Handbook of Sexuality-Related Measures

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Power Sharing in Lesbian Partnerships

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Power Sharing in Lesbian Partnerships

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The instrument was developed to determine egalitarianism in lesbian partnerships as a function of similarity in social status variables. Specifically, it investigates whether couples who are similar in age, income, occupation, education, and financial assets tend to characterize their relationships as equal in a variety of areas. Previous researchers have typically investigated one partner’s perception of power in the relationship (e.g., Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Peplau et al., 1982). Our instrument is designed to assess similarities and differences in each partner’s assets so that it can be determined whether differences in these demographic variables are related to social status. Additionally, our instrument allows a determination of whether type of couple (i.e., equal, unequal but in agreement about who has more power, and couples with differing perceptions about power sharing) is related to social status variables.

Description

The power sharing instrument consists of demographic items, such as respondent’s age as of the last birthday, income, educational attainment, occupation and occupational classification, and several items which assess the respondent’s assets. A number of items also investigate financial sharing by partners, such as whether the couple are cosignatories on saving and checking accounts, and whether the partner is a sole or partial beneficiary. Respondents also indicate how financial contributions in the household are divided, such as whether the respondent or her partner pays, or whether equal or proportional payments are made for a variety of household needs.

The remainder of the questionnaire measures egalitarianism in a variety of areas. Specifically, these items refer to responsibility for household chores and financial decision making. Three items query respondents regarding sexual equality in terms of initiation, decisions about the frequency of sex, and sexual satisfaction. As above, responses to the items indicate whether respondents are equal or whether the partner or respondent has more control in the relationship.

Finally, single items ask respondents about a number of issues related to equality, for example, self-disclosure, degree of commitment, and yielding in disagreements. Potential responses indicate whether the respondent or her partner or both tend to dominate in these areas. Two items, ideal and actual power (i.e., who has more say and who should have more say) are included from Peplau, Cochran, Rook, and Padesky’s (1978) instrument.

Reliability and Validity

No reliability data are available. The instrument evidences face and content validity, covering the areas most significant to power in relationships. Results from studies using the instrument (e.g., Lynch & Reilly, 1986; Peplau et al., 1978; Peplan et al., 1982; Reilly & Lynch, 1990) indicate considerable consistency across diverse samples (college and adult populations in relationships of at least 1 year’s duration). For both populations, respondents professed a belief in the importance of power sharing, and there was evidence of a great deal of egalitarianism in lesbian relationships. When inequity was found, power sharing arrangements did not seem to be explained by social status differences.

References


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Exhibit

Power Sharing in Lesbian Relationships

This questionnaire is the main source of data for a study of lesbian relationships. It should only take a few minutes to complete.

Your replies will be completely anonymous since there are no identifying marks on the questionnaire. Please do not sign the questionnaire. It is important that each partner fills out her questionnaire separately and places it in one of the blank envelopes. Both should be returned to me together in the stamped, addressed envelope provided. Since I am studying couples, this is essential. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

1. What is your age as of your last birthday? _______ years.
2. What is your income (as reported on all W-2 forms)? _______
3. Which of the following best describes your highest level of educational attainment?
   ( ) Completed grammar school
   ( ) Completed high school
   ( ) Some college or technical school
   ( ) Completed college
   ( ) Master’s degree
   ( ) Ph.D., M.D., Ed.D., J.D., L
   ( ) Other, please describe ____________________________
4. What is your occupation? _________________________
5. Which of the following would you use to describe your occupation?
   ( ) Homemaker
   ( ) Professional
   ( ) Manager or Administrator
   ( ) Sales worker
   ( ) Clerical
   ( ) Craftworker
   ( ) Farm worker
   ( ) Machinist or Transportation Worker
   ( ) Laborer
   ( ) Service worker
   ( ) Private household worker
   ( ) Other
6. What is the current worth of your personal financial assets? (stocks, bonds, property, cars, savings and checking accounts). Please estimate:
   ( ) $0
   ( ) $1,001–$9,999
   ( ) $10,000–$19,999
   ( ) $20,000–$34,999
   ( ) $35,000–$49,999
   ( ) $50,000–$74,999
   ( ) $75,000–$100,000 or more
7. Which of the following are currently held by you? Check all that apply.
   A. ( ) Savings accounts in my name only
   B. ( ) Checking accounts in my name only
   C. ( ) Investments in my name only
   D. ( ) Joint savings accounts
   E. ( ) Joint checking accounts
   F. ( ) Investments in my name and someone else’s
8. If you checked A, B, or C in Question 7 above, are the account(s) or investment(s) arranged so that your partner could manage your personal finances in the event that you were unable to do so?
   ( ) Yes
   ( ) No
9. If you checked C, E, or F in Question 7 above, is the other name on the account(s) or investment(s):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checking</th>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Relative</th>
<th>Some other person, not related</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investments</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. If you have a will, is your partner named as:

- () A beneficiary of all of your estate
- () A beneficiary of part of your estate
- () Not mentioned in your will
- () I do not have a will

11. If you have life insurance, who is your beneficiary?

- () Partner
- () Relative
- () Some other person, not related
- () Both partner and relative
- () I do not have any insurance

12. If you are currently renting, and have a lease, whose name is it in?

- () My name
- () My partner’s name
- () Both of our names
- () Someone else’s name
- () No lease

13. If you own your own home, whose name is on the mortgage title or title to the house?

- () My name
- () My partner’s name
- () My partner and I are tenants in common
- () My partner and I are joint tenants

14. If you currently own a car, who paid (or is paying) for it?

- () I
- () My partner
- () Both own it equally
- () Each has her own car which she owns
- () Other, please explain _______________________

15. In our current residence, household furnishings are:

- () Predominantly mine
- () Predominantly hers
- () Each person owns approximately half of the furnishings
- () Ours jointly

16. In your household, how are contributions to the following arranged:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I pay</th>
<th>My partner pays</th>
<th>We split bills based on our ability to pay</th>
<th>We split bills equally</th>
<th>Included in the rent</th>
<th>Does not apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Mortgage payments</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Property taxes</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Rent payments</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Insurance (house or apartment)</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Heating bills</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Electric bills</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Telephone bills</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Groceries</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Household repairs</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>()</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. Reviewing the items in Question 16 above, how would you describe your overall contributions to these household expenses?

- () I contribute more
- () My partner contributes more
- () We contribute according to our ability to pay
- () We contribute equally
18. How long have you and your partner been living together? ____ years

19. When you and your partner first began living together, whose residence did you use?
   ( ) Mine
   ( ) Partner’s
   ( ) A new residence chosen by us

20. Our current residence is:
   ( ) Mine, where I lived before meeting my partner
   ( ) Hers, where she lived before meeting me
   ( ) Ours, since we met

21. Do you have children?
   ( ) Yes
   ( ) No (Please skip to Question 25)

22. How many children do you have?
   _____ Girls
   _____ Boys

23. Where are the children presently living? Please describe _____________________

24. Who is financially responsible for the support of the children?
   ( ) I am primarily responsible for their support
   ( ) Father is primarily responsible for their support
   ( ) Father and I support them equally
   ( ) Father, partner and I support them
   ( ) Partner and I support them equally
   ( ) Partner is primarily responsible for their support
   ( ) Other. Please describe ____________________________________________

25. For the following items, please indicate who has the major responsibility for the following chores:

   A. Cooking   Always I Usually I Partner and I exactly equal Usually partner Always partner Does not apply or done by hired person
   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
   B. Laundry   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
   C. Dishwashing and cleaning up   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
   D. Household repairs   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
   E. Dusting and vacuuming   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
   F. Housecleaning (windows, floors, cleaning drapes)   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
   G. Child care   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
   H. Payment of bills   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
   I. Bathroom cleaning   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
   J. Outdoor maintenance (e.g., washing windows, cleaning gutters, painting)   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
   K. Lawn care   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
   L. Gardening (flowers and vegetables)   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
   M. Car repairs   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )
   N. Decorating   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

26. Who do you think is more involved in your relationship—your partner or you?
   ( ) Partner is much more involved
   ( ) Partner is somewhat more involved
   ( ) We are involved to exactly the same degree
   ( ) I am somewhat more involved
   ( ) I am much more involved

27. Who do you think has revealed more about herself to the other—your partner or you?
   ( ) Partner has revealed much more
   ( ) Partner has revealed somewhat more
   ( ) We have revealed exactly the same amount
   ( ) I have revealed somewhat more
   ( ) I have revealed much more

28. Who do you think has more of a say about what you and your partner do together—your partner or you?
29. Who do you think is more satisfied in the relationship—your partner or you?
   _____ Partner is much more satisfied
   _____ Partner is somewhat more satisfied
   _____ We are exactly equally satisfied
   _____ I am somewhat more satisfied
   _____ I am much more satisfied

30. Who do you think is more committed to the relationship—your partner or you?
   _____ Partner is much more committed
   _____ Partner is somewhat more committed
   _____ We are committed to exactly the same degree
   _____ I am somewhat more committed
   _____ I am much more committed

31. Who do you think should have more of a say about what you and your partner do together—your partner or you?
   _____ Partner should have much more say
   _____ Partner should have somewhat more say
   _____ We should have exactly equal say
   _____ I should have somewhat more say
   _____ I should have much more say

32. If my partner and I disagreed on political issues or candidates,
   _____ Partner would definitely change her opinion
   _____ Partner would probably change her opinion
   _____ Neither of us would change our opinion
   _____ I would probably change my opinion
   _____ I would definitely change my opinion

33. When my partner and I argue,
   _____ Partner always gives in first
   _____ Partner usually gives in first
   _____ Sometimes she gives in first, sometimes I give in first
   _____ I usually give in first
   _____ I always give in first

34. If my partner expressed dislike for a friend of mine,
   _____ I would definitely reevaluate my opinion of the friend
   _____ I would probably reevaluate my opinion of my friend
   _____ Neither of us would change our opinion
   _____ I would probably not reevaluate my opinion of the friend
   _____ I would definitely not reevaluate my opinion of the friend

35. If your partner were offered an attractive job opportunity in another city, how likely is it that you would move with your partner?
   _____ I would definitely move with my partner
   _____ I would probably move with my partner
   _____ Uncertain if I would move or not
   _____ I would probably not move with my partner
   _____ I would definitely not move with my partner

36. If you were offered an attractive job opportunity in another city, how likely is it that your partner would move with you?
   _____ My partner would definitely move with me
   _____ My partner would probably move with me
   _____ Uncertain if my partner would move with me
   _____ My partner would probably not move with me
   _____ My partner would definitely not move with me

37. Who do you think takes more of the initiative in your sexual relationship?
   _____ My partner takes much more of the initiative
   _____ My partner takes somewhat more of the initiative
   _____ We both initiate sex to exactly the same degree
____ I take somewhat more of the initiative
____ I take much more of the initiative

38. Who do you think makes more of the decisions about the frequency of sex?
____ My partner makes much more of the decisions
____ My partner makes somewhat more of the decisions
____ We make mutual decisions
____ I make somewhat more of the decisions
____ I make much more of the decisions

39. Who do you think is more sexually satisfied in your relationship?
____ My partner is much more satisfied
____ My partner is somewhat more satisfied
____ We are both satisfied to exactly the same degree
____ I am somewhat more satisfied
____ I am much more satisfied

40. For the following, please check the appropriate responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who usually makes the final decision about:</th>
<th>Partner always</th>
<th>Partner more than I</th>
<th>Partner and I exactly equal</th>
<th>Usually I</th>
<th>Always I</th>
<th>Does not apply; has never been an issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. What car to get</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Whether or not to buy life insurance</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
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<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. How much money to spend per week on food</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
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<td>( )</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. Where to go on vacation</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
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<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. What restaurants to frequent</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. How to spend leisure time</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Which friends to spend time with</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
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<tr>
<td>H. Where to go on holidays</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. What house or apartment to take</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
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<td>( )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

41. Do any of the following know that you are a lesbian?
   Your mother _____ Your father _____ Brothers _____ Sisters _____ Other relatives _____
   Neighbors _____ Friends _____ Colleagues at work _____

42. How many friends are aware of your relationship?
   All _____ Most _____ Half _____ A few _____ None _____

43. Do you and your partner participate in any lesbian organizations?
   ____ Yes
   ____ No

44. How often do you see your family?
   Weekly _____ Monthly _____ Several times a year _____ Never _____