Sexual Path Preferences Inventory

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In Mosher’s (1980) sexual involvement theory, orgasmic response is potentiated by effective sexual stimulation that is subjectively experienced as pleasurable: (a) sensory signals, (b) the discrete affects of interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy, and (c) the cognitive interpretation and evaluation of sensory and affective pleasure as ordered by rules contained in facilitating sexual scripts. Effective sexual stimulation is a joint function of the optimal density of physical sexual stimulation and depth of involvement in the sexual episode. The optimal density of physical stimulation is a function of scripted rules for ordering information about the intensity times duration of sexual touching. Involvement is defined as a latent or theoretical construct consisting of a complex of interacting psychological processes that motivate and define the state of absorption in the sexual episode. The involvement complex consists of (a) the affects of interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy, (b) affect-cognition blends of anticipatory excitement and sexual pleasure with the sexual goal, image, and plan (i.e., the sexual motive) for the episode, and (c) the facilitating sexual scripts of involvement potential and path preference.

The Sexual Path Preferences Inventory measures involvement potential and path preferences. In addition, it measures, for couples, the compatibility of path preferences and potential involvement. Involvement is manifested as a state of absorption in the inherently acceptable affective scene of the sexual episode. To be involved or absorbed means the person is fully attending to or totally engrossed in the possibilities of the sexual image and plan and the unfolding actualities or expressive action, subject experience, and interpersonal engagement emergent in the present moment of the sexual episode. Depth of involvement in the sexual episode is a function of a deepening involvement within three (so far identified) general paths, or families of plans, that are distinguished conceptually as (a) the path of involvement in sexual role enactment, (b) the path of involvement in sexual trance, and (c) the path of involvement with the sex partner.

A path is defined as a general sexual script containing (a) the ordered set of rules for generating, predicting, interpreting, controlling, and evaluating a related family of sexual scenes and (b) its associated affect. The potentiality for deep involvement in a particular sexual scene is a function of (a) involvement potential; (b) multiple, highly valued path preferences; and (c) flexibility in responding to feedback from auxiliary information about the goodness-of-fit of the unfolding incidents and events to the sexual image and plan. Involvement potential is defined as a latent capacity, realized in an actual sexual scene, for absorption in the sexual episode as a function of the total set of facilitating sexual scripts. Path preference is defined as a relative preference for a specific set of plans sharing a family resemblance, the three paths to involvement identified above. Compatible involving path or paths is defined as the sharing by a couple of one or more paths which are involving for them as individuals and on which they overlap, preferring the same specific features within the path. This inventory is appropriate for use in research on sexual involvement theory and for clinical use with clients experiencing sexual dysfunction.

Description

This inventory consists of 90 7-point Likert items, arranged into 30 item triplets by categories, with response options labeled 0, not at all true of (for) me to 6, extremely true of (for) me. Each item triplet consists of an item from the sexual role enactment, sexual trance, and sex partner paths in categories that define path preference (e.g., sexual metaphors, mood, settings, sexual techniques, etc.). This novel item arrangement in sets of three is named a limited comparison format because respondents are encouraged to compare their responses within the set to delineate gradations in preference. The inventory is appropriate for use with sexually experienced adults who have had an opportunity to develop preferences.

Response Mode and Timing

Respondents rate each item on a 0 to 6 scale by circling a number on the test booklet or filling in a blank on a machine-scoreable answer sheet. Approximately 20 minutes are required for completion.

Scoring

The sum of the scores for all 90 items measures involvement potential. The summed scores of the following 30 items measure Preference for the Path of Sexual Role Enactment: 1, 5, 9, 11, 13, 18, 19, 23, 26, 28, 33, 35, 38, 42, 44, 46, 49, 52, 55, 59, 62, 66, 68, 70, 74, 78, 80, 83, 86, and 90. The summed scores of the following 30 items measure Preference for the Path of Sexual Trance: 3, 4, 8, 12, 14, 16, 20, 24, 27, 29, 31, 36, 39, 40, 43, 47, 50, 54, 56, 60, 61, 65, 69, 72, 75, 77, 81, 84, 85, and 89. The summed scores of the following 30 items measure Preference for the Path of Partner Engagement: 2, 6, 7, 10, 15, 17, 21, 22, 25, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90.

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25, 30, 32, 34, 37, 41, 45, 48, 51, 53, 57, 58, 63, 64, 67, 71, 73, 76, 79, 82, 87, and 88. An individual might have one, two, three, or no highly valued paths as defined by scores above 120 for a particular path. If each partner of a couple has completed the inventory independently, then indices of compatibility of involving path preference can be scored. A score for Compatible Role Path is a count of the 30 items keyed above on which both members of the couple rated the same item as 5, 6, or 7 (i.e., it was true of them both). A score for Compatible Trance Path is a similar count of the 30 items keyed in that path which both members of the couple endorsed as true for them; likewise, a count is made for Compatible Partner Path. A sum of these three scores yields an index of Potential for Compatible Involvement.

Reliability
Cronbach alpha coefficients were computed on a sample of 100 sexually experienced adult men and women for Involvement Potential, alpha = .93; Preference for Role Path, alpha = .92; Preference for Trance Path, alpha = .86; and Preference for Partner Path, alpha = .91.

Validity
Sirkin (1985) found that 76 college men scored significantly higher on the Path of Role Enactment, M = 100.01, than 62 college women, M = 87.52, t(136) = 2.72, p < .01. For the women in the sample, Involvement Potential, Trance Path Preference, and Role Path Preference were significantly correlated (Mdn r(60) = .43) with self-reports of sexual behavior, sexual pleasure, and sexual fantasy. Partner Path Preference was correlated, also for women, with reported sexual pleasure. For the men, there were only three significant correlations. Two were for Partner Path Preference and reports of sexual behavior, r(74) = −.28, and masturbation, r(73) = .32 (i.e., men who scored higher on the Partner Path reported less sexual behavior with partners and more masturbation). Men scoring higher on the Role Path reported more sexual fantasy, r(72) = .25.

Moreover, Sirkin (1985), using a method of guided sexual imagery, experimentally varied conditions of hypnotic trance induction with a relaxation control and a no-treatment control to test for a theoretically predicted interaction between the Path of Sexual Trance and hypnotic induction. Using ratings of sexual arousal as the dependent variable, men and women who scored above the median on the Path of Sexual Trance and who received the hypnotic trance induction reported significantly higher sexual arousal than all of the other subjects in various conditions, t(136) = 2.83, p < .01. Preference for the Trance Path was also associated, alone or in interaction with the other two path preferences, with reports of experiencing the positive effects of enjoyment-joy and interest-excitement during the guided sexual imagery. Furthermore, Involvement Potential, after partialing out the treatment effects, was predictive of greater depth of involvement in the guided imagery, more subjective sexual arousal across three measures, and more affective enjoyment and interest.

References

**Exhibit**

**Sexual Path Preferences Inventory**

*Instructions*: This Inventory of Sexual Preferences provides you with an opportunity to clarify what your sexual preferences are. It consists of 90 items arranged into 30 triplets. Each set of three items is related to some aspect of a sexual episode between two partners. You are to respond to each of the 90 items as honestly as you can by rating your response on a 7-point scale where 0 means not at all true of (for) me, and 6 means extremely true of (for) me. Ratings of 1 through 5 represent ratings of disagreement/agreement that are intermediate between not at all true and extremely true. The items are arranged in sets of three to permit you to compare the intensity of agreement/disagreement among the set since they all relate to the same feature of the sexual situation. This limited comparison is often useful since people frequently most or least prefer one item in each set. In some instances it is possible that all items in a set may be not at all true or extremely true for you. Most often, there will be a gradation in preference. You may prefer or believe some items to be more characteristically true of you than others, and you may not prefer some items which are much less true for you than others. Rate each of the 90 items from 0 to 6 as you keep in mind the value of comparing items within the triplets.

Sexual metaphors

1. Sex is artful and dramatic play.
2. Sex is union.
3. Sex is trance.
Mood
4. My favorite mood for enjoying sex is like a tranquil meditative state or the relaxation that you might get from a massage or marijuana.
5. When I’m feeling that “All the world’s a stage, and all the people are sex players,” then I know I want to get it on.
6. When my heart is bursting with love, I know our sex will be bursting with loving pleasure.

Settings
7. I like to have sex in a romantic context in which my partner and I are feeling loving toward one another.
8. I could enjoy having sex in a setting close to nature (e.g., on a mountain top or by the ocean), if I knew that we were totally alone and sure of privacy.
9. I would enjoy having sex in a dramatic setting, like in an oriental harem or an elegant New Orleans brothel.

Sexual techniques
10. Regardless of contemporary views on sexual variety, for me nothing will replace my favorite position for coitus of being face to face with the one I love.
11. I enjoy having sexual intercourse in a wide variety of positions.
12. I prefer slow and rhythmic movement that permits me to really sense the shades and nuances of pleasure that can exist during sexual intercourse.

Sexual metaphors
13. Sex is a drama that begins with attraction, develops a plot filled with intrigue, mystery, and sex play, and ends in tumultuous climax worthy of an audience’s applause.
14. Sex is a trip into your own sensory nerves and erotic images.
15. I consider sex to be the organ of love.

Mood
16. The most important aspect of my mood when I get into sex is that I be physically relaxed and mentally receptive.
17. To really want sex my mood must be one of really loving my partner.
18. I love serious sex play when I’m in a playful mood.

Settings
19. I believe that I would feel very excited by having secret sex in a semi-public place.
20. I like a setting for having sex that ensures total privacy.
21. I enjoy having sex in a place that has special meanings for me and my partner.

Sexual techniques
22. Ideally, all sexual techniques begin and build from kissing the face and lips.
23. I pride myself in being quite accomplished in the techniques of oral sex.
24. The most important thing about sexual technique is pacing and repetition that permits you and your partner to become absorbed into the sex.

Sexual style
25. My sexual style is affectionate and loving.
26. My sexual style is as varied as my mood suggests and my fantasies can create.
27. I concentrate on my inward sensations and experience during sex.

Ideal partner
28. Sexual skill and a flair for experimenting make an ideal sex partner.
29. An ideal sex partner flows with your mood and the situation rather than trying to dictate just how sex is to be done.
30. My ideal sex partner is my ideal love object.
Sex talk

31. If I talk during sex it’s liable to be to say something like “oh, that feels so good, oh more, mmmh good, etc.”
32. Most of all during sex I like to hear and say “I love you.”
33. I really get off when my partner is urging, begging, or directing me by saying, for example, “fuck me, fuck me, fuck me!”

Sex fantasies

34. Sometimes I imagine that my partner through his/her sexual participation is pledging his/her love to me for life.
35. I can enjoy a wide range of sexual fantasies that create novelty in partners, activities, and settings.
36. I like to use my imagination to increase my absorption into the sensory experience of sex.

Sexual techniques

37. My sexual style concentrates on mutual pleasuring to bond us closer together.
38. Sexual variety is the spice of a love life.
39. When I have truly good sex I care less about what and how we are doing it sexually than I do about what I am sensing, feeling, and experiencing as a consequence.

Sexual style

40. For me the sexual experience is truly entrancing, and you would never know how intensely I am experiencing the sex by just looking at me.
41. In my sexual style I try to blend the romantic with the erotic to offer a full rich gift of sexual love.
42. I like to play different sexual roles and scripts that act out fantasies while having sex.

Ideal partner

43. I expect my sexual partner to help create and sustain an ambiance of sensual pleasure.
44. I like a partner who moans and writhes and is carried away by his/her passion.
45. I expect my sex partner to be truly sexually considerate and loving.

Sex talk

46. I can enjoy lusty sex talk that uses erotic language for erotic acts.
47. During sex I like little talk and more sensual friction.
48. Sex talk should be love talk.

Sex fantasies

49. I have several fantastic sex fantasies with dramatic and exciting plots that help turn me on during ordinary sex.
50. I may imagine how I look or how my own and my partner’s sex organs look, etc. during sex to enhance my erotic pleasure.
51. Sometimes I imagine my partner is telling me how much he/she loves me during our lovemaking in ways that exceed the limits of mere words.

Ideal sex

52. Truly good sex for me usually entails a wide variety of sex practices and coital positions.
53. Good sex is the physical expression through sexual union of an interpersonal loving union.
54. Good sex for me is characterized by an intense involvement into the sensual and sexual sensation of the moment.

Music

55. Music to have sex by should have dramatic changes in rhythm, tempo, and volume while building to a lively crescendo.
56. Music to have sex by should be soft, low, and repetitive to form a rhythmic background that facilitates the flow without setting a pace to be followed.
57. Music to have sex by should be lyrical, romantic, and poetic in tone to match the partner’s loving mood.

Orgasms

58. I most enjoy orgasms in which I seem to flow into my partner and lose myself in our union.
59. I love it when sex moves me to uninhibited self-expression that leaves me with no sense of control of my sounds, movements, and orgasm.

60. I most enjoy orgasms in which I experience sensations that are so intense that I actually lose consciousness or at least waking consciousness fades in the face of the culminative sensations and experience.

Ideal partner

61. An ideal sex partner knows exactly what I like and want now.
62. I enjoy a partner who is open to playing different roles so that we can create a novel and dramatic sexual script.
63. If a person cannot look me in the eye before, during and after sex, I suspect the attraction is to my body and not to me.

Sex fantasies

64. Most of my fantasies during sex are really memories of past shared moments in which we felt especially close and loving.
65. Sometimes I experience visual and auditory images that accompany the sensual sensory experience during sex.
66. Sometimes I imagine that I could enjoy sex on a stage surrounded by an admiring audience.

Ideal sex

67. The best sex for me is loving sex.
68. The best sex occurs when sexual expression becomes so ecstatic that it becomes nonvolitional and I lose all sense of conscious control.
69. When I’m having the best sex, my sex organs become alive and their sensations demand and direct the action.

Orgasms

70. I love it when my orgasms are nearly convulsive and I involuntarily scream in pleasure, and grab, and/or bite, or scratch.
71. To orgasm, I must be secure in my love for and from my partner.
72. During orgasms my awareness is flooded with intense sensations.

Emotions

73. Love is the predominant emotion in my sexual experience.
74. Excitement is the predominant emotion in my sexual experience.
75. Enjoyment is the predominant emotion in my sexual experience.

Meanings of sex

76. Sex is the merger of two into a unity of physical and spiritual love.
77. The meaning of sex is that it permits me to set aside my daily existence and to be transported into an underworld of sensations.
78. Sex when most meaningful is a cathartic drama that requires mastery and artful performance of one’s sexual identity.

Sex fantasies

79. I sometimes imagine that my partner and I have been selected to symbolize the essence of love in a religious-like, sexual-spiritual ritual.
80. I can enjoy imagining that I am an amazingly successful porno film star and sex symbol in our culture.
81. I rarely have a sex fantasy with a plot; usually I only have a series of nonconnected, visual, sexual images of, for example, sex organs.

Ideal sex

82. The best sex occurs when I enter into a loving warm union with my partner, when we become two in one.
83. Sexual ecstasy is my criterion of good sex.
84. Good sex is total absorption into the sexual experience.

Orgasms

85. The moment of orgasm is a moment of total surrender to intense sensations.
86. The best orgasm is like an involuntary dramatic shock that overwhells yet releases my sexual tension.
87. Orgasms are a unique moment of fusion in which my soul cries out its love through my body, and my longing for my partner is fulfilled.
Meanings of sex
88. Sharing sex with my partner can become a ritual that celebrates the profound meaning of life.
89. During sex I feel transported into another level of consciousness or plane of existence that gives me a new understanding of my life and the universe.
90. When I have a super sexual experience I feel as if I embody all men/women in a universal and timeless sexual ritual.

Anticipated Sexual Jealousy Scale

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Sexual jealousy can be defined as an aversive emotional reaction that occurs as the result of the partner’s sexual attraction to a rival that is real, imagined, or considered likely to occur (Bringle & Buunk, 1985). In line with this definition, the Anticipated Sexual Jealousy Scale (ASJS) measures the degree to which the idea of sexual attraction felt by one’s partner for another person evokes a negative emotional response. Because sexual attraction can be manifested in divergent ways, a range of sexually laden behaviors that could be exhibited by the partner are described, and the respondent’s reaction to these hypothetical events is assessed. Another consideration behind the construction of the scale was that the negative emotional reactions to such events are not necessarily labeled as jealousy. As the word jealous has a negative connotation in Western culture, individuals may resist labeling their feelings as such. Therefore, the word jealous is avoided in the scale: people are simply asked how bothered they would be. Furthermore, it was assumed that extradyadic sexual behaviors exhibited by the partner can evoke negative, neutral, and positive emotional reactions (see Buunk, 1981a) and that this should be reflected in the response code.

Description, Response Mode, and Timing

The scale consists of five items. The format for each item is the same: the respondents are asked how they would feel if their partner were to engage in flirting, light petting, falling in love, sexual intercourse, and a long-term sexual relationship with another person of the opposite sex. The nine response options range from extremely bothered to extremely pleased. The midpoint is described as neutral. Each of the possible answers is spelled out literally. The respondents circle the number corresponding with the answer that best fits their anticipated feelings. The scale usually requires no more than 1 or 2 minutes for completion.

Scoring

The items can simply be summed. No reverse scoring is necessary. Higher scores indicate a higher degree of jealousy.

Reliability

The Cronbach alpha of the scale was .94 in a sample more or less representative of the general Dutch population and consisting of people with diverse levels of sexual permissiveness (Buunk, 1978); .90 in a study of people who had all been involved in extramarital relationships (Buunk, 1982); .91 in a sample of people in sexually open marriages (Buunk, 1981a); and .91 in a sample of undergraduate students (Buunk, 1981b). Over a 3-month period, test-retest reliability in the open marriage sample was r(100) = .76, p < .001.

Validity

There is considerable evidence for the concurrent validity of the ASJS. Individuals who said they were presently less jealous than before scored significantly lower on the scale than people who indicated they were as jealous now as they had been in the past (Buunk, 1981a). The scale particularly discriminates between persons high and low in sexual permissiveness. The sample described above, consisting of people who had been involved in extramarital relationships, scored much lower on the scale than a sample of undergraduate students, t(596) = 19.78, p < .001, and also much lower than the sample more or less representative of the average population, t(466) = 11.27, p < .001.

Further evidence for the concurrent validity of the ASJS is provided by the strong negative correlations that were found between this scale and a scale for extramarital behavioral intentions in three samples (Buunk, 1982). Finally, in