

# Study shows males are more tolerant of same-sex peers

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Women have traditionally been viewed as being more social and cooperative than men. However, there is recent evidence that this may not be the case. In fact, studies have shown that men maintain larger social networks with other males compared to women and tend to have longer lasting friendships with members of the same-sex than do women. Psychologist Joyce F. Benenson from Emmanuel College, along with her colleagues from Harvard University and the Universite du Quebec a Montreal wanted to compare males' and females' levels of tolerance towards same-sex peers.

The psychologists recruited male and female college students for this study and had them complete surveys about their relationship with their roommates. In a separate experiment, the participants read a story in which a hypothetical individual's best friend was described as being completely reliable until one day when they promised to hand in a paper and did not. After reading the story, the participants were to judge the best friend's reliability.

The findings, reported in *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, reveal that males are more tolerant than females of unrelated same-sex individuals. The males in this study rated their roommates as being more satisfactory and less bothersome than females did. In addition, the researchers found at three different collegiate institutions that females were more likely to switch to a new roommate than males were. The results of the final experiment, in which participants judged one negative behavior of a formerly reliable

hypothetical friend, showed that women downgraded the best friend's reliability significantly more than men did.

The researchers caution, however, that their definition of tolerance may be limited and more work needs to be done to uncover the fundamental processes suggested by their findings. For example, they suggest that, "at the most primitive level, females may have lower thresholds than males for sensing negative visual, auditory, or olfactory information in unrelated same-sex individuals." The authors surmise that gender differences in tolerance may be based on the different functions and expectations that same-sex friendships serve for males and females.

They add, "Females may simply weight negative information more heavily than males do, because negative information disrupts the establishment of intimacy, which serves a more important function in same-sex relationships for females than for males." The authors go on to explain that the effort that we put into relationships with unrelated same-sex individuals may also depend on our short- and long- term needs during that specific time in our lives.

Source: Association for Psychological Science

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