Sexual Correlates of Female Homosexual Experience

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Goode and Haber (1977) investigated whether and to what extent college women who have engaged in homosexual behavior have had different sexual experiences than those who have not engaged in such behavior. Hence, setting aside the direction of causality, whether the respondent engaged in versus did not engage in homosexual or lesbian experiences was taken as the “independent” variable. We used a questionnaire that consisted of 66 questions about a wide variety and range of sexual behaviors and experiences. These included age of first heterosexual intercourse, total number of sexual partners, sex partners with whom the respondent was not in love, experiences with fellatio and heterosexual cunnilingus, types of sexual experiences with a woman, age of the respondent when she first engaged in homosexual experience, whether she engaged in masturbation and how often, and so on. We took the answers to these 66 questions as the “dependent” variables.

Description

We distributed the questionnaire/instrument during the spring of 1975 to all the female residents of several dormitories at the State University of New York at Stony Brook; the questionnaires were delivered on a door-to-door basis. When completed, residents sealed them in an envelope; we picked them up a week later. The response rate for the initial wave was just under 50%; the total response rate following the third and final wave was 64%, which is considered good for this type of survey. The sample N was 160. We consider the findings from this survey exploratory rather than definitive. Because the respondents were college students, their average age was between 19 and 20; no respondent was older than 23.

Among our respondents, 86% had engaged in heterosexual intercourse at least once in their lives; only 16 respondents (10%) had engaged in at least one form of homosexual experience we asked about at least once, and 9 out of the 16 had never achieved an orgasm in this fashion. We found that the homosexually experienced women had engaged in a wider range of heterosexual experiences, and with a substantially larger number of partners, than was true of the homosexually naive women. For instance, the modal number of men the women with homosexual experience had engaged in intercourse with was 2, the median was 5, and the mean was 7.4; for those without homosexual experience, these figures were 1, 2, and 3.6, respectively. The median age at first heterosexual intercourse for the homosexually experienced was 16.7, with a mode of 15 and a median of 16; for the homosexually inexperienced, the figures were 18.3, 17, and 17, respectively. Women with homosexual experience were more likely to have experienced or engaged in fellatio, heterosexual cunnilingus, loveless sex, regular self-masturbation, and fantasy during heterosexual intercourse. Women without homosexual experience were more likely to enjoy fellatio and rank heterosexual intercourse as the source of their most pleasurable orgasm. Attainment of orgasm in heterosexual sex (at all) was slightly more likely among homosexually experienced women, but always or almost always attaining orgasm during heterosexual intercourse was slightly less likely.

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Scoring:

Hate = 4, 24, 8, 14, 9, 18
Knowledge = 20, 10, 16, 5, 1
Civil Rights = 27, 23, 11, 28, 25
Religious Conflict = 26, 12, 22, 7, 3, 13, 2
Internalized Affirmativeness = 19, 15, 17, 6, 21

There are no reverse-scored items. Subscale scores are obtained by averaging ratings on items receiving a response for each participant. Thus, if Item 19 is not rated by a specific respondent, only the remaining four items on the Internalized Affirmativeness subscale are used to obtain the average, and so on. This method ensures comparable scores when there are missing data.

*The 6-point rating scale follows each of the items.
In short, homosexually experienced women appeared to be more heterosexually experienced as well, at least at this stage of their lives. We speculated that this category includes a “mixed bag”: young women who are sexual “adventurers,” experimenting with a variety of sexual experiences, most of whom will go on to become exclusively heterosexual; those who will decide to have a bisexual lifestyle; and those who will come to regard themselves as lesbians. Members of the last of these categories will, in all likelihood, abandon heterosexuality activity later in their lives. Possible indicators of the last of these categories include the following: nonenjoyment of fellatio; the predominance of loveless heterosexual sex; mention of homosexual sex as the source of their most pleasurable sexual activity; and mention of women in sexual fantasies.

Response Mode and Timing

The questions were framed in the form of a forced-choice checklist or a question requesting that the respondent write out a specific answer, often a number. Most respondents needed between 30 and 60 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Scoring

No scoring is required (see below).

Reliability and Validity

Because the study for which the instrument was developed (Goode & Haber, 1977) was descriptive and exploratory and not explanatory and definitive, we did not conduct tests of reliability, validity, and significance. We used simple percentage differences—as determined by magnitude—to determine the differences between our two categories of respondents.

Reference


Exhibit

**Sexual Correlates of Female Homosexual Experience: Sexual Experience Questionnaire/Instrument**

*Instructions:* The intent of this study is to find out what and how women feel about their own sexuality. These questions are designed as a means of understanding what women experience in their sexual relationships and activities.

It is my belief that we, as women, have been letting one another down by allowing men to define our sexuality for us. The time has come for us to speak candidly and frankly about our sexual lives. Only in this way can we know the nature of our collective experiences.

It will not be easy to shed the beliefs we were taught and expected to accept pertaining to our sexuality, but it is something we must do for ourselves and for each other.

Several hundred questionnaires will be distributed to a sample of women on the Stony Brook campus. All returned questions will remain confidential. There is no need to write your name on this questionnaire.

Please answer all questions honestly, completely, and seriously. Your cooperation is very much appreciated. Thank you!

1. Have you ever engaged in sexual intercourse with a man or a boy? (Please check one) Yes ____ No ____
   (If no, skip to Question 2; if yes, proceed to Question 1a)
   1a. Please write the age when you first engaged in sexual intercourse with a man or boy ____
   1b. Please write in the total number of men or boys with whom you have engaged in sexual intercourse ____
   1c. Have you ever engaged in sexual intercourse with a man or boy you were not in love with? Yes ____ No ____
   1d. If yes to Question 1c, how did you usually feel right after engaging in sexual intercourse when you were not in love? (Please check the alternative that comes closest to your feeling)
      Negative (sad, depressed, guilty, etc.) ____
      Positive (It was what I wanted to do at the time) ____
      Neutral (it didn’t bother me) ____
      It depended on the man; I felt different with different men ____
      It depended on my mood at the time ____
      Other (please explain) ____________________________________________
   1e. About what proportion of the time do you generally achieve orgasm during intercourse with a man? (Please check the appropriate category)
      Never ____
      Rarely (less than 10% of the time) ____
Occasionally (less than a quarter of the time but more than 10% of the time) ____
About half the time, more or less ____
Usually ____
Always or almost always ____
1f. Please estimate the total number of times that you have had intercourse with any boy or man. (Please write in the number) ____

2. Have you ever engaged in fellatio with a boy or man (oral stimulation of a man’s penis) whether or not it led to his orgasm?
Yes ____ No ____
2a. Could you estimate the number of times that you have engaged in fellatio, with any boy or man _______
2b. About what proportion of this number did your oral stimulation of a boy or a man’s penis lead to his orgasm? Please estimate about what percentage of the time this happened) _____
2c. With how many boys or men have you engaged in fellatio when it did not lead to his orgasm? _______
2d. With how many men have you engaged in fellatio when it did lead to his orgasm? _______
2e. How old were you when you first engaged in fellatio with a boy or man? _____
2f. How old were you when you first engaged in fellatio when it led to his orgasm? _____
2g. Do you usually enjoy fellating a man? Yes ____ No ____
2h. Do you usually fellate a man spontaneously, or does the man usually request you to do it?
Usually spontaneously ____
At first, I was asked; later, it’s usually been spontaneous ____
It depends on how much I like the man ____
I usually have to be asked to do it ____
There’s no particular pattern to it ____
It’s some other way (please explain) ______________________

3. Has a man ever engaged in cunnilingus (oral stimulation of the woman’s genitals) with you? Yes ____ No ____
If no, have you ever wanted a man to engage in cunnilingus with you? Yes _____ No ____; if yes, how often has this happened and with how many men? ___________; If yes, a man has engaged in cunnilingus with you, could you please estimate the total number of times that this has taken place? ____________
(If no, a man has not engaged in cunnilingus with you, please skip to Question 4; if at least one has, please continue with Question 3a)

3a. About what proportion of the time would you say you have achieved orgasm during cunnilingus with a man? (Please check the appropriate category):
Never ____
Rarely (less than 10% of the time) ____
Occasionally (less than a quarter of the time but more than 10% of the time) ____
About half the time, more or less ____
Usually ____
Always or almost always ____
3b. If you achieved orgasm during cunnilingus with a man less than half the time, why do you think this is so?
(Please explain) ____________________
3c. If a man engages in cunnilingus with you, do you usually ask him to do it or does he usually do it without you having to ask him?
I always have to ask ____
I usually have to ask ____
It depends on the man ____
It happens both ways about half the time ____
The man usually does it without my asking ____
The man always does it without my asking ____
3d. How many men have performed cunnilingus with you? _____
3e. How old were you when a man first performed cunnilingus with you? _____
3f. How old were you when a man first performed cunnilingus with you when it led to your orgasm? _____
3g. Have you ever been afraid to ask a man to perform cunnilingus with you because you thought he wouldn’t like it?
Yes ____ No ____
3h. If yes, about how many times has that taken place? (Please estimate the number of times) ______
3i. If yes, with how many men have you been afraid to ask? (Please estimate the number of men) ______

4. Have you ever engaged in any of the following sexual experiences with another woman?
Nude hugging and kissing and caressing without genital contact? Yes ____ No ____
Cunnilingus? Yes ____ No ____
Mutual pubic rubbing? Yes ____ No ____
Manual genital contact? Yes ____ No ____

(If you have not engaged in any of these activities, please skip to Question 5; if you have, please proceed with Question 4a)

If you have engaged in any other sexual experiences with another woman, what were they?
(Please explain) __________________________________________

4a. Could you estimate the total number of times that you have had sexual experiences with another woman asked about in Question 4—caressing, cunnilingus, pubic rubbing, and manual genital contact? (Please write in the total number) ____

4b. About what proportion of the time have you engaged in the following activities when you have engaged in sexual experiences with another woman? (Please write in the percentage)
Nude hugging, kissing, and caressing, without genital contact ____%
Cunnilingus ____%
Mutual pubic rubbing ____%
Manual genital contact ____%

4c. How old were you when you had any of these sexual experiences with another woman? ____

4d. Have you ever engaged in any of these sexual experiences with a woman, with a man present? Yes ____ No ____

4e. If so, how often has this happened? ____

4f. About what proportion of the time that you had a sexual experience with another woman did you achieve orgasm?
Never ____ Rarely ____ Occasionally ____ About half the time ____
Usually ____ Always or almost always ____

5. Have you ever masturbated yourself? Yes ____ No ____
(If no, skip to Question 6; if yes, proceed with Question 5a)

5a. How old were you when you first masturbated yourself? ____

5b. How old were you when you first masturbated yourself to orgasm? ____

5c. How frequently would you say you have masturbated yourself per month in the past year? ____

5d. About what proportion of the time would you say that you achieved orgasm when you masturbated yourself?
Never ____ Rarely ____ Occasionally ____ About half the time ____
Usually ____ Always or almost always ____

5e. Do you feel that masturbation is a substitute for having orgasms during sex with another person, or do you think that it is an enjoyable activity in itself? A substitute ____ Enjoyable in itself ____ Something else (Please explain) ____________________

6. Are some of your orgasms significantly more enjoyable than others, or are they equally enjoyable?
Some are far more enjoyable than others ______
They are about equally enjoyable ______
I have never had an orgasm ______
Something else (Please explain) __________________________________________

6a. If some of your orgasms are far more pleasurable than others, what do you think makes them this way?
(Please explain) __________________________________________

6b. Which of the following activities gives you the most pleasurable orgasm? Which one the least? Please rank all of the following activities in terms of how pleasurable your orgasms have been when you engaged in each one:
Intercourse with a man ______
Cunnilingus with a man ______
Masturbating yourself ______
A man masturbating me ______
Sexual experience with another woman ______
My orgasms are about equally enjoyable ______
I have orgasms only one way ______
I have never had an orgasm ______
Something else (Please explain) _______

7. If you fail to achieve an orgasm with a man during intercourse, are you usually:
Extremely disappointed and frustrated ______
Somewhat disappointed and frustrated ______
Indifferent; if it happens, it happens, if it doesn’t, it doesn’t ______
I usually feel some other way (Please explain) __________________________________________

8. How do you know you are having an orgasm? What are the signs? What happens to your body or mind that tells you that you are having an orgasm? (Please explain) __________________________________________
9. Are there any sexual activities that you have not participated in but you would like to try? Yes _____ No _____
   If yes, what are they? (Write it/them out) ________________________________

10. When you've been in bed with another person, have there been times when you would have liked to engage in a certain activity but didn't because you were afraid to ask your partner? Yes _____ No _____
    If yes, what were they? (Please explain) ________________________________

11. When you have been in bed with someone for the first time, have you ever felt reluctant to take off your clothes, or to have your partner take off your clothes, because you were afraid the other person might not like your body? Yes _____ No _____

12. About how many orgasms per week do you feel is ideal for yourself? ______

13. In the best of all possible worlds, how often would you engage in sexual activity each week? ____________

14. Do you fantasize during sex, any form of sex? Yes ____ No____

15. When you have sex, any form of sex, and have an orgasm, do you feel that one orgasm is satisfying for the next few hours, or do you feel that you would like to have more than one?
   One is usually satisfying ____
   I usually would like to have more than one ____
   It depends ____ (If it depends, what does it depend on? _____________________)
   Something else (Please explain) ________________________________
   I rarely or never have orgasms ____

16. If you could have things more or less exactly the way you wanted sexually, what would they be like? How would you change your life? What would your sex life be like? ___________________________________________________

17. What is your age? ______

18. What is your grandparents' religion? _________________________

19. How religious would you say you are?
   Very religious ______
   Somewhat religious ______
   Not very religious _____
   I'm not religious at all _____

20. Father's education: ____________ Mother’s education: ____________

    Other (Please write in your race if it is Other) _______________________

22. How influential do you feel your parents are now in your life? (Check one)
   Very influential now ______
   Somewhat influential now ______
   Not very influential now _____
   Not at all influential now ______

23. Have you ever smoked marijuana? Yes ____ No _____

24. During the past six months or so, how often would you estimate that you have smoked marijuana?
   Not at all ______
   Less than monthly ______
   More than monthly but less than weekly ______
   About once a week ______
   Several times a week ______
   Daily or so ______
   More than once a day ______

25. Are there any questions that we should have asked in this questionnaire but didn't?

*The original introductory instructions were written by Goode's collaborator, Lynn Haber.*