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

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Sexual Self-Disclosure Scale

WILLIAM E. SNELL, JR.,1 Southeast Missouri State University

The literature on human sexuality emphasizes the need for people to discuss the sexual aspects of themselves with others. Snell, Belk, Papini, and Clark (1989) examined women’s and men’s willingness to discuss a variety of sexual topics with parents and friends by developing an objective self-report instrument, the Sexual Self-Disclosure Scale (SSDS). The first version of the SSDS consists of 12 subscales that measure the following sexual topics (Snell & Belk, 1987): sexual behavior, sexual sensations, sexual fantasies, sexual attitudes, the meaning of sex, negative sexual affect, positive sexual affect, sexual concerns, birth control, sexual responsibility, sexual dishonesty, and rape. In another study reported by Snell et al. (1989), women’s and men’s willingness to discuss a variety of sexual topics with an intimate partner was examined by extending the SSDS to include a greater variety of sexual topics. The Revised Sexual Self-Disclosure Scale (SSDS-R) consists of 24 three-item subscales measuring people’s willingness to discuss the following sexual topics with an intimate partner (reported in Study 3 by Snell et al., 1989): sexual behaviors, sexual sensations, sexual fantasies, sexual preferences, meaning of sex, sexual accountability, distressing sex, sexual dishonesty, sexual delay preferences, abortion and pregnancy, homosexuality, rape, AIDS, sexual morality, sexual satisfaction, sexual guilt, sexual calmness, sexual depression, sexual jealousy, sexual apathy, sexual anxiety, sexual happiness, sexual anger, and sexual fear.

Description

The initial version of the SSDS consists of 120 items that form 12 separate five-item subscales for each of two disclosure targets (male and female therapists). To respond to this version of the SSDS, individuals are asked to indicate how willing they would be to discuss the SSDS sexual topics with the disclosure targets. A 5-point Likert-type scale is used to measure the responses: (0) I would not be willing to discuss this topic with an intimate partner, (1) I would be slightly willing to discuss this topic with an intimate partner, (2) I would be moderately willing to discuss this topic with an intimate partner, and (3) I would be mostly willing to discuss this topic with an intimate partner, (4) I would be completely willing to discuss this topic with an intimate partner. A total subscore is created for each target (i.e., an intimate partner). In responding to the SSDS-R, individuals are asked to indicate how much they are willing to discuss the SSDS-R topics with an intimate partner. A 5-point Likert-type scale is used to collected data on the subjects’ responses, with each item being scored from 0 to 4: (0) I would not be willing to discuss this topic with an intimate partner, (1) I would be slightly willing to discuss this topic with an intimate partner, (2) I would be moderately willing to discuss this topic with an intimate partner, (3) I would be mostly willing to discuss this topic with an intimate partner, and (4) I would be completely willing to discuss this topic with an intimate partner. In order to create SSDS-R subscale scores, the three items on each subscale are summed (no items are reverse scored). Higher scores thus correspond to greater willingness to discuss the SSDS-R sexual topics with an intimate partner.

The sample version of the SSDS-R in the exhibit is an example of how the SSDS-R may be modified for use with different target persons (e.g., mother, father, best female friend, best male friend).

Response Mode and Timing

Respondents indicate their responses typically on a computer scan sheet by darkening in a response from A to E. Alternatively, responses to the SSDS can be written directly on the questionnaire itself. Usually, 20–30 minutes are needed to complete the SSDS.

Scoring

The SSDS consists of 12 subscales, each containing five separate items. The labels and items for each of these subscales are: (a) Sexual Behavior (Items 1, 13, 25, 37, 49); (b) Sexual Sensations (Items 2, 14, 26, 38, 50); (c) Sexual Fantasies (Items 3, 15, 27, 39, 51); (d) Sexual Attitudes (Items 4, 16, 28, 40, 52); (e) Meaning of Sex (Items 5, 17, 29, 41, 53); (f) Negative Sexual Affect (Items 6, 18, 30, 42, 54); (g) Positive Sexual Affect (Items 7, 19, 31, 43, 55); (h) Sexual Concerns (Items 8, 20, 32, 44, 56); (i) Birth Control (Items 9, 21, 33, 45, 57); (j) Sexual Responsibility (Items 10, 22, 34, 46, 58); (k) Sexual Dishonesty (Items 11, 23, 35, 47, 59); and (l) Rape (Items 12, 24, 36, 48, 60). The items are coded so that A = 0; B = 1; C = 2; D = 3; and E = 4. The five items on each subscale are then summed, so that higher scores correspond to greater sexual self-disclosure.

The SSDS-R consists of 24 subscales, each containing three separate items: (a) Sexual Behaviors (Items 1, 5, 9); (b) Sexual Sensations (Items 2, 14, 26, 38, 50); (c) Sexual Fantasies (Items 3, 15, 27, 39, 51); (d) Sexual Attitudes (Items 4, 16, 28, 40, 52); (e) Meaning of Sex (Items 5, 17, 29, 41, 53); (f) Negative Sexual Affect (Items 6, 18, 30, 42, 54); (g) Positive Sexual Affect (Items 7, 19, 31, 43, 55); (h) Sexual Concerns (Items 8, 20, 32, 44, 56); (i) Birth Control (Items 9, 21, 33, 45, 57); (j) Sexual Responsibility (Items 10, 22, 34, 46, 58); (k) Sexual Dishonesty (Items 11, 23, 35, 47, 59); and (l) Rape (Items 12, 24, 36, 48, 60). The items are coded so that A = 0; B = 1; C = 2; D = 3; and E = 4. The five items on each subscale are then summed, so that higher scores correspond to greater sexual self-disclosure.

1Address all correspondence to William E. Snell, Jr., Department of Psychology, Southeast Missouri State University, One University Plaza, Cape Girardeau, MO 63701; e-mail: wesnell@semo.edu
(b) Sexual Sensations (Items 2, 6, 10); (c) Sexual Fantasies (Items 3, 7, 11); (d) Sexual Preferences (Items 4, 8, 12); (e) Meaning of Sex (Items 13, 18, 23); (f) Sexual Accountability (Items 14, 19, 24); (g) Distressing Sex (Items 15, 20, 25); (h) Sexual Dishonesty (Items 16, 21, 26); (i) Sexual Delay Preferences (Items 17, 22, 27); (j) Abortion and Pregnancy (Items 28, 33, 38); (k) Homosexuality (Items 29, 34, 39); (l) Rape (Items 30, 35, 40); (m) AIDS (Items 31, 36, 41); (n) Sexual Morality (Items 32, 37, 42); (o) Sexual Satisfaction (Items 43, 53, 63); (p) Sexual Guilt (Items 44, 54, 64); (q) Sexual Calmness (Items 45, 55, 65); (r) Sexual Depression (Items 46, 56, 66); (s) Sexual Jealousy (Items 47, 57, 67); (t) Sexual Apathy (Items 48, 58, 68); (u) Sexual Anxiety (Items 49, 59, 69); (v) Sexual Happiness (Items 50, 60, 70); (w) Sexual Anger (Items 51, 61, 71); and (x) Sexual Fear (Items 52, 62, 72).

Reliability

The internal consistency of the 12 subscales on the original SSDS was determined by calculating Cronbach alpha coefficients. These alphas ranged from a low of .83 to a high of .93 (average = .90) for the female therapist, and from a low of .84 to a high of .94 (average = .92) for the male therapist.

Validity

Snell et al. (1989) reported that women’s and men’s responses to the SSDS varied as a function of the disclosure recipient and the content of the sexual disclosure. Women indicated that they were more willing to discuss the topics on the SSDS with a female than a male therapist. Also, it was found that people’s responses to the SSDS-R varied as a function of respondent gender and sexual topic.

References


### Exhibit

**Sexual Self-Disclosure Scale**

**Instructions:** This survey is concerned with the extent to which you have discussed the following 60 topics about sexuality with several different people. Listed below you will notice four columns which represent the following individuals: (A) your mother, (B) your father, (C) your best male friend, and (D) your best female friend. For each of these people, indicate how much you have discussed these topics with them. Use the following scale for your responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have not discussed</th>
<th>Have slightly discussed</th>
<th>Have moderately discussed</th>
<th>Have mostly discussed</th>
<th>Have fully discussed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>this topic:</td>
<td>this topic:</td>
<td>this topic:</td>
<td>this topic:</td>
<td>this topic:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(A) with your mother.
(B) with your father.
(C) with your best male friend.
(D) with your best female friend.

1. My past sexual experiences
2. The things that sexually arouse me
3. My imaginary sexual encounters
4. The sexual behaviors which I think people ought to exhibit
5. What sex means to me
6. How guilty I feel about sex
7. How satisfied I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
8. Times when sex was distressing for me
9. What I think about birth control
10. My private notion of sexual responsibility
11. The times I have faked orgasm
12. My private views about rape

The reliability coefficients for the SSDS-R ranged from a low of .59 to a high of .91 (average = .81). These reliability coefficients were all sufficiently high to justify using either version of the scale in research investigations.
13. The types of sexual behaviors I’ve engaged in
14. The sexual activities that “feel good” to me
15. My private sexual fantasies
16. What I consider “proper” sexual behaviors
17. What it means to me to make love together with someone
18. How anxious I feel about my sex life
19. How content I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
20. Times when I had undesired sex
21. How I feel about abortions
22. The responsibility one ought to assume for one’s sexuality
23. The times I have pretended to enjoy sex
24. The “truths and falsehoods” about rape
25. The number of times I have had sex
26. The behaviors that are sexually exciting to me
27. My sexually exciting imaginary thoughts
28. The sexual conduct that people ought to exhibit
29. What I think and feel about having sex with someone
30. How depressed I feel about my own sexuality
31. How happy I feel about my sexuality
32. Times when I was pressured to have sex
33. How I feel about pregnancy
34. My own ideas about sexual accountability
35. The times I have lied about sexual matters
36. What women and men really feel about rape
37. The sexual positions I’ve tried
38. The sensations that are sexually arousing to me
39. My “juicy” sexual thoughts
40. My attitudes about sexual behaviors
41. The meaning that sexual intercourse has for me
42. How frustrated I feel about my sex life
43. How much joy that sex gives me
44. The aspects of sex that bother me
45. My private beliefs about pregnancy prevention
46. The idea of having to answer for one’s sexual conduct
47. What I think about sexual disloyalty
48. Women’s and men’s reactions to rape
49. The places and times-of-day when I’ve had sex
50. The types of sexual foreplay that feel arousing to me
51. The sexual episodes that I daydream about
52. My personal beliefs about sexual morality
53. The importance that I attach to making love with someone
54. How angry I feel about the sexual aspect of my life
55. How enjoyable I feel about my sexuality
56. Times when I wanted to leave a sexual encounter
57. The pregnancy precautions that people ought to take
58. The notion one is answerable for one’s sexual behaviors
59. How I feel about sexual honesty
60. Women’s and men’s reactions to rape

Revised Sexual Self-Disclosure Scale (illustrated for the “intimate partner” target only)

Instructions: This survey is concerned with the extent to which you have discussed the following topics about sexuality with an intimate partner. To respond, indicate how much you have discussed these topics with an intimate partner. Use the following scale for your responses:

1. My past sexual experiences
2. The kinds of touching that sexually arouse me
3. My private sexual fantasies
4. The sexual preferences that I have
5. The types of sexual behaviors I have engaged in
6. The sensations that are sexually exciting to me
7. My “juicy” sexual thoughts
8. What I would desire in a sexual encounter
9. The sexual positions I have tried
10. The types of sexual foreplay that feel arousing to me
11. The sexual episodes that I daydream about
12. The things I enjoy most about sex
13. What sex in an intimate relationship means to me
14. My private beliefs about sexual responsibility
15. Times when sex was distressing for me
16. The times I have pretended to enjoy sex
17. Times when I prefer to refrain from sexual activity
18. What it means to me to have sex with my partner
19. My own ideas about sexual accountability
20. Times when I was pressured to have sex
21. The times I have lied about sexual matters
22. The times when I might not want to have sex
23. What I think and feel about having sex with my partner
24. The notion that one is accountable for one’s sexual behaviors
25. The aspects of sex that bother me
26. How I would feel about sexual dishonesty
27. My ideas about not having sex unless I want to
28. How I feel about abortions
29. My personal views about homosexuals
30. My own ideas about why rapes occur
31. My personal views about people with AIDS
32. What I consider “proper” sexual behavior
33. My beliefs about pregnancy prevention
34. Opinions I have about homosexual relationships
35. What I really feel about rape
36. Concerns that I have about the disease AIDS
37. The sexual behaviors that I consider appropriate
38. How I feel about pregnancy at this time
39. My reactions to working with a homosexual
40. My reactions to rape
41. My feelings about working with someone who has AIDS
42. My personal beliefs about sexual morality
43. How satisfied I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
44. How guilty I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
45. How calm I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
46. How depressed I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
47. How jealous I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
48. How apathetic I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
49. How anxious I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
50. How happy I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
51. How angry I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
52. How afraid I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
53. How pleased I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
54. How shameful I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
55. How serene I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
56. How sad I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
57. How possessive I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
58. How indifferent I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
59. How troubled I feel about the sexual aspects of my life
The evaluation and alteration of self-efficacy expectations is important in the cognitive-behavioral treatment of psychosexual problems. The Sexual Self-Efficacy Scale for females (SSES-F) is a measure of perceived competence in the behavioral, cognitive, and affective dimensions of female sexual response. Recently, researchers studying women’s perceived sexual self-efficacy, using the SSES-F, have focused on sexual adjustment (Reissing, Laliberté, & Davis, 2005), marital satisfaction (Oluwole, 2008), and the treatment of genital pain (Sutton, Pukall, & Chamberlain, 2009).

**Description**

The SSES-F was developed as a multidimensional counterpart to the SSES-E (erectile function in men), and has been used for clinical screening and assessment, as well as for research (Fichten et al., 2010; Libman, Rothenberg, Fichten, & Amsel, 1985).

The SSES-F has 37 items, sampling capabilities in four phases of sexual response: interest, desire, arousal, and orgasm. In addition, the measure samples diverse aspects of female individual and interpersonal sexual expression (e.g., communication, body comfort and acceptance, and enjoyment of various sexual activities). The instrument includes the following subscales determined by factor analysis (items in parentheses): Interpersonal Orgasm (4, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37), Interpersonal Interest/Desire (1, 5, 6, 7, 9, 22), Sensuality (17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 27), Individual Arousal (24, 25, 26, 31), Affection (8, 15, 16), Communication (12, 13, 14, 23, 35), Body Acceptance (2, 3), and Refusal (10, 11).

The SSES-F may be used by single or partnered women of all ages. Female respondents indicate those activities they can do and, for each of these, rate their confidence level. In addition, their partners can rate how they perceive the respondents’ capabilities and confidence levels.

**Response Mode and Timing**

For each item, respondents check whether the female can do the described activity and rate her confidence in being able to engage in the activity. Confidence ratings range from 10 (Quite Uncertain) to 100 (Quite Certain). If an item is unchecked, the corresponding confidence rating is assumed to be zero. The measure takes about 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

**Scoring**

The SSES-F yields an overall self-efficacy strength score as well as eight subscale scores. The total strength score is

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1 Address correspondence to Sally Bailes, Department of Psychiatry, SMBD-Jewish General Hospital, 4333 Cote Ste. Catherine, Montreal, Quebec, H3T 1E4, Canada; e-mail: sally.bailes@mail.mcgill.ca