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Sociosexuality: Infidelity



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Synonyms

[Extradyadic involvement](#); [Extradyadic sex](#); [Short-term mating](#); [Uncommitted relationship](#)

Definition

Sociosexuality is the tendency toward engaging in uncommitted sexual relationships and is shown to be associated with infidelity, extradyadic involvement.

Introduction

Sociosexuality reflects an individual's tendency toward engaging in uncommitted sexual relationships (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). Sociosexuality is studied on a continuum and individuals can show variance within the lower (i.e., unrestricted sociosexual orientation) and higher (i.e., restricted sociosexual orientation) ends (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). Higher levels of sociosexuality are related to sexual activity with low commitment and investment, while

lower levels of sociosexuality are related to having sex exclusively with emotional closeness and committed relationships (Hudek-Knezevic & Kardum, 2020). Individual differences in sociosexuality are found to be associated with multiple aspects of infidelity in intimate relationships (Weiser et al., 2023). It's been shown that sociosexuality has associations with motivations for infidelity, engagement with infidelity behaviors, and reactions toward infidelity.

One line of research investigates the role of sociosexuality on individuals' motivations to engage in infidelity. Barta and Kiene (2005) identified four dimensions of motivations for infidelity (i.e., dissatisfaction, neglect, sex, and anger) and found that greater unrestricted sociosexuality is linked with greater sex motives for infidelity. In another study, Hackathorn and Ashdown (2021) examined a sample where all participants engage or seek infidelity. They found that greater unrestricted sociosexuality was positively linked with sex motives for infidelity, while a negative link was present with neglect motivations for infidelity, which is feeling neglected by the primary partner (Hackathorn & Ashdown, 2021). Another research examined additional dimension of infidelity motivation and found that greater unrestricted sociosexuality was associated with increased motivation to have greater variety of sexual partners (Selterman et al., 2019). Based on the investment model, researchers investigated the pathways in which sociosexuality is linked with infidelity. More specifically, individuals

with unrestricted sociosexuality reported a tendency to have lower commitment levels which in turn led to greater willingness to engage in infidelity (Mattingly et al., 2011). Another study demonstrated that people who have lower relationship quality had more unrestricted sociosexuality which then predicted greater intentions toward infidelity (Urganci et al., 2021).

The second line of research examined individual differences in sociosexuality on engagement with infidelity behaviors. More specifically, more unrestricted sociosexuality was associated with more frequent engagement in online sexual activities such as viewing sexually explicit materials and cybersex (Liu & Zheng, 2019). While in an exclusive romantic relationship, people with greater unrestricted sociosexuality were more likely to spend time with someone they met on Tinder, send a message to someone they met on Tinder, and have sex with someone they met on Tinder (Weiser et al., 2018).

The third area of study investigated the links between sociosexuality and reactions toward infidelity. These studies used hypothetical scenarios of infidelity and examined if participants would be distressed more in a sexual infidelity scenario (e.g., your partner having sex with someone else) or an emotional infidelity scenario (e.g., your partner having a deep emotional attachment with someone else). Participants were forced to choose between these two scenarios. Treger and Sprecher (2011) used a single scenario item to assess reaction toward infidelity. They reported that greater unrestricted sociosexuality was associated with finding the sexual infidelity scenario as more distressing, while greater restricted sociosexuality was associated with finding the emotional infidelity scenario more distressing (Treger & Sprecher, 2011). Further, an interaction with sex was also found showing that sociosexuality was a stronger predictor for men's than women's tendency to select sexual infidelity as more distressing (Treger & Sprecher, 2011). Brase et al. (2014) examined reactions toward infidelity with the Infidelity Dilemmas Questionnaire (Buss et al., 1999). However, contrary to Treger and Sprecher (2011), a significant association between

sociosexuality and reactions toward infidelity was not found (Brase et al., 2014).

In conclusion, sociosexual orientation is an important predictor of infidelity, supported my multiple findings. Individuals with more unrestricted sociosexual orientations have greater motivations for infidelity, engage in more infidelity behaviors, and somewhat have more distressing reactions toward partner's potential engagement in infidelity. Majority of the studies on sociosexuality and infidelity utilized data of individuals, while in the study of close relationships use of dyadic data is essential. Future research should adopt dyadic designs that might offer insights into couples' similarity in their sociosexual orientation and how this couples' (dis)similarity is linked with engagement in infidelity.

Cross-References

- ▶ [Infidelity](#)
- ▶ [Sociosexuality](#)

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