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Sexual Arousal and Sexual Aversion in the Context of Mixed-Orientation Relationships

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Introduction

- Sexual attraction is of innate and biological nature. It is resistant to change and can be in discord with sexual orientation identity.
 - SOCE doesn't change SSA (Beckstead, 2012)
 - Biological evidence for the experience of attraction (Semon et al., 2017)
- Sexual aversion is of learned and psychological nature. It can be manipulated by external factors.
 - Cultural influence (Beckstead, 2012)
 - Westermarck and natural aversion (Fraleley & Marks, 2010)
 - Sexual disgust can be primed (Campbell-Fuller & Craig, 2009)
- MORs are a prime test case to explore how the experiences of attraction and arousal result in relationship behavior. Being in a MOR can be detrimental to mental health.
 - Sexual satisfaction (Legerski et al., 2016)
 - Self esteem (Hernandez et al., 2011)

Research Question

- Q1: Are sexual attraction and aversion distinct?
 Q2: Do people differentiate between sexual attraction and aversion? If, so, who does?
 Q3: Are they related to outcome variables in mixed-orientation relationships (MORs)?

Methodology

- Participants**
- Data collected from Four Options Survey Database, 2016.
 - Total of 1,499 participants met inclusion criteria
- Measures**
- Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) to measure depression
 - Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) scale to measure anxiety
 - Heterosexual-Homosexual Rating Scale (HHRS) to measure sexual attraction
 - 2 questions on the Four Options Survey dealing with sexual aversion to measure sexual aversion
 - Flourishing Scale to measure flourishing
 - Four Options Survey Question to measure relationship satisfaction

Methodology

Procedure

- Survey designed to obtain information about the lives and relationships of people who are currently or have ever experienced same-sex attraction
- Questions assess demographics, sexual identity, religious affiliation, mental health, depression, & anxiety
- Respondents were majority adult White, Mormon males who fit one of four relationship options: Single, Celibate (SC), Single, Not Celibate (SNC), Mixed-Orientation Relationship (MOR), and Same-Sex Relationship (SSR)

Statistical Analysis

- Correlations used to assess relationship between sexual attraction and aversion
- Pearson's Chi-Squared used to determine which demographics influence attraction & aversion
- Regression analyses used to measure impact of sexual attraction & aversion on MORs

Results

Table 2. Correlation between Attraction and Aversion

	M	SD	OS Attraction	SS Attraction	OS Aversion	SS Aversion
OS Attraction	2.34	1.74	—			
SS Attraction	5.66	1.69	-.23**	—		
OS Aversion	3.96	2.29	-.54**	.25**	—	
SS Aversion	1.94	1.62	.20**	-.41**	-.15**	—

*p value < .05; **p value < .01

Table 4. Regression Analyses

Variable	Same Sex Attraction		Same Sex Aversion		Other Sex Attraction		Other Sex Aversion		F	R ²
	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t		
Happiness of relationship	-.09	-1.51	0.07	1.15	0.04	0.69	-0.15	-2.45*	5.14**	.04
Depression	0.15	2.76**	-0.04	-0.64	0.03	0.62	0.11	1.78	4.55**	.03
Anxiety	0.16	2.78**	-0.02	-0.35	0.03	0.53	0.00	0.04	2.84*	.01
Flourishing	-0.13	-2.30*	0.03	0.54	-0.05	-0.82	-0.09	-1.41	3.01*	.01
Internalized Homonegativity	0.02	0.38	0.12	2.13*	-0.11	-1.82	0.03	0.48	2.75*	.01

*p value < .05; **p value < .01

Results

Table 3. Demographic Variables that Mediate Sexual Attraction and Aversion

Variable	% Discriminating	χ ²	V
Gender		5.56*	-.07
	Cisgender	59.9%	
	Transgender	52.4%	
Sexual Identity		62.51**	.22
	Lesbian/Gay	41.7%	
	Bisexual	61.0%	
	Heterosexual	62.5%	
Four Option Status		20.61**	.13
	Single, Not Celibate	45.2%	
	Single, Celibate	53.2%	
	Mixed-Orientation Relationship	62.4%	
	Same-Sex Relationship	54.9%	
Race/Ethnicity		3.87	.06
	Multi-Ethnic	55.0%	
	Asian/Asian-American	66.7%	
	Black/African-American	61.5%	
	Latino/Hispanic-American	52.4%	
	Middle-Eastern/Middle-Eastern American	66.7%	
	Native American/Alaska Native	100%	
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	50%	
	South Asian	100%	
	White/Caucasian/European-American	54.1%	
Education		9.83*	.09
	Less than High School Diploma	60.2%	
	High School Diploma	50.2%	
	Some College	51.4%	
	Bachelor's Degree	52.0%	
	Graduate Degree	60.4%	
Religion		5.02*	.06
	Religious	56.0%	
	Non-Religious	48.4%	

*p value < .05; **p value < .01

Discussion

- Majority of sample differentiated between sexual attraction and aversion
 - Bisexual and label rejecters (heterosexual but SSA)
 - Women
 - Higher and lower education
 - MORs/religious
- Inverse relationship between happiness of relationship in MOR and other sex aversion
- Inverse relationship between same sex attraction and mental health (depression, anxiety, and flourishing) in MORs

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