



Patterns of Attraction and Love in Irish Schoolchildren

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescents who identify as Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual, are at higher risk of various mental and physical health problems than their heterosexual peers.^{1,2} Sexual orientation comprises identity but also behaviour and romantic attraction, which may be divergent.³ Adolescent sexual minorities can be appropriately categorised based on romantic attraction.⁴

OBJECTIVE

This study examined the overlap in reported attraction and love, as part of a pilot study for the 2018 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study in Ireland.

METHODOLOGY

Students from fifth class to fifth year (n=239), from a non-probability sample of three primary and two post-primary schools, were asked: "Are you attracted to..." and "Have you ever been in love with...". Response options were: girl(s), boy(s), both girls and boys, I am not attracted yet to anyone/I have never been in love. Participants were categorised as attracted exclusively to opposite-gender (OGA), same-gender (SGA), both-gender (BGA) partners, or never attracted (NA). Similarly they were categorised into having been in love with the opposite-gender (OGL), same-gender (SGL), both-genders (BGL), or never in love (NL).

RESULTS

Rates of ever being in love were 57.4% (OGL), 1.7% (SGL) and 3.5% (BGL); 37.4% had never been in love. Rates of attraction were 80.9% (OGA), 1.7% (SGA) and 7% (BGL); 10.4% had not experienced attraction. Love and attraction were significantly associated with each other: $\chi^2(9) = 144.56, p < 0.001$, effect size Cramer's V=0.46.

Table 1 - Correspondence of Attraction and Love

	OGA n (%)	SGA n (%)	BGA n (%)	NA n (%)	Within Love n (%)
OGL	123 (93.2)	1 (0.8)	3 (2.3)	5 (3.8)	132 (57.4)
SGL	2 (50.0)	2 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (1.7)
BGL	0 (0.0)	1 (12.5)	6 (75.0)	1 (12.5)	8 (3.5)
NL	61 (70.9)	0 (0.0)	7 (8.1)	18 (20.9)	86 (37.4)
Within Attraction	186 (80.9)	4 (1.7)	16 (7.0)	24 (10.4)	230 (100.0)

*For attraction columns, percentages are within the love categories; for love and attraction overall values, percentages are within that variable.

CONCLUSIONS

Findings mirror those from eight other European countries⁴ in pattern and extent, although the high rate of never being in love is more similar to English adolescents than other, continental countries.⁴ That more adolescents report attraction than love suggests that the two concepts diverge.⁵

REFERENCES

Available on request.

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