



Personal characteristics associated with sexuality can be classified into seven dimensions in Brazil[☆]

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ABSTRACT

The present study sought to map the structure of personal descriptors of sexuality in the Brazilian Portuguese language and test relationships between sexuality and the Big 5 personality traits (i.e., Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness). A selection of descriptors resulted in a list of 28 adjectives that were empirically tested to evaluate how well each descriptor could describe each participant. In the first study ($N = 331$), we found seven explanatory dimensions based on sexuality descriptors, whose content resembled those reported by Schmitt and Buss (2000). In the second study ($N = 723$), we confirmed the seven-dimension structure. These sexuality dimensions, however, presented independent constructs that were not subordinated to the Big 5 factors. The sexuality dimensions also explained variance in self-esteem beyond the Big 5 factors. Our results advance the mapping of individual differences concerning sexuality and suggest that these seven dimensions may represent features that have widespread importance to humans in many cultures. This discovery implies the possibility of developing specific tests for assessing these characteristics.

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1. Introduction

Scientific discussions of individual differences in human sexual strategies have recently resumed, based on the notions of Stewart-Williams and Thomas (2013). These authors questioned the plausibility of the “men short-term, women long-term” model. The basis of this model is Trivers's (1972) differential parental investment theory, which suggests that women are more predisposed to adopt long-term sexual strategies because of the high cost of bearing children (i.e., limited production of gametes, lengthy ovulation period, time needed to generate a child, and mandatory allocation of resources to offspring). By contrast, men are predisposed to adopt short-term strategies as a function of the low cost that is associated with their descendants (i.e., high rate of gamete production, high possibility of dissemination of gametes, and paternity uncertainty; see Buss & Schmitt, 1993). In fact, this model has been used to explain gender differences in several fields (e.g. Buss, 1988, 1995; Del Giudice, 2009; Schmitt, Realo, Voracek, & Allik, 2008). Stewart-Williams and Thomas's (2013) contradiction of this generated elucidative responses from other researchers (e.g. Buss, 2013; Miller, 2013).

Stewart-Williams and Thomas (2013) proposed that human complexity cannot be explained by such a restrictive model based solely on a short-term/long-term binary construct. Instead, they asserted

that individual differences that are found in sexual strategies that are used by both sexes reinforce the proposition that humans have a mixed repertoire of sexual strategies. Although this idea is not new (see Buss, 1991, 2013; Buss & Schmitt, 1993), it revives the importance of investigating individual differences in aspects of human sexuality.

Researchers have long emphasized the importance of individual differences in sexual strategies and consequently adaptive mechanisms that are related to these strategies (e.g. Buss, 1991, 2009; Gangestad & Simpson, 1990; Symons, 1979; Trivers, 1972). For example, in the early 1990s, Buss demonstrated the importance of adopting an evolutionary perspective in an area of psychology that is focused on individual differences, namely the personality arena (Buss, 1991). According to Buss (1991), individual differences in sexuality-related characteristics are central to explaining various psychological phenomena. Such differences assume paramount importance because they can explain behaviors and strategies that lead to human reproduction, including those that are related to the search, selection, and retention of partners and reproductive behavior itself (Buss, 1991).

One can see examples of consequences of individual differences in aspects of sexuality in the results of Gangestad and Simpson (1990). They suggested that variations in sexual attractiveness can explain variations in successful romantic conquest, in which high attractiveness leads to greater success. Other examples can be found in studies that reported that differences in sexual restraint are related to the formation of affective bonds, whereas sexual permissiveness is associated with greater avoidance of attachment (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008; Shiramizu, Natividade, & Lopes, 2013; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991).

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To comprehensively map the potential diversity of characteristics that are related to sexuality, Schmitt and Buss (2000) performed a study that was similar to prior studies on personality traits using a lexical hypothesis approach (e.g. Goldberg, 1992; Norman, 1963). The authors selected personal descriptors that were related to sexuality from dictionaries and books on sexuality. After applying several inclusion and exclusion criteria, the authors finalized a list of 67 adjectives and then empirically tested their structural organization.

Schmitt and Buss (2000), running a Principal Axis Factor Analysis with oblimin method of rotation, noted that the adjectives that they selected could be coherently grouped into dimensions with suitable internal consistency and evidence of construct validity. Some of the dimensions were similar to constructs that were already common in studies on sexuality, such as the previously mentioned sexual attractiveness and sexual restraint. The authors concluded that variance in sexuality descriptors can be explained by seven major dimensions: (1) Sexual Attractiveness (which corresponds to the degree of attraction that is exerted for the purpose of entering a romantic relationship; e.g., sexy), (2) Relationship Exclusivity (which indicates how willing one is to engage in exclusive romantic relationships; e.g., monogamous), (3) Gender Orientation (which refers to how one delimits others on the basis of gender roles; e.g., feminine), (4) Sexual Restraint (which describes the level of restriction of sexual practices; e.g., virginal), (5) Erotophilic Disposition (which describes one's degree of motivation to have sex; e.g., vulgar), (6) Emotional Investment (which corresponds to how willing one is to emotionally invest in a relationship; e.g., Romantic), and (7) Sexual Orientation (which describes how individuals are characterized based on Sexual Orientation; e.g., homosexual).

In addition to mapping sexuality characteristics based on English-language lexical content, Schmitt and Buss (2000) tested the relationship between their findings on sexuality and the five widely used major personality factors (i.e., the Big 5: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness; for more details, see Block, 2010; Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1992, 1993; John, Naumann, & Soto, 2010; Hutz et al., 1998; McCrae & Costa, 1996). The authors found moderate correlations between each dimension of sexuality and at least one of the Big 5 factors, with the exception of the Neuroticism factor. For example, Sexual Attractiveness positively correlated with Extraversion. Emotional Investment positively correlated with Agreeableness. Sexual Orientation positively correlated with Openness, in sense of less heterosexual, more Openness. In addition to finding these correlations, the authors performed factorial analyses that included all of the sexuality descriptors and the Big 5 factors and concluded that the most appropriate solution was five factors. In this solution, the Big 5 traits were separated and combined with several sexuality dimensions. After conducting some tests to determine relationships between the dimensions of sexuality and the Big 5 traits (e.g. correlation tests among sexuality dimensions and Big 5 factors, multiple correlations, canonical correlation, and combined exploratory factor analyses with factors and items), the researchers concluded that the dimensions of sexuality do not explain personality as broadly as the Big 5 factors. However, the dimensions of sexuality could not be regarded as facets of any one of the Big 5 traits.

The lexical mapping that was performed by Schmitt and Buss (2000) provided a comprehensive foundation for investigating individual differences and their relationship to sexuality, similar to the initial studies that culminated in the Big 5 personality traits (John, Angleitner, & Ostendorf, 1988). Despite the potential impact of these findings, the lexical research literature shows that the results have not been replicated in other cultures. Researches mapping sexual characteristics within specific cultures, and in specific languages (lexical studies), could help to elucidate the latent factors that explain the individual differences in sexuality.

A recent search of the PsycINFO database in January 2015 revealed that the study by Schmitt and Buss (2000) had been cited in 82 other studies (21 book chapters and 61 articles). Among these articles, 17

used the Sexy Seven (i.e., an instrument that was derived from sexuality descriptors), either in its entirety or in part (Birnbaum, Mikulincer, Szepeswol, Shaver, & Mizrahi, 2014; Bourdage, Lee, Ashton, & Perry, 2007; Herzog & Hill-Chapman, 2013; Kardum, Gračanin, & Hudek-Knežević, 2006; Rowatt & Schmitt, 2003; Schmitt, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2007; Schmitt & Buss, 2001; Schmitt & Jonason, 2015; Schmitt & Shackelford, 2008; Schmitt et al., 2002; Schmitt et al., 2009; Smith, Nezlek, Webster, & Paddock, 2007; Weinstein et al., 2012). Although no evidence was found that the lexical study has been conducted in other cultures (i.e., emic studies), the instrument has been used in studies that were conducted in at least 53 countries and has been translated into 26 languages, including Brazilian Portuguese (Schmitt, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2007; Schmitt & Shackelford, 2008; Schmitt et al., 2009).

Among the studies that used translations of the Sexy Seven, only one found evidence of the construct validity of the instrument in a country other than the United States. Kardum et al. (2006) translated the 67 adjectives from the English version of the Sexy Seven into Croatian. After conducting a factor analysis, the authors retained 54 adjectives and verified that the Emotional Investment dimension did not emerge. However, a new factor was found. Thus, Kardum et al. (2006) adopted a structure of seven dimensions of sexuality characteristics in their language, six of which were the same as those found by Schmitt and Buss (2000).

Psychological instruments that are derived from explanatory theories are challenging to translate and require careful adherence to a translation procedure to ensure representativeness of the constructs (e.g., Oliveira & Bandeira, 2011). Translations of instruments that are designed to evaluate descriptors of individual differences in the language of a specific culture can produce biased results and might be considered inconsistent with the lexical approach (Saucier & Goldberg, 1996). Therefore, the present study sought to identify descriptors of characteristics that are related to sexuality in Brazilian Portuguese, characterize their structural organization, and test their relationships with the Big 5 factors of personality.

2. Overview

This present article reports the results of two studies that were conducted consecutively. The first study was a replication of the study by Schmitt and Buss (2000) in a different cultural context. A list of adjectives that describe personal sexuality characteristics was compiled in Brazilian Portuguese. The structural organization of these adjectives and their relationships with the Big 5 factors were characterized using exploratory analysis. The second study advanced beyond exploratory analyses. The structure that was found in the first study that was based on sexuality descriptors and tests of independence of the sexuality characteristics from the Big 5 factors underwent confirmatory analysis.

3. Study 1

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants

A total of 331 individuals participated in the study, 65% of whom were women. The mean age was 23.3 years ($SD = 4.53$ years). No significant gender differences in age were found, $t(329) = 0.004$. The education of the participants varied from incomplete undergraduate education (73.4%) to college graduate (26.6%).

3.1.2. Instruments

Two versions (paper-and-pencil and online) of a self-administered questionnaire were used. The questionnaire included demographic questions, a list of personal sexuality descriptors, and the Factorial Battery of Personality (FBP; Nunes, Hutz, & Nunes, 2010). The list of sexuality descriptors was composed of 28 adjectives that are related

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