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Multidimensional Sexual Approach Questionnaire

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The Multidimensional Sexual Approach Questionnaire (MSAQ; Snell, 1992) is a self-report questionnaire designed to assess several different ways in which people can approach their sexual relationships (e.g., from a caring vs. an exchange perspective). More specifically, the MSAQ was developed to measure eight separate approaches to sexual relations (cf. Hughes & Snell, 1990): (a) a passionate, romantic approach to sexual relations; (b) a game-playing approach to sexual relations; (c) a companionate, friendship approach to sexual relations; (d) a practical, logical, and shopping-list approach to a sexual partner and a sexual relationship; (e) a dependent, possessive approach to sexual relations; (f) an altruistic, selfless, and all-giving approach to sexual partners and sexual relations; (g) a communal approach to sex (i.e., a sensitive approach to sexual relations that emphasizes caring and concern for a partner’s sexual needs and preferences); and (h) an exchange approach to sex (i.e., a quid pro quo approach to sex, in which a sexual partner keeps “tabs” on the sexual activities and favors that she or he does for a partner, expecting to be repaid in an exchange fashion at some time in the future of the relationship). Snell (1992) found significant relationships between the ways that people approach their sexual relations, as measured by the MSAQ, and both their sexual and love attitudes. Other findings reported by Snell (1992) revealed that several demographic/psychosocial variables (e.g., dating status) were also associated with the sexual styles measured by the MSAQ.

Description

The MSAQ consists of 56 items. In responding to the MSAQ, subjects are asked to indicate how much they agree--disagree with each statement. A 5-point Likert-type scale is used to collect data on the subjects’ responses, with each item being scored from +2 to –2: agree (+2), slightly agree (+1), neither agree nor disagree (0), slightly disagree (–1), disagree (–2). In order to create subscale scores, the items on each subscale are summed. Higher positive (vs. negative) scores thus correspond to the tendency to approach one’s sexual relations in the manner described by each respective MSAQ subscale. A varimax factor analysis with an orthogonal rotation extracted eight factors that corresponded to the eight approaches measured by the MSAQ.

Response Mode and Timing

Respondents indicate their responses on a computer scan sheet by darkening in a response from A to E. The questionnaire usually takes 15–20 minutes to complete.

Scoring

For purposes of analyses, the statements are keyed so that A=2, B = 1, C = 0, D = –1, and E = –2 (no items are reverse scored). This procedure results in six subscale scores, based on the sum of the items assigned to a particular subscale (i.e., add up the seven item scores). An overall scale score for the MSAQ is not particularly useful. The MSAQ subscales are coded so that a higher score indicates greater agreement with the respective MSAQ statements. Subscale scores can range from –14 to 14. The items assigned to each subscale are (a) a passionate, romantic approach to sexual relations (Items 1–7); (b) a game-playing approach to sexual relations (Items 8–14); (c) a companionate, friendship approach to sexual relations (Items 15–21); (d) a practical, logical, and shopping-list approach to a sexual partner and a sexual relationship (Items 22–28); (e) a dependent, possessive approach to sexual relations (Items 29 to 35); (f) an altruistic, selfless, and all-giving approach to sexual partners and sexual relations (Items 36 to 42); (g) sexual communion and a sensitive approach to sexual relations that emphasizes caring and concern for a partner’s sexual needs and preferences (Items 43 to 48); and (h) sexual exchange (Items 49 to 56).

Reliability

To examine the internal reliability of the subscales on the MSAQ, Cronbach alpha coefficients were computed for males and females, separately and in combination (Snell, 1992). The results clearly indicated that the subscales on the MSAQ have high internal reliability among both males and females. Specifically, the Cronbach alphas ranged from a low of .72 for males (.73 for females) to a high of .92 for males (.85 for females), average for males = .80 (average for females = .78).

Validity

As expected, Snell (1992) found that males who took a friendly, companionate approach to their sexual relations were characterized by sexual possessiveness, selflessness, and sensitivity. Not surprisingly, it was also found that, among males, a game-playing sexual style was directly related to a logical, rational way of approaching their sexual relations. In contrast, females who approached sex as a game were less likely to engage in friendly, companionate sexual relations. Other results reported by Snell indicated that males reported higher scores than females on the

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measure of the altruistic sexual style (a selfless, all-giving approach to sexual relations). In contrast, females, relative to males, were more rejecting of an exchange approach to sex. Men’s and women’s scores on the remaining MSAQ subscales were quite similar; they endorsed a romantic, companionate, and communal approach to their sexual relations, while disavowing a game-playing sexual style.

A final set of results reported by Snell examined the impact of sexual attitudes on the way that people approach their sexual relations (i.e., their sexual styles). As expected, sexually permissive attitudes were found to be positively associated with a game-playing approach to sex; people with sexually responsible attitudes toward contraceptives approached their sexual relations with a sensitive, caring sexual style; and a sexual attitude favoring idealized communal sex, as measured by the Sexual Attitudes Scale (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1987), was positively and strongly associated with all of the following MSAQ sexual styles: passionate, companionate, possessive, selfless, and caring approaches to sex.

References

Exhibit

Multidimensional Sexual Approach Questionnaire

Instructions: Listed below are several statements that reflect different attitudes about sex. For each statement fill in the response on the answer sheet that indicates how much you agree or disagree with that statement. Some of the items refer to a specific sexual relationship, while others refer to general attitudes and beliefs about sex. Whenever possible, answer the questions with your current partner in mind. If you are not currently dating anyone, answer the questions with your most recent partner in mind. If you have never had a sexual relationship, answer in terms of what you think your responses would most likely be in a future sexual relationship. For each statement:

A = Strongly agree with the statement.
B = Moderately agree with the statement.
C = Neutral—Neither agree nor disagree.
D = Moderately disagree with the statement.
E = Strongly disagree with the statement.

1. I was sexually attracted to my partner immediately after we first met.
2. I feel a strong sexual “chemistry” toward my partner.
3. I have a very intense and satisfying sexual relationship with my partner.
4. I was sexually meant for my partner.
5. I became sexually involved rather quickly with my partner.
6. I have a strong sexual understanding of my partner.
7. My partner fits my notion of the ideal sexual partner.
8. I try to keep my partner a little uncertain about my sexual commitment to him/her.
9. I believe that what my partner doesn’t know about my sexual activity won’t hurt him/her.
10. I have not always told my partner about my previous sexual experiences.
11. I could end my sexual relationship with my partner rather easily and quickly.
12. My partner wouldn’t like hearing about some of the sexual experiences I’ve had with others.
13. When my partner becomes too sexually involved with me, I want to back off a little.
14. I like playing around with a number of people, including my partner and others.
15. The sexual relationship between myself and my partner started off rather slowly.
16. I had to “care” for my partner before I could make love to him/her.
17. I expect to always be a friend of my sexual partner.
18. The sex I have with my partner is better because it was preceded by a long friendship.
19. I was a friend of my sexual partner before we became lovers.
20. The sex my partner and I have is based on a deep friendship, not something mystical and mysterious.
21. Sex with my partner is highly satisfying because it developed out of a good friendship.
22. Before I made love with my partner, I spent some time evaluating her/his career potential.
23. I planned my life in a careful manner before I chose my sexual partner.
24. One of the reasons I chose my sexual partner is because of our similar backgrounds.
25. Before I made love with my sexual partner, I considered how s/he would reflect on my family.
26. It was important to me that my sexual partner be a good parent.
27. I thought about the implications for my career before I made love with my sexual partner.
28. I didn’t have sex with my partner until after I had considered our hereditary backgrounds.
29. When sex with my partner isn’t going right, I become upset.
30. If my sexual relationship with my partner ended, I would become extremely despondent and depressed.
31. Sometimes I am so sexually attracted to my partner that I simply can’t sleep.
32. When my partner sexually ignores me, I feel really sick.
33. Since my partner and I started having sex, I have not been able to concentrate on anything else.
34. If my partner became sexually involved with someone else, I wouldn’t be able to take it.
35. If my partner doesn’t have sex with me for a while, I sometimes do stupid things to get her/his sexual attention.
36. If my partner were having a sexual difficulty, I would definitely try to help as much as I could.
37. I would rather have a sexual problem myself than let my partner suffer though one.
38. I could never be sexually satisfied unless first my partner was sexually satisfied.
39. I am usually willing to forsake my own sexual needs in order to let my partner achieve her/his own sexual needs.
40. My partner can use me the way s/he chooses in order for him/her to be sexually satisfied.
41. When my partner is sexually dissatisfied with me, I still accept him/her without reservations.
42. I would do practically any sexual activity that my partner wanted.
43. It would bother me if my sexual partner neglected my needs.
44. If I were to make love with a sexual partner, I’d take that person’s needs and feelings into account.
45. If a sexual partner were to do something sensual for me, I’d try to do the same for him/her.
46. I expect a sexual partner to be responsive to my sexual needs and feelings.
47. I would be willing to go out of my way to satisfy my sexual partner.
48. If I were feeling sexually needy, I’d ask my sexual partner for help.
49. If a sexual partner were to ignore my sexual needs, I’d feel hurt.
50. I think people should feel obligated to repay an intimate partner for sexual favors.
51. I would feel somewhat exploited if an intimate partner failed to repay me for a sexual favor.
52. I would probably keep track of the times a sexual partner asked me for a sensual pleasure.
53. When a person receives sexual pleasures from another, s/he ought to repay that person right away.
54. It’s best to make sure things are always kept “even” between two people in a sexual relationship.
55. I would do a special sexual favor for an intimate partner, only if that person did some special sexual favor for me.
56. If my sexual partner performed a sexual request for me, I would probably feel that I’d have to repay him/her later on.
57. I responded to the following items based on:
   (A) A current sexual relationship.
   (B) A past sexual relationship.
   (C) An imagined sexual relationship.

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Sexual Relationship Scale

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Clark and Mills (1979) proposed a theory of relationship orientation based on the rules governing the giving and receiving of benefits. An exchange-relationship orientation was defined as one in which benefits are given on the assumption that a similar benefit would be reciprocated. The recipient of a benefit in such a relationship presumably incurs a debt to make a suitable, comparable return. By contrast, a communal-relationship orientation was defined by Clark and Mills as one in which benefits are given on the assumption that they are in response to some need. In