



The evolution of same-sex attraction: Exploring women's willingness to have sex with other women in order to satisfy their partners



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ABSTRACT

About one in five women are not attracted exclusively to members of the opposite sex. This high prevalence of same-sex attractions constitutes an evolutionary puzzle as they appear to impair reproductive success. It has recently been proposed that, one reason behind such high prevalence is a male preference for same-sex attraction in women. The male choice hypothesis predicts that heterosexual women who experience same-sex attractions would be more willing than heterosexual women who do not experience such attractions to have sex with other women. It predicts further that heterosexual women who experience same-sex attractions would be more willing than heterosexual women to engaging in extra-pair copulations with a woman than with a man. Evidence from an online sample of 707 heterosexual women found strong support for both predictions. It was also found that about one in four heterosexual women would consider having sex with another woman in order to satisfy their long-term partner, and about one in two heterosexual women would react negatively to such a suggestion by their partner.

1. Introduction

About one in five women experience attractions toward other women (Calzo, Masyn, Austin, Jun, & Corliss, 2017; Dickson, Paul, & Herbison, 2003; LeVay, 2010; Savin-Williams, Joyner, & Rieger, 2012). Such attractions constitute an evolutionary puzzle because they appear to impair reproduction. There has been increasing theorizing on why selection forces have allowed or favored same-sex attraction in women in relatively high frequencies (Apostolou, 2016a, 2016b; Kanazawa, 2017; Kuhle & Radtke, 2013; Semenyna, Belu, Vasey, & Honey, 2017). It has been recently proposed that same-sex attractions in women have been favored by selection forces because men find them attractive in a female partner – the so called male-choice hypothesis (Apostolou, Shialos, Khalil, & Paschali, 2017).

More specifically, it has been argued that same-sex attractions in an opposite-sex partner have been beneficial for men because they enable them to gain sexual access to additional women, and because they reduce the risk of cuckoldry. The current paper advances this line of work by investigating whether women who experience same-sex attractions are more likely than women who do not experience such attractions to have sex with other women in order to satisfy their partners, and more likely to cheat with a woman than with a man. It also aims to estimate the proportion of heterosexual women who are willing to have sex with another woman in order to satisfy their partners.

2. Men's desires for same-sex attraction in women

Men desire women who are attracted to men. It would not make sense for men to desire opposite-sex partners who are not attracted to men, as they would be unlikely to form meaningful intimate relationships or even have casual sex with them. Accordingly, when asked, men indicated that they do not desire as partners bisexual or homosexual women (Apostolou et al., 2017). However, this reasoning does not necessarily mean that men would be attracted only to women who are exclusively attracted to men. Actually, it can be the case that men would prefer women who are predominantly but not exclusively attracted to men (Apostolou et al., 2017). One reason is that men's fitness or reproductive success increases when they gain sexual access to additional women with little effort, and when they face a low risk to be cuckolded.

To begin with, as men are not constrained by pregnancy, having sex with additional women may increase their fitness considerably. Women, who have to bear the burden of pregnancy, do not increase their fitness by having sex with different men but by being selective, having sex with men who are willing to invest to them and to their children (Buss, 2017a, b). Women's choosiness constrains men who have to spend considerable mating effort in order to gain sexual access to the opposite sex (Buss, 2017a; Miller, 2000). Nevertheless, if a man's partner has also a female partner, he can gain sexual access to the latter

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Table 1
Prevalence rates for reactions to a partner's same-sex preferences.

	Long-term relationship			Short-term relationship			Long-term relationship - Participate			Short-term relationship - Participate		
	Exclusively heterosexual	Heterosexual with same-sex attractions	Heterosexual with same-sex attractions	Exclusively heterosexual	Heterosexual with same-sex attractions	Heterosexual with same-sex attractions	Exclusively heterosexual	Heterosexual with same-sex attractions	Heterosexual with same-sex attractions	Exclusively heterosexual	Heterosexual with same-sex attractions	Heterosexual with same-sex attractions
Positive reactions	3	4-5	3	4-5	3	4-5	3	4-5	3	4-5	3	4-5
I would do it in order to satisfy him	9.7	4.7	25.3	16	18.7	14.3	6.5	4	22.7	18	10.9	23.7
I would consider the possibility to do it in order to satisfy him.	12.1	10.7	23.7	29.3	18.3	21.7	9.9	5	20.7	28.7	11.6	22.1
I would find it sexually exciting	18.1	9.9	25	46.6	23.2	45.6	14.4	11.7	23.3	38.6	13.7	23.1
Negative reactions	3	4-5	3	4-5	3	4-5	3	4-5	3	4-5	3	4-5
I would be disgusted	19.5	39	12.3	7.6	12	4.4	18	39.5	11.7	14.4	17.4	45.1
I would consider breaking up with him	20.4	36.6	16.1	14.7	20.3	24.7	20.2	53.1	19.7	19.4	18.2	20.8
I would get angry	18.3	47.9	17.7	21.3	16	17	20.2	41.3	14.3	31.4	23.3	41.8
I would feel sad	19	52.3	18.7	22.3	15.4	11.7	20.9	30.3	18.7	31.8	23.7	31
I would think he does not care about me	21.3	43	18.3	26	23.4	26.8	21.7	52.1	15	30.4	19.8	53.8

without additional mating effort, as this effort has been made predominantly by his partner. In addition, if he gets access to this woman, his partner may be less likely to consider it as cheating, than if he has sex with a different woman (Apostolou et al., 2017).

Moreover, during human evolutionary time, men faced the problem of protecting themselves from being cuckolded (Buss, 2000, 2017a). Although pregnancy is a burden for women, it provides them with the certainty that the children they give birth to are actually their own. Men, who do not give birth to their children, do not have such certainty, and they are vulnerable to being cuckolded: Their partner may have become pregnant by another man, and present the child to be the one of her legitimate partner. However, if a woman cheats with another woman, this does not increase a man's risk of being cuckolded as it does not lead to conception. Actually, doing so decreases such risk, because a woman consumes the opportunities she has for cheating in having sex with women instead with men (Apostolou et al., 2017).

On this basis, it has been argued that men would find same-sex attraction in heterosexual women desirable, and such male preference would favor same-sex attraction in women (Apostolou et al., 2017). Evidence from two independent studies found that a considerable proportion of heterosexual men desired as partners women who experienced same-sex attractions. They also desired their partners to have sex with other women (Apostolou et al., 2017). Accordingly, it has been argued that heterosexual women with same-sex attractions would gain fitness benefits from better relationships with men, as they have a trait that the latter desire. In turn, such fitness benefits would make same-sex attraction more frequent in women.

Since a considerable proportion of heterosexual men prefer their partners to have same-sex contacts, the first aim of this study is to examine how many heterosexual women are willing to satisfy their partners' preferences. Moreover, in the male choice hypothesis, same-sex attractions enable women to be more positively disposed toward having sex with other women. On this basis, it can be predicted that women with same-sex attractions would be less likely to react negatively to their male partners' same-sex preferences and more likely than exclusively heterosexual women to have sex with another woman where their male partners would participate. It can be predicted further that women with same-sex attractions would be more likely than exclusively heterosexual women to cheat with a woman than with a man. Thus, the second aim of this paper is to test these predictions. Finally, we will also attempt examine whether women response would differ for their long-term than with their short-term partners.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The research was designed and run in a large private university in the Republic of Cyprus. The research was performed online. We chose this method because of the sensitive nature of the study we could get more honest answers in this way (Kreuter, Presser, & Tourangeau, 2008). The study was forwarded as a Facebook add. The target group was set to be women who were 18 years old or older.

Our study was designed to assess the responses of heterosexual women. Therefore, our sample did not include men, and we removed from the dataset the answers of participants who indicated that they were attracted to both sexes or to the same-sex. Thus, our analysis was based on a sample of 707 women, who answered that they were attracted exclusively or predominantly to the opposite sex. Our sample consisted of 407 exclusively heterosexual and 300 heterosexual with same-sex attractions women. Moreover, the mean age of women was 22.6 years ($SD = 4.2$). In addition, 47.4% of the participants were in a relationship, 49.8% were single, 1.5% were married and 1.3% were divorced.

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