Introduction & Hypotheses

Introduction

- Both popular media and social science research suggest that gender/sexual identities and roles that have dominated western society are being challenged (Budgeon, 2014).
- Heteronormative assumptions and the gender binary are rapidly evolving to capture experiences that reflect greater diversity (Diamond, 2005; Nagoshi et al., 2012), including those that extend beyond labels.
- How this increased flexibility affects well-being, however, is not yet understood.
- The current study seeks to advance our understanding of this diversity among gender, sexual and romantic minorities (GSRMs) by answering the following questions:
  - Question 1: With regard to gender identity and sexual orientation, what are the experiences of unlabeled individuals in their communities? Why do unlabeled individuals choose to be unlabeled?
  - Question 2: Is unlabeled status associated with minority stress and well-being?

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from a range of sources (students, LGBTQ organization, and social media targeting GSRMs)
- Mean age: 19.24 years (SD = 1.49)
- Primarily White (82%), Hispanic (5%), Asian-American (4%), African-American (2%), Native American (1%), Pacific Islander (1%), Other (5%)

Procedure & Measures

- As a part of a larger battery of measures, participants completed the following scales:
  - Extended Satisfaction with Life Scale (ESWLS; Alfonso, Allison, Rader and Gorman, 1996)
  - Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG; Klein, 1978)
  - Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire (DHEQ; Balsam, 2013)

Results

- The majority (82%) of participants who reported an “unlabeled” gender identity were assigned female at birth and reported being gendered in public as “she” (65%) or both “she/equal” (18%)
- In general, “unlabeled” participants reported lower overall and family life satisfaction compared to cisgendered, and lower social life satisfaction compared to men (see Table 1)
- “Unlabeled” were similar to other GSRMs on reported levels of minority stress and all other ESWLS subscales
- Explaining their “unlabeled” status, participants described their primary identification as human, expressed discomfort with gender-based assumptions and rejected constrictions of the gender binary

Conclusion

- This study represents one of the first attempts to understand the experience of those who describe themselves as “unlabeled” and how they compare to other GSRMs on measures of well-being and minority stress
- Although a range of explanations for eschewing labels existed among a small number of participants, lower life satisfaction suggests that this may be an at-risk population meriting further study