

SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY AND POPULATION DATABASES

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Prevalence of health indicators, risk factors, and social milieu variables unique to or different for sexual/gender and ethno-cultural minorities, using secondary analyses of Statistics Canada databases.

COMPOSITION OF THE PROJÉT TEAM

1. Chair

- Greta Bauer, Ph.D., Professor, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, University of Western Ontario (Ontario)

2. Co-researchers

3. Collaborators

- Lori Ross, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto
- David Brennan, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto
- Martin Blais, Professor, UQAM
- Gilbert Émond, Assistant Professor, Concordia University
- Paul Hastings, Associate Professor, Concordia University
- Nick Mulé, Professor, York University
- Joanne Otis, Full Professor, UQAM
- Dominic Beaulieu-Prévost, Professor, Concordia University
- Elizabeth Saewyc, Associate Professor, University of British

4. Students, Community Members, and Researchers not formally affiliated with SVR:

- Karin Hohenadel
- Todd Coleman
- Cheryl Dobinson
- Leah Steele

RESEARCH PROGRAM

Objective 1: Advocacy for inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in Statistics Canada data sets

Given the new Longitudinal Health Administrative Databases (LHAD) project, in which provinces and territories are working with Statistics Canada to enable linking of data for research studies, new opportunities for advocating change are potentially open.

UPDATE

A Catalyst Grant on Methods and Measures for Gender, Sex and Health was submitted to CIHR by Greta Bauer and David Brennan in October, 2009. Notification is imminent. The title of the grant is “Are Gay Men Really Men who have Sex with Men (MSM)? Methodological Issues in Measuring Male Sexual Orientation in Health Research.” The lay abstract follows:

Health studies on sexual minority men have used a wide variety of measures of sexual orientation. Different dimensions of sexual orientation – attraction, behaviour and identity – are measured in diverse ways. Behavioural measures of men who have sex with men (MSM) may define this group according to sexual activity during different timeframes (Ever? Past six months?) and may define “sex” variably or not at all. Identity measures may involve scales or categories, including culturally specific categories, or options such as “unsure” or “something else,” and may combine categories (e.g. gay and bisexual vs. heterosexual). Despite varying measures, researchers and policy makers combine data across studies, formally and informally, assuming that results obtained using one measure are comparable to those that would be obtained using another. This assumption had been found to be invalid for women, but has not been evaluated for men. If it is not, there are serious policy implications. For example, in the consideration of Canadian blood donor deferral criteria, data from studies of gay- and bisexual-identified men have been used to evaluate whether changes should be made to the current policy excluding potential male donors who have had sex with another man, even one time, since 1977. The proposed study draws on population data from the U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Study, which contains multiple measures of sexual orientation not available in Canadian data sets, to assess whether different measures and categorizations of sexual orientation in men will produce similar outcomes in the same large group of adult men. Outcomes include obesity, physical activity, current alcohol and tobacco use, sexually transmitted disease prevalence, and recent sexual risk-taking. Based on a literature review and results of this analysis, recommendations will be made for measuring male sexual orientation in health research studies, and a guide for researchers will be created.

Objective 2: Expand analysis of CCHS data

The analyses that some members (Lori Ross, Leah Steele and David Brennan) have conducted or are currently conducting using Canadian Community Health Survey data have involved analyzing health outcomes for gay/lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual group separately for men and for women. With some additional analysis, comparisons can be made to show how issues affect sexual minority men and women similarly or differently.

UPDATE

The new analysis of CCHS data with relation to bisexuality and mental health is moving ahead slowly. Since bisexuality remains understudied with relation to sexual orientation, this was a major contribution we could make, even given the limitations of secondary data analysis using CCHS data.

Objective 3. Paper on characteristics of population datasets including sexual orientation variables

UPDATE

Drafting of a paper analyzing the current state of population data collection on sexual orientation and gender identity has begun.

Objective 4: Review of Population-based Datasets that Include Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity

For this project, we will compile a database of population-based data sets (national, or state-, region- or provincial-level within a country) that include measures of sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

UPDATE

Our rough database of population databases was completed by fall, 2009. We redesigned it into simple, standardized, searchable fields, with parallel fields in English and French. Translation of the database from English to French is still underway. A logo for the website has been finalized, and a website template created. The final website will be hosted at www.svrpopulations.ca, as this URL recognizes the origins of the project within SVR and was equally acceptable to English- and French-language researchers on our project.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

UPDATE

For 2010-2011, our plan is to wrap up our current projects with existing funding. We have had discussions regarding new plans for research, and Gilbert Émond is preparing one proposal. There was also broad interest in working with other teams within SVR to conduct a Canadian study of either LGBT health, or a large sexuality study for all Canadians.

COMMUNICATIONS RELATED TO THE PROJECT

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