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Self-esteem among lesbian, gay, bisexual and same-sex-attracted Mormons and ex-Mormons

Lauren J. Joseph & Stephen Cranney

Pages 1028-1041 | Received 03 Jan 2017, Accepted 29 Jan 2018, Published online: 28 Feb 2018

Download citation

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2018.1435634>

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ABSTRACT

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and same-sex-attracted (LGB/SSA) individuals in conservative religions often experience stigma, shame, and psychological distress in reconciling their religious and sexual identities, yet religion can also provide existential comfort and social support. We investigated relationships among self-esteem, participation in the Mormon Church, and sexual identity acceptance among 348 LGB/SSA Mormons and ex-Mormons in 2013–2014 and found that the two groups reported similar self-esteem. By testing plausible mediators (family support, gay/SSA identity acceptance, and agreement with Mormon Church policy prohibiting same-sex behaviour) through a path model, results revealed different pathways to self-esteem. Practicing LGB/SSA Mormons reported higher family support and lower gay/SSA identity acceptance than ex-Mormons, while those self-identifying as SSA but not gay reported lower gay/SSA identity acceptance. We suggest that religiously active Mormons demonstrate low self-acceptance of their gay/SSA identity while ex-Mormons suffer loss of familial and social support, resulting in equal self-esteem across church status groups.

KEYWORDS: Sexuality Mormon gay self-esteem mental health religion

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by Penn State Schuylkill Research Development Grants, 2013–14 and 2014–15.

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