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Motivations and Experiences Related to Women's First Same-sex Sexual Encounters

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Abstract

Using women's self-identified sexual identity, the current study compares motivations for first same-sex sexual encounters as well as associated experiential outcomes. We also examine whether relations between sexual motivations and experiential outcomes differ as a function of women's sexual identity status. Participants were women ($N=123$), ages 18-to-29 ($M=21.59$, $SD=3.33$), who self-reported a history of same-sex sexual contact. Approximately 27% of women identified as *exclusively heterosexual* (i.e., EH), 35% as *primarily heterosexual* (i.e., 'mostly heterosexual' [MH]), and 38% as *exclusively or primarily lesbian/ gay*, or *bisexual* (i.e., LGB). Participants completed an online survey. MH and LGB women reported first same-sex sexual encounters that were more motivated by intimacy and exploration motives, relative to EH women. Compared to MH and LGB women, EH also engaged in fewer sexual activities with their first same-sex partner. Intimacy and exploration motives were related to positive experiential outcomes during first same-sex contact. Associations between motivations and experiential outcomes were not moderated by sexual identity. Findings contribute to understanding motivations and experiences related to women's first same-sex sexual encounters and show that not all women with a history of same-sex sexual contact subsequently identify with a minority sexual identity label.

Keywords

Female; Sexuality; First Sexual Experience; Sexual motives; Lesbian; Bisexual

Humans engage in sexual activity for a variety of reasons and, important for the motivational approach to understanding sexual behavior, these motivating factors are believed to shape subsequent experiences and expressions of sexuality (Cooper, Barber, Zhaoyang, & Talley, 2011). The specific reasons motivating sexual activity, including same-sex activity, can

reflect an individual's broader approach or avoidance orientations (e.g., Birnbaum et al., 2014), which are theorized to be linked to distinct neurological and behavioral systems (Birnbaum et al., 2014; Gray, 1970, 1987). For example, recent findings suggest that underlying excitatory/inhibitory motivational systems alter the incentive value associated with various risk-taking behavior (Birnbaum et al., 2014; Nagoski et al., 2012) and sexual stimuli (Birnbaum et al. 2014; Ferrey et al., 2012) and may have broad impact on psychosocial and sexual functioning (Birnbaum et al. 2014; Impett et al., 2008).

The importance of understanding motivational factors for initiating same-sex sexual activity is self-evident. This knowledge has the potential to inform basic research examining factors that motivate adolescents' and young adults' exploration of various sexual attractions and impulses and ultimately inform their self-identification with a particular sexual identity (i.e., sexual identity development; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2006). The current work also has relevance for applied researchers who seek to develop interventions that limit negative consequences (e.g., sexually transmitted infections) for individuals with distinct underlying motivations for sex which may potentiate risk-taking during initial and subsequent sexual encounters (e.g., sex under the influence of drugs or alcohol).

Although initial sexual encounters may have lasting impact on subsequent sexual activity and development (e.g., Epstein, Bailey, Manhart, Hill, & Hawkins, 2014), a systematic comparison of young adults' subjective experience of and motivations for their initial sexual encounters based on their self-identified sexual identity, regardless of their partner's biological sex, has yet to be conducted. An individual's sexual identity is informed by various aspects of their sexuality, including their self-labeling (e.g., *heterosexual*, *bisexual*) as well as their attraction toward and engagement in sexual activity with partners of varying gender identities (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994; Morgan, 2013). Findings from qualitative interviews with "self-identified sexual minorities" (Galupo, Davis, Gryniewicz, & Mitchell, 2014) suggest that self-labeling of one's sexual identity is of primary importance in contemplating and defining one's sexual orientation. Participants' current, self-ascribed sexual identity was seen as "primary over current and past experience that might otherwise be interpreted as 'contradictory'" (p. 16).

Central to the motivational approach for understanding human sexuality, people use sex strategically to achieve different goals, and distinct goals shape the experience and expression of their sexuality (see Cooper et al., 2011). Cooper and colleagues identified four broad classes of motives for sex that can be understood with reference to two underlying motivational dimensions (Cooper, Shapiro, & Powers, 1998). The first dimension captures the extent to which the source of reinforcement for the behavior is primarily internal to the individual, as opposed to external. This dimension is closely tied to distinctions between agentic and communal goals (Bakan, 1966), exploratory and attachment goals (Bowlby, 1970), and autonomy/competence, as opposed to relatedness goals (Skinner & Wellborn, 1994). The second dimension distinguishes behaviors that are motivated by positive reinforcement (appetitive or approach behaviors) from those that are motivated by negative reinforcement - concerned with the avoidance of, or escape from, negative or aversive states (aversive or avoidance behaviors).

A factorial combination of these two dimensions yields the four-motive typology: (1) self-focused approach motives, such as having sex to enhance physical or emotional pleasure (i.e., enhancement motives); (2) social approach motives, such as having sex to bond with a socially significant other (i.e., intimacy motives); (3) self-focused avoidance motives, such as having sex to ameliorate threats to self-esteem or to minimize negative emotions (i.e., self-affirmation and coping motives, respectively); and (4) social avoidance motives, such as having sex to avoid social censure or another's disapproval (i.e., peer and partner approval motives).

Thus, depending on individuals' motivations, sex may be pursued for positive reinforcement reasons – to increase feelings of *social* connectedness (i.e., intimacy) or to foster *one's own* pleasure and sexual desires (i.e., enhancement). Alternatively, sex may be fueled by negative reinforcement reasons, which are associated with the pursuit of sex to alleviate aversive psychological states – specifically, to avoid *social* ridicule from a partner or peer group (i.e., partner approval; peer approval) and to alleviate *one's own* negative emotionality (i.e., cope) or the sequelae of threats to one's self-esteem (i.e., self-affirmation) (Cooper et al., 1998). To the extent that first sexual encounters are effective in satisfying underlying motivations, associations between specific motivations and patterns of sexual activity, including that which may have occurred under risky circumstances, may be potentiated in future sexual encounters.

These relations have yet to be examined among women who self-identify as non-EH. However, previous research with heterosexual samples suggests that sexual behaviors and attitudes differ in systematic and theoretically meaningful ways among individuals who enter into sexual activities with distinct underlying approach-avoidance motives (for a review see Cooper et al., 2011). Persons who have sex for approach reasons (i.e., enhancement, intimacy) have been found to report more positive feelings about sex (i.e., erotophilia), more frequent intercourse, and higher levels of sexual satisfaction (e.g., Cooper et al., 1998; Cooper, Talley, Sheldon, Levitt, & Barber, 2008). By contrast, persons who have sex for avoidance reasons (i.e., coping, self-affirmation, partner approval) have been found to report erotophobia (i.e., negative emotional responses to sex) and low levels of sexual satisfaction (Cooper et al., 1998; Cooper et al., 2008). Avoidance motives are thought to correspond with riskier and more maladaptive sexual behaviors in general. In particular, the focus on negative experiences inherent to an avoidant orientation is believed to disrupt clear thinking and adaptive responding, just as negative emotions associated with avoidant behaviors are thought to trigger impulsive responding meant to alleviate negative affect (see Cooper et al., 1998; Cooper et al., 2008). As evidence, motivations for sexual activity that are intended to alleviate negative affect, namely sexual motives for coping, are positively related to sexual motives for self-affirmation ($r = .64$; Cooper et al., 1998) and both subscales have been shown to load on a higher-order latent factor characterized by avoidant, self-focused motivations for sex. In addition, compared to those lower in self-affirmation motives, women with higher levels of self-affirmation motives for sex report significantly more casual and risky extra-pair sex partners (Cooper et al., 2006), the latter of which is defined as sexual partners outside of an ongoing, committed relationship.

Within each underlying motivational system, important differences have also been found when comparing sexual experiences based on the source of the expected reinforcement – either internal or external to the individual. Specifically with regard to social, approach-oriented motives for sex, individuals who report higher levels of intimacy motives endorse a strong general need for affiliation, and have fewer, better-known sexual partners than those who report lower levels of intimacy motives (Cooper et al., 1998; Patrick, Maggs, Cooper, & Lee, 2011). Research shows that individuals who report more often engaging in sex for intimacy reasons report fewer lifetime sexual partners, overall, but are also less likely to use condoms consistently within the context of a steady relationship (Ellen, Cahn, Eyre, & Boyer, 1996; Gebhardt et al., 2003; Plichta et al., 1992; Reisen & Poppen, 1995). Relative to those who report lower levels of intimacy motives for sex, individuals higher in intimacy motives drink alcohol less often in conjunction with sex (Cooper et al., 1998; Patrick et al., 2011). By contrast, with regard to self-focused, approach-oriented motives for sex, individuals who are higher in enhancement motives for sex report stronger thrill and adventure-seeking needs and more unrestricted attitudes toward sex than those lower in enhancement motives (manifested as a greater willingness to have sex with casual, uncommitted partners, and a greater number of sex partners, especially casual ones; Cooper et al., 1998). Heterosexual individuals who report enhancement motivations for sex appear to engage in multiple risk-taking behaviors - drinking more often in conjunction with sex and also being less likely to use condoms, often in the context of casual sex encounters.

With regard to avoidance-oriented motives for sex, self-focused avoidance motives (coping, self-affirmation) have been shown to relate to ambivalent emotional responses to sex (i.e., high simultaneous levels of erotophobia and erotophilia) and a greater desire for sex (Cooper et al., 1998). This pattern suggests that individuals high in internal avoidance motives both like and desire sex, but may experience a host of overlapping negative emotions associated with sexuality.

Purpose and Hypotheses

The purpose of the current report is to (a) compare young adult women's reports of motivations for their first same-sex sexual encounters, based on their self-reported sexual identity in young adulthood (b) compare young adult women's reports of subjective experiences during their first same-sex sexual encounters, based on their reported sexual identity, and (c) examine associations between young adult women's sexual motivations and experiential outcomes during their first same-sex sexual encounters and whether these relations differ based on their reported sexual identity.

We anticipate that women who do not identify as exclusively heterosexual (EH) in young adulthood will report distinct self-reported motivations and experiences for first same-sex sexual encounters. We hypothesize this based on previous work regarding women's sexual fluidity, which surmises that “women's desires are particularly sensitive to situational or interpersonal factors” (Diamond, 2012, p. 75) and suggests that women who ultimately elect to act on same-sex sexual desires may generally be more approach-oriented in domains pertaining to sexuality. Specifically, we anticipate that first same-sex encounters reported by women who self-identify as LGB or “mostly heterosexual” (MH) in young adulthood will be

associated with higher levels of approach-oriented motives, particularly intimacy and exploration motives. We also expect that women who self-identify as LGB or MH in young adulthood will report more active involvement in their first same-sex encounters, reflected in older age at first same-sex encounters, engagement in a greater number of behaviors, and a relative lack of drug use or alcohol use.

Based on the extant literature reviewed, we also generally expect, regardless of self-ascribed sexual identity in young adulthood, that intimacy motives will relate to less engagement in risky sex since becoming sexually active (defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [1991] as behaviors associated with a higher probability of exposure to sexually transmitted infections), better-known first same-sex partners, a greater likelihood of initiating first same-sex sexual encounters, and a lower likelihood of drug or alcohol use during first same-sex sexual encounters. By contrast, we expect enhancement motives will relate to greater engagement in risky sexual behavior since becoming sexually active, less well-known first same-sex partners, a greater likelihood of initiating first same-sex encounters, engaging in a greater variety of sexual activities, and greater likelihood of using alcohol or drugs during first same-sex encounters. We also hypothesize that self-focused, avoidant motives (i.e., self-affirmation, coping) will relate to more engagement in potentially risky sexual behaviors since becoming sexually active, less well-known first same-sex partners, and greater likelihood of initiating first same-sex encounters. As our theoretical approach is based on broadband motivational systems, we do not necessarily expect to see moderation by sexual identity status when examining associations between motives and experiential outcomes during first same-sex sexual encounters, stressing robust main effects that characterize general motivational systems relevant for sexual behavior.

Materials and Methods

Participants

Current analyses utilize a subset of data from a larger study ($N = 354$) examining associations among women's sexual self-concepts and their alcohol consumption behaviors. All participants, regardless of their self-identified sexual identity at the time of the survey, were asked to report on their history of same-sex sexual behavior. Thirty five percent of women from this larger study ($N = 123$), reported a history of same-sex sexual contact (defined subsequently). Thus, the current analytic sub-sample consists of 123 women ranging in age from 18 to 29 ($M = 21.59$, $SD = 3.33$) in young adulthood, defined by Erikson (1963) as a developmental life stage between ages 18 and 40. Using a "select all that apply" option, approximately 89% of participants identified as White or Caucasian, 10% as Black or African-American, 2% as Asian, and 1% as Hispanic or Latina. All participants were currently residing in a Midwestern town with a population size of approximately 110,000 residents (U. S. Census Bureau, v2015) at the time the data were collected.

Procedure

Participants were recruited into the study from the fall of 2010 to the spring of 2013. Eligible introductory psychology students ($n=30$) and women from the same town in which the university sample was recruited ($n=93$) were invited to participate using multiple

recruitment strategies. Introductory students were recruited from a research participant pool at a large Midwestern university and received experimental credit in return for participation. Community participants were recruited through campus-wide email notices, advertisements in local newspapers, posted flyers in local businesses, and snowball sampling techniques. Community participants received a 25 dollar gift certificate to Amazon.com in exchange for participation. Interested participants were administered a brief telephone screening to determine eligibility and to facilitate oversampling of women who did not self-identify as EH or who reported a history of same-sex sexual attraction or behavior. Eligibility criteria for the larger study required that interested participants: (a) could speak and read English, (b) be between ages 18 and 30, (c) indicate their biological sex as 'woman' (d) report no history of a substance use disorder, and (e) report having at least one drink of alcohol in the past-three months. In addition, we made attempts to oversample women who self-reported a non-EH identity, any same-sex attraction OR any same-sex behavior in their lifetime. Eligible participants were emailed a link to a 2 ½ hour online survey. Participants were required to provide electronic consent prior to accessing the survey. Ninety-six percent of individuals who began the online survey completed it in its entirety. Data from partially completed surveys were retained and pertinent values were designated as missing. All relevant federal and institutional research ethical standards were met with regard to the treatment of participants.

Measures

Sexual identity status—A Kinsey-type scale was used to assess current sexual identity (Kinsey et al., 1998). Given increasing interest in and recognition of persons self-identifying as MH (Savin-Willaims & Vrangalova, 2013; Vrangalova & Savin-Willaims, 2012), we retained women who self-identified as MH as a separate sub-group in analyses. By contrast, women who self-identified as LGB comprised another distinct sub-group with a roughly equivalent sample size. Approximately 27% of women ($n = 33$) in the current sub-sample identified as *exclusively heterosexual* (i.e., EH) at the time of the survey. Thirty five percent of the sample identified as *primarily heterosexual* (i.e., 'mostly heterosexual' [MH]; $n = 43$). The remaining portion of the sample identified as *exclusively lesbian or gay, primarily lesbian or gay, or bisexual* (i.e., LGB; 38%, $n = 47$). Two orthogonal contrast codes were created to denote sexual identity status at the time of the survey and used in regression analyses to test for moderation (Aiken & West, 1991). In such cases, EH women were compared on the primary outcomes to women who identified as MH and LGB women, respectively.

Motivations for first-sexual contact with a female partner—For the purposes of this study, sexual contact was defined as 'any sexual activity, including kissing or making out, that lasts for 5 or more minutes.' Notably, this prompt did not require vaginal penetration and, instead, was conceived of as same-sex sexual contact. Two items, derived from Cooper and colleagues' (1998) Sex Motives Scale, were used to create subscale scores for each type of motivation. Five motives for first sexual intercourse with a female partner, in total, were assessed with items rated on a Likert-type scale (1=Not at all important to 5=Extremely important). Motivations to have sex contact for enhancement reasons were assessed with two items (Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient [Eisinga, Grotenhuis, &

Pelzer, 2013]: $\rho = .68$; e.g., ‘...having sex for the thrill and excitement of it’). Motivations to have sex contact for intimacy reasons were assessed using two items (Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient: $\rho = .83$; e.g., ‘...making an emotional connection and becoming closer to this woman’). Two items were used to ascertain self-affirmation (Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient: $\rho = .75$; e.g., ‘...having sex to reassure yourself that you were attractive and sexually desirable’) and coping (Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient: $\rho = .80$; e.g., ‘...having sex to help you deal with feeling of disappointment, sadness, or loneliness in your life at that time’) motivations, respectively. Coping motivations were log-transformed to improve normality. Exploration motives were assessed with a single item (i.e., ‘...having sexual contact so that you could have the experience of exploring your same-sex attraction’) created by the first author.

Sexual experience during first-sexual contact with a female partner—A

composite variable was created from three single items that were standardized and then averaged. Higher scores indicate greater familiarity with the sexual partner at the time the sexual contact occurred ($\alpha = .78$). Specifically, participants were asked: (a) ‘How long had you known this woman at the time you first had sex? (in months)’ (open-ended; $M = 23.60$, $SD = 28.41$) (b) ‘How would you describe your relationship with this woman at that time?’ (1=someone you just met to 5=spouse/long-term partner; $M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.10$) and (c) ‘At the time you first had sexual contact with this woman, how well would you say you knew her?’ (1 = Not at all to 5 = Extremely well; $M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.05$).

The number of sexual behaviors that participants engaged in during that first sexual encounter was ascertained by asking participants: ‘Did you and your partner do any of the following on this occasion (check all that apply)’. Sexual behaviors included: *sexual kissing/making out, fondling your breasts, fondling your partner's breasts, fondling your genitals, fondling your partner's genitals, receiving oral sex, giving oral sex, vaginal penetration, and anal penetration*. A count of the number of sexual behaviors participants endorsed was created ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 2.29$).

A single-item was used to determine who initiated the first sexual encounter with a female partner, ‘Whose idea was it to have sex on that first occasion?’ (1=completely your idea to 7=completely your partner's idea; $M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.06$). Age of first consensual sexual encounter with a female partner was determined with a single open-ended item, ‘Approximately what age were you the first time you ever had any consensual (both parties agreed) sexual intercourse/contact with a woman?’ ($M = 16.32$, $SD = 4.08$, $n = 114$).

Two-items were used to determine whether the participant had used drugs or alcohol prior to her first sexual encounter with a woman: ‘Did you personally drink any alcohol on this sexual occasion?’ and ‘Did you smoke marijuana or use any other drugs on this sexual occasion?’ (Yes/No). A dichotomous variable was created to indicate whether the participant had used alcohol or other drugs prior to their first same-sex sexual encounter (56% indicated yes, $n = 69$).

Finally, participants were asked the frequency with which they had engaged in a number of sexual activities, since becoming sexually active, that the CDC (1991) considers ‘high risk’

for increasing the probability of exposure to sexually transmitted infections, without reference to the use of condoms. These potentially risky sexual behaviors have been assessed in previous studies (e.g., Cooper et al., 1998; Patrick et al., 2011) seeking to examine general associations between motivations for sex and lifetime sexual outcomes, including the original validation study for the Sex Motives Scale (Cooper et al., 1998). A count variable was created to denote the number of seven potentially risky sexual activities ($M = 1.87$, $SD = 1.64$) endorsed by participants. Items specifically referred to: *anal intercourse; one-night stands; intercourse with a stranger or prostitute; intercourse in exchange for drugs or money; intercourse with a gay or bisexual man; intercourse with someone who has used intravenous drugs; or intercourse with someone who is infected with HIV.*

Covariates—We included covariates that we expected might influence reported motivations for and subjective experiences related to women's first same-sex sexual encounter. All model estimates adjust for participant ethnic minority status (0 = White, 1 = non-White; 84% [$n = 103$] identified as White/Caucasian), how well the participant remembered the sexual contact (i.e., 'Overall, how well do you feel you can remember what you thought or felt after the occasion?', 1 = not at all to 5 = extremely well; $M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.27$, $n = 122$), religiosity (i.e., composite of two standardized items: importance of religion/spirituality [1 = Not important; 4 = Extremely important; $M = 2.09$, $SD = 1.09$] and frequency of church attendance [1 = Never; 6 = Once a week, $M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.45$]; Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient: $\rho = .79$) and social desirability (ie., Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Scale; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; Response scale: 1 = True, 2 = False; $\alpha = .63$, $M = 4.82$, $SD = 2.01$). Finally, we also adjusted estimates based on self-reported history of childhood sexual assault, molestation, or forcible/unwanted sex (0 = no history of sexual assault, 1 = self-reported sexual assault occurring before age 18; approximately 25% of participants [$n = 30$] reported a history of childhood sexual abuse).

Data Analysis

Two MANCOVAs were conducted to examine between-group differences in conceptually similar criterion variables, grouped according to (a) motivations for engagement in and (b) subjective experiences related to women's first sexual encounter with a same-sex partner. Significant MANCOVA results were followed-up with discriminant analysis (Warne, 2014). Discriminant analysis provides information on which particular dependent variables contribute to differences in self-reported identity status, controlling for other dependent variables. Standardized discriminant function coefficients were used to determine the value of self-reported motivations and experiential outcomes during first same-sex encounters in discriminating among various sexual identity statuses in young adulthood. Variables with larger discriminant function coefficients suggest increased ability to discriminate cases, based on sexual identity status, than those variables with smaller coefficients. In addition, ANCOVA was used to test between-group differences in lifetime risky sexual behavior across sexual identity sub-groups. Finally, linear and logistic regression models were used to determine support for associations between motivations for engagement in same-sex sexual activity and subjective experiences related to women's first same-sex sexual encounter. Moderation analyses were conducted in regression models (Aiken, West, & Reno, 1991) to determine whether sexual identity status interacted with reported motivations for first same-

sex experiences to differentially predict subjective, experiential outcomes. Variables were centered prior to the creation of each corresponding interaction term.

Results

Table 1 shows the overall mean scores for first same-sex sexual encounter motivations and experiences among the entire sample and also separated according to sexual identity sub-group at the time of the survey. Table 2 contains bivariate correlation coefficients among all primary study variables. A one-way MANCOVA was significant for the model examining differences based on sexual identity status with regard to motivations for engagement in their first sexual encounter with a female partner, Pillai's Trace = .25, $F(5,108)=6.97$, $p<.001$. In the upper panel of Table 3, standardized discriminant function coefficients and structure matrix coefficients indicate that knowing whether first same-sex encounters were motivated by intimacy or exploration, in particular, is useful for classifying based on sexual identity with no other variables emerging as strong corollaries. Thus, results showed that self-rated motivations for intimacy and exploration, and to a lesser extent, enhancement and self-affirmation were important in distinguishing respondents based on sexual identity. The first estimated discriminant function explained 85.0% of the variance in sexual identity status, Wilks' $\lambda = .66$, $\chi^2(10) = 47.43$, $p < .001$, and the second discriminant function was not significant and will not be discussed further. The group centroids on the first discriminant function (EH: -.86; MH: -.13; LGB: .70) indicated that sexual identity sub-groups were relatively distinguishable on the basis of sexual motivations for first same-sex encounters. With the first discriminant function, approximately 57.9% of overall cases were correctly classified on the basis of these motives. MH women were most often misclassified, with only 52.4% of cases being correctly classified. MH women were slightly more likely to be misclassified as EH (28.6%), rather than LGB (19%), on the basis of first same-sex motivations. For EH women, 62.5% of cases were correctly classified. For LGB women, 61.2% of cases were correctly classified.

We also conducted a MANCOVA to examine differences in the experiences of first sexual encounters with a female partner. Specifically, level of familiarity with partner, age of first encounter, self-versus-partner initiation, and number of sexual activities enacted were compared among sexual identity groups. Overall, the MANOVA showed significant differences among outcomes based on sexual identity status in young adulthood, Pillai's Trace = .14, $F(4,100)=4.26$, $p=.003$. In the lower panel of Table 3, standardized discriminant function coefficients and structure matrix coefficients indicate that knowing, first and foremost, the number of sexual behaviors engaged in and, to a lesser extent, the age of first contact and how well you knew your same-sex partner were useful for classifying cases on the basis of sexual identity. The first estimated discriminant function explained 84.8% of the variance in sexual identity status, Wilks' $\lambda = .78$, $\chi^2(8) = 27.53$, $p = .001$, and the second discriminant function was not significant. The group centroids on the first discriminant function (EH: -.79; MH: .22; LGB: .35) indicated that EH women were distinguishable from MH and LGB women on the basis of experiential outcomes for first same-sex encounters. With the estimated discriminant function, approximately 47.4% of cases were correctly classified based on self-reported experiential outcomes during first same-sex encounters. MH women were most often misclassified, with only 30% of cases being correctly

classified. Misclassifications of MH women were equally likely to be EH (35%) and LGB (35%). For EH women, 70% of cases were correctly classified. For LGB women, 47.7% of cases were correctly classified. Misclassifications of LGB women were likely to be MH (36.4%) and, to a lesser extent, EH (15.9%).

A separate logistic regression model showed MH women were much less likely to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol during their first same-sex sexual encounter, $OR = 0.15$, $SE = .58$, $p = .001$, compared to EH women, whereas LGB women were not less likely to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol than EH women, $OR = 0.39$, $SE = .57$, $p = .10$. Finally, a one-way ANOVA, showed that, in general, women had engaged in a similar number of potentially risky sexual behaviors since becoming sexually active, and these mean-level differences were not significant across sexual identity sub-groups, $F(1,113) = 0.004$, $\eta^2 = .00$, $p = .952$. The next set of analyses examined whether the endorsement of specific motivations for first sexual encounters related to experiential outcomes. Separate regressions were conducted for each experiential outcome. Women who endorsed higher levels of enhancement motivations for their first same-sex sexual contact reported being older at the time of their first same-sex sexual encounter than those who reported lower levels of enhancement motives. Moreover, and consistent with hypotheses, women who endorsed higher enhancement motives for their first same-sex contact also reported (a) engaging in a greater number of sexual behaviors during this first occasion; (b) being more likely to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol prior to contact; and (c) engaging in more potentially risky sexual activities since becoming sexually active.

Compared to those reporting lower levels of intimacy motives, women who reported higher levels of intimacy motives during their first same-sex sexual contact reported knowing their partner better and had lower log odds of using drugs and/or alcohol prior to the encounter. Against our hypotheses, findings did not support that women whose motivation for their first same-sex contact was related to intimacy reported engaging in a lower number of potentially risky sexual behaviors since becoming sexually active.

Somewhat unanticipated, women who endorsed higher levels of self-affirmation or coping motivations during their first same-sex sexual contact did not engage in a greater number of potentially risky sexual behaviors since becoming sexually active. Women who endorsed higher levels of motivations to explore their same-sex attraction engaged in a greater number of sexual activities during their first same-sex contact experience yet, also reported lower engagement in potentially risky sexual behaviors since becoming sexually active. As expected, there were no significant interactions between women's self-reported sexual identity in young adulthood and their retrospectively reported motivations for first same-sex sexual encounters in predicting their experiential outcomes, suggesting that motivations for first same-sex encounters relate to similar subjective experiences for all women.

Discussion

Although previous work (Hatfield, Luckhurst, & Rapson, 2011; Leigh, 1989; Whitley, 1988) has theorized about potential differences in sexual motivations based on women's sexual identities, this study is the first to provide empirical evidence that women's first sexual

encounters with a female partner are initiated for largely similar motives, regardless of their self-reported sexual identity in young adulthood. The exception is that MH and LGB women tended to report higher motivations related to intimacy and exploration, compared to EH women, as being relevant for their first same-sex contact.

Current findings also showed that, despite largely similar motivations for engaging in first sexual contact with a same-sex partner, compared to MH and LGB women, EH-identified women reported being younger at the time of their first same-sex contact, engaged in fewer sexual activities with their female partner, and were more likely to be under the influence of drugs/alcohol. Taken together, these findings suggest EH-identified women may be more likely than their MH and LGB peers to participate passively in a relatively small number of sexual activities with a close female friend under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs during their first sexual encounter with a woman (see also Yost & McCarthy, 2012). One implication of EH women's distinct experiential outcomes is that they may come to view their first same-sex sexual encounter as less relevant for informing their sexual identity than their MH and LGB peers, perhaps attributing their initial sexual encounter with a female friend to the "heat of the moment" or a consequence of their alcohol or other drug use.

Sexual minority women, on the other hand, engaged in a great variety of sexual activities and were older at age of first same-sex sexual encounter relative to EH women. Similarities in the experiential features of LGB and MH women's first same-sex encounters indicate that women who ultimately self-identify as MH or LGB may find that their first same-sex encounters are largely similar, occurring when they were older, with relatively little drug or alcohol use, and with a variety of sexual behaviors.

In light of few moderated associations between motivations for first same-sex encounters and associated experiential outcomes based on women's sexual identity in young adulthood, findings provide initial evidence that particular sex motives tend to be associated with unique experiential outcomes during first same-sex sexual encounters, regardless of women's subsequent self-ascribed sexual identity. As expected (Cooper et al., 1998; Patrick et al., 2011), women who reported higher levels of intimacy motives - considered a social, approach-oriented motivation for sex - were less likely to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol and reported knowing their first female partner to a greater extent than women who reported lower levels of intimacy motives. Current results suggest that first same-sex encounters motivated by intimacy are less likely to occur in potentially risky social contexts (e.g., under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol or with an unfamiliar partner).

Also, as expected (Cooper et al., 1998), the current study found that women who reported engaging in first sexual contact with their first female partner to feel pleasure or because they were 'horny,' could certainly be characterized as more sexually appetitive, as they were more likely to initiate the encounter and engage in a greater variety of behaviors. Moreover, women who reported being motivated for enhancement reasons tended to initiate their first same-sex sexual encounter under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. Consistent with previous work (Cooper et al., 1998), women who endorsed greater enhancement motivations for their first same-sex sexual contact reported engaging in a greater number of potentially risky sexual behaviors since becoming sexually active. It is important to note that, somewhat

unexpectedly, internal, maladaptive motives (i.e., self-affirmation, coping) were largely unrelated to reported subjective experiential outcomes within first same-sex sexual encounters.

Finally, women in the current sample who were motivated, during their first same-sex encounter, to explore their same-sex attraction (presumably an approach-oriented motivation) did not necessarily report a greater propensity to engage in risky sexual behavior generally. Nevertheless, they did report engaging in a greater variety of sexual activities during their initial same-sex encounter. Thus, sexual exploration appears to be a positive motivation for first same-sex sexual encounters that may correlate with general interest in greater sexual variety and ultimately contribute to positive sexual self-concepts among women (see e.g., Parent, Talley, Schwarz, & Hancock, 2015).

There are a number of important implications from the current findings. To our knowledge, our study is the first to examine whether differences are apparent with regard to motivations for engaging in first same-sex sexual encounters. This work contributes to a better understanding of what goals may precipitate women's first same-sex encounter. They also speak against previous theorizing that LGB women's motivations for sex might be more gender-atypical than EH women's (e.g., Whitley, 1988), which would have been supported if, for example, LGB or MH women were to report higher enhancement motives and lower intimacy motives, corresponding to patterns seen among heterosexual men, relative to heterosexual women (Cooper et al., 1998). Knowing how women's sexual identity relates to their experience of and motivations for first same-sex encounters provides a better understanding of important contributors to patterns of sexual development. Second, the current work provides some of the only available evidence within a sample of young adult women to support theorized associations among sexual motivations and associated experiential outcomes during a particular sexual event (i.e., first same-sex sexual encounters). Understanding that relations among theoretically-derived sex motives and corresponding sexual experiences are common across women with a diversity of sexual identities provides promise for generalized public health interventions. For example, interventions seeking to reduce or eliminate potentially risky sexual practices (e.g., sex with a stranger, co-occurring use of drugs/alcohol; e.g., Carey, Senn, Vanable, Coury-Doniger, & Urban, 2010) could provide targeted skills and motivational training to women who endorse self-focused, approach-oriented motivations for sex that are uncommonly associated with safer sex practices (e.g., enhancement motives). Moreover, we believe that it is important for such interventions to communicate effective ways to adeptly approach sexual decision-making, in terms of limiting risky encounters, while still affirming women's right to sexual pleasure and autonomy. As another example, interventions that aim to promote positive sexual development by fostering sexual self-efficacy and assertiveness among adolescent and young adult women (e.g., Hutchinson & Cooney, 1998) could use the current findings to discuss motivations and experiences that are typical for initial sexual encounters with same-sex partners. Despite the promise of the current findings for improving psychosexual health of women, additional examinations of how initial same-sex sexual encounters shape subsequent sexual behavior and close relationships are needed to better understand the role of underlying motivational systems for the sexual health and decision-making of adult women.

Some study limitations should be mentioned. First, this study relied on retrospective reports of women's first same-sex sexual encounters. Although discriminant analysis was used to identify motivations and experiences that were strong corollaries of sexual identity status in young adulthood, by no means do we view these models as deterministic in informing sexual identity development nor do we consider sexual orientation immutable. Instead, we assert a person's current sexual identity status is likely to be informed by multiple factors, including subjective interpretations of current and prior experiences related to one's sexuality (Galupo et al., 2014). For example, although we adjusted model estimates based on how well respondents reported remembering their first sexual encounters, self-report data on first same-sex encounters are likely to be influenced by a person's ability and motivation to accurately recall retrospective details. Second, our recruitment strategies resulted in a convenience sample, which is problematic because the participants were aware that the study concerned issues relating to 'female sexuality and alcohol use'. Thus, our sample may have greater numbers of women who naturally had interest in these topics and biased findings by self-selecting into the study. We did, however, attempt to enroll participants from an array of backgrounds, varying from college students and community members to a range of sexual identities and behaviors. Even still, the small sub-group sample sizes precluded our ability to adequately identify statistically significant mean-level differences in sexual motives and experiential outcomes during first same-sex sexual encounters among self-identified *bisexual*, *mostly gay/lesbian*, and *exclusively gay/lesbian* women. Thus, future work is needed to better distinguish bisexual and gay/lesbian women's motivations and experiences related to their first same-sex sexual encounters. Finally, we only looked at women's first same-sex sexual encounter rather than their most recent same-sex sexual encounter or their experiences across multiple occasions. We chose to only ask about respondent's first sexual encounter because we believed it allowed participants to focus on what tends to be a very specific and impactful event. We suspected that participants should be better able to recall details of this event and be more accurate than if we were to ask the same type of questions aggregated across all encounters with same-sex sexual partners.

A better understanding of what motivates women to initiate and engage in their first same-sex encounter could lead to a better understanding of factors influencing sexual development and close relationship functioning as well as contribute to improved sexual and relational outcomes for all women. Overall, the reasons that women choose to engage in their first sexual encounter with a same-sex partner were largely similar, suggesting that all women, regardless of their self-ascribed sexual identity in young adulthood, report similar motivations for their first same-sex sexual encounter. EH women tended to experience this encounter more passively than MH and LGB women. Nevertheless, the fact that initial motivations for sexual contact with a woman were associated with similar subjective experiential outcomes suggests underlying motivational systems may facilitate common sexual experiences depending on the underlying reason women engage in sexual activity with their first same-sex partner.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Primary Study Outcomes.

	Overall Sample					Exclusively Heterosexual					Mostly Heterosexual					LGB				
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	
FS Sexual Motives																				
Enhancement	122	3.58	1.23	1.00-5.00		33	3.12	1.42	1.00-5.00		42	3.77	1.26	1.00-5.00		47	3.73	0.94	1.00-5.00	
Intimacy	122	2.40	1.43	1.00-5.00		33	1.67	1.21	1.00-5.00		42	3.22	1.37	1.00-5.00		47	2.05	1.18	1.00-5.00	
Self-Affirmation	122	1.97	1.08	1.00-5.00		33	1.71	1.01	1.00-4.50		42	2.15	1.15	1.00-5.00		47	1.98	1.04	1.00-5.00	
Coping	121	1.30	0.75	1.00-5.00		32	1.22	0.65	1.00-4.00		42	1.30	0.73	1.00-5.00		47	1.36	0.84	1.00-5.00	
Exploration	122	3.51	1.51	1.00-5.00		33	2.48	1.60	1.00-5.00		42	4.04	1.25	1.00-5.00		47	3.71	1.31	1.00-5.00	
FS Experiential Outcomes																				
Well-known	123	-0.02	0.81	-1.82-1.55		33	0.23	0.89	-1.68-1.56		43	-0.16	0.76	-1.47-1.12		47	-0.05	0.75	-1.47-1.35	
Initiation	123	4.32	1.06	1.00-7.00		33	4.64	1.06	3.00-7.00		43	4.38	0.90	3.00-7.00		47	4.00	1.16	1.00-7.00	
Age of Encounter	119	16.32	4.08	8.00-27.00		30	14.73	4.39	8.00-23.00		40	17.25	4.23	8.00-27.00		46	16.48	3.34	8.00-22.00	
Num. of behaviors	123	3.81	2.29	1.00-8.00		33	2.52	1.86	1.00-7.00		43	4.60	2.18	1.00-8.00		47	3.95	2.31	1.00-8.00	
Alcohol/Drugs Involved	123	0.56	0.50	0.00-1.00		33	0.82	0.39	0.00-1.00		43	0.34	0.48	0.00-1.00		47	0.60	0.44	0.00-1.00	
LT Risky Sex	122	1.87	1.64	0.00-7.00		33	1.58	1.32	0.00-7.00		42	1.87	1.87	0.00-7.00		47	2.10	1.59	0.00-7.00	

Note. All respondents were women. LGB = *Primarily/Exclusively Lesbian and Bisexual*/sexual identity self-labels. FS = First sex; LT = Lifetime; Num. = Number. Sexual motivations were measured using the Cooper Sexual Motivation Scale (Cooper et al., 1998). Items were rated in the manner of, “*How important was...*” (1=Not at all important, 5=Extremely important). Enhancement (2 items, Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient [Eisinga, Grotenhuis, & Pelzer, 2013]; $\rho = .68$); “...having sex for the thrill and excitement of it” Intimacy (2 items, $\rho = .83$); “...making an emotional connection and becoming closer to this man(woman)” Self-Affirmation (2 items, $\rho = .75$); “...having sex to reassure yourself that you were attractive and sexually desirable” Coping (2 items, $\rho = .80$); “...having sex to help you deal with feeling of disappointment, sadness, or loneliness in your life at that time” Exploration (1-item): “...having sexual contact so that you could have the experience of exploring your same-sex attraction”. “Well known” is a composite variable (3-items): (a) “How long had you known this woman at the time you first had sex? (in months)” (open-ended) (b) “How would you describe your relationship with this woman at that time?” (1=someone you just met to 5=spouse/long-term partner) and (c) “At the time you first had sex contact with this woman, how well would you say you knew him/her?” (1 = Not at all to 5 = Extremely well). Higher scores indicate greater familiarity with the sexual partner at the time the sexual contact occurred. Initiation, “Whose idea was it to have sex on that first occasion?” (1=completely your idea to 7=completely your partner’s idea). Age of encounter: “Approximately what age were you the first time you ever had any consensual (both parties agreed) sexual contact with a woman?” Count of number of behaviors: “Did you and your partner do any of the following on this occasion (check all that apply)”. Sexual behaviors included: sexual kissing/making out, fondling your breasts, fondling your partner’s chest/breasts, fondling your genitals, receiving oral sex, giving oral sex, vaginal penetration, and anal penetration. Presence of drugs or alcohol prior to their first sexual encounter with a woman: “Did you personally drink any alcohol on this sexual occasion?” and “Did you smoke marijuana or use any other drugs on this sexual occasion?” (Yes/No). A dichotomous variable was created to indicate whether the participant had used alcohol or other drugs prior to their first same-sex sexual encounter(s). Lifetime risky sex: An average of the number of times participants had engaged in seven risky behaviors in their lifetime (“never in my life” to “More than 30 times”).

Table 2
Spearman Correlations among Sexual Motivation and Experiential Variables for First Same-sex Sexual Encounter

	Minority sexual identity	FS Enhance SM	FS Intimacy SM	FS Self-affirm SM	FS Coping SM	FS Explore SM	FS Well-know	FS Initiation	FS Age of encounter	FS Num. of behaviors	FS Alcohol/drugs involved	LT Risky sex
Minority Sexual Identity ^a	--	.20 [*]	.36 ^{***}	.18	.10	.39 ^{***}	-.21 [*]	-.16	.20 [*]	.34 ^{***}	-.31 ^{***}	.10
FS Enhancement SM		--	.33 ^{***}	.20 [*]	.09	.50 ^{***}	-.15	-.07	.25 ^{**}	.45 ^{***}	.05	.21 [*]
FS Intimacy SM			--	.13	.13	.34 ^{**}	.06	-.09	.19 [*]	.29 ^{**}	-.36 ^{***}	-.09
FS Self-affirmation SM				--	.43 ^{***}	.37 ^{***}	-.23 [*]	.07	.32 ^{**}	.08	-.02	-.07
FS Coping SM					--	.22 [*]	-.20 [*]	.07	.09	-.01	-.09	-.04
FS Exploration SM						--	-.20 [*]	-.04	.24 [*]	.42 ^{***}	-.13	.08
FS Well known							--	-.10	-.35 ^{***}	-.12	-.10	-.15
FS Initiation								--	.00	-.01	.04	-.02
FS Age of encounter									--	.26 ^{**}	.22 [*]	.00
FS Num. of behaviors										--	-.02	.29 ^{**}

^{*} $p < .05$,
^{**} $p < .01$,
^{***} $p < .001$.

^a A binary variable was coded from the Kinsey-type sexual identity item to reflect a minority sexual identity in young adulthood (0=Exclusively heterosexual; 1 = Non-exclusively heterosexual). Spearman correlations are presented due to non-normally distributed variables (e.g., Coping, Num. of behaviors). EH=exclusively heterosexual. FS = First sex; LT = Lifetime SM = Sex motive; Num. = Number.

Table 3
Standardized Discriminant Function Coefficients and Structure Matrix Coefficients

Dependent Variable	Standardized coefficients	Structure matrix coefficients
First Same-Sex Sexual Motivations		
FS Enhancement SM	-.13	.30
FS Intimacy SM	.73	.81
FS Self-affirmation SM	.12	.28
FS Coping SM	-.15	.05
FS Exploration SM	.61	.69
First Same-sex Experiential Outcomes		
FS Well known	-.35	-.42
FS Initiation	-.39	-.38
FS Age of encounter	.24	.51
FS Num. of behaviors	.72	.80

FS = First sex; SM = Sex motive; Num. = Number.

Primary Regression Analyses of Experiential Outcomes for First Same-sex Sexual Contact, as Predicted by Sexual Motivations

Table 4

Sexual Motive Predictor	FS Well-known			FS Initiation			FS Age of Encounter			FS Num. of behaviors			FS Alcohol/Drugs Involved ^a			LT Risky Sex		
	β	SE	p	β	SE	p	β	SE	p	β	SE	p	OR	SE	p	β	SE	p
FS Enhancement SM	-.13	.07	.205	-.18	.09	.103	.28	.35	.008	.33	.17	<.001	1.82	.25	.015	.30	.14	.004
FS Intimacy SM	.36	.06	.001	-.10	.08	.377	-.07	.32	.551	-.03	.15	.786	0.56	.19	.002	-.14	.12	.172
FS Self-affirmation SM	-.09	.08	.389	.14	.11	.180	.21	.40	.049	-.14	.19	.112	1.03	.25	.894	-.18	.15	.088
FS Coping SM	-.11	.24	.303	.02	.32	.827	-.07	1.17	.505	-.06	.57	.492	0.52	.73	.377	.02	.46	.875
FS Exploration SM	-.06	.06	.588	.06	.08	.626	.14	.31	.231	.30	.15	.003	1.02	.20	.918	-.24	.12	.033

^aLogistic regression was employed for the binary outcome variable; all other models employed basic linear regression. Bolded, standardized coefficients are statistically significant, $p < .05$. FS = First sex; LT = Lifetime SM = Sex motive; Num. = Number. Regression covariates included: ethnic/racial status, history of self-reported sexual assault, social desirability, religiosity, how well they reported remembering the occasion, and the two contrast codes for sexual identity status (MH = Mostly heterosexual; LGB = Exclusively or Primarily Lesbian/Gay or Bisexual; Reference group: EH = Exclusively heterosexual).