

# The Research on the Effect of Gender Expression on Intimacy of Homosexual Groups

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**Abstract.** The research on LGBT people and their intimate relationships has always been a topic of public concern, and this paper based on the previous studies and investigations in the field of LGBT relationship satisfaction, try to solve the loophole in the gender expression and sex role concerning relationship satisfaction. On this research, the results show that in a same-sex relationship, those who are passive are likely to be more feminine, whereas those who are active tend to be masculine. Most people think it necessary to have a complementary sex role, but only a few consider it is not necessarily meaningful. These may be due to the social context, if the environment is adaptive to LGBT, or they suffer less from the stigma brought by binary gender or heterosexism, people can insist on their preferable gender role instead of reluctantly switching to create a complementary relationship, since it may harm their satisfaction and intimacy with the relationship. In this paper, the author hopes to make a little contribution through the study of homosexual groups and their intimacy.

**Keywords:** Gender Expression; Gender Role; Homosexuality; Intimacy.

## 1. Introduction

LGBT usually have a sexual preference other than normal binary sexual orientation, which appears to be different. LGBT is an actual and realistic existing social phenomenon, it is a unique subculture, and is related to politics, economy and culture. To the public, the definition seems to be explicit and needs no explanation, and they use this word freely, many people think LGBT means they love people of the same-sex and have sex with them. However, physiology, psychology and social aspects may be involved in defining LGBT academically. In this article, the author takes gays and lesbians in the group as research objects, and explores their intimacy.

In terms of the definition, psychologist Sigmund Freud described LGBTQ as “only love people with same-sex” or “sex-reversed people [1].” Havelock Ellis, a British sexologist, considered homosexuality when the object of the sexual impulse was the same sex, not the opposite sex. Florence Tamagne, a historian of homosexuality, argued that homosexuality was a form of sex in which sexual attraction was directed towards others of the same sex. Kinsey (A.C.), a famous American sexologist, conducted a large-scale survey of human sexual behavior in 1948 and put forward the famous “sexual continuum” idea. According to the theory, things in the world are not black and white, and the reality of society is a continuum in all aspects, including sexual orientation and behavior, with seven intermediate states ranging from “absolute heterosexual sex” (level 0) to “absolute homosexual sex” (level 6). Kinsey defined homosexuality as “a sexual relationship between persons of the same sex, both physical and spiritual.” There are many viewpoints about the academic explanation for LGBTQ, but investigating the intimate relationship among them will allow more people to know the relationship patterns among LGBTQ, and this help forms closer bonds within the group of people and give them some advice. How to achieve the state of mutual love in a homosexual relationship is influenced by the gender functions of two people. Gender roles break the conventional binary system of gender, and now homosexuals can freely pursue gender expression. Their gender identity also affects their sexual roles and gender expression to some extent.

Gender Expression means manifesting a feeling of being masculine or feminine through clothing, behavior, or grooming. Gender Identity means an inner sense of being either male or female [2]. Gender expression is associated with gender identity to some extent, a person's gender identity reveals his gender expression, a thinking of themselves as men of woman also shows masculinity, but her gender expression depends on the environment's influence on him, or if the inclusion degree is high,

they can more freely express their gender, but if in a conservative country, even if they identify as men, they do not act in a masculine way because society has stigmatized gender expression. In their view, only boys can behave in a masculine way, and girls can only behave in a feminine way, otherwise they will be ostracized by society. Gender expression may be related to sexual roles to a certain extent. According to the binary gender, masculine roles tend to be the ones who need to take care of each other in a relationship, while feminine roles tend to be weak, such as men who work outside and women who work inside, but in today's society, more and more counter examples prove that gender expression, which is closely linked with sex roles is not the fourth love. For instance, in a relationship, although it is a binary gender system, the girl has assumed the role of masculinity, men play the role of the feminine, in the gay community in different or the same gender expression pattern, to some extent, it will affect the intimate relationship in the group. Based on this, this paper will discuss the gender expression in the gay community, containing different roles of gay whether gender expression with other performance, and hope to be able to out the gender expression through the analysis on the related research of the influenced factors of relationship among gay and degree of attention to the social minority relationship happiness in mode, maintain physical and mental health and social harmony, and provide some contributions for future scholars who aspire to do this research.

## 2. The concept and characteristics of gender expression

### 2.1 The Concept of Gender Expression

Around the concept of gender expression, the relationship and difference between gender expression, gender identity and sexual role can be clarified first. Gender expression can be understood as whether a person wants to be masculine or feminine, derived based on personal preference, but will be affected by gender stereotypes. Gender identity, which refers to a person's internal identification as male or female, is not necessarily the same as their gender, but can also be influenced by gender stereotypes. The idea that traditional, socialized gender roles may result in some negative consequences for people arose in the 1970's with the women's movement [3]. Through the women's movement and research advances, more people came to believe that traditional gender roles placed unreasonable restrictions on women and limited their potential. Although the women's movement generated a lot of attention and a large body of literature, it was not until the late 1970's and early 1980's that people began to believe that socialized gender roles might be restrictive for men too. Several writers suggested that male socialization was a primary cause of men's physical and emotional problems [4], specifically, with themselves, other men, women, and their work and leisure.

If the performance of homosexuals does not conform to social expectations, they are likely to deny their gender and have doubts about their gender identity, which will lead them to refuse to follow their inner thoughts, but to conform to social stigma and change their gender expression to meet social expectations. Gender expression is not only internal, but also sometimes external. Gender expression is usually reflected in a person's gendered expression and behavior in society. For example, the stigmatized word "sissy" is a female's gender expression, but the behavior is issued by a man.

Sexual roles can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as role preference, where gay men are "attacker" (means those who take the responsibility of man in binary sexual and they are more likely to be more masculine, also known as "1") and "affected" (means those who take the responsibility of females in binary sexual and may be more feminine, also known as "0"), and lesbians are "P" (means those who take the responsibility of females in binary sexual and may be more feminine) and "T" (means those who take the responsibility of man in binary sexual and they are more likely to be more masculine), which is usually a personal preference, but the "affected" and "p" are seen as more feminine and tend to need more care and protection from their partner, while the "attacker" and "T" are more masculine and tend to have more burden to resist. Assigning these roles depends on personal preference, and by complementing the character of the target, the gay community can make themselves feel happy and loved. Gender identity and gender expression are closely related, and gender expression is often the carrier of gender identity. If a man identifies as a woman, he will

behave femininely. Gender identity is less likely affected by the social environment than gender expression. If a person is in a conservative country, he dares not behave differently from his gender, otherwise he will be attacked or isolated by the masses, or even sentenced in severe cases. In history and even in modern times, there has been discrimination and abuse against the gay community to varying degrees, ignoring the pursuit of the happy and intimate relationships with the gay community.

In thirty-seven countries in Africa, homosexuality is punishable by life imprisonment while it is a death penalty in Mauritania, Nigeria, and Sudan, and also in Middle East countries (Rupar, 2014). Patria (2014) mentioned that UN Human Rights Council expressed their concern of grave acts about violence and discrimination committed by every region in the world towards individuals due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. A further study conducted by the Human Rights Campaign revealed that there are 42% of LGBT youth live in a hostile environment where they are not accepted. LGBT youth are twice as likely to report physical assaults, attacked with kicks, or someone shoving them at school, 26% say their biggest problems are acceptance by their families, bullying at school, and fear of being open about their sexuality, 92% of LGBT youth say they hear negative things about themselves at school, on the Internet, or from their peers, 73% of LGBT youth say they are more honest online than in the real world, 90% of LGBT youth say they are out to their close friends, 63% say they are out at school. While in thirty-seven countries in Africa, homosexuality is punishable by life imprisonment, while it is the death penalty in Mauritania, Nigeria and Sudan and also in Middle East countries [5].

## 2.2 Characteristics of Gender Expression

The traditional concept, binary gender role is an either-or thing, it confines what man and woman should be like, and is internalized heterosexism. If a man does not behave in a masculine way, he is likely to be bullied, to some extent, does harm to their well-being, such as their life satisfaction, and they are likely to be isolated and suffer from health or mental diseases. Although this concept is out of trend, it is still the primary source of many stigmas, for example, girls are thought to be more emotional in a relationship, and boys should be firm and responsible. Nowadays, the freedom of gender expression is prevalent. Among LGB couples, although they are of the same-sex, they can have their own preferred gender expression, they can behave either in a masculine or feminine way.

In some places, the gender binary is not the only legal one, and homosexuality can break the gender binary, such as in the gay community, where there are two biologically masculine 1s or two feminized 0s in a relationship. In the gay community, gender expression is divided into “1 (attack)”, “0.5 (neutral)” and “0 (suffer)”. “Attack” is usually the role of male in the binary gender system, and “0” is generally the role of female in the binary gender system. Still, these three types of gender expression cannot represent their gender identity.

To avoid role conflict and leading to sexual disharmony and emotional separation, gay people with bit of experience will be clear about the sexual roles of both parties in advance. Gay sex role, however, is not fixed and curing, when the object of different sex, gay men may change the original consistent sex role, that is to say, sex role is not entirely determined by the physiological characteristics, the behavior of “0”, “1” is not structured, affective factors in the process of the love, also worked as a lubricant. The change of sexual role is the embodiment of love, temporary compromise, the awakening, and development of another kind of sexual pleasure [6]. Couples are more likely to enter into a relationship and the relationship is more stable if the proper sex-role brings joy. If the sex role is not a proper or forced sex role, the connection will be less long-lasting.

In today's society, according to the survey, the proportion of “1” and “0” in gay men is not balanced, except MB, other “0” may change their gender expression to enter a relationship, but it does not mean that they are also willing to change their heart. “0” is stigmatized, and a male-biased society will have this stigma attached to “0s” identity. Since “0” is a passive role just like women, derogatory terms are also used against “0[6]”. Compared to men, women are far more likely to be victims of abuse [7], and its occurrence in both childhood and adulthood has been studied in relation to both sexual orientation and gender socialization, or an individual's masculinity or femininity. In our review of the

literature all studies are based in the United States (US) unless otherwise stated and include both heterosexual and sexual minority samples as well as both adult and child samples.

This indicates that the frequency of the same gender roles in a relationship is also increasing. Although some people may be affected by social stigma, exploring the forms of different gender expression and the same gender expression in homosexuality is able to grasp the extent of the influence of gender expression on the intimate relationship of the homosexual community.

### **3. The impact of gender expression on intimacy among LGB groups**

#### **3.1 The Impact of Different Gender Expressions on Intimacy**

The gender cultural classification of homosexuality is usually based on binary gender. Among gay men, “attacking (1)” is considered masculine, while “accepting (0)” is considered feminine. “1” often plays the role of a man in a relationship, and they need to take care of “0” and take the initiative to take responsibility. Lesbian “T” was considered masculine and “P” feminine, but both groups had a neutral character, “0.5” and “H”. The cause of gender role can be based on the identity theory of gender role proposed by Freud. According to the idea, individual preferences for the same sex or opposite sex are established through competition and identification with parents of the same sex. For example, young boys between 3 and 5 begin to crave their mothers, to suppress the anxiety associated with this craving and to overcome oedipal complexes, young boys gradually internalize masculine behaviors and traits. Girls, however, are more complicated in their development of gender roles. At the same time, the girl is afraid of her mother's revenge. It is possible that in this dual psychological conflict, the girl finally chooses to identify with her mother. At the same time, girls internalize feminine behaviors and traits to please their fathers, and eventually developing stereotyped female gender roles [8]. However, lesbians with masculine characteristics are defined as male gender roles. In terms of appearance, they usually like to keep short hair, wear simple and casual clothes, and have masculine behaviors. Female homosexuals with feminine traits generally like to wear long hair and wear women's clothes, with typical female characteristics. Compared with female homosexuals with feminine characteristics, female homosexuals with male traits are more active, independent, rational and strong. In terms of sexual attitude and behavior, the performance of female homosexuals with masculine traits is a subversion and challenge to the traditional Chinese sexual model. Their sexual behavior is characterized by the following: first, they are more open to sex when it is not for reproductive purposes. In the understanding of sexual knowledge, they usually know more widely than the female homosexuals with feminine characteristics, and often show positive sexual desire, without the oppression of traditional women. Secondly, the sex objects are not simple, they have an open sexual concept, which makes them far more active in sexual behavior than other women, and the number of sex objects is also more than other women. Thirdly, they have higher requirements for the quality of sex than other women, and they will find more pleasant sexual ways in the process of sex. In China, female homosexuals with masculine characteristics and female homosexuals with feminine traits are the majority [8].

Since they have a complementary sexual identity, their divorce rate may be similar to those binary heterosexuals. However, the marriage rate still depends on the social context, it is not allowed to get married in some places. It seems that a complementary sexual identity will help improve the satisfaction of a relationship, they do not worry that they will face the same-sex role, so they tend to be more harmonious. Given that they do not care about the sex role, instead, they appreciate the quality of their mates, this seems to have a higher satisfaction since it is not due to the happiness brought by sex or external things, this appears to be on the next level since they are spiritual complementary.

To explore the impact of gender roles on relationships, 220 gay men and 217 lesbians from 111 cities across China were surveyed online. Participants rated their functions and partner parts requirements on five categories ranging from “pure 0/P” (single female role) to “pure 1/T” (single male role). The masculinity and femininity of the Bem sex role scale were measured. Results:

Homosexual roles can be divided into passive, ambiguous and active roles, and the passive role of homosexual men (34.7%) is more than that of active role (27.4%). The opposite is true for homosexual women (21.2, 581%). Regarding gender role types, the passives were more feminine than masculine (31.6% and 6.6%, respectively; Male and female were 28.3%, and 8.7%, respectively. Male and female were 25.6% and 13.3%, respectively. For lesbians, 27.8 percent and 11.9 percent respectively). In terms of role requirements for partners, 65.26 and 70.2 percent of gay and lesbian couples with role bias were complementary, 34.8% and 29.8% respectively. Conclusion: The role of homosexuality can be divided into passive, ambiguous and active roles. To some extent, the differentiation of roles is based on individual masculinity and femininity, most of the role requirements of the homosexual with role bias are complementary, and a few have no specific role requirements, which proves that the influence of different gender expression on intimate relationship mainly lies in the role requirements of the partner [9]. In most cases, the probability of passive and active complementary is relatively high, but the gender role is not immutable, it is more like a division of labor in service life. In a society where a person's sexual role cannot be defined by appearance alone, there are more male zeros (masculine zeros) and female ones (feminine ones), suggesting that roles do not match their gender expression. To alleviate the sex-role imbalance, some people change their sex role, or enter a relationship with someone similar to their sex role, this can lead to the same sexual positions in a relationship.

### 3.2 The Effect of Same-Gender Expression on Intimacy

The same role may be because two people have the exact external sexual position, or it may be that a person has changed his external sexual role to achieve the binary gender system, but he is still committed to or has not changed his authentic role. In the second case, the satisfaction of the relationship tends to be low because the sexual roles of the two people are essentially the same. If they are both passive roles, the relationship will end because they do not take care of the emotional experience in time. Still, the ambiguous gender role can serve as a lubricant to alleviate the particular situation.

Ambivalent people have some flexibility in what they want from their partner because they can play the active or passive role. The results of this study indicate that the role requirements of active and passive partners can be divided into complementary and both types. In this study, an average of 67.7% (65.2% male, 70.2% female) of the role-biased (active and passive) homosexuals had "complementary" role requirements for their partners. In comparison, 32.3% (34.8% male, 29.8% female) had no specific role requirements for their partners. Perhaps most homosexuals are still influenced by the heterosexual model and require "complementarity" in their choice of same-sex partners. It may also be because the homosexual with complementary roles will have harmonious sexual behavior and both of them can get physiological and psychological satisfaction. In contrast, a few homosexuals with compatible roles may attach more importance to the relationship between two people, and the role issue is not very important [9], so non-complementary relationships are considered to lack the stability and happiness of complementary relationships, but the same gender role can have a high degree of satisfaction, as long as two people think they are compatible, because gender roles are dominant in sex, and if they don't enjoy sex, gender roles are not a problem for them. To some extent, this reflects that they break the traditional idea of dualism.

Above all, the author concluded that there are internal factors affecting gay relationships, such as the sex role of coordination, two people whether there is a person wants to match the binary gender of sexual role (1, 0 or t, p), and they can reach a consensus, or both of them don't care about each other's sex role, as well as the external environment such as the surrounding people and society, for example, in the United Kingdom and the United States, people hold a tolerant attitude towards homosexuality. In contrast, in middle Eastern countries, such as Pakistan, homosexuality is not approved and accepted due to religious belief and state regulations. Most of the significant correlations referred to gender role self-concept but not to gender-related attitudes. This leads to the conclusion that gender role self-concept is closer to a person's behavior than gender-related beliefs.

However, gender-related attitudes were correlated with the behavior of the partner. Our data provide evidence that, especially in same-sex settings traditional partners elicit gender-stereotyped behaviors. More research is needed on this issue.

To summarize, it seems that gender roles have different significance in same-sex than in mixed-sex interactions. In same-sex interactions, one's gender role is more relevant than in mixed-sex settings, especially for women. As only a few correlations between gender role self-concept and behavior in mixed-sex settings have been found, this suggests that participants did not activate their gender role self-concept [10].

#### 4. Conclusion

It is essential to emphasize the satisfaction of a group, despite other factors that may influence the satisfaction, such as gender identity, they may form this in their early years, and they may be affected by the social contexts that what they should be like so their gender identity formed. However, it stands more for individual side, they tend to behave what society requires and retain their real identity. Gender expression can also be an aspect to investigate, since it is flexible and this may also contribute to their sex role, it is a variable, so it may depend on their current situation. If they want to form a complementary relationship, they may change their gender expression, so this can be investigated in-depth, allowing them to carry out the different or same gender roles in a relationship and how this will contribute to the satisfaction. The research showed that most LGBT groups still think it necessary to have a complementary sexual identity, just as the binary sexual system offers. They may have this concept due to the social stigma, since it is more universally accepted. However, it is more likely that they think complementary roles enhance their relationship, they can be more harmonious without worrying their conflict sex roles or personalities, but this is not the case, sex roles are not closely related to gender expression. Some who take the response of males may only exist in sex, they may be feminine in daily life. A minority think it is not necessary to have a complementary sexual relationship, this may be due to their appreciation of their mates' "qualities" or, they are not interested in sex. This research can be a reference for LGBTQ to enhance their relationship and fix the gap in the effect on satisfaction of same-sex roles in a relationship. This research remains some drawbacks, such as not taking into account people in different countries, and in the future, a broader scope of sample can be included to make the results more representative.

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