



Sex Differences in Sexual Behaviors and Mating Preferences in a Sample of American Adults

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Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and t-Tests for the Three Dimensions of the Sociosexual Inventory (SOI)

	Females (n = 75)	Males (n = 38)	t-test
Sexual Attitudes	1.92 (.70)	2.03 (.70)	$t(111) = -0.77, p = .444$ (ns)
Sexual Desires	2.03 (.95)	2.58 (1.12)	$t(111) = -2.75, p = .007^{**}$
Sexual Behaviors	2.19 (.99)	2.18 (1.19)	$t(111) = 0.01, p = .989$ (ns)

Note. Higher scores on each of the Sociosexual subscales indicate more liberal sexual attitudes, desires, or behaviors. All scores are on a 1-4 scale.

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, and t-tests for All Significant Gender Differences in the Mate Selection Survey (MSS)

	Females (n = 75)	Males (n = 38)	t-test
Importance rating for preferences in a mate (higher scores mean more important)...			
Good cook and housekeeper	2.65 (.74)	2.34 (.78)	$t(111) = 2.06, p = .041$
Good financial prospect	3.19 (.73)	2.53 (.80)	$t(111) = 4.41, p < .001$
Emotional maturity	3.87 (.38)	3.42 (.72)	$t(111) = 3.92, p < .001$
Similar religious background	2.59 (1.14)	1.95 (1.11)	$t(111) = 2.84, p = .005$
Similar political background	2.76 (1.05)	2.26 (.89)	$t(111) = 2.50, p = .014$
Good health	3.47 (.62)	3.18 (.65)	$t(111) = 2.24, p = .027$

Note. There was a not a significant difference in 12 other domains of the MSS including: *pleasing disposition, sociability, similar education, neatness, chastity, dependability, desire for children, social status, good looks, ambition, and love*. All scores are on a 1-4 scale.

Introduction

- Historically, human mate selection literature suggests that **male and females prefer and value different traits in their romantic partners** (Buss, 1989).
 - Males** tend to value physical attractiveness and domestic characteristics; are more likely to engage in short-term relationships more than women.
 - Females** tend to prefer mates who have access to resources, demonstrating financial and emotional stability; are more likely to favor long-term commitments.
- Recent studies suggest a shift in preferences of both sexes** (Mende, 2022; Schwartz & Hassebrauck, 2012).
 - Boxer et al (2015) suggests that **both males and females increasingly place a higher value on a mate's financial prospects and desire for home and children.**
- It is important to revisit these themes periodically in an effort to understand the evolving nature of human relationships.

We hypothesize that males and females will differ in sexual behaviors and in preferences in partners. Preferences will be consistent with traditional evolutionary theory.

Method

- Participants:** $N = 113$ (75 female; 38 male)
 - Age ($M = 28.02, SD = 10.30$)
- Materials & Procedure:** As part of a larger study, participants answered the following questionnaires via smart device.
- Materials:**
 - Sociosexual Inventory-Revised (SOI-R)**
 - Attitudes:** "Sex without love is okay."
 - Desires:** "How often do you have fantasies about having sex with someone you are not in a committed relationship with?"
 - Behaviors:** "With how many partners have you had sex with on one and only one occasion?"
 - Mate Selection Survey (MSS;** see items in Table 2.)

Results

- Independent samples *t*-tests were used to examine sex differences in sexual attitudes, desires, and behaviors.
 - Males reported more sexual desires than females.** This effect was not seen for sexual attitudes or behaviors. See the red box in Table 1.
- Independent samples *t*-tests were also conducted to examine sex differences in importance ratings for mate preferences in 18 categories.
 - Females place more importance in six domains,** all outlined in red on Table 2.

Discussion

- Although there are sex differences in some of these attitudes and behaviors, **there are more similarities than differences in mating preferences between males and females.**
 - This supports recent research suggesting an alignment in preferences between males and females (Mende, 2022; Schwartz & Hassebrauck, 2012).
- However, sex differences do exist.**
 - Contrary to Boxer's et al. (2015) results, females place a higher importance than males on their mate's financial prospects.
 - Males express more sexual desires, aligning what traditional evolutionary theory (Buss, 1989).

Recommendations for Researchers

- Consider how modern social views influence mate preferences.** For instance, views on the acceptability of divorce might influence one's preference in a partner.
- Examine cultural differences.** Buss (1989) suggests that there are universal sex differences in some mate preferences, but other research is mixed on whether they are truly universal (Bech-Sorensen & Pollet, 2016).
- The use of experimental techniques would enhance construct validity.** In a quasi-experimental design, Hughes et al. (2021) found that traditional mating preferences still exist, specifically, a desire for novelty in sexual encounters.