statements more than males, to a statistically significant extent. These ideas included:

When growing up, parents told me premarital intercourse is unacceptable

When growing up, parents told me any type of sexual behavior before marriage is unacceptable.

Sex should only occur with a person you love

Lust and love are two different emotions

If I were to have sex, I would always practice safe sex

Clubs that promote all nude dancing should not be allowed to exist

Magazines such as Playboy are demeaning to women

Magazines like Playboy are pornographic and should not be published

Pornographic material causes males to become sexually aggressive

Masturbation is wrong

I would be jealous if my partner had sexual intercourse with someone else

Discussion

Research from the 1980's and before suggested that a sexual revolution had occurred and that while both sexes approved of premarital sex in a serious relationship, females indicated having stronger emotional needs [19]. However, 1990's research indicated that sexual attitudes started taking a more conservative turn [19-20]. One of the questions we have is whether this trend is reflected in a Hispanic sample, and whether the conservatism is related to gender and/or ethnicity. Our results suggest that Hispanic women in our sample were more restrictive in their sexual beliefs than Hispanic males. Hispanic males here were more oriented to experiencing the pleasures of sex without censorship, even to the point of thinking—at least more than the women—that it is all right to force one's spouse to have sex. However, it should be noted that both males and females tended to disagree with this attitude. It is just that the males disagreed with it less than the females (and to a statistically significant extent). Many of the findings of the present study show sex differences among these mostly Hispanic college students, but the differences are small, and the sexes mostly agree with each other regarding the attitudes expressed on our sex attitudes scale. The results are consistent with previous findings at this university, both with regard to the gender differences, and with regard

to failing, again, to support the Buss evolutionary psychology jealousy theory [1, 12, 21].

It would appear that there continues a conservative attitude about sex by college students regardless of gender, albeit this was among Hispanic students who, culturally, are a conservative group [22]. The items where the males were more agreeable tend to be suggestive of a “macho” or “machismo” viewpoint. On the items where the females were more agreeable, we found that females placed more emphasis on avoidance or censorship of certain sexual behaviors. The results are very consistent with Stevens, Caron, and Pratt [20] who found that college students have turned more conservative in their sexual attitudes, and who also found that religion influences sexual attitudes to be restrictive. Our sample is comprised mostly of Hispanics, and at this university we have found that two-thirds of the students are Roman Catholic. Catholicism teaches very restrictive views about sex. Also, many who are not Catholic are members of conservative religious groups. So, we should, perhaps, expect Hispanics to hold many conservative attitudes about sex. At the same time, we suspect they are less sexually inhibited in real-life behavior, as Hispanics have also been found often to engage in high risk sexual behaviors, such as multiple partners, not using condoms, etc., leading to a high rate of HIV/AIDS in Hispanics, that is three times greater than the HIV/AIDS rate of Anglo Americans [7].

Buss's Evolutionary Psychology Theory Of Jealousy

The results of the two questions aimed at Buss's evolutionary psychology theory of jealousy [12, 21] failed to support his theory. Contrary to what should have occurred if Buss's theory is correct, we found that men were not more likely than women to be jealous of their partner's sexual intercourse with another, and women were not more likely than men to be jealous of their partner's emotional commitment to another. The two sexes both expressed jealousy to both situations, with women being more jealous of the sexual intercourse example (to a statistically significant extent), which is the opposite of Buss's theory. The direction of the results showed that among our Hispanic sample, both men and women condemned partner unfaithfulness, whether it involved sexual intercourse or commitment to another. Again, this does not support Buss, who would have predicted that women, more than men, condemn the partner's emotional investment in another, but men are more worried than women by the partner having sexual intercourse with another. Grice and Seely [23] likewise failed to find support for Buss's jealousy theory. In that case, they were looking at physiological reactions to different kinds of scenarios, but failed to find the sex differences that Buss would predict. Thus, it may be that Buss is not always correct in his theory of jealousy, although it may hold up in some circumstances. Perhaps the method of assessment is all-important, or the kind of sample utilized. Harris [24] found support for Buss's jealousy theory only if forced choice was used for comparing sexual intercourse vs. emotional commitment jealousy. However, when people recalled their experiences of jealousy, the Buss theory was not supported

[24]. Taken together, the present study, our previous study [3], the Grice and Seely [23] study, and the Harris [24] research, all suggest caution in total acceptance of Buss's jealousy theory. None of these studies support the Buss jealousy theory. Yet, at the same time, Buss has accumulated much research supporting his view. Further study is needed to see what variables account for the differences between Buss on the one hand, and the negative findings here, and in the previous studies just mentioned. Our next step is to expand the research, with a larger sample. Also, we want to compare Hispanics and non-Hispanics, to see if the sex differences found here apply with a non-Hispanic sample as well.

In a personal communication to the author, Buss pointed out that the jealousy findings occur when subjects are given the question of which makes them more jealous, partner sexual intercourse with another vs. partner emotional commitment to another. Buss says that rating scales do not show his jealousy difference, and are seen by him as not sensitive enough to get the sex difference. While he may be entirely correct, it should also be considered that, perhaps, different methods will produce different results and that, possibly, the Buss jealousy theory does not have the universal truth to it that he seems to think it has.

Probably, the Hispanic students, especially the women, are not as sexually inhibited in their behavior as they are in the attitudes they endorse. It may be that they have many conflicting feelings about sex, which would be consistent with how cultures around the world provide people, especially females, with contradictory views of sex. People are taught that sex is, at the same time, both wonderful and good, and evil and dirty. On the other hand, there is evidence that women may engage in various sexual behaviors less than men, so it may be that in some areas of sex women are more inhibited than men [25]. Some of these differences could be due to biology, gender roles, or a combination of the two [26].

It may be that the way Buss and others measure things determines the results they get. It may be that men and women do not really have such distinct views in the area of jealousy, as the Buss jealousy theory claims. Or, it could be that other things are at work. For example, Regan [27] points out that one of the few negative things couples equate with passionate love is jealousy. Perhaps Hispanics feel more passionate about love than non-Hispanics, and thus are more jealous in both the example where the partner is emotionally involved with someone else, and when the partner has sexual intercourse with someone else. This guess would fit with the belief that Hispanics are a more emotive or expressive culture than many others, including Anglo Americans [28]. Thus, Hispanics might hold passionate views about love, and be more jealous than those not holding such passionate view.

The findings in this study fit well with similar research by Eisenman [29] and Eisenman and Dantzker [30], where the current scale was employed with small differences in sexual attitudes between males and females, but with males tending to be somewhat more permissive than females.

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