



# Sexual Identification and the Effects on Ally Identity



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## Abstract

In this study, I have examined whether the way someone is asked about their sexual orientation affects their subsequent answers regarding feelings about people in different minority groups. In an online study administered via Qualtrics, the participants were randomly assigned to complete either the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG) or a multiple choice option (heterosexual, homosexual or other). The KSOG is much more expansive and asks questions organized into 7 different categories as well as asking about past, present, and future identities in order to get a more complete understanding of the individual's sexuality. The sexual orientation questions served as a prime, after which participants were asked to complete the Ally Identity Measure and the Symbolic Racism Scale. The participants were taken from both the Sewanee population (N=237) and from outside of Sewanee (N=57) with 187 females and 92 males in total. While overall there was no effect on the Ally Identity scores as a function of which priming question was received, when examining gender differences, it appears that there was a higher level of support for the LGBTQ+ community shown in males who had completed the Klein scale that can be explored with further research. It was also found for both men and women that if an individual supports racial equality, then they were significantly more likely to support the LGBTQ+ community and vice versa. Women were shown to support LGBTQ+ rights and racial equality more than men. Using the Klein Scale revealed variety and fluidity in the sexuality of the participants and is recommended for future research.

## Introduction

There have been many changes in the past years in the LGBTQ community. These changes are not only with numbers; although a 2015 survey reported that roughly 19 million Americans or 8.2% reporting to have had same-sex sexual behavior.<sup>1</sup> People have become more and more accepting of the LGBTQ community members, both inside the community and outside.<sup>2</sup> More people believe that sexuality is something that one is born with and not a decision.<sup>3</sup> This is an important difference and allows for overall acceptance of not only lesbian, gay and bisexual people but also opens up the door for the lesser known sexualities. This also allows for an increase in interest on the subjects which leads to better understanding as a result of curiosity. This change can be seen in the influence of the political situation as the power and influence of the group grows as more people openly identify as LGBTQ+. This influence grows as politicians and the rest of the public understand not only the power that the group has but also the growing size of the community.<sup>4</sup> The group is also growing as more people become allies and fight for rights alongside the queer community.

Despite the progress made forward for the LGBTQ+ community there is still shame in coming out as being gay as well as people not coming out at all.<sup>5,6</sup> As the LGBTQ+ identity changes and progresses, a certain stigma about fitting the stereotype for each of the sexualities has appeared; especially in relation to clothing and self-presentation. Sexual orientation is something that is very complex and as a result, researchers have had difficulty accurately measuring it. There has been much discussion about the way in which studies should ask the sexuality of the participant, which has led to many different scales created to try and measure sexuality.

In 1946, Kinsey invented the Kinsey Scale which was a new and inventive way of measuring sexuality by taking into account there being different levels of bisexuality as well as allowing for people to be more detailed about their sexual experience. However it did not take into account frequency, which ignores asexuality, or that the person's history could be different than their desires, therefore making the reports more inaccurate. Dr. Fritz Klein created The Klein Sexual Orientation Grid, or KSOG, that looked at the person's past, their present, and their ideal.<sup>7</sup> The KSOG proved to be so accurate that in one study it was found that there was a 93% congruence between the responses to the KSOG and the open self-response.<sup>8</sup> Many studies have been done that find that the KSOG provides a more accurate depiction of sexual orientation and allows for all of the complexities of sexuality.<sup>9</sup> The only complaints that have come up with the KSOG are in relation to gender identity.<sup>9</sup> There are also still people who are prejudiced against them inside and outside of the LGBTQ+ community<sup>10</sup> and some who continue to work to 'convert' gay people (Fjelstrom, 2013). Some of the prejudice inside of the community is related to bisexuality and the confusion of where it fits into sexual orientation.

There is a great deal of prejudice and discrimination against minority groups, however it has been found that being a part of a minority group creates a higher possibility of supporting other minority groups. Many studies have been done that look at the "underdog theory"<sup>11</sup> that looks at how those who are not in a dominant group are more likely to support and accept other minorities. This theory has been proven valid in past research, each finding that members of different non-dominant groups consistently support other minorities. This begins the discussion of the power of being an ally and the ways in which one is able to measure this quality quantitatively. In 2014, in order to prevent a standstill on the research done on LGBT allies; Nicole Jones, Melanie Brewster and Jacob Jones worked together to create an Ally Identity Measure (AIM) in order to accurately gauge the effectiveness of people as allies. In this study, I am using the priming of sexual orientation and then asking the participants to complete the Ally Identity Measure and the Symbolic Racism Scale. By giving participants either the KSOG or the multiple choice option with limited possible answers may trigger a different response than normal when responding to the Ally Identity Measure because they will be thinking more about their sexual orientation.

## Methods and Materials

### Participants

- Total of 284 participants with 237 undergraduate students from a small, private liberal arts college in the South and 57 participants from the nation volunteered to participate in this study.
- 92 were male and 187 were female.

### Ally Identity Measure

- The scale that I used for the study was the Ally Identity Measure (Jones, Brewster, & Jones, 2014).
- Some of the items for the Ally Identity Measure (AIM) include: "I try to increase my knowledge about sexual minority groups", and "I think the sexual minority groups are oppressed by society in the United States" (Jones et al., 2014).

### Klein Sexual Orientation Grid

- The participants took either the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG) or a multiple choice option to answer their sexual orientation at the beginning of the survey (Klein, Sepeckoff, & Wolf, 1985).
- The participants were randomly assigned to either the KSOG or the multiple choice option; which will consist of: Heterosexual, Gay/Lesbian or Other.
- Some examples of the KSOG items include "To whom are you sexually attracted to in the most recent 12 months" and "Do you hope to love and like only members of the same sex, only members of the other sex, or members of both sexes in your life in the future?" (Klein, 1985)

### Symbolic Racism

- The participants also completed the symbolic racism scale (McConahay & Hough Jr, 1976). This scale was used to also distract from the participants figuring out the point of the study and also to test an extension of the underdog theory.

## Results

- Two-way ANOVAs were completed to assess the effect of gender and sexual orientation question had on the overall scores of both Ally Identity and Symbolic Racism Scale.
- As predicted by my hypotheses, there was a significant main effect of gender on the Ally Identity score,  $F(1, 233) = 11.71, p = .001$ . There was no significant main effect of sexual orientation question group, and no significant interaction of gender and sexual orientation question group on Ally Identity score.
- Also consistent with our hypotheses, there was a significant main effect of gender on the Symbolic Racism Scale scores,  $F(1, 233) = 21.96, p = .00$ . There was no significant main effect of sexual orientation question group and no significant interaction of gender and sexual orientation question group on Symbolic Racism Scale score.
- Bivariate correlation coefficients were conducted to assess the effect of Ally Identity scores and Symbolic Racism Scale for men and women separately. For men, they were found to be significantly correlated,  $r(90) = .29, p < .006$ . For women, they were found to be significantly correlated,  $r(185) = .46, p = .000$ .

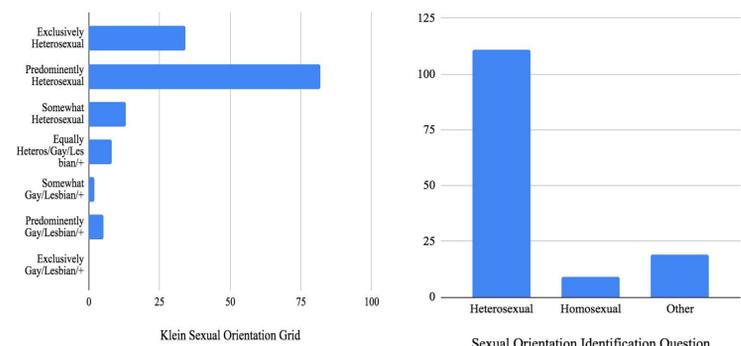
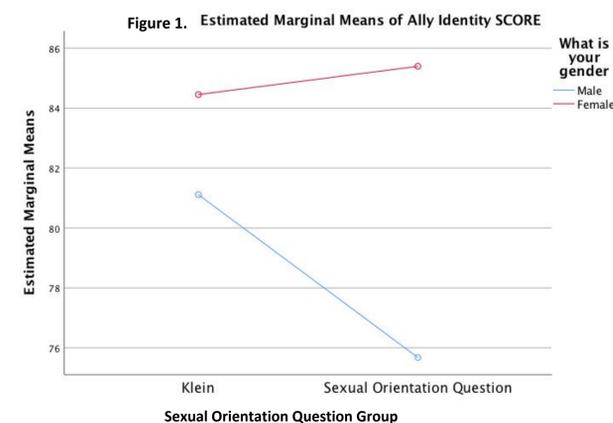


Chart 1. Klein Sexual Orientation Grid Results

Chart 2. Sexual Orientation Identification Question Results

## Discussion

While overall there was no effect on the Ally Identity scores as a result of which priming question the participant received, when examining gender differences, it appears that there was a higher level of support for the LGBTQ+ community shown in males who had completed the Klein scale (seen in Figure 1). Also, it was found that for both women and men that if an individual supports the LGBTQ+ community they were significantly more likely to support racial equality as well and vice versa. It was also shown that women were more likely to support both LGBTQ+ rights and racial equality more than men. It was also found that in completing the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid individuals were more likely to report being within the spectrum of sexuality between heterosexual and homosexual (seen in Chart 1 and 2). These findings mean that support of marginalized groups leads to support of other groups as well. These findings about gender differences are supported by past research. There has not yet been a study about the priming of sexual orientation and the impact on Ally Identity but this is something that future research should pursue. A possibility for the inconclusive results with regard to the priming for Ally Identity would be the small number of participants from outside of the Sewanee student population as well as the lack of diversity and representation of the American population in the participants' demographics. Further research should look into how priming of sexual orientation impacts Ally Identity with a larger sample population that has more variety and a better representation of the national population.

## Conclusions

This research was designed to look further into how priming with sexual orientation questions impacts one's likelihood to be more of an Ally to the LGBTQ+ community as well as other marginalized groups, such as race. I hypothesized that women would be more likely to be supportive of the LGBTQ+ community and racial equality than men. I also hypothesized that the priming would result in an increase in support of the LGBTQ+ community. There have been no other studies that look into the priming of sexual orientation on support of the LGBTQ+ community. This can lead to further research on this topic as it is important to better understand how normalizing the variations of sexual orientation can lead to more support of the LGBTQ+ community. It also shows how sexuality is a much wider spectrum than the general population and social discourses make it out to be. The limitations of my study were the small size of participants outside of the Sewanee student population and the lack of diversity of the participant pool. Future research should look further into how priming for sexual orientation can lead to more support of the LGBTQ+ community, especially when considering males' lower rates of Ally Identity.

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