

How Do I Love Thee?

Implications of Attachment Theory for Understanding Same-Sex Love and Desire

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*H*azan and Shaver's (1987) seminal notion that romantic love is an adult "version" of infant-caregiver attachment radically transformed our understanding of the nature and dynamics of adult intimate pair bonds, and the reverberations of this conceptual turning point continue to shape psychological research on adult romantic relationships. A key component of their theoretical model was the distinction between the evolved social-behavioral systems of *attachment*, *caregiving*, and *sexuality* (Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, 1988). As they maintained, although experiences of adult romantic attachment typically integrate the feelings and behaviors of these systems, the systems themselves have distinct origins, functions, and underpinnings. Recent research on the brain substrates of both human and animal sexuality and pair bonding have confirmed this view (Bartels & Zeki, 2000; Fisher, Aron, Mashek, Li, & Brown, 2002; Williams, Catania, & Carter, 1992; Williams, Insel, Harbaugh, & Carter, 1994).

This conceptualization of romantic love and sexual desire as fundamentally distinct has profound implications for our understanding of the

nature and development of same-sex sexuality, and yet these implications have gone largely unappreciated. Specifically, if love and desire are based in independent social-behavioral systems, then one's *sexual orientation* toward same-sex or other-sex partners need not correspond with experiences of *romantic attachment* to same-sex or other-sex partners. This, of course, runs directly counter to the implicit presumption among both scientists and laypeople that heterosexual individuals fall in love only with other-sex partners and lesbian and gay individuals fall in love only with same-sex partners.

Despite these presumptions, the last 30 years of social scientific research on same-sex sexuality have converged to indicate that inconsistencies between sexual and affectional feelings for same-sex versus other-sex partners constitute one of the primary forms of both interindividual and intraindividual variability in same-sex sexuality, both in contemporary Western culture and in other cultures and historical periods (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Blackwood, 1985; Blumstein & Schwartz, 1977; Brown, 1995; Diamond, 2000a, 2004; Faderman, 1981; Gay, 1985; Golden, 1987; Nardi, 1992; Nichols, 1990; Rothblum, 1993; Savin-Williams, 1998; Shuster, 1987). Most notably, some individuals report falling in love with a same-sex friend in the absence of a generalized predisposition for same-sex *sexual* desire; in some cases, these emotional attachments engender situationally specific same-sex desires that remain restricted to the partner in question (reviewed in Diamond, 2003b).

Historically, such cases have been classed as instances of "spurious homosexuality" (Bergler, 1954) that have little to tell us about the basic nature and development of same-sex sexuality (DeCecco & Elia, 1993). Reflecting this view, studies investigating the potential genetic basis of sexual orientation have sometimes specifically excluded such individuals (Burr, 1996). It is certainly reasonable to posit that individuals whose same-sex desires are specifically limited to instances of same-sex emotional attachment represent different "types" of people than those with more generalized same-sex sexual predispositions. Yet it is difficult to evaluate this possibility given how many questions remain unanswered regarding the specific phenomenon of same-sex emotional attachment and its relationship to same-sex sexual desire (Brown, 1995; DeCecco, 1990).

In this chapter I briefly review a biobehavioral model of sexuality and attachment that I have advanced elsewhere (Diamond, 2003b) to address these unanswered questions, and I use longitudinal data on a sample of young sexual-minority (i.e., nonheterosexual) women to investigate the possibility that there are stable individual differences in the linkage between sexuality and attachment that shape women's experiences of same-sex and other-sex sexuality over time. Although these analyses must be considered preliminary, they raise fundamental questions about intraindividual variability in the links between love and desire that have im-

portant implications for understanding *both* attachment and sexual orientation.

A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE "UNORIENTATION" OF ATTACHMENT

It is commonly assumed that an individual's sexual orientation shapes not only his or her sexual desires but also experiences of romantic love. Tendencies to become romantically attached to same-sex versus other-sex partners are typically assessed as part of the standard measurements of sexual orientation (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Pattatucci & Hamer, 1995; Russell & Consolacion, 2003; Sell & Petruccio, 1996), and, in fact, the majority of openly identified lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals report desiring and participating in long-term romantic attachments with same-sex partners (reviewed in Diamond, in press), whereas heterosexuals typically form romantic attachments exclusively with other-sex partners.

Yet this is not always the case. As noted earlier, disjunctions between sexual and affectional feelings for same-sex and other-sex partners have been widely documented. Such disjunctions do not seem so peculiar, however, when one considers the biobehavioral architecture of romantic love. As Hazan and Shaver argued (1987), the dynamics of adult pair bonding are based in the *attachment* system, which originally evolved to keep infants in close proximity to caregivers (thereby maximizing their chances for survival) by establishing an intense affectional bond between them (Bowlby, 1982). In other words, adult pair bonding is an *exaptation*—a system that originally evolved for one reason (bonding infants to their caregivers) but came to serve another (bonding reproductive partners together) over the course of human evolution (see Hazan & Zeifman, 1999).

The fundamental correspondence between infant-caregiver attachment and adult pair bonding is supported by extensive research that documents that these phenomena share the same core emotional and behavioral dynamics: heightened proximity maintenance, resistance to separation, and utilization of the partner as a preferred target for comfort and security seeking (reviewed in Hazan & Zeifman, 1999). Even more powerful evidence is provided by voluminous animal research that documents that these two types of affectional bonding are mediated by the same opioid- and oxytocin-based neural circuitry (Carter, 1998).

Yet if the basic affective, behavioral, and neurobiological dynamics of pair bonding are based in the infant-caregiver attachment system—and, importantly, *not* in the sexual mating system—then consider the implications for sexual orientation. Quite simply, there is no reason to expect the orientation of an individual's *sexual* desires to fundamentally circumscribe his or her propensity for romantic attachment. If individuals were endowed with

intrinsic affectional “orientations” driving them to form pair bonds *only* with partners of a particular gender, such orientations would have to be coded into the biobehavioral architecture of infant-caregiver attachment. Of course, this is implausible: Infants do not become selectively attached to same-sex versus other-sex caregivers, and it would be maladaptive if they did.

Consequently, it should be possible for lesbian or gay individuals to fall in love with other-sex partners and for heterosexual individuals to fall in love with same-sex partners, even in the absence of sexual desire. As it happens, both the anthropological and historical literatures are replete with descriptions of platonic same-sex “infatuations” between otherwise heterosexual individuals (Blackwood, 1985; Faderman, 1981; Gay, 1985; Hansen, 1992; Nardi, 1992; Sahli, 1979; Smith-Rosenberg, 1975). Although contemporary Western scholars typically ponder whether the participants were “really” lesbian or gay, this does not appear to have been true in most cases and was not typically suspected of the participants in the cultures and historical periods during which such bonds have been most prevalent (Faderman, 1981; Nardi, 1992).

For example, in 19th-century America, passionate attachments between women were actually viewed as appropriate outlets for intense intimacy during the adolescent years *because* of their platonic nature (Faderman, 1981). The diaries of young girls of this period frequently contained exclamations of enduring love for other girls (Smith-Rosenberg, 1975), and writers such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Oliver Wendell Holmes explicitly described these intense friendships as forms of “rehearsal” for adult marital intimacy (Faderman, 1993). Even now, such passionate and platonic attachments continue to be observed (Crumpacker & Vander Haegen, 1993; Diamond, 2000a), most commonly among young women and most often in sex-segregated environments (reviewed in Diamond, 2003b).

PATHWAYS FROM LOVE TO DESIRE

Although the aforementioned cases demonstrate that one need not experience same-sex sexual desire in order to develop a same-sex attachment, it is important to note that in some cases, same-sex attachments appear to *precipitate* novel same-sex sexual desires among individuals who may have never before experienced such feelings (Diamond, 2000a) and who often claim that these desires are experienced *only* for the attachment figure in question. Although such cases have long been anecdotally reported in the literature on sexual identity and orientation (Cass, 1990; Pillard, 1990), they are often greeted with skepticism or puzzlement, given that our conventional understanding of sexual orientation maintains that it is

impossible to have “just one” same-sex attraction (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1990).

Yet research increasingly suggests that such attachment-based same-sex desires are, in fact, possible and that they may be engendered by a certain degree of intrinsic plasticity in the human sexual response system (Cass, 1990), particularly among women (Baumeister, 2000). One potential explanation for these feelings is that although attachment and sexuality are distinct social-behavioral systems, there are cultural, psychological, and neurobiological interconnections between them that are intrinsically bidirectional, making it possible to “get” from love to desire just as individuals often begin with desire and progress toward love (for a full explanation of this possibility and the evidence for it, see Diamond, 2003b).

Interestingly, this might help to explain the widely documented but little understood phenomenon in which individuals (typically women) claim that they are not necessarily sexually oriented to one sex or the other but are rather drawn to “the person rather than the gender” (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1977; Golden, 1987; Weinberg, Williams, & Pryor, 1994). Such reports are difficult to reconcile with conventional conceptualizations of sexual orientation, in which love and desire are *always* fundamentally “about” gender. Yet, currently, we have little empirical or theoretical basis on which to interpret and evaluate such claims and to explore their significance for contemporary models of sexual orientation. One intriguing possibility, for example, is that there are considerable *individual differences* in the degree of interconnectedness between the social-behavioral systems of sexuality and attachment (perhaps even manifested in the functioning of their shared neurobiological substrates, as in Turner, Altemus, Enos, Cooper, & McGuinness, 1999) that make such “nongendered” desires possible. In other words, just as some individuals appear to possess sexual predispositions for other-sex or same-sex partners, other individuals might possess an orthogonal predisposition to develop full-blown adult attachments in the absence of sexual desire, or perhaps to develop sexual desires on the basis of such attachments, regardless of the other person’s sex.

On this point, it is notable that some women who have experienced passionate but platonic same-sex attachments report having developed multiple such relationships at different stages of life (Cole, 1993), sometimes with playmates or even sisters in early childhood (Rothblum, 1993). This observation led Rothblum (1993) to speculate whether such relationships might serve as an influential developmental model, priming women to develop such bonds later on. Yet without knowing more about *how* interconnections between the systems of sexuality and attachment develop during childhood, puberty, and early adulthood, it is difficult to evaluate this possibility. Clearly, a systematic integration of research on attachment with research on sexual development has the potential to fundamentally advance our understanding of the nature and development of different forms of

same-sex love and desire over the life course. In particular, it might help to evaluate the long-held presumption (critiqued by DeCecco & Elia, 1993) that individuals whose same-sex attractions and relationships are strongly influenced by situational and emotional factors are less "authentically" gay and less likely to maintain a lesbian/gay/bisexual identity over time than are individuals whose same-sex sexuality is motivated by generalized, early-appearing, and fundamentally sexual urges.

Toward this end, the research presented here provides a preliminary inquiry into some of these issues by exploring two attachment-relevant phenomena that have remained unexplained in the extant literature on sexual orientation: (1) being attracted to "the person and not the gender," and (2) requiring a strong emotional bond in order to develop a physical attraction. Using a sample of young sexual-minority women whose trajectories of same-sex and other-sex love and desire have been documented over an 8-year period, the goal is to provide a rough snapshot of the prevalence of these phenomena, to assess whether they appear fundamentally related to one another, and to investigate whether women reporting either of these experiences appear to represent unique "types" of sexual minorities, with distinctive patterns of emotional and physical attractions, relationships, and developmental histories.

OVERVIEW OF STUDY METHODS

Participants were 79 nonheterosexual women between the ages of 18 and 23 years who were initially interviewed in person as part of a longitudinal study of sexual identity development among young women (Diamond, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a). Of the original sample of 89 women, 42% identified as lesbian, 30% identified as bisexual, and 28% declined to adopt a sexual identity label. Time 1 (T1) assessments were scripted, face-to-face interviews conducted with each woman by the primary investigator, approximately 90% of which lasted between 1 and 1.5 hours. When possible, interviews were conducted in a university office. When this was not feasible, interviews were conducted at a location of the participant's choosing, usually her home. Because of the sensitivity of the subject matter, interviews were not tape-recorded. Detailed notes were taken during the interview by the primary investigator and transcribed immediately afterward. The primary investigator reinterviewed participants over the phone 2 years later (T2), after an additional 3 years (T3), and after an additional 2 years (T4). The T2, T3, and T4 interviews followed a standard script reassessing the major variables assessed at T1 and lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. Verbatim typed transcriptions were taken of the T2 interviews while they were being conducted; T3 and T4 interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Eleven women could not be located for follow-up by time 4. At the first as-

assessment, the mean and median age of the participants was 19; at the fourth assessment, the mean and median age of the participants was 28. There were no significant age differences across recruitment sites or sexual identity categories.

Initial sampling took place in two moderately sized cities and a number of smaller urban and rural communities in central New York state. The settings that were sampled included (1) lesbian, gay, and bisexual community events (i.e., picnics, parades, social events) and youth groups; (2) classes on gender and sexuality issues taught at a large university with a moderately ethnically diverse—but largely middle-class—student population; and (3) lesbian, gay, and bisexual student groups at a large public university with a predominantly white but more socioeconomically diverse population and at a small, private women's college with a predominantly white and middle-class student population. This recruitment strategy succeeded in sampling sizable numbers of bisexual women as well as nonheterosexual women who declined to label their sexual identity; both groups are underrepresented in most research on sexual minorities. However, the sample shares a chronic drawback with other samples of sexual minorities in that it comprises predominantly white, highly educated, middle- to upper-class individuals. Nearly all of the college-age participants had enrolled in college at one point, and 75% came from families in which at least one parent had completed college. Sixty-three percent of women came from families in which at least one parent had a professional or technical occupation, and 84% were white.

As reviewed in previously published reports on this sample (Diamond, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a), at the beginning of each interview, each woman was asked, "How do you currently label your sexual identity to yourself, even if it's different from what you might tell other people? If you don't apply a label to your sexual identity, please say so." Lesbian- and bisexual-identified women were categorized according to their chosen identity labels. Women who declined to attach a label to their sexuality were classified as *unlabeled*. Women were also asked to recall the process by which they first questioned their sexuality and to recount any changes they had recently undergone since the previous interview regarding their experience or conceptualization of their sexuality. At time 1, they also provided information on the age at which they first consciously questioned their sexual identity, first experienced a same-sex attraction, first engaged in same-sex contact, and first openly adopted a sexual-minority identity. To assess their same-sex attractions, at each interview women were asked to estimate the general percentage of their current attractions that were directed toward the same sex on a day-to-day basis; separate estimates were provided for sexual versus romantic/affectional attractions. This yields an estimate of the *relative frequency* of same-sex versus other-sex attractions, regardless of the intensity of these attractions or the total number of sexual attractions expe-

rienced on a day-to-day basis. Also, at T4 women were asked to rate, on a 5-point Likert scale, their agreement with the following statements describing different aspects of sexual orientation and its development: "I'm the kind of person who's attracted to the person rather than to their gender"; "I feel my sexuality is something I was born with"; "I feel my sexuality has been influenced by my environment"; "I would have a hard time becoming physically attracted to someone without having an emotional connection to them."

RESULTS

Overall, 60% of the sample agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they were generally attracted to the person rather than their gender ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.23$), and 45% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they needed an emotional connection with someone to become physically attracted to them ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.45$). Notably, responses on these items were not associated with one another (Table 11.1 presents correlations among these variables and the major variables under analysis). A one-way analysis of variance found that endorsement of "nongendered" attractions differed significantly among the sexual identity groups (using time 1 identity labels), $F(2, 76) = 4.56$, $p = .01$. Specifically, bisexually identified individuals more strongly endorsed nongendered attractions than both lesbians and unlabeled women, both Bonferroni-corrected p values $< .05$. Because the majority of respondents changed identity labels over the 8 years of the study (Diamond, 2005), this analysis was repeated using T2, T3, and T4 identity labels (note, for example, that 42% of the T4 bisexuals had a different identity label at T1). The results were unchanged.

In contrast, a two-group t test found that emotionally based attractions (i.e., needing an emotional connection to become physically attracted to someone) were more strongly endorsed among women who selected "unlabeled" as their sexual identity during at least one assessment over the 8 years of the study, $t = 2.45$, $p < .02$. Emotionally based attractions were also significantly associated with reidentification as heterosexual: Of the 11 women who reidentified as heterosexual over the 8-year study period (note that 5 of these women ended up going back to lesbian/gay/unlabeled identities by the last assessment, so that only 6 women identified as heterosexual at T4), all but one of these women either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement describing emotionally based attractions, $\chi^2(1, n = 79) = 6.0$, $p = .01$. The only other consistent distinguishing characteristic of women with emotionally based attractions was that they tended to begin questioning their sexuality at later ages.

Endorsement of nongendered attractions showed a broader pattern of associations: As shown in Table 11.1, it was significantly associated with having less exclusive (i.e., more bisexual) attractions and with being more

TABLE 11.1. Correlations among Study Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Attracted to person, not gender								
2. Need emotional bond to become attracted	-.10							
3. Percentage of day-to-day physical attractions to women, averaged across the 4 assessments	-.45***	-.10						
4. Percentage of day-to-day emotional attractions to women, averaged across the 4 assessments	-.27*	-.03	.82***					
5. Gap between emotional and physical attractions (emotional minus physical), computed for each assessment and averaged	.29*	.10	-.39***	.18				
6. Belief that the environment has influenced one's sexuality	.45***	-.05	-.22†	-.05	.27*			
7. Belief that one was "born" with her sexuality	-.14	-.12	.16	.15	-.01	-.35**		
8. Age of first conscious same-sex attraction	-.04	.08	-.20	-.01	.27*	.15	-.12	
9. Age of first conscious questioning of sexual identity	-.09	.25*	-.15	-.02	.15	.15	-.07	.53***

† $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

emotionally than physically drawn to women (assessed by subtracting each woman's percentage of physical attractions from her percentage of emotional attractions in order to yield a difference score, with positive values indicating same-sex attractions that were more emotional than physical and negative values indicating same-sex attractions that were more physical than emotional). These effects are represented in Figure 11.1, which contrasts the 8-year averages for percentages of same-sex physical and emotional attractions among women with gendered versus nongendered attractions and also displays the gaps between these attractions at each of the four assessments.

Nongendered attractions were also associated with believing that one's sexuality was, to some extent, environmentally influenced, although it was *not* associated with the age of women's first same-sex attractions, the age of their first sexual questioning, the degree to which they believed they were

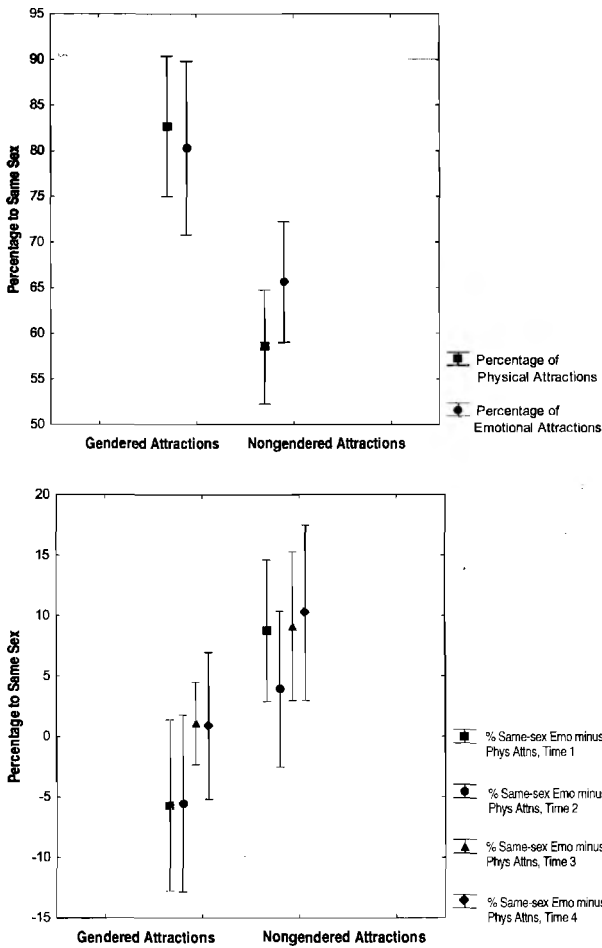


FIGURE 11.1. Percentages of same-sex physical and emotional attractions among women with gendered versus nongendered attractions, averaged across assessments, and differences between emotional and physical attractions at each assessment.

“born” with their sexuality, or the likelihood of reidentifying as heterosexual. This contrasts with the conventional wisdom, noted earlier, that individuals who are attracted to “the person, not the gender” are less “essentially” gay (and therefore, presumably, less likely to experience an early onset of their same-sex attractions).

The pattern of associations in Table 11.1 clearly demonstrates that nongendered attractions and emotionally based attractions are two distinct phenomena, representing different patterns of same-sex and other-sex sexuality. In order to explore their implications for the degree of linkage over

time in women's physical and emotional attractions, hierarchical linear modeling was used to test whether these two individual difference dimensions moderated within-person covariation between physical and emotional attractions from T1 to T4.

Hierarchical linear modeling (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992) is a technique designed for multilevel data structures in which observations at one level of analysis (in this case, self-reported percentages of physical and emotional same-sex attractions at times 1–4) are nested within higher levels of analysis (individuals). This technique estimates within-person and between-person effects simultaneously. At the within-person level (known as level 1), the model estimates a separate regression equation for each participant, modeling physical same-sex attractions at time i as a function of emotional attractions at time i . Then the coefficients for each of these n equations (one for each participant) become the dependent variables for the between-person (level 2) analysis, where they are modeled as a function of the following variables: overall percentage of physical same-sex attractions (averaged across all assessments), gap between emotional and physical attractions (averaged across all assessments), the degree to which one's attractions are emotionally based, and the degree to which they are gendered versus nongendered. Thus the model is essentially testing whether these individual-difference dimensions moderate the degree to which a specific woman's physical and emotional attractions have covaried over the 8 years of the study. Inclusion of the overall percentage of same-sex attractions and also the gap between emotional and physical attractions as potential moderators was designed to assess whether—independent of women's subjective experience of their attractions as emotionally based or nongendered—those with more exclusive same-sex attractions showed more correspondence over time between their physical and emotional attractions and whether there was less correspondence among women who had consistently reported large discrepancies between physical and emotional attractions. Including these attraction measures is also important given that both are correlated with women's self-reports of nongendered attractions. All level 2 variables were centered before entry into the equation.

The results indicated significant moderating effects. Specifically, women who described themselves as having nongendered attractions showed greater covariation between their physical and emotional attractions over time, $G = .016$, $t = 3.17$, $p = .002$. Covariation was not associated, however, with endorsement of emotionally based attractions. Notably, greater covariation was also found among women with larger overall percentages of same-sex physical attractions, $G = .008$, $t = 8.94$, $p < .001$, whereas there was *less* covariation among women whose attractions to women were more emotional than physical (i.e., larger difference scores when subtracting their percentage of physical attractions from their percentage of emotional attractions), $G = -.004$, $t = -5.70$, $p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

These findings confirm that the degree of correspondence between sexual-minority women's physical and emotional attractions for same-sex and other-sex partners is neither perfect nor uniform. Rather, the women in the sample showed notable interindividual variability in the nature and degree of linkage between these two different types of attractions, and hence potentially between their underlying mating and attachment systems. These findings underscore the importance of investigating attachment-related phenomena in the context of research on sexual identity and same-sex sexuality.

Attractions to "the Person and Not the Gender"

Importantly, these results suggest that the experience of being attracted to "the person and not the gender" is appreciably distinct from the experience of needing an emotional bond with another person in order to experience physical attraction to them. There was no significant association between these two types of experiences, and each was found to be associated with a distinct profile of sexual and emotional attractions to same-sex and other-sex partners over time. Nongendered attractions were strongly associated with bisexuality in terms of both the distribution of women's same-sex and other-sex attractions and their self-identifications. At each of the four assessments, women with nongendered attractions were disproportionately likely to identify as bisexual, despite the fact that the exact composition of the "bisexual" identity group changed from assessment to assessment. Clearly, many contemporary sexual-minority women consider a capacity for desire based on "the person and not the gender" to be consistent with their own definitions and conceptualizations of bisexuality. Notably, the same finding has been obtained in older cohorts of bisexuals. Weinberg et al. (1994) found that an "open gender schema" with regard to patterns of attractions characterized many of the adult bisexual men and women they surveyed in the 1980s.

Of course, not all individuals with this profile view "bisexual" as an appropriate identity label. Some of the women in the present study explicitly noted during their interviews that they had elected *not* to identify as bisexual specifically because they felt that the term placed too much emphasis on gender:

"I don't even identify as a bisexual, just because my definition of bisexuality is one who maybe craves both, either at the same time or . . . or just can see themselves with both parties whereas with me I'm all about one person. I've gotten to the point now in my life where it's not even like a sexual or gender identification; it's just, like, I'm attracted to certain

things about a . . . about a whole person and if and when I find that *sexuality* doesn't really matter that much for me anymore. It's just about the person."

Nongendered attractions were also significantly associated with the experience of being more emotionally than physically drawn to women (based on gaps between women's self-reported percentages of day-to-day physical attractions to women and their percentages of day-to-day emotional attractions) and with greater covariation between physical and emotional attractions across the 8 years of the study. These findings hint at a potential difference between women with nongendered versus emotionally based attractions: Although women who were attracted to "the person and not the gender" generally experienced more emotional than physical attractions to women, changes in one domain over the 8 years of the study were associated with corresponding changes in the other. This might indicate a high propensity for the type of bidirectional plasticity between sexuality and attachment that makes the phenomenon of nongendered attractions possible, particularly given that some of these women experienced a generally low frequency of day-to-day physical attractions to women. In contrast, the experience of "needing" an emotional attachment in order to develop physical attractions seems to suggest a pattern of interconnections between sexuality and attachment that is more unidirectional, more commonly progressing from attachment to sexuality than vice versa.

Emotionally Based Attractions

Although some women with nongendered attractions preferred to reject sexual identity labels altogether, this tendency was much more pronounced among women who reported that they needed an emotional connection to another person in order to become attracted to them; furthermore, such women were also disproportionately likely to readopt *heterosexual* identities over time. Thus, despite the fact that women with "emotionally based" attractions were comparable to the rest of the sample with regard to their overall proportion of same-sex attractions and the degree to which they felt they were "born with" their sexuality, they nonetheless perceived that their particular pattern of attractions was inconsistent with contemporary conceptualizations of lesbian and bisexual orientations.

This was directly reflected in women's stated reasons for declining to adopt an identity label. For example, numerous unlabeled women remarked that they were unsure whether emotionally based attractions "counted" as a reliable index of their underlying sexual orientation, and they were therefore reluctant to consider themselves lesbian or bisexual even if they had done so in the past. As one woman noted:

“I guess my attraction to women isn’t really all that sexual. . . . My immediate gut-level physical response is to men, but I want to marry a woman because I find women more beautiful, and I have more enduring emotional bonds with a woman. I guess I find women magnetic. I’m not sure that’s the same as a sexual attraction.”

Certainly, her reservations might be shared by scientists and laypeople who believe that individuals with same-sex attractions that are primarily situationally or interpersonally based are fundamentally different “types” of sexual minorities than those whose same-sex attractions are experienced as broad, cross-situational predispositions.

Yet the present findings cannot be taken as straightforward confirmation for this view. Although nearly all of the women who ended up concluding that they were “really” heterosexual had emotionally based attractions, this was a fairly uncommon pattern. Overall, the majority of women with emotionally based attractions maintained sexual-minority identifications over time. Thus, to the extent that we can identify a phenomenon of “situational” same-sex sexuality that represents an emergent property of emotionally intimate same-sex bonds, this phenomenon may, in fact, be meaningfully linked to the phenomenon of emotionally based attractions. However, the converse is not necessarily true: Experiencing one’s attractions as emotionally based does not necessarily mean that one’s same-sex sexuality is exclusively situational. As with the phenomenon of nongendered attractions, we clearly require a greater understanding of the basic biobehavioral links between the systems of attachment and sexuality in order to understand the bases and developmental implications of these phenomena.

CONCLUSION

Although these findings raise more questions than they definitively answer, they certainly demonstrate the importance of investigating attachment phenomena in order to understand individuals’ sexual self-concepts and behaviors over time. The standard practice of classifying individuals into discrete sexual categories solely on the basis of their physical attractions for same-sex versus other-sex partners provides an incomplete picture of the complex interconnections between emotional intimacy and physical eroticism that shape individuals’ subjective experiences of their sexuality.

Interestingly, taking greater account of attachment phenomena might productively change not only the way we investigate the development of same-sex sexuality but also the way we study other-sex sexuality. As Brown (1995) noted, perhaps instead of asking why some individuals grow up to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual, we might ask why *heterosexual* individuals who may have experienced intense, emotionally intimate same-sex bonds in

childhood or adolescence either lost such bonds or never sexualized them. Brown's point highlights how little we know about the constellation of intrapsychic, cultural, and perhaps even neurobiological mechanisms through which sexuality and attachment become interconnected over the course of social and sexual development. One intriguing possibility is that certain types of erotic *or* emotional experiences during the childhood or early adolescent years influence the nature and strength of these interconnections. On this note, it is interesting to consider that women with emotionally based attractions typically began questioning their sexuality at around age 16½ (notably, later than the rest of the sample), which corresponds to the age at which Hazan and Zeifman found that adolescents generally first begin developing full-blown attachment relationships with peers rather than parents (Hazan & Zeifman, 1994). Clearly, in order for future research to clarify the bases and developmental implications of nongendered or emotionally based attractions among sexual-minority women, we need more substantive basic research on links between sexuality and affectional bonding among *all* kinds of individuals over the life course.

Thus, whereas the first 50 years of systematic psychological research on same-sex sexuality largely ignored questions of romantic love, the next generation of scientific research on the topic cannot afford to. Understanding the ways in which desire, caregiving, and attachment are interbraided in our experiences of physical and emotional intimacy with same-sex and other-sex partners is clearly fundamental to understanding our basic sexual and affectional nature.

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