Handbook of Sexuality-Related Measures

Terri D. Fisher, Clive M. Davis, William L. Yarber, Sandra L. Davis

Measure of Sexual Identity Exploration and Commitment

Publication details
Rachel L. Navarro, Holly Bielstein Savoy, Roger L. Worthington
Published online on: 12 Aug 2010

Accessed on: 13 Jul 2023

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
Identity encompasses a coherent sense of one’s values, beliefs, and roles, including but not limited to gender, race, ethnicity, social class, spirituality, and sexuality. Identity development is an active process of exploring and assessing one’s identity and establishing a commitment to an integrated identity. Marcia (1966) generated a four-status model for understanding ego identity development based on the processes of exploration and commitment to identity: (a) foreclosure (commitment without prior exploration), (b) moratorium (withholding commitment during the process of exploration), (c) achievement (commitment following exploration), and (d) diffusion (a lack of commitment and exploration).

Fassinger and colleagues described two models of gay and lesbian identity development that define sexual identity development as including four phases (awareness, exploration, deepening/commitment, and internalization/synthesis) conceptualized along the dimensions of individual and group membership identity (Fassinger & Miller, 1996; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). Building upon the work of Fassinger and colleagues, Worthington, Savoy, Dillon, and Vernaglia (2002) conceptualized a developmental model of sexual identity that more broadly establishes sexual orientation identity as just one of six components of individual sexual identity (i.e., perceived sexual needs, preferred sexual activities, preferred characteristics of sexual partners, perceived relationship risks, etc.).
The Measure of Sexual Identity Exploration and Commitment (MoSIEC) is a theoretically based multidimensional measure of the processes of sexual identity development. The purposes of this measure are to (a) quantitatively assess the processes associated with Marcia’s (1966) model of identity development as applied to the construct of sexual identity and (b) assess the processes of sexual identity development among individuals of any sexual orientation identity. The MoSIEC is comprised of four interrelated, but independent, dimensions underlying the construct of sexual identity, namely (a) commitment, (b) exploration, (c) sexual orientation identity uncertainty, and (d) synthesis/integration.

**Description**

The MoSIEC consists of 22 items within four subscales: (a) Commitment (6 items), (b) Exploration (8 items), (c) Sexual Orientation Identity Uncertainty (3 items), and (d) Synthesis/Integration (5 items). The Commitment subscale assesses the degree of commitment to a sexual identity. The Exploration subscale measures "a general orientation toward or away from sexual exploration" (Worthington, Navarro, Savoy, & Hampton, 2008, p. 31). The Sexual Orientation Identity Uncertainty subscale assesses commitment or a lack of commitment to a sexual orientation identity. The Synthesis/Integration subscale measures the degree of commitment to a unified, cohesive sexual identity. On the Commitment subscale, 3 items are reverse scored; on the Sexual Orientation Identity Uncertainty subscale, 1 item is reverse scored. Thus, higher scores on each of the subscales are indicative of higher levels of the construct being measured.

The MoSIEC is intended for persons of any sexual orientation identity. Thus, the instrument is not constrained for use in samples in which all participants are from LGB or heterosexual orientations, as is the case for earlier measures. In fact, the sexual orientation identities of participants need not be known at the time of administration in order to use the MoSIEC in psychological research, a feature unique to this instrument at the time of its development.

The MoSIEC was developed and validated across four studies. In Study 1, scale development procedures and exploratory factor analysis were conducted. Additionally, initial reliability and validity estimates were examined (described in Reliability and Validity). Using Marcia’s (1966) model of identity formation, Klein’s (1993) extension of Kinsey and colleagues’ (1948, 1953) model of sexual identity, and Worthington et al.’s (2002) model of heterosexual identity development, an initial pool of 48 MoSIEC items were generated. These items reflected exploration (i.e., past, current, and future) and commitment (i.e., not committed, committed, or synthesis/integration) across six dimensions of sexual identity: (a) sexual needs, (b) sexual values, (c) characteristics of sexual partners, (d) preferred sexual activities, (e) sexual orientation identity, and (f) models of sexual expression” (Worthington et al., 2008, p. 24). A principal-axis factor analysis with oblique rotation was conducted with the initial 48 MoSIEC items. A four-factor solution with 22 items was retained.

In Study 2, confirmatory factor analyses were used to establish the factor reliability and construct validity of the MoSIEC retained in Study 1 across two samples. In Study 3, convergent validity and additional reliability data was examined (described in Reliability and Validity). In Study 4, the authors assessed test-retest reliability (described in Reliability).

**Response Mode and Timing**

Participants respond to each item using a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (very uncharacteristic of me) to 6 (very characteristic of me). It typically takes a participant 10 minutes to complete the MoSIEC.

**Scoring**

After reverse scoring the necessary items, MoSIEC subscale scores are obtained by averaging the ratings within each of the four subscales: (a) Commitment, (b) Exploration, (c) Sexual Orientation Identity Uncertainty, and (d) Synthesis/Integration (see the Exhibit).

**Reliability**

In past studies (Dillon, Worthington, Soth-McNett, & Schwartz, 2008; Worthington et al., 2008), findings have demonstrated the high internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha > 0.70$) of the MoSIEC subscales. Furthermore, test-retest reliability estimates are indicative of the MoSIEC subscales’ stability across a 2-week interval (Worthington et al., 2008).

**Validity**

Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses (Worthington et al., 2008) support the construct validity of the MoSIEC. Convergent validity was supported by “correlations indicating that the MoSIEC subscales were related to age, religiosity, sexual conservatism, and multiple aspects of sexual self-awareness in expected and logically consistent ways” (Worthington et al., 2008, p. 31). Criterion-related validity was established by demonstrated MoSIEC subscale differences across sexual orientation groups in expected and logically consistent ways. Dillon and colleagues (2008) provided further validity evidence for the Exploration and Commitment subscales in that these scores correlated or did not correlate with age, income, professional experience, sexual orientation, gender self-definition, gender self-acceptance, and lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) affirmative counseling self-efficacy as logically expected. Worthington and Reynolds (2009) found that all four of the subscales of...
the MoSIEC were useful for independently differentiating between research participants with different sexual orientation identities. Worthington, Dillon, and Becker-Schutte (2005) also found that heterosexual attitudes regarding LGB individuals were related to all four subscales of the MoSIEC, with the strongest correlations between sexual identity exploration and attitudes regarding LGB civil rights and “internalized affirmativeness” regarding homosexuality.

**Other Information**

Dustin Hampton contributed to the original research on the scale.

**References**


**Exhibit**

*Measure of Sexual Identity Exploration and Commitment*

Please read the following definitions before completing the survey items:

**Sexual needs** are defined as an internal, subjective experience of instinct, desire, appetite, biological necessity, impulses, interest, and/or libido with respect to sex.

**Sexual values** are defined as moral evaluations, judgments and/or standards about what is appropriate, acceptable, desirable, and innate sexual behavior.

**Sexual activities** are defined as any behavior that a person might engage in relating to or based on sexual attraction, sexual arousal, sexual gratification, or reproduction (e.g., fantasy to holding hands to kissing to sexual intercourse).

**Modes of sexual expression** are defined as any form of communication (verbal or nonverbal) or direct and indirect signals that a person might use to convey her or his sexuality (e.g., flirting, eye contact, touching, vocal quality, compliments, suggestive body movements or postures).

**Sexual orientation** is defined as an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, or affectional attraction to other persons that ranges from exclusive heterosexuality to exclusive homosexuality and includes various forms of bisexuality.

Please use the following scale to respond to Items 1–22.

<p>| | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very Uncharacteristic of Me</strong></td>
<td><strong>Very Characteristic of Me</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. My sexual orientation is clear to me.
2. I went through a period in my life when I was trying to determine my sexual needs.
3. I am actively trying to learn more about my own sexual needs.
4. My sexual values are consistent with all of the other aspects of my sexuality.
5. I am open to experiment with new types of sexual activities in the future.
6. I am actively trying new ways to express myself sexually.
7. My understanding of my sexual needs coincides with my overall sense of sexual self.
8. I went through a period in my life when I was trying different forms of sexual expression.
9. My sexual values will always be open to exploration.
10. I know what my preferences are for expressing myself sexually.
11. I have a clear sense of the types of sexual activities I prefer.
12. I am actively experimenting with sexual activities that are new to me.
13. The ways I express myself sexually are consistent with all of the other aspects of my sexuality.
15. I do not know how to express myself sexually.
16. I have never clearly identified what my sexual values are.
17. The sexual activities I prefer are compatible with all of the other aspects of my sexuality.
18. I have never clearly identified what my sexual needs are.
19. I can see myself trying new ways of expressing myself sexually in the future.
20. I have a firm sense of what my sexual needs are.
21. My sexual orientation is not clear to me.
22. My sexual orientation is compatible all of the other aspects of my sexuality.

Scoring:

Exploration = 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 19
Commitment = 10, 11, 15, 16, 18, 20
Synthesis = 4, 7, 13, 17, 22
Sexual Orientation Identity Moratorium = 1, 15, 21

Reverse-scored items are listed in bold typeface. Subscale scores are obtained by averaging ratings on items receiving a response for each participant. Thus, if Item 17 is not rated by a specific respondent, only the remaining four items on the Synthesis 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.

Sexual Ideology Instrument

ILSA L. LOTTES,¹ University of Maryland, Baltimore County

The original purpose of the Sexual Ideology Instrument (SII) was to test Reiss’s (1981, 1983, 1986) hypotheses about the sexual ideologies of Americans. Reiss proposed three sexual ideologies: Traditional Romantic, Modern Naturalistic, and Abstinence. A sexual ideology is a coherent set of beliefs regarding what is appropriate, acceptable, desirable, and innate sexual behavior. A tenet is a specific belief of an ideology. The SII contains scales and specific items designed to measure attitudes toward the tenets of the three ideologies and toward the four controversial topics mentioned below.

The five tenet types in the Reiss ideologies are concerned with gender role equality, the value of body-centered sexuality, the power of sexual emotions, the importance of coital focus in sexual relations, and the necessity of love for satisfactory sex or the love need in sex. These are described more specifically in Table 1, in conjunction with the three ideologies. Reiss also claimed that adherents of each ideology would have predictable attitudes on the following four areas of public controversy: abortion, gender genetic differences, pornography, and homosexuality. The expected views, as linked to each ideology, are also indicated in Table 1. Although the SII was originally constructed to test hypotheses about sexual ideologies, its use would also be appropriate in studies requiring assessment of a wide range of sexual attitudes. In addition, because the SII contains several small scales, the use of all or some of its scales would be appropriate in studies assessing many variables.

¹Address correspondence to Ilsa L. Lottes, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, 5401 Wilkens Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21228; e-mail: lottes@umbc.edu