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Heteronormativity and Sexual Partnering Among Bisexual Latino Men

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Abstract

Our analyses address the question of how bisexual Latino men organize their sexual partnerships. Heteronormativity can be understood as the set of social norms and normative structures that guide sexual partnering among men and women. We provide descriptive statistics to describe bisexual Latino men's sexual partnerships. Logistic and linear regression modeling were used to explore bivariate and multivariate relationships. Of our total sample ($N = 142$), 41.6% had unprotected vaginal intercourse 2 months prior to the interview; 21.8 % had unprotected anal intercourse with female partners; 37.5 % had unprotected insertive anal intercourse with male partners; and 22.5 % had unprotected receptive anal intercourse with male partners. In our multivariate model, machismo was directly associated with meeting female partners through formal spaces (workplace, school, and/or church), but inversely associated with meeting male partners in formal spaces. Machismo was positively associated with meeting male sex partners through social networks (i.e., friendship and kinship networks). The more comfortable men were with homosexuality the less likely they were to meet men online and the more likely they were to meet men through social networks of friends and kinship. Interventions to reduce sexually transmitted diseases that target bisexual behavior as an epidemiological "bridge" of transmission from homosexual to heterosexual networks might very well benefit from a more complex

understanding of how Latino bisexuality is patterned. Thus, this exploratory analysis might lead to a rethinking of how to address risk and vulnerability among Latino bisexual men and their sexual networks.

Keywords

Bisexuality; Heteronormativity; Latino men; Sexual partnership; Sexual orientation

Introduction

Our current understanding of Latino bisexual men is that they closely follow heterosexual norms of sexual partnering and behavior (Muñoz-Laboy, 2008). Sexual partnering among bisexual Latino men is more complex, as some of the literature shows they (1) have steady/regular female partners concurrently with casual male or male-to-female transgender partners (Bockting, Miner, & Rosser 2007; Stokes, McKirnan, Doll, & Burzette 1993); (2) hide their same-sex affective and sexual relations from their families and in social spaces (Mason, Marks, Simoni, Ruiz, & Richardson, 1995); (3) compartmentalize their sexual practices with male and female partners (Muñoz-Laboy, 2008); (4) consider being penetrated during anal intercourse to be a feminizing practice (Fox, 1996; Muñoz-Laboy & Dodge, 2007); and (5) have more unprotected sexual practices with female than with male partners (Schnarrs et al., 2012). Yet, we have a very limited understanding of how bisexual men, particularly Latino men in the United States, organize their sexual lives with male and female partners in sociospatial contexts regulated by norms that guide heterosexual monogamous relationships.

We know a significant amount about the psychosocial development of bisexual identities (Brierley, 2000; Fox, 1996; Leland, 2000; Rodríguez-Rust, 2000), but empirical studies examining how bisexual men negotiate, form, and maintain partnerships are limited (Carballo-Diéguez, Miner, Dolezal, Rosser, & Jacoby, 2006; Martinez et al., 2011). Exploring how bisexual men configure their sexual partnerships according to networks and social context is important because it provides a better understanding of the fluidity of bisexual behavior and its implications for sexual health. Without attempting to reduce all bisexual behavior to a particular category (e.g., men who have sex with men [MSM] or men who have sex with men and women [MSMW]), there are a multitude of partnership configurations according to the contexts and norms in which they operate. Interventions to reduce sexually transmitted diseases that target bisexual behavior as an epidemiological “bridge” of transmission from homosexual to heterosexual networks might very well benefit from a more complex understanding of how Latino bisexuality is patterned. This is particularly pressing as bisexual ethnic minority men have been identified as one of the most vulnerable groups in the U.S. for contracting HIV (Brooks, Rotheram-Borus, Bing, Ayala, & Henry, 2003). Thus, this analysis leads to an exploratory rethinking of how to address risk and vulnerability among Latino bisexual men and their sexual networks.

Heteronormative Scripts

We address the social problem of how bisexual Latino men partner by analyzing the contextually and culturally defined social regulatory mechanism of heteronormativity. Heteronormativity can be understood as the cultural rules and normative structures that guide sexual partnering among men and women in a way that emphasizes the “naturalness” of opposite sexes being attracted to each other and same sex couplings as “alternative,” if not “deviant” (Kitzinger, 2005). The literature on heteronormativity has focused primarily on the ways it affects gender inequality and the oppression of non-heterosexuals in social, cultural, and political economic realms (Blasius, 2000; Grace, 1999; Lancaster, 2003; Phelan, 2001). Whereas there has been research on homoerotic desire and the ways it translates into behavior and identities in Latin American men (Cáceres, 1996, 1999; Lancaster 1992, 1997; Ramirez, 1999; Schifter, 2000), the focus has been on the relationship between “active” and “passive” (i.e., insertive partner and receptive partner) sexual roles. Current research does not go far enough to guide our understanding of how heteronormativity influences the ways Latino men configure concurrent relationships with men and other gender types (i.e. women and transwomen). Exploring bisexual men’s sexual partnership configuration allows us to examine whether complex regulatory structures are associated with heteronormativity.

We conjecture that heteronormativity might be associated with sexual scripts reinforced by bisexual Latino men’s families, co-workers, friendship networks, and so forth. Gagnon and Simon (1984) posited that sexual scripts are social and contextually inscribed norms that guide desires and behaviors. Sexual scripts describe the ways we interact when looking for sex and during sexual relationships. Gagnon and Simon (1984) give important insights into how heteronormative sexual scripts are socially reproduced:

Aside from its own intrinsic requirements, the sexual also shares the burden of demonstrating social, gender, and moral competence and, as a result, the demands placed upon interpersonal scripting often are compelling. Rather than being reciprocally reinforcing, the requirements of interpersonal and intrapsychic scripting of the sexual frequently represent a continuing—and for some a costly—dialectic (p. 59).

Exploring the interpersonal and contextual factors (such as neighborhood of residence or place of sexual encounter) that might be associated with different forms of sexual partnerships among bisexual Latino men is one way to empirically nuance this theory. The relationship between social space and sexual behavior has been explored by Laumann, Ellingson, Mahay, Paik, and Youm (2004) and argues cultural norms (e.g., heteronormativity) and social institutions function together to structure the opportunities for sexual partnering. We conceptualize sociocultural space in terms of (1) relational (e.g., the process of finding a girlfriend or boyfriend) or transactional (e.g., the process of finding a casual, one-night stand) behaviors; (2) time-bounded spaces to interact with potential partners; and (3) informal and formal networks. For example, we propose to question the cultural notion of *machismo* (i.e., a form of hypermasculinity) and the way it operates in the partnering behaviors of Latino men. Our time–space dependent conceptualization of sexual behavior and partnering might be useful in testing the essentializing, static notions of Latino

machismo. The organization of bisexual Latino men's sexual partnering behaviors, attitudes towards a "traditional" masculinity, and avoidance of being labeled as homosexual might become important dimensions of heteronormativity.

More specifically, in our exploration of social factors that affect these men, we hypothesized: If bisexual Latino men adhered to heteronormative scripts of partnership, (1) they would be less likely to have steady or casual male partners in the same neighborhood as their steady female sexual partners, (2) they would be more likely to have females as steady partners and males or transgender women as casual partners, (3) they would be more likely to meet their male or transgender partners through informal spaces/networks, and (4) they would be more comfortable meeting in informal spaces and online if they were more hypermasculine (*machista*) and/or had negative feelings towards homosexuality. These hypotheses allowed us to explore whether our theoretical framework could be operationalized to show associations with contextual and social factors.

Method

Participants and Procedure

This project was approved by the Columbia University Medical Center Institutional Review Board (August 2009 to July 2012) and the Temple University Institutional Review Board (August 2012 to July 2014), with data collected from August 2009 through September 2011. To recruit participants, we first designed a recruitment card with a generic name for the study—Latino Men's Sexual Health Survey—with a simple instruction to contact us via phone, via e-mail or via the web address on the card. The card was then distributed to all people present in the recruitment sites with permission from the establishments or agencies. Additionally, mini-posters and cards were left for potential participants. Next, a version of the card was posted on two types of webpages: sites for Latino men cruising for sex with other men and sites oriented towards self-identifying bisexual Latino men. The senior advisory committee for the study generated the list of Internet sites. Last, interested participants had the option of calling our study phone number, e-mailing us, or visiting the recruitment Internet page of the study.

The recruitment Internet page asked potential participants to consent to participate in the confidential automated screening via a 5-min questionnaire, available in Spanish and English. The questions for the screening focused on the selection criteria for the study: age (18–60 years), sex (male), ethnicity (Latino descent), sexual encounters throughout life with women and men (bisexual history), and recent sexual encounters [bisexually active in the last 6 months, a time-frame used in the literature to establish behavioral sexual orientation stability (Stokes et al., 1993)]; place of residence based on zip code (Bronx, Queens, Washington Heights, Inwood, Jersey City, or Newark), and general health practices and status (including HIV status). We developed a software program that determined the eligibility of the participant according to our selection criteria and the quota sampling process. If the person did not meet the selection criteria, he received a message thanking him for his time and cooperation. If the person met the selection criteria and sampling parameters, then he was asked to schedule a time and date for the interview on the Internet page.

We also used person-to-person outreach and individuals were asked to complete the online screening questionnaire on the computer in our study office or at the site of recruitment using a laptop computer. This automated system for recruitment facilitated the process of sampling while at the same time it reduced participants' potential discomfort in answering screening questions.

We screened 258 men, of whom 45 % did not meet study criteria (7 % did not have male partners in their lifetimes; 1.9 % did not have female partners in their lifetimes; 10.9 % did not have sex with female or female-to-male transgender partners in the past 6 months; 11.2 % did not have sex with male or male-to-female transgender partners in the past 6 months; 7 % were HIV positive; and 7 % were unable to participate in the study). A total of 142 men qualified and participated in the study. Participants were offered an incentive of \$125 for completing the study. They were asked to answer an online survey (in Spanish or English) on their demographic profile, sexuality, masculinity, and general measures of their health and health/risk practices. Data for the analyses presented here originate from the quantitative measures of the computer-based survey.

Measures

We examined bisexual Latino heteronormativity along three dimensions: (1) the organization of their sexual partnering, (2) their sexual behavior, and (3) their attitudes towards traditional masculinity and against homosexuality. Where appropriate, we report the Cronbach's alpha (α) reliability coefficients for each measure. Using cross-tabulations, we describe the sexual behavior of the participants through a series of items on their partnering practices in the prior 2 months. We examined the (1) types of sexual partners (for anal, vaginal or oral sex only) during the past 2 months (along two axes: if the sexual encounter was steady/casual and whether the partner was male, female, MTF, FTM); (2) meeting place, i.e., the first place that they met the sexual partner; (3) social network influences, i.e., whether the new partner belonged to the same social network as participant (Yes/No; If yes, introduction by whom); (4) knowledge of place of residence of partner prior to sexual encounter (Yes/No); (5) neighborhood of residence of partner in relation to the individual, i.e., did the participant and the new partner reside in the same neighborhood or not (Yes/No); (6) place of last sex, i.e., specific venue of last physical sexual interaction; (7) estimated number of friends in common prior to sex.

To measure the ways Latino masculinity was enacted and the participants' attitudes towards homosexuality, we used the 22-item Machismo Cuéllar Scale for hypermasculinity ($\alpha = 0.87$) (Cuéllar, Arnold, & González, 1995). We also used a 6-item scale to measure comfort with homosexual behavior: (1) Do you feel comfortable tongue kissing with another man? (2) Do you feel comfortable masturbating with another man? (3) Do you feel comfortable getting a blow job from another man? (4) Do you feel comfortable giving a blow job to another man? (5) Do you feel comfortable sexually penetrating another man? (6) Do you feel comfortable being sexually penetrated by another man? Possible answers included: "Definitely Yes," "Sometimes Yes," "Sometimes No," and "Definitely No." We tested the psychometric properties of this scale and found $\alpha = 0.77$, indicating adequate reliability for use in our analysis.

Statistical Analysis

Data were extracted from the online survey database and imported into SPSS, version 15.0.1. We conducted descriptive statistics to characterize bisexual Latino men's sexual partnerships. We used logistic regression modeling and linear regression modeling to explore bivariate associations among factors theoretically related to heteronormativity and sexual partnering. In our multivariate linear models we explore the associations between (1) machismo and (2) comfort with homosexuality with several factors related to sexual partnering. We controlled for individual income as a continuous variable to rule out differences related to socioeconomic status. Other sociodemographic variables (e.g., age, education, place of birth) were not included in the multivariate regressions because they did not show bivariate associations with the machismo or comfort with homosexuality scales.

Results

Sample Characteristics

The average age of study participants was 32.9 years ($SD = 11.8$). In our sample, 34.6 % was native U.S.-born. Of those who were foreign-born, 3.6 % had lived in the U.S. for less than 1 year, 1.4 % lived in the U.S. 1–2 years, 4.3 % 3–5 years, 17.4 % 6–10 years, 14.5 % 11–20 years, and 8.7 % more than 20 years. Fifty-percent of foreign-born Latinos had lived in the U.S. since they were infants. Five percent of the sample had elementary school education, 15 % had a middle school education, 11 % had some high school education, 20 % graduated high school, 6.5 % had a GED, 25 % had some college education, 15 % had a college degree, and 2.5 % had a Master's degree or above. Regarding occupations, 10.8 % were unemployed. Among those employed, 15.1 % held administrative or managerial jobs, 24.3 % were employed in sale and retail, 3.4 % were technicians, 42.5 % worked in protective, household or other services, and 14.6 % were laborers, mechanics, repairers, construction workers, farmers or groundskeepers. Most of the study participants worked in the private sector (23 % self-employed, 21.7 % government employees, and 54.9 % employees of a private company, business or individual). As indicators for access to health services show, 37.7 % percent had health insurance, and 34.8 % had a regular medical provider.

In terms of income, 53.1 % had an annual income below \$14,999; 30.4 % earned between \$15,000 and \$49,999; and the remaining 16.5 % earned above \$50,000 per year. Finally, in terms of sexual risk behavior, the men in our study reported the following practices during the prior 2 months: 41.6 % unprotected vaginal intercourse; 21.8 % unprotected anal intercourse with female partners; 37.5 % unprotected insertive anal intercourse with male partners; 22.5 % unprotected receptive anal intercourse with male partners; 64.9 % had performed oral sex on a male partner; 62.3 % had performed oral sex on a female partner; 81.8 % had received oral sex from a male partner; and 77.7 % had received oral sex from a female partner.

Spatial Restrictions in Sexual Partnering

We posited that if bisexual Latino men adhered to heteronormative scripts of partnership, they would be less likely to have male partners or female casual partners in the same

neighborhood as their female regular sexual partners (Hypothesis 1). Within the last 2 months, 24 participants had casual female partners and a steady female partner (17 % of total sample) in their own neighborhoods; 13 participants (9 % of total sample) had steady male partners and a steady female partner in their own neighborhoods; and, 9 participants (6 % of total sample) had casual male partners and a steady female partner in their own neighborhoods. Although the sample size for these exploratory findings was relatively small, it is still worth noting that our findings did not support our first hypothesis. On the contrary, men whose steady female partner lived in the same neighborhood as they did were also more likely to have steady male partners (OR 5.57, 95 % CI 1.61–18.46) and casual male partners (OR 22.65, 95 % CI 4.34–118.32), as well as casual female partners (OR 27.10, 95 % CI 7.51–97.03), from the same neighborhood than if their steady female partner lived in a different neighborhood.

Sexual Partnership Configurations

We also hypothesized that if bisexual Latino men adhered to heteronormative scripts of partnership, they would be more likely to have female partners as steady and male or transgender partners as casual (Hypothesis 2). Our findings from cross-tabulations did not support this hypothesis. Study participants reported four types of configurations: (1) concurrent steady male/female partners and casual male/female partners. The most common configuration was having two steady female or male partners concurrently with at least one casual male and female partner ($n = 34$; 23.9 %); (2) concurrent transgender partners: 25 of the 40 configurations reported including transgender (male-to-female and/or female-to-male; casual and/or steady) sexual partners, representing 30.9 % (44 out of 142) of the individuals in the sample; (3) mixed casual/steady male and female partners: The remaining 33.9 % of the men had only biological female and/or male partners and either one steady female or male partner (but not two steady male and female partners); and (4) only casual male and female partners: 16 men reported only having casual male and casual female partners (no steady partners) in the prior two months (11.3 % of the sample).

Social Networks and Sexual Spaces

Our third hypothesis was that if bisexual Latino men adhered to heteronormative scripts, they would be more likely to meet their non-heteronormative partners (male or transgender) through informal social spaces, networks, and/or online and would be more likely to have sex with them in informal spaces, i.e., outside their homes (Hypothesis 3). To answer this hypothesis we examined four regression models ordered by the gender of the participants' partners: (1) the likelihood of meeting gender-specific partners in a formal space (workplace, school/university, and/or church); (2) the likelihood of meeting gender-specific partners online (not introduced by someone, but through website chatting or online dating); (3) the likelihood of meeting gender-specific partners through their kinship and friendship social networks; and (4) the likelihood of their last sexual encounter (in the past 2 months) to be outside the home of the participant or sexual partner (e.g., bar, park, bathroom, car, hotel). On one hand, our findings using bivariate logistic regressions suggest that there were no statistical differences in the odds of meeting biological male partners through formal or informal spaces, social networks or online.

On the other hand, participants were more likely to meet female partners through formal spaces (OR 4.9, 95 % CI 1.52–10.99) and through the participants' social networks (OR 3.01, 95 % CI 1.42–6.35) than through informal spaces (referent). These findings suggest that the men in our study followed a heteronormative way of meeting female but not male partners. To our surprise, our study participants reported a higher likelihood of having had their last sexual encounter in a formal venue (their home or partner's home) than informal venue with both men (OR 1.42, 95 % CI 1.04–1.93) and women (OR 1.27, 95 % CI 1.27–3.38). The majority of bisexual Latino men in our study had sexual encounters primarily in their own homes or the homes of their partners (72.7 % with steady and 54 % with casual female partners; 71.7 % with steady and 68.8 % with casual male partners, and 46.2 % with MTF and 33.4 % with FTM partners).

Masculinity and Feelings Towards Homosexual Behavior

Our final hypothesis was that if bisexual Latino men adhered to heteronormative scripts, differences in the organization of their sexual partnering and sexual practices would reflect differences in their machismo and feelings towards homosexual behaviors (Hypothesis 4). Our machismo model (Table 1) suggests that machismo was directly associated with meeting female partners through formal spaces (workplace, school, and/or church), but inversely associated with meeting male partners in these same formal spaces. Instead, machismo was associated with meeting other male sex partners through social networks (i.e., friendship and kinship networks). The homosexual comfort model (Table 2) suggests the less comfortable men were with homosexual behaviors, the more likely they were to meet other men online, and the more comfortable they were with homosexuality, the more likely they were to meet through social networks of friends and kinship.

Discussion

Our data did not support all of our hypotheses about how heteronormative sexual scripts guide bisexual Latino men in their interactions with their partners. However, our findings did suggest bisexual Latino men engage most commonly in steady relationships, as most men were in steady relationships with male, female and/or transgender (MTF or FTM) partners. The prominent focus on steady relationships offers insights into how heteronormativity affects this particular population.

Our exploratory results point to the complex negotiations bisexual Latino men have with norms regarding sexual partnering with men, women, and transgender persons. Having sex with more than one gender-type seems inherently contrary to what a heteronormative framework suggests. It might be that heteronormativity instills a social desire for stability in a steady relationship, but that non-static and fluid sexual desires instantiate themselves in steady and casual sexual encounters with biological male and transgender partners as well. In other words, regardless of the partner configuration, heteronormativity might be inculcated in the bisexual Latino men in our sample to the extent that they might value steady partnership regardless of type of partner(s). The importance of having steady relationships as opposed to casual sexual interactions may stem from a larger issue of culture. That is to say, many Latino groups highly value emotional ties in sexually affective

relationships over casual contacts (Harris, Skogrand, & Hatch, 2008). This contradicts our prior understanding that bisexual Latino men engage in steady relationships with biological females and have casual and/or transactional relationships with males and transgendered partners (Muñoz-Laboy, 2004).

Our study sample was not composed of self-identified bisexual men who had low frequency of sexual interactions with biological females. Although our interpretations are limited to our sample, these findings suggest that bisexual Latino men operate in complex partnerships integrating male, female, and transgendered partners of similar Latino ancestry and economic class. In addition, bisexuality as a sexual category has elements—along the dimensions of desire, behavior, and identity—that differ from heteronormative or homonormative (i.e., referring to the norms that guide how men have sexual partnerships and encounters with other men), static conceptions of how desires translate directly into behavior, which then become part of a personal or social identity (Muñoz-Laboy, Perry, Parker, & Garcia, 2013). The rules of engagement in sexual relations are often influenced by cultural factors and rules inculcated by institutional spaces and local sexual scripts, as well as by individual human agency that allows for bisexual Latino men to navigate these rules and scripts depending on time and space (Garcia, Muñoz-Laboy, Parker, & Wilson 2013; Johnston & Longhurst, 2010).

For this reason, our analytical explorations of the sociogeographic context (e.g., neighborhood or place/space of sexual encounter) offer important insights for future research on the ways heteronormativity affects bisexual behavior. For those who lived in the same neighborhoods as their steady female sexual partners, our findings suggest that bisexual Latino men still engage with other sexual partners in that neighborhood. There might be an unobserved element that partially allows for men to navigate the social risk of interpersonal complications related to the spatial proximity of concurrent partners, such as the potential for the steady partner finding out about other steady/casual partners or for being “outed” as non-heterosexual men in their local communities.

Thus, we look to the role of navigating friendship and kinship networks and spaces for sexual encounters (e.g., formal and informal). If our interpretation is correct that bisexual Latino men are engaging in steady relational sex, then what is the role of social networks in sustaining these relationships? In other words, do friendships or kinship networks play a role in introducing steady sex partners; do partners and participants have social networks in common; and, if a bisexual man is maintaining parallel steady relations, do the partners know about each other? Our findings suggest that kinship networks and work-based social networks play a negligible role in connecting/introducing partners to study participants. The literature on heterosexual men suggests female partners (girlfriends/wives) are introduced by social networks, such as family members and/or friends from work (Julien, Chartrand, & Bégin 1999). Outside of the work environment, our findings suggest friendship networks play an important role in introducing bisexual Latino men to their male and female partners. The vast majority of participants had at least one friend in common with their female partners (88.4 % including steady and casual partners) or with their steady male-to-female or female-to-male transgender partners (67.3 %). This might suggest that steady biological female partners are sought through social networks close to the participants’ social networks

as opposed to seeking partners outside their social networks. This seems to not be true for seeking other partners. Less than half of the participants had at least one friend in common with their male partners (regardless if they were casual or steady) or with their casual male-to-female partners.

Qualitative research suggests that bisexual Latino men navigate their same-sex relationships in secrecy (Garcia et al., 2013; Sandfort & Dodge, 2008). This helps explain the lack of overlap in friendship social networks among study participants and their casual and regular male partners. Overlap in social networks between individuals and their partners have been demonstrated to play a central role in predicting extra-dyadic relationships and sexual risk behavior through social control (Laumann et al., 2004). That is, the more friends in common, the less likely the individual is to behave in ways that contradict the norms of the local social network, the lower the likelihood of engaging in extra-dyadic relationships, and the lower the likelihood of taking sexual risks outside their primary relationships.

The vast majority of partners (regardless of gender or type of sexual relationship) were *met* in informal spaces, i.e., social gatherings, parties, night clubs and/or bars. We asked participants their first and most recent place that they had sex by type of partner. Homes were the most prominent space for sexual interactions regardless of the gender and type of partners. From the literature on sex and space, we know that the space of homes provides the best-equipped space for safe sexual interactions. In fact, consistent with the literature (Goldbaum et al., 1998; Leap, 1999), our evidence suggests that having first sexual encounters in public spaces was associated with unprotected vaginal intercourse.

Moreover, the relationships between context for finding partners and machismo as well as with feelings of comfort with homosexuality were two key findings in our study. There were clear differences in the levels of machismo dependent on whether the participant was with a female or a male sex partner. The bisexual Latino men in our sample that were more “hypermasculine” tended to meet female partners in formal spaces (workplace, school and/or church) and the less hypermasculine men also met male partners in these formal spaces. This could indicate that behaviorally bisexual Latino men’s “machismo” is a social performance or a sexual script used to preserve a heterosexual appearance in spaces that are more public or open to sanctions by those who occupy the sociocultural space that they are in.

In addition, the men who were least comfortable with homosexual sexual behaviors tended to meet other men online, which perhaps allowed for them to let their guard down vis-à-vis their masculine social performance. For future research, it is important to explore the role that having transgender partners plays in the cognitive and social negotiation of Latino bisexual men’s negativity toward homosexuality and their hypermasculinity. On one hand, it is possible that having sexual desire for males and females might be negotiated by having sexual partnerships with someone who is not “entirely” male or female, in a social or biological sense. At the same time, it might be more psychically acceptable (less cognitive dissonance) to have sex with a transgender woman than with a biological man if there are high levels of homonegativity. Thus, this article also calls for more research on how sexual desires play out in diverse partnering behaviors and masculine identities. In fact, our

findings, although exploratory, begin to deconstruct some of the rigid and essentializing portrayals of Latino men as always being hypermasculine (*machistas*). This also adds to a more complex understanding of the sociocultural and spatial orientation of heteronormative attitudes and behaviors.

However, we highlight important limitations to our study, especially because they can inform the design of future research in the field of bisexuality studies. This was a cross-sectional study exploring factors associated with the sexual partnering of bisexual Latino men. As such, we have limited ability to make causal inferences in the exploratory associations found. Although the survey covered a period of 2 months, there is no evidence to support how sexual partnership configurations change over the life course of our study participants. The closest indicator of life course changes would be suggested by the inclusion of age as a control variable in our analysis. We found in our sample age had no significant influence on sexual partnership configurations. We could have conducted the current analysis focusing on general types of partners (female vs. male vs. transgender); however, this approach would have lower validity because it did not resemble the ways these men organized their sexual lives in our sample. Moreover, it is possible that our way of clustering partners is flawed in using frequency by gender-type and not by other partner characteristics, which might have yielded different results (e.g., partnering with same race/same social class individuals). Taking the above limitations into consideration, this analysis presented initial insights into the structure of bisexual Latino sexual relations.

Our findings have important implications for understanding bisexual Latino sexual behavior and sexual health. The social and spatial dependency of heteronormative performance indicated by our exploratory analysis brings into question the usefulness of this theoretical construct, as it is often thought of as stable and static. Studies on Latino masculinities have demonstrated that Latino men are expected and oriented towards playing the role of providers and protectors, as well as prone to demand respect in the public arena (Taylor, Tucker, & Mitchell-Kernan 1999). As providers, maintaining concurrent steady partnerships is perhaps costly to bisexual Latino men in our sample. Concurrent relationships might also decrease the amount of financial support that bisexual men can provide for their families or send to their home countries as remissions. Casual sexual relationships were most common with persons in their own neighborhood. This finding shows that there might be a potential for HIV risk among sexual networks in certain Latino enclaves. Interventions to target bisexual behavior as “bridging” transmission from homosexual to heterosexual networks might benefit from a more complex understanding of how heteronormativity affects Latino bisexuality and how this set of social norms is sometimes circumvented through a strategic management of social context.

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Table 1

Linear regression model for machismo and sexual partnering factors among bisexual Latino men (N=142)

Factors	Standardized beta	t
Having last sexual encounter in outside home venue with any female partners in the past 2 months	−0.35	−1.50
Having last sexual encounter in outside home venue with any male partners in the past 2 months	0.14	1.47
Meeting any female partners in the past 2 months through formal spaces (workplace, school and/or church)	0.22*	2.31
Meeting any male partners in the past 2 months online	−0.13	−1.47
Meeting any male partners in the past 2 months through formal spaces (workplace, school and/or church)	−0.34*	−3.42
Meeting any male partners in the past 2 months through social (friendship/kinship) networks	0.21*	2.17
Number of female partners in the past 2 months	−0.08	−0.87
Number of male partners in the past 2 months	0.09	1.01
Income	−0.07	−0.51

* $p < .05$, $F = 1.99$; $R^2 = .12$; $p = .046$

Table 2

Linear regression model for homosexual comfort and sexual partnering factors among bisexual Latino men (N = 142)

Factors	Standardized beta	t
Meeting any male partners in the past 2 months online	−0.19*	−2.03
Number of female partners in the past 2 months	0.18	1.87
Meeting any female partners in the past 2 months online	0.07	0.76
Meeting any male partners in the past 2 months through social (friendship/kinship) networks	0.25*	2.66
Number of male partners in the past 2 months	−0.15	−1.50
Having last sexual encounter in outside home venue with any female partners in the past 2 months	−0.09	−0.96
Income	0.57	1.41

* $p < .05$, $F = 2.23$; $R^2 = .10$; $p = .042$