Handbook of Sexuality-Related Measures

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Women’s Nontraditional Sexuality Questionnaire

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The Women’s Nontraditional Sexuality Questionnaire (WNSQ) was created to investigate women’s nontraditional sexual behaviors and attitudes as broadly as possible by including forms of sexuality that are prohibited by the traditional norm, such as recreational sex, using sex as a means to gain an end, and participating in commercial sex by paying for, or receiving payment for, a sexual experience.

Description

The WNSQ is a 40-item self-report measure that is divided into three general sections. The first section asks six preliminary questions about the respondent’s relationship status, sexual activity, sexual orientation, and current engagement in casual sex. The second section forms the bulk of the questionnaire and assesses the frequency of 26 sexual behaviors that occur for reasons other than the expression of love within a committed sexual relationship. The third section addresses attitudes about nontraditional sexuality by asking the respondent the strength of her agreement or disagreement with eight statements assessing attitudes toward sex. Six additional demographic items—age, gender, race/ethnicity, family/household income, highest educational level completed, and socioeconomic status—assisted in the validation of the instrument but are not included here in order to maintain focus on the core sexuality-related items.
The psychometric properties of the WNSQ were assessed with a sample drawn from college-aged women at a large midwestern university. Of the 243 women who completed the instrument, 85% identified as White/European American, 7% identified as Black/African American, and 2% or less each identified as Asian/Asian American, Arab/ Arab American, Bi-/Multi-Racial, or Latino(a)/Hispanic. Respondents’ ages ranged from 18 to 49 years old, but 90% of participants were 26 years of age or younger, and the average age was approximately 21. Annual household income varied considerably, with about one-fifth of the sample making less than $20,000 per year, about half the sample making between $20,000 and $80,000, and slightly more than a quarter of the sample making $80,000 or more. Self-descriptions of socioeconomic status were consistent with the financial responses except that only 4% self-described lower/working class and only 2% self-described as upper class.

Of the respondents, 92% reported that they always preferred a male sexual partner. An additional 4% usually preferred a male partner, and 3% preferred a female partner exclusively or at least as often as a male partner. About 45% of the respondents were seriously dating someone, and 43% were single. Only 10% were married or partnered, and 2% were divorced. Although 89% of the sample had been sexually active at some point in their lives, only 72% were sexually active when they completed the survey, and 67% said that their sexual activity occurred in the context of a relationship. Thus, 5% of the sample engaged exclusively in nontraditional sexual activity.

**Response Mode and Timing**

The WNSQ has been administered solely online but was adapted to a paper-and-pencil format in the Exhibit. Online administration used a commercial survey administration website that permits responses to automatically be downloaded into Excel and then imported into SPSS for analysis. Participants simply clicked their answer choice using their computer’s mouse. The measure is usually completed within 15 to 30 minutes.

**Scoring**

All items receive a score of 1–7, according to the numbers across the top of each page of the survey. Items 36, 38, 39, and 40 are reverse scored (designated with an R) such that a response of 1 is scored as a 7 and a response of 7 is scored as a 1, and so forth for each value 1–7. Never is scored as a 1 and Frequently is scored as a 7 in Items 7–32, whereas Agree Strongly is scored as a 7 and Disagree Strongly is scored as a 1 in Items 33–40. Items 1–6 are nominal or categorical variables and are scored as such.

To obtain the total scale score, reverse the scores of Items 36, 38, 39, and 40 and then average Items 7–40. To obtain the Degree of Sexual Interest subscale score, average the scores of responses to Items 7, 11, 14, 20, 21, and 27. To obtain the Casual Sex subscale score, average the scores of responses to Items 9, 10, 17, 22, 23, 28, and 29. To obtain the Involvement in Commercial Sex subscale score, average the scores of responses to Items 12, 13, 18, 19, 24, 25, 31, and 32. To obtain the Sex as a Means to an End subscale score, reverse Item 39 and then average the scores of responses to Items 8, 15, 16, 26, 30, 35, and 39R. To obtain the Nontraditional Attitudes About Sex subscale score, reverse Items 36, 38, and 40 and then average the scores of responses to Items 33, 34, 36R, 37, 38R, and 40R.

**Reliability**

Reliability for the total scale was excellent, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .88. Subscale reliabilities were good for four subscales: alphas were .80, .84, .72, and .80 for the subscales Degree of Sexual Interest, Casual Sex, Sex as a Means to an End, and Commercial Sex, respectively. The fifth theorized subscale, Nontraditional Attitudes About Sex, displayed poor reliability (α = .22). Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses suggested a four-factor solution in which three of the four factors corresponded to the Degree of Sexual Interest, Casual Sex, and Sex as a Means to an End subscales. On the Commercial Sex subscale, only items relating to Self-Pleasing survived the factor analyses, and the Nontraditional Attitudes About Sex did not emerge as a stable factor. The four factors accounted for 33.5% of the variance (Levant, Rankin, Hall, Smalley, & Williams, 2009).

**Validity**

Convergent construct validity for the WNSQ was supported by its moderate-to-large correlation (r = .72, p < .01) with the Sociosexual Orientation Index (SOI; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991), which measures men’s and women’s willingness to engage in sex with a partner who is not committed to them. The Casual Sex subscale had the highest correlation with the SOI (r = .73, p < .01), whereas the other four subscales had moderate correlations (ranging from r = .28 to .57, p < .01). This is consistent with the intention that the WNSQ was constructed to measure casual sex plus other nontraditional sexuality behaviors such as self-pleasuring, using sex as a means to an end, degree of sexual interest, and involvement in commercial sex. In addition, convergent construct validity was supported by a moderate negative correlation (r = −.44, p < .01) between the total scale score of the WNSQ and the Purity subscale of the Femininity Ideology Scale (FIS; Levant, Richmond, Cook, House, & Aupont, 2007), which measures the degree to which women endorse traditional feminine sexual norms. The Sex as a Means to an End subscale had the lowest correlation with the Purity subscale of the FIS (r = −.17, p < .01), whereas the other four subscales had small to moderate correlations (ranging from r = −.24 to −.46, p < .01).
Other Information

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Korenna Barto, The University of Akron; Katherine Frank, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Chassity Angeny, Nova Southeastern University; and Katherine Richmond, Muhlenberg College.

References


Exhibit

Women’s Nontraditional Sexuality Questionnaire

Sexual Practices and Attitudes Survey

Thank you for your help with our study! We are looking at current sexual practices and attitudes in our society. We are very interested in your honest responses to our questions. We would like this survey to remain anonymous, so please do not put your name on the survey.

Please circle the response that best describes yourself.

1. Relationship Status:
   a. Married/Partnered/Engaged
   b. Single: Casual, non-exclusive dating
   c. Single: Dating one person with the expectation of exclusivity
   d. Single: Not currently dating anyone
   e. Divorced/Separated
   f. Widowed

For the following questions, please consider the term “sex” to refer to any form of intimate physical contact involving more than kissing between you and another person (opposite or same sex).

2. Have you ever had sex (based on the above definition)?
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. Are you currently sexually active (based on the above definition)?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4. Are you currently involved in a sexual relationship in which you and your partner have agreed not to have sex (based on the above definition) with other people?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. Are you currently or have you recently been sexually active (based on the above definition) with someone who is not your exclusive sexual partner (e.g., one-night stand; having sex with two or more people in a short time period; or casual sexual activity)?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. Whether or not you are sexually active, would your preferred sexual partner be:
   a. Always male
   b. Usually male, but sometimes female
   c. Equally likely to be either
   d. Usually female, but sometimes male
   e. Always female
For the following questions, please provide your answer using the 7-point scale provided. Check the circle that best describes where you fall between those two extremes. Please remember that the definition of sex is any form of intimate physical contact involving more than kissing between you and another person (opposite or same sex).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
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<th>6</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
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<td>7. Given the chance, how often would you choose to have sex?</td>
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<td>8. How often have you had sex to end a fight?</td>
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<td>9. How often do you go somewhere (e.g., bar, social event) to find someone to have sex with?</td>
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<td>10. How often would you have anonymous sex with someone you are very attracted to if you are/were single?</td>
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<td>11. How often do you masturbate?</td>
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<td>12. How often do you use sex toys alone?</td>
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<td>13. How often have you been paid for sex?</td>
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<td>14. How often do you fantasize about having sex with someone other than your current partner?</td>
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<td>15. How often have you had sex to keep your partner in the relationship?</td>
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<td>16. How often have you had sex to help get a promotion or some other benefit at work or school?</td>
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<td>17. How often do you cheat sexually on a partner?</td>
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<td>18. How often do you purchase sex toys?</td>
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<td>19. How often do you pay for sex?</td>
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<td>20. How often do you talk to your friends about your sexual experiences?</td>
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<td>21. How often do you say what you want or need during sex?</td>
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<td>22. How often do you have sex outside of an exclusive relationship?</td>
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<td>23. How often would you have anonymous sex with someone you were very attracted to if you were in a relationship and knew for sure that your partner would not find out?</td>
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<td>24. How often do you buy an X-rated video?</td>
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<td>25. How often do you go to a strip club?</td>
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<td>26. How often do you use sex to get something you want?</td>
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<td>27. How often do you fantasize about having sex with your current partner?</td>
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<td>28. Do you ever have sex with a friend with whom you are not interested in dating (so-called &quot;friends with benefits&quot;)?</td>
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<td>29. How often do you have sex with someone you just met?</td>
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<td>30. How often have you had sex to get someone to do something for you?</td>
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<td>31. How often do you watch pornography alone?</td>
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<td>32. How often do you have phone-sex or cyber-sex with someone you are not in a relationship with?</td>
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Revised Sociosexual Orientation Inventory

LARS PENKE,1 University of Edinburgh

The construct of sociosexuality or sociosexual orientation captures individual differences in the tendency to have casual, uncommitted sexual relationships. The term was introduced by Alfred Kinsey, who used it to describe the individual differences in sexual permissiveness and promiscuity that he found in his groundbreaking survey studies on sexual behavior (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhard, 1953). The amount of scientific research on sociosexuality increased markedly when Simpson and Gangestad (1991) published the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI), a 7-item self-report questionnaire that assesses sociosexual orientations along a single dimension from restricted (indicating a tendency to have sex exclusively in emotionally close and committed relationships) to unrestricted (indicating a tendency for sexual relationships with low commitment and investment, often after short periods of acquaintance and with changing partners). On average, men tend to be more unrestricted than women in their sociosexual orientations, though there are also large individual differences within both sexes (Schmitt, 2005). The SOI has been successfully applied in over 50 published studies from fields as diverse as social, personality, and evolutionary psychology, sexuality research, gender studies, biological anthropology, and cross-cultural research (Simpson, Wilson, & Winterheld, 2004).

Despite its popularity, the SOI has repeatedly been criticized (Asendorpf & Penke, 2005; Penke & Asendorpf, 2008; Townsend, Kline, & Wasserman, 1995; Voracek, 2005; Webster & Bryan, 2007). Conceptually, it has been doubted that a single unitary dimension accurately reflects individual differences in sociosexuality. Psychometrically, the SOI has received criticism for its sometimes low internal consistency, its multifactorial structure, its skewed score distribution, its open response items that invite exaggerated responses, its multiple alternative scoring methods that yield incoherent results, and the formulation of one item (number 4) that makes the SOI inappropriate for singles.

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