

Sexual Communal Strength Scale

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Purpose

The six-item sexual communal strength (SCS) scale (Muise, Impett, Kogan, & Desmarais, 2013) assesses a person's motivation to meet their partner's sexual needs, their willingness to incur personal costs to meet their partner's sexual needs, and how happy they feel when meeting their partner's sexual needs. This measure has been used to understand how couples maintain sexual desire and satisfaction over time (Muise et al. 2013; Muise & Impett, 2015), as well as how romantic partners sustain feelings of connection, even during times when their sexual desire is low (Day, Muise, Joel, & Impett, 2015).

Development

The items for the SCS scale were generated by adapting relevant items from a general measure of communal strength, which assesses a person's willingness to incur costs to meet a relationship partner's needs (Mills, Clark, Ford, & Johnson, 2004). The SCS scale was originally administered to a sample of long-term couples ($M_{\text{Rel length}} = 11$ years; Muise et al., 2013). The measure has also been administered to additional samples of established couples (Day et al., 2015; Muise & Impett, 2015), as well as to a sample of new parent couples (Muise, Rosen, Kim, & Impett, in press), a sample of couples coping with a sexual dysfunction (Muise, Bergeron, Impett, & Rosen, 2017), and a sample of individuals who are in consensually nonmonogamous (CNM) relationships (Muise, Laughton, & Impett, under review). The measure asks people to report on a current romantic or sexual partner, therefore, participants must be in a relationship to complete the measure. In one study (Muise et al., 2017), to assess daily fluctuations in SCS, we adapted three of the items from the original six-item SCS scale to measure daily SCS.

Response Mode and Timing

The measure is brief—it includes only six items—and each item is responded to on a 5-point likert-type scale (0 = *not at all* to 4 = *extremely*). Participants read one sentence asking them to respond to the items about their current romantic partner.

Scoring

Items 2 and 4 are reverse-scored and then the mean is calculated for all items. Higher scores indicate higher levels of SCS. See Table 1 for means and standard deviations.

Reliability

Across diverse samples, our measure demonstrated adequate reliability, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .70 to .88 (see Table 1).

Validity

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Sexual communal strength is highly correlated with general communal strength ($r = .59, p < .001$; Muise et al., 2013), demonstrating convergent validity, but SCS uniquely predicts sexual and relationship outcomes above and beyond general communal strength (Muise et al., 2013). As evidence of construct validity, people higher in SCS are perceived by their partners as more responsive to their needs during sex (Muise & Impett, 2015), suggesting that a person's level of SCS is detected by their romantic partner. The predictive validity of the SCS measure is demonstrated in one study where people higher in SCS were more likely, over the course of a 21-day daily experience study, to engage in sex with their partner on days when their partner was interested in sex, but their own personal desire for sex was low (Day et al., 2015). Consistent with theories of communal relationships (Clark & Mills, 2012), people higher in SCS reported higher daily sexual desire, maintained higher desire over time, and had partners who reported being more satisfied and committed to the relationship.

Summary

Our measure has been administered to diverse samples in North America, but has not been examined cross-culturally, which is an important avenue for future research. We have demonstrated that SCS is associated with important sexual and relationship outcomes, but to date, we have not explored what predicts higher SCS or how SCS develops over time.

Table 1

Sexual Communal Strength Scale Descriptives Across Studies

Sample	Mean, SD	Reliability (α)
Study 1 ($N = 44$ mixed sex couples) $M_{\text{Rel length}} = 11$ years (Muise et al., 2013; Muise & Impett, 2015, Study 2)	$M = 2.97, SD = .52$	$\alpha = .77$
Study 2 ($N = 118$ mixed sex couples) $M_{\text{Rel length}} = 5$ years (Muise & Impett, 2015, Study 1) Note: Scale is 1 to 7	$M = 5.56, SD = .94$	$\alpha = .70$
Study 3 ($N = 371$ individuals in relationships) Recruited online; $M_{\text{Rel length}} = 6$ years (Day et al., 2015, Study 2) Note: Scale is 1 to 7	$M = 5.37, SD = 1.03$	$\alpha = .81$
Study 4 ($N = 101$ cohabitating couples) $M_{\text{Rel length}} = 4.5$ years (Day et al., 2015, Study 3)	$M = 2.72, SD = .80$	$\alpha = .86$
Study 5 ($N = 95$ women coping with vulvodynia and their romantic partner) $M_{\text{Rel length}} = 3$ years (Muise et al, 2017) Note: 3-item daily measure	Women: $M = 2.39, SD = 1.15$ Partners: $M = 2.63, SD = 1.15$	$\alpha = .83$ $\alpha = .88$

Study 6 (N = 185 individuals in relationships) (Muise et al., in press)	$M = 3.01, SD = .72$	$\alpha = .80$
Study 7 (N = 255 mixed-sex new parent couples) M_{Rel} length = 3 years (Muise et al., in press)	Women: $M = 2.45, SD = .66$ Men: $M = 2.76, SD = .79$	$\alpha = .76$ $\alpha = .83$
Study 8 (N = 649 individuals in CNM relationships) (Muise, Laughton, & Impett, under review) Note: Scale is 1 to 5	Primary partner: $M = 4.33, SD = .74$ Secondary partner: $M = 4.11, SD = .78$	$\alpha = .76$ $\alpha = .78$

Note: Scale is from 0 to 4 and includes all 6 items, unless otherwise noted.

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