

Students favour monogamy

The Institute for Tropical Medicine investigated the way 800 students from the University of Antwerp (subconsciously) view sexual relationships

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Dit is de omschrijving



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More than nine out of ten students have a strong preference for monogamy, according to a study based on an online questionnaire. Over 800 UAntwerp students were asked about their subconscious attitude towards monogamy and sexual partner concurrency. The study, led by the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) in Antwerp, will be published this week in PLOS ONE.

The team of Prof. Chris Kenyon at ITM investigates sexual networks and their influence on the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections

(STI).

Prof. Dr. Chris Kenyon: "A better insight into people's attitude towards sexuality can provide us with tools to develop more efficient campaigns against the spread of HIV and STI."

"Earlier research has shown that direct questioning about sexual preferences is not a reliable method. Most people still consider it taboo to admit that they endorse forms of concurrent partnering, while others are not even aware that they hold such an attitude. This may distort the general picture."

The researchers therefore opted for a so-called "Implicit Association Test" which looks at implicit links that people make, without being specifically asked to reflect on a particular issue. In this study, participants had to categorise words as either positive or negative. They were also asked to determine whether photographs depicted two people in a monogamous relationship or two people of which one had another partner. 92.3% of the students appeared to indicate an implicit preference for monogamy.

"The preference for monogamy is similar in male and female students. Homosexual men and lesbian women were more open to multiple partner concurrency," says Kenyon. Due to the limited size of the non-heterosexual respondents group, their results must be interpreted with caution.

The researchers also compared the implicit preferences questionnaire with the answers the students gave when explicitly asked about their views on monogamy and sexual partner concurrency. In this explicit questionnaire students also clearly opted for monogamy. There was no visible difference in this latter questionnaire on the basis of the indicated sexual preference of the respondents.

The strong preference for monogamy is no surprise. Any form of non-monogamy was forbidden and stigmatised for centuries in Western Europe and has, in general, been looked upon with disapproval. Therefore, the researchers would like to reproduce this study in sub-Saharan African regions, where various forms of concurrent partnering are more socially accepted.

"If people in these regions have a different subconscious attitude, we may well ask why and from what age these differences emerge. We know that intensive and interconnected sexual networks maintain the spread of sexually transmitted infections. A better picture of sexual preferences should help us control this spread," says Kenyon.

This research was a joint venture between ITM, the University of Antwerp, the University of Cape Town (South Africa) and the Open University Limburg (Netherlands).

Link

- [Implicit attitudes to sexual partner concurrency vary by sexual orientation but not by gender—A cross sectional study of Belgian students](#)