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**Towards the measurement of sex drive as an evolutionary supremacy:
Basics for a new research program**

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ABSTRACT

If the human sex drive is an evolutionarily-instigated motivation towards procreation, then the strength of men and women's sex drive should be dependent on factors affecting offspring. In this study, the effect of gender was investigated among 534 participants by means of a survey that was based on evolutionary adaptations underlying sexual behaviour, This survey the basis for a new research line. Analysis of covariance showed that, in general, men have a higher sex drive than women. These results are in line with studies of sexual selection and partner choice preferences where evolved behavioural manifestations of sex drive facilitate the competition and rivalry for access to a partner, and where men differ from women with regard to their participation in parental investment.

INTRODUCTION

In the present study, an attempt is made to measure the evolutionary sex drive of women and men based on behavioural manifestations related to procreation. To this aim, a online survey was developed to measure sex drive. The survey forms the basis for research for Master students in Psychology of the Open University of the Netherlands.

From an evolutionary perspective, the most important task in life for both men and women is procreation. As such, evolution has shaped female and male bodies and minds differently and has arranged different adaptations that guide and organise our procreation behaviours (see also Buss (1994)). The mechanism of parental investment (Trivers, 1972) is such that women seek a partner that is fertile and that appears to be beneficial in the long-term. Women seek male partners that are capable and willing to take care of their offspring. Thus, with regard to the mate choice, evolution brought about a tendency in women to be selective. In order to be selected by a woman, men have 'pop out' and this evolutionary tendency has resulted in typical male sexual selection strategies (Darwin, 1871). Abundant evidence is available from animal studies. These studies have shown that the sex with the least parental investment - often male - has evolved characteristics that are peculiarly remarkable and not at all beneficial for their individual survival. These peculiar characteristics are also seen in male behaviour across cultures. For example, males tend to demonstrate or exaggerate their physical strength or their status (Low, 2000; Thornhill & Thornhill, 1992). Evolution resulted in men being motivated differently than women (Baumeister, Catanese, & Vohs, 2001). With regard to procreation, this evolutionarily-instigated motivation is called here sex drive.

Sex drive has been discussed for a long time in the literature. It has been defined in various ways. One early is example is Freud who viewed the sex drive as a biological innate drive

comparable to hunger and thirst (Freud, 1905). In recent studies, sex drive has been operationalised as a sexual desire or as libido (Lippa, 2006, 2009; Ostovich & Sabini, 2004). These definitions do not necessarily refer to an innate tendency and thus it is possible that the drive is triggered by external factors. According to Baumeister et al. (2001), sex drive refers to sexual motivation as in craving for sexual activity or sexual pleasure. This motivation can be categorised as intrinsic or extrinsic. Extrinsic sexual motivation refers to desiring sex for the sake of distal goals (e.g. to enhance feelings of power or for stress relief). Intrinsic sexual motivation refers to desiring sex for its own sake. In the present paper, the focus is placed on the intrinsic aspect of sex drive. The focus is on sex drive as an innate tendency that results in behavioural manifestations, which facilitate male competition and female rivalry for sexual partners. Competition and rivalry, which is often implicit and processed unconsciously, yields specific behaviours that seek to find, attract and seduce potential partners. A stronger sex drive is associated with more variety in these behaviours and more explicit manifestations of these behaviours.

In sex research, multiple specific behaviours that may emerge from sex drive have been studied. An extensive overview of these behaviours was presented in a literature review conducted by Baumeister et al. (2001). Based on a large literature search in PsychInfo and Medline, more than 5000 citations were collected. The main behavioural manifestations studied can be categorised as thoughts, fantasies and spontaneous arousal, desired frequency of sex, desired number of sexual partners, masturbation, willingness to forego sex, emergence of sexual desire, seeking versus avoiding, liking for various sexual practices, sacrificing resources to get sex, and favourable attitudes towards sex. These behaviours differ between men and women. Men tend to fantasize more often than women (e.g. Carpenter, Janssen, Graham, Vorst, & Wicherts, 2008; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994;

Leitenberg & Henning, 1995) and the content of sexual fantasies seems to differ between men and women (Byers, Purdon, & Clark, 1998; Meana, 2010; Zurbriggen & Yost, 2004). In addition, spontaneous sexual arousal seems to be more prevalent in men than in women (Bancroft, Graham, Janssen, & Sanders, 2009; Beck, Bozman, & Qualthrough, 1991; Carpenter et al., 2008; Toates, 2009). Also, several studies have demonstrated that, compared to women, men desire a greater number of sexual partners, agree faster to a sexual liaison and have lower standards for short-term mating (Baumeister et al., 2001; Burdette, Ellison, Sherkat, & Gore, 2007; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Carpenter et al., 2008). Additionally, more men than women reported having friends with benefits relationships (Owen & Fincham, 2010). During dating and ongoing relationships, men tend to initiate more sexual activities than women (Impett & Peplau, 2003) and show more regret when missing a sexual opportunity (Roese et al., 2006). However, Klusmann (2006) found that, at the start of a relationship, heterosexual women desire sex as often as their partner. Also, in clinical practice, it is a well-observed phenomenon that, within a relationship, men and women tend to differ with regard to their motivation for sexual activities (Hiller, 2005). The more typical behavioural manifestations of sex drive, the greater the strength of sex drive. As such, we can expect that men have a higher sex drive than women.

The survey was based largely on the behavioural manifestations discussed in the extensive theoretical overview put forth by Baumeister et al. (2001). The present study also investigated whether men had a higher sex drive than women.

METHOD

Participants

The data were collected by means of an internet-based survey that aimed to establish the human sex drive as an evolutionary supremacy. The survey was part of an educational website on psychological topics that were addressed in television programmes broadcasted by a public broadcasting system specialised in educational television. Over the course of two months, 671 people completed the survey. Participants that had not fully completed the survey, were younger than 17 years of age, showed contrasting patterns in their answers or randomly filled in answers were not included in the analyses. Exclusion of these participants yielded a sample of 602 participants, of which 413 were men and 189 were women. The mean age among male participants was 37.8 years with a range of 17 to 71 years, and the mean age among female participants was 33.0 with a range of 17 to 59 years. The sample is described further in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the initial sample of participants ($N=602$).

	Women ($N=189$)	Men ($N=413$)
Relationship status		
• Single	56	104
• Involved in a relationship	123	290
• Involved in more than one relationships	10	19
Age (mean)	33.0	37.8

In order to obtain a homogeneous group for the analyses, only heterosexual participants were included ($N=558$). Because the number of men and women with multiple partners was

relatively small ($N=29$), these participants were also excluded. The remaining 534 participants were included in the analyses.

Sex drive survey

The sex drive survey for the current study comprised 28 items, each focusing on a behavioural manifestation of sex drive as suggested by Baumeister et al. (2001). The items were taken from the master version of the sex drive scale (see attachment I). The items were rated on a four-point scale (0, 1, 2 or 3). Higher scores indicated a stronger tendency to express sex drive. In accordance with existing theory, the 28 items were categorised in one of three subscales, namely fantasies and thoughts, spontaneous sexual arousal and attitude towards sex. The total scores for the subscales were computed by summing the scores of the corresponding subscale items. No more than 29% missing values for each subscale was permitted. Missing values were imputed by the means of the subsequent subscale. The three scales in the sex drive survey were characterized as follows:

- *Fantasies and thoughts* was assessed by 6 items (e.g. ‘Did you fantasize about sex in general or sex-related stuff in the last week?’). Cronbach’s alpha was 0.71.
- *Spontaneous sexual arousal* was measured by 11 items (e.g. ‘Did you visit an erotic site on the internet last week?’). Cronbach’s alpha was 0.79.
- *Attitude towards sex* was assessed by 11 items (e.g. ‘Trying to fulfil one’s sexual fantasies is normal’). Cronbach’s alpha was 0.72.

The total scale was computed by weighing the total scores of the three subscales. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.89.

Following the multiple choice items, seven open-ended questions were presented:

1. How many sexual partners do you expect to have in the next five years?
2. With how many partners did you have sex just once?
3. If I could give my current sex life a grade, it would be
4. How many orgasms did you have last week?
5. How many times did you masturbate last week?
6. How many times did you have sex with someone last week?
7. How many times did you buy sexy lingerie or sex objects by mail-order last year?

Statistics

Separate one-way analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) were performed to analyze differences in total mean scores and the mean answer scores for the open-ended questions. Because of its potential influence on the strength of one's sex drive (e.g. Hiller, 2005), age was included as a covariate. Bonferroni corrected pairwise comparisons were employed to characterize further significant differences between single participants and participants with a partner. Differences were regarded as statistically significant if $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Overall, the ANCOVA revealed that the mean score for sex drive among men (44.11; $SD=12.60$) was significantly higher than the mean score for sex drive among women (35.08; $SD=11.91$; $F(1,532)=35.02$, $p < 0.01$; $\eta^2 = 0.06$).

With regard to *fantasies and thoughts*, a significant effects of gender was found ($F(1, 532)=27.85$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2=0.05$). Men scored significantly higher than women. A significant effects of gender was found for *spontaneous sexual arousal* ($F(1, 532)=43.08$, $p < 0.01$,

$\eta^2=0.08$). Men scored significantly higher than women. For the *attitude towards sex* subscale, also a significant effect of gender was found ($F(1, 532)=19.75, p<0.01, \eta^2=0.04$). Men scored significantly higher than women.

Means scores on the seven open-ended questions are presented in Table 2. Overall, there were no significant differences between men and women with regard to the expected number of sexual partners in the next five years (Question 1). With respect to the number of partners with whom one has had sex only once (Question 2), no significant effects of gender.

Table 2. Mean scores for the seven open-ended questions, segregated by gender and relationship status.

Q	Single		Partnered	
	Men (N=92)	Women (N=46)	Men (N=275)	Women (N=110)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
1	6.69 (13.4)	6.09 (9.31)	2.60 (3.54)	1.58 (1.61)
2	5.56 (21.94)	3.36 (4.59)	6.52 (18.70)	1.58 (2.37)
3	4.15 (2.76)	5.00 (3.02)	6.31 (2.25)	6.64 (2.64)
4	4.90 (3.71)	3.20 (4.13)	4.83 (3.55)	3.26 (2.73)
5	4.79 (3.45)	2.91 (2.80)	3.36 (3.35)	1.44 (1.87)
6	0.76 (1.69)	0.51 (1.07)	1.99 (2.30)	2.24 (2.13)
7	0.15 (0.47)	0.87 (1.93)	0.87 (2.01)	0.62 (1.35)

Regarding the quality of one's sex life (Question 3), also no significant difference between men and women was found. With respect to orgasm frequency (Question 4), men reported

having had more orgasms than women ($F(1,523)=23.49, p<0.01; \eta^2=0.04$). Also, men reported having masturbated (Question 5) more than women ($F(1,523)=35.49, p<0.01; \eta^2=0.06$). There were no significant differences between men and women with regard to the amount of sex they had had in the week prior to completing the survey (Question 6). With regard to buying sexy lingerie or sex toys by mail-order in the past year (Question 7), no significant effect of gender found.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the impact of gender on sex drive was investigated using an extended online survey. The findings supported earlier research that men have a stronger sex drive than women. The finding that gender impacts sex drive was also found on questions pertaining to fantasies and thoughts, and spontaneous sexual arousal. Men did report a less restrictive attitude towards sex than women. The gender differences found in our study concur with the results of previous studies (Bancroft et al., 2009; Burdette et al., 2007; Carpenter et al., 2008; Leitenberg & Henning, 1995). In our study, additional gender differences were found in responses to open-ended questions. Men reported significantly more orgasms than women. This may be because men masturbate more frequently than women. No gender differences in the frequency of sexual activity were found.

The findings can be explained from an evolutionary perspective. To procreate, women select their partners on the basis of specific male behaviours that indicate that he will have much to offer in the long-term. As a result, men displaying behaviour that implies this are more likely to be selected by more women. As a consequence, men tend to father children with more women than women do with men. Evidence in this respect comes from research that uses DNA analysis to show that today's human population is descended from many more women

than men (Wilder, Mobasher, & Hammer, 2004). In short, and in general, women must be noticeable but selective and men must be representative and competitive. For behavioural manifestations to be noticeable, representative and competitive, the underlying sex drive has to be elevated. As female behavioural manifestations is concerned to be more selective or less selective, it is logical that the strength of their underlying sex drive is variable. One reason is that selectivity depends on the menstrual cycle and is more dependent on hormones and situational factors (Baumeister, 2000). Being noticeable is likely more important for single women than it is for women with a partner and selectivity is likely more important for women with a partner than single women. This is in line with our finding that single women's sex drive is stronger than women with a partner's sex drive.

A number of methodological considerations should be taken into account when interpreting these results. First, the method of online recruitment may have resulted in a study population that is not representative of the general population. People who use the internet tend to be younger, wealthier and better educated than non-users. Second, response rates to web-based surveys tend to be low (Skitka & Sargis, 2006). However, recent evidence has shown that samples are not as selective as was once feared (Birnbaum, 2004). Second, the use of an online format may have some limitations. For example, it is possible that the survey was completed under undesirable circumstances and that anonymity encourages deceptive responses (Prause & Graham, 2007). The likelihood of these limitations was reduced in so far as possible in the present study. The introductory page of the website was explicit about the fact that data are confidential and that survey completion is voluntary. Additionally, prior to analyses, the data were reviewed in an effort to find and remove obviously deceptive answers.

In conclusion, this study has established gender differences in the evolutionarily-instigated motivation towards procreation. Men appear to have a more stable and stronger sex drive than women.

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ATTACHMENT I: Masterversie Seksdriveschaal

Toelichting

Het doel van dit onderzoek is het meetbaar maken van de biologisch-evolutionaire seksdrive. Vanuit een biologisch-evolutionair perspectief is de seksdrive een namelijk interessant gegeven. Seksdrive stuurt namelijk ons seksueel gedrag. Hoe sterker de (seks)drive, des te gericht het (seksueel) gedrag. Seksueel gedrag is alle acties die een persoon uitvoert om (uiteindelijk) seks te kunnen hebben. Seks is alles wat een persoon zelf onder seks verstaat. Echter, als het gaat om 'seks met iemand', dan wordt geslachtsverkeer bedoeld. Al dan niet vergezeld met een orgasme bij één van de betrokkenen.

Onderstaande vragen gaan soms in op zeer intieme aspecten van iemands leven. Het kan dan dus moeilijk zijn om hierover iets te uiten. Toch vragen we u om de vragen zo waarheidsgetrouw in te vullen. Maar u bent vrij om vragen niet te beantwoorden en om op elk moment te stoppen. Het invullen van de vragen is geheel vrijwillig. De gegevens worden uiteraard zeer vertrouwelijk verwerkt. Het is niet mogelijk om uw naam te herleiden uit uw gegevens.

Het invullen van de vragen duurt ongeveer 5 tot 10 minuten. Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden. Denk niet te lang na over de vragen. Meestal is uw eerste ingeving het beste antwoord.

DEELNEMERGEGEVENS

1) Ik ben geboren in het jaar

2) Ik ben een

man <input type="radio"/>	vrouw <input type="radio"/>	
↓	↓	
	Mijn menstruatiecyclus is redelijk normaal	afwezig, omdat ik nu (al lang) niet meer zwanger ben aanwezig
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
		Ik gebruik een anticonceptiemiddel
	nee <input type="radio"/>	ja <input type="radio"/>
		namelijk
		Hoeveel dagen geleden was uw 1e dag van uw laatste menstruatieperiode?

2) Ik beschouw mijzelf als

heteroseksueel homoseksueel biseksueel aoseksueel

3) Ik heb momenteel

geen partner <input type="radio"/>	meerdere partners <input type="radio"/>	een dating partner <input type="radio"/>	een vaste partner <input type="radio"/>
↓		↓	

SEKSDRIVESCHAAL

			Helemaal niet	Een enkele keer	Vaak	Bijna dagelijks		MZP	MMP	VZP	VMP
SD	Fantasieën en gedachten	UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week in het algemeen aan seks of aan seksgerelateerde zaken gedacht?			FG1		1	5	1	5
		UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week gefantaseerd over een specifieke seksuele activiteit/handeling die u nog niet in de praktijk hebt kunnen brengen?			FG2		2	13	2	14
		UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week aan bepaalde seks gedacht waarvan u eigenlijk weet dat die niet haalbaar is?			FG3		7	23	7	23
		UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week gedacht aan het creëren van mogelijkheden om seks te hebben?			FG4		21	33	21	33
		UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week gefantaseerd om seks te hebben in een speciale omgeving?			FG5		25	35	26	35
		UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week gefantaseerd om seks te hebben onder een speciale omstandigheid?			FG6		17	37	17	37
	Spontane opwinding	VB	Heeft u de afgelopen week bijzondere of speciale lingerie of kleding gedragen?			SO1		--	--	22	15
		UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week uw Tv-gids, krant doorgebladerd en/of internet geraadpleegd om te kijken of er een erotisch programma of film op de TV zou komen?			SO2		13	1	13	1
		UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week de behoefte gevoeld om seks te hebben?			SO3		14	2	14	2
		UP	Bent u de afgelopen week seksueel opgewonden geraakt door een iemand anders dan uw partner?			SO4		15	6	15	6
		UB	Bent u de afgelopen week seksueel opgewonden geraakt door iets dat u toevallig heeft gezien in uw omgeving, op TV, al dan niet via Blu-ray, DVD of video, of op het internet?			SO5		3	15	3	16
		UP	Heeft u de afgelopen week seks gehad met iemand anders dan uw partner?			SO6		22	24	23	24
		UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week geen ondergoed gedragen?			SO7		4	25	4	25

		Helemaal niet erg	Een beetje erg	Erg	Heel erg					
	UB	Hoe erg zou u het vinden om de volgende week niet te kunnen masturberen?				SO8	5	48	31	50
		Helemaal niet	Een enkele keer	Vaak	Bijna dagelijks					
	UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week geprobeerd om een specifieke sekswens vervuld te krijgen?				SO9	11	7	11	7
	UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week geprobeerd een speciale mogelijkheid of moment te creëren om seks te hebben?				SO10	16	34	16	34
	UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week een erotische site op het internet bekeken?				SO11	23	41	24	41
	UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week in een weekblad of tijdschrift iets gelezen dat met erotiek of seks te maken had?				SO12	12	17	12	45
	UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week geld uitgegeven aan seksgerelateerde zaken?				SO13	26	40	27	40
	UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week speciale aandacht besteed aan uw uiterlijk?				SO14	24	42	25	42
	VB	Heeft u de afgelopen week nagedacht om te gaan voor (nog) een kind?				SO15	--	--	5	11
	UB	Heeft u de afgelopen week een voor u aantrekkelijke man of vrouw gezien?				SO16	6	43	6	43
Neiging tot vreemdgaan	UP	Heeft u de afgelopen week de gedachte laten passeren of een andere partner wellicht beter voor u zou zijn dan uw huidige partner?				IP1	--	3	--	3
	UP	Heeft u de afgelopen week gefantaseerd over seks met iemand anders dan uw partner?				IP2	--	21	--	21
	UP	Heeft u de afgelopen week nadacht hoe het zou zijn als uw partner zou willen scheiden?				IP3	--	16	--	17
	UP	Heeft u de afgelopen week nagedacht hoe het zou zijn om van uw partner te gaan scheiden?				IP4	--	26	--	26
	UP	Heeft u de afgelopen week geprobeerd een persoon te verleiden om seks met u te hebben die niet uw partner is?				IP5	--	35	--	35

	VP	Heeft u de afgelopen week het gevoel gehad dat uw partner bezitterig of jaloers gedrag vertoonde?			IP6	--	32	--	32	
	UP	Heeft u de afgelopen week betaalde seks gehad?			IP7	--	44	--	44	
Partnerband	UP	Heeft u de afgelopen week bewust uw partner ontlopen om geen seks te hoeven hebben?			PB1	--	11	--	12	
	UP	Heeft u de afgelopen week een mogelijkheid om seks te hebben bewust afgewezen?			PB2	--	31	--	31	
	UP	Bent u de afgelopen week eerder of later naar bed gegaan om seks met uw partner te ontlopen?			PB3	--	36	--	36	
	UP	Bent u de afgelopen week express eerder uw bed uitgegaan om seks met uw partner te ontlopen?			PB4	--	27	--	27	
	UP	Heeft u de afgelopen week gefantaseerd over seks met uw partner?			PB5	--	46	--	48	
	UP	Heeft de afgelopen week iets speciaals gekookt voor uw partner?			PB6	--	9	--	4	
	UP	Bent u de afgelopen week speciaal thuis gebleven om bij uw partner te zijn?			PB7	--	22	--	22	
	UP	Bent u de afgelopen week speciaal langer opgebleven om bij uw partner te zijn?			PB8	--	14	--	46	
	UP	Heeft u de afgelopen week seks gehad met uw partner?			PB9	--	12	--	13	
			Helemaal niet erg	Een beetje erg	Erg	Heel erg				
	UP	Hoe erg zou u het vinden om de volgende week helemaal geen seks met een partner te hebben?			PB10	--	47	--	49	
			Helemaal niet	Een enkele keer	Vaak	Bijna dagelijks				
	UP	Heeft u de afgelopen week geprobeerd uw partner te verleiden om seks met u te hebben?			PB11	--	45	--	47	
		Helemaal mee oneens	Een beetje mee oneens	Een beetje mee eens	Helemaal mee eens					
Attitude t.o.v. seks	UB	1 keer seks per maand is meer dan genoeg.			AT1	8	8	8	8	
	UB	1 keer seks per 2 weken is meer dan genoeg.			AT2	18	18	18	18	
	UB	1 keer seks per week is meer dan genoeg.			AT3	27	28	28	28	

	UB	2 keer seks per week is meer dan genoeg.	AT4	30	38	32	38
	UB	1 keer seks per dag is te weinig.	AT5	29	30	30	30
	UB	Het hebben van seksuele fantasieën is normaal.	AT6	9	9	9	9
	UB	Seks zonder liefde is oké.	AT7	10	10	10	10
	UB	Het willen laten uitkomen van seksuele fantasieën is normaal.	AT8	19	19	19	19
	UB	Voor seks met iemand moet hij of zij zich emotioneel of psychologisch gebonden voelen met die persoon.	AT9	20	20	20	20
	UB	Het bezoeken van omgevingen die expliciet gericht zijn op seks, zoals een eroticabeurs of een seksmuseum is heel normaal.	AT10	28	29	29	29
	UB	Ik kan genieten van seks met verschillende partners.	AT11	31	39	33	39
Open vragen		Met hoeveel verschillende personen verwacht u in de komende vijf jaar seks te hebben?	OV1				
		Met hoeveel partners had u, tot nu toe, seks voor slechts een keer?	OV2				
		Mijn huidige seksleven krijgt als rapportcijfer een...	OV3				
		Hoe veel orgasmen heeft u de afgelopen week gehad?	OV4				
		Hoe vaak heeft u de afgelopen week gemasturbeerd?	OV5				
		Hoe vaak heeft u de afgelopen week seks met iemand gehad?	OV6				
		Hoe vaak heeft u het afgelopen jaar sexy lingerie/kleding of seksattributen besteld via postorderbedrijven of gewoon gekocht in een winkel?	OV7				
		Hoe vaak heeft u het afgelopen jaar omgevingen bezocht die expliciet gericht zijn op verkrijgen van seks, zoals (paren)clubs of prostitutiebuurten?	OV8				
		Hoe vaak heeft u het afgelopen jaar omgevingen bezocht die expliciet gericht zijn op seks in het algemeen, zoals erotiekbeurzen of seksmusea?	OV9				