CLOSER Conference
Mental health and wellbeing 3:
Wellbeing
Chair: Praveetha Patalay

• The Effect of Sexual Orientation on Subjective Well-being
  Samuel Mann
The Effect of Sexual Orientation on Subjective Well-being

SAMUEL MANN
Why (theoretically) might there be a difference in wellbeing between sexual minorities and heterosexuals?

Meyer (1995)

• Sexual minorities face additional stress as a result of their sexual identity.
• Internalised, Perceived and Enacted stigma

• Internalisation of negative attitudes prior to realisation or identification of sexual identity.
• The perception of negative societal attitudes towards sexual minorities.
• Experiences of non-acceptance, discrimination, and violence.
Does this translate into a wellbeing differential?

Chakraborty et al (2011)

• Binary sexual minority variable based on sexual identity/sexual behaviour. British Non-Heterosexuals were significantly less happy (irrelevant of the identification method).

Powdthavee & Wooden (2015)

• British and Australian homosexuals and bisexual are significantly less satisfied with their lives.

Perales (2016)

• Australian sexual minorities (in a random effects model) had lower wellbeing than heterosexuals according to four different measures of wellbeing
Research Questions

(RQ. 1) Does a wellbeing differential persist after controlling for fixed unobserved heterogeneity?

(RQ. 2) Can partnership help to alleviate the wellbeing differential between sexual minorities and heterosexuals?

(RQ. 3) Does the size of the wellbeing differential differ depending on where in the distribution of wellbeing we are examining?
Data

Understanding Society Data (2009 - 2014)

Wellbeing
- Likert score derived from the GHQ component
- Life Satisfaction

Sexual Orientation
- Sexual Identity
- Gender of cohabiting/legal partner
### Controls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECONOMIC</th>
<th>SOCIAL</th>
<th>COVARIATES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Legal partnership status</td>
<td>Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>No. of children</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Member of organisation</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Empirical Methodology

- Pooled OLS
- Unconditional Panel Quantile Regression
Results (1) Sexual Identity Method.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: OLS Specification for Sexual Identity by gender</th>
<th>Table 2: CRE Specification for Sexual Identity by gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WELLBEING MEASURE</td>
<td>WELLBEING MEASURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likert (GHQ)</td>
<td>Likert (GHQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEXUAL IDENTITY</td>
<td>SEXUAL IDENTITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td>Homosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0.963*** (-0.141)</td>
<td>-0.833*** (-0.210)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>Bisexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2.013*** (-0.175)</td>
<td>-1.975*** (-0.247)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOT CONTROLLING FOR FIXED PERSONALITY TRAITS = UPWARD BIAS.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ. 1
Results (2) Partnership method.

Table 3: OLS Specification for Partnered method by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wellbeing Measure</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Non-Heterosexual</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likert (GHQ)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.622***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.026 (0.189)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.026 (0.048)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: CRE Specification for Partnered method by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wellbeing Measure</th>
<th>Partnered</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Non-Heterosexual</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likert (GHQ)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.426 (0.281)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.027 (0.066)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.426 (0.281)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ. 1 Not controlling for fixed personality traits = downward bias.

RQ. 2 Partnered individuals have a smaller wellbeing differential.
Results (3) Panel quantile for sexual identity method - Homosexual

RQ. 3 The effect of being a sexual minority is generally negative across the entire distribution.
Results (4) Panel quantile for sexual identity method - Bisexual

The effect of being a sexual minority is generally negative across the entire distribution.
Results (5) Panel quantile for partnership method

RQ. 3
The effect of being a sexual minority is generally negative across the entire distribution.
Summary of Findings

- Sexual orientation effects both psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction.
- Gender plays a significant role in the effect of sexual orientation on wellbeing.
- Partnership reduces the impact that sexual orientation has on wellbeing. We cannot decipher whether this is due to partnered sexual minorities being happier before becoming partnered, or if partnership itself improves wellbeing.
- Controlling for fixed personality traits highlights that previous analyses have been upward bias.
- Quantile analyses have highlighted that the effect sexual orientation has is, in general, negative across the distribution. Mean based findings are a result of significant gaps at the bottom of the distribution of wellbeing.
Conclusions

The unique findings presented here highlight that public policy needs to change in order to reflect the needs of, and positively engage LGB persons across the distribution.

Mean based analyses are unable to capture the full picture.

Bisexuals have the lowest wellbeing, thus must be seen as a priority.
References


Thank You.

Any Questions?