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Assessing Multiple Facets of Attraction to Women and Men

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### Exhibit

**Attitudes Toward Unconventional Sex Scale**

I would describe my sexual preferences as “non-traditional.”
I like sex most when it is out-of-the-ordinary.
I like sex with my partner to be unpredictable.
I like to experiment with different sexual practices.
Some people might think my sexual preferences are unusual.

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**Assessing Multiple Facets of Attraction to Women and Men**

**Lisa M. Diamond,¹ University of Utah**

This measure is designed to provide an assessment of both the frequency and the intensity of an individual’s attractions to women and men. The measure is written so that it can be administered to either women or men, thereby yielding estimates of same-sex and other-sex attractions (depending on the gender of the respondent). All of the items are phrased with respect to “woman” and “man,” instead of “same-sex” and “other-sex.” The items are not designed to be aggregated into a single scale. Rather, the intent is to provide a more detailed, nuanced assessment of an individual’s pattern of sexual and emotional feelings than that which is provided by global measures such as the Kinsey scale. Depending on the specific research questions being asked, and the population being studied, different items (and combinations of items) may prove meaningful. Modifications of this scale have been administered in Diamond (1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2008a, 2008b).

**Description**

Items 1–3 assess the *relative* frequency of same-sex and opposite-sex attractions and fantasies (similar to the Kinsey scale), but they use a different response format than the Kinsey scale. Specifically, respondents are prompted to provide a number between 0 and 100 to represent the degree to which they are more frequently attracted to women versus men. The 0%-to-100% response format has been found to be more intuitive and easier to understand than the Kinsey scale items. For example, whereas respondents need to be given a specific operational definition for each different number on the Kinsey scale, most individuals intuitively understand the distinctions between, for example, “75%” and “95%.” Note that physical and emotional attractions are assessed separately, and operational definitions are provided for each type.

In contrast to the items assessing relative frequency, Items 4, 7, and 10 (for women) and 14, 17, and 20 (for men) provide information on the *overall* frequency of attractions and fantasies. This is useful for differentiating between (for example) a woman who experiences 90% of her physical attractions for men, but experiences such attractions less than once a month, versus a woman who experiences 90% of her attractions for men, and experiences such attractions every single day.

Depending on the research question at hand, researchers might consider averaging together the responses assessing frequency of attractions and fantasy, but are advised to carefully examine the correlations between attraction-fantasy items (and in particular, to examine scatterplots) before doing so. In my own research on women, I have found tremendous interindividual variation in the degree to which women’s attractions correspond to their sexual fantasies, perhaps because some women feel self-conscious about engaging in sexual fantasy. When such discrepancies are observed, it is advisable to analyze attraction and fantasy as separate constructs.

Items 5, 6, 8 and 9 (for women) and 15, 16, 18, and 19 (for men) are designed to assess the *breadth* of an individual’s attractions. In other words, are respondents only capable of experiencing same-sex attractions for one specific individual (and, perhaps, someone that they are currently involved with) or do respondents experience them.

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for many different individuals? Previous research indicates that some individuals experience their attractions as “based on the person rather than the gender,” or report that they have only ever experienced same-sex (or other-sex) attractions for one particular person. These items are designed to identify such individuals so that they can be meaningfully contrasted with individuals who experience more general, stable patterns of same-sex or other-sex attraction.

Items 11–13 (for women) and 21–23 (for men) focus on the intensity of attractions experienced in the previous 6 months, and the degree to which these attractions are experienced as an urge for sexual activity. Researchers may wish to average these measures (within target gender, of course), but should carefully inspect correlations and scatterplots before doing so, as (again) there may be considerable inter-individual variation in the degree of correspondence among these items.

Response Mode and Timing

The measure is designed so that it can be administered on paper, online, or verbally during an interview. Administration takes about 10 minutes.

Scoring

As indicated during the description, the scale is not designed to provide an aggregated index. Rather, different items may be of interest to researchers investigating different components of sexual attraction. Not all of the items have comparable scales. Hence, if researchers decide to aggregate certain items after inspecting correlations and scatterplots, they should standardize the relevant variables before doing so.

Reliability and Validity

No formal information is available on reliability and validity. However, I have used different subsets of these items during my own long-standing research on female sexual identity development. Relevant publications appear in the references. I have not collected comparable data on men, and hence the degree to which the items capture the same types of variation in female versus male sexual attraction is not yet known.

References


Exhibit

Assessing Multiple Facets of Attraction to Women and Men

The first few questions below ask about how OFTEN you are attracted to women versus men. It does not matter if the attractions are strong or weak; we are just trying to get a sense of how often they occur. The first question focuses on physical attractions and the second question focuses on emotional attractions. By “physical,” we mean the type of attraction that you would associate with a desire for sexual activity. By “emotional,” we mean the type of attraction that is usually associated with romantic love, including strong desires for emotional closeness and intimacy. Physical and emotional attractions often occur together, but not always. This is why we are asking about them separately.

1. Please provide a number between 0 and 100 to represent the percentage of your day-to-day PHYSICAL attractions which have been directed toward women versus men over the past 6 months. For example, 0% would mean that you have NEVER experienced attractions for women during the past 6 months, 100% would mean that you have ONLY experienced attractions for women during the past 6 months, and 50% would mean that you have been physically attracted to women about as often as you have been physically attracted to men during the past 6 months. You can provide any number between 0 and 100 (for example 20%, 83%, 99%).

Percentage of physical attractions directed toward women: 

2. Now provide a number from 0% to 100% for the percentage of your EMOTIONAL attractions which are directed to women versus men. Percentage of emotional attractions directed toward women: 

3. In general, what percentage of your sexual fantasies have been about women versus men over the past 6 months?

Percentage of sexual fantasies about women: 

4. How often have you experienced a physical attraction for a woman during the past 6 months?
Attraction

5. About how many different women have you been physically attracted to in the past 6 months? _____________

6. If you answered “1” on the last question, is this someone that you are currently sexually or romantically involved with?
   ____ yes  ____ no

7. How often have you experienced an emotional attraction for a woman during the past 6 months?
   ____ Almost never
   ____ Less than once a month
   ____ Once or twice a month
   ____ About once a week
   ____ More than once a week
   ____ About every day

8. About how many different women have you been emotionally attracted to in the past 6 months? _____________

9. If you answered “1” on the last question, is this someone that you are currently sexually or romantically involved with?
   ____ yes  ____ no

10. How often have you had sexual fantasies about a woman, or women in general, in the past MONTH?
    ____ Almost never
    ____ Less than once a month
    ____ Once or twice a month
    ____ About once a week
    ____ More than once a week
    ____ About every day

11. The next question concerns the intensity of your physical attractions for women. This is on a 1 to 5 scale, so that 1 is “no attraction,” 3 is a moderate attraction (right in the middle of the scale), and 5 is the most intense attraction you can experience. Thinking about ALL of the attractions to women you have experienced in the past 6 months, how would you rate the AVERAGE intensity of those attractions? _________

12. How would you rate the intensity of the STRONGEST attraction to a woman that you’ve experienced in the past 6 months? _________

13. When you have sexual thoughts about a woman, or women in general, how strong is your desire to engage in sexual activity? Use the same 1 to 5 scale, so 1 is basically “no desire for sexual activity,” 3 is in the middle, and 5 is maximum desire for sexual activity.
    _________

The next set of questions focus on men.

14. How often have you experienced a physical attraction for a man during the past 6 months?
    ____ Almost never
    ____ Less than once a month
    ____ Once or twice a month
    ____ About once a week
    ____ More than once a week
    ____ About every day

15. About how many different men have you been physically attracted to in the past 6 months? _____________

16. If you answered “1” on the last question, is this someone that you are currently sexually or romantically involved with?
    ____ yes  ____ no

17. How often have you experienced an emotional attraction for a man during the past 6 months?
    ____ Almost never
    ____ Less than once a month
    ____ Once or twice a month
The Sexual Awareness Questionnaire (SAQ; Snell, Fisher, & Miller, 1991) is an objective, self-report instrument designed to measure four personality tendencies associated with sexual awareness and sexual assertiveness: (a) sexual consciousness, defined as the tendency to think and reflect about the nature of one’s sexuality; (b) sexual preoccupation, defined as the tendency to think about sex to an excessive degree; (c) sexual monitoring, defined as the tendency to be aware of the public impression which one’s sexuality makes on others; and (d) sexual assertiveness, defined as the tendency to be assertive about the sexual aspects of one’s life.

### Description

The SAQ consists of 36 items arranged in a format whereby respondents indicate how characteristic of them each statement is. A 5-point Likert scale is used, with each item being scored from 0 to 4: Not at all characteristic of me (0), Slightly characteristic of me (1), Somewhat characteristic of me (2), Moderately characteristic of me (3), Very characteristic of me (4). In order to create subscale scores (discussed below), the items on each subscale are summed. Higher scores thus correspond to greater amounts of the relevant tendency.

To confirm the conceptual dimensions assumed to underlie the SAQ, the questionnaire items were subjected to a principal axis factor analysis with varimax rotation. Four factors accounting for 42% of the variance were interpreted. The first factor contained items that pertained to sexual consciousness (Items 1, 4, 10, 13, 22, and 25). The items on the second factor (Items 2, 5, 14, 17, 23, 26, 28, 31, and 32) referred to sexual monitoring tendencies. The third factor was composed of items assessing sexual assertive-