

Teasing with Sex, Hunting for a Relationship: What a Popular Adult Dating/Sex Site Can Tell Us About 21st Century USA Female Sexual Behavior

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Abstract

The ubiquitousness of sex sites posts a potential challenge to evolutionary theory of human sexuality and its consistent and replicable documentation of sex differences in male and female erotic perception, imagination, and behavior. Our study looked at a popular website used by individuals interested in engaging in a casual sexual encounter to determine if there is a convergence in male and female motivation to enter into an anonymous sexual encounter. In effect, we want to determine if females who advertise on the sexual site motives resemble males. To this end, our study analyzed 1508 profiles (754 males, 754 females) on the sexual encounters site and determined the type of sexual encounter sought. Results revealed that females report seeking a long-term relationship (31.9%) more than males (9.7%), while males list seeking more casual sex (51.7%) than females (26.2%). Our analyses found that of the women seeking casual sex with a variety of partners, 53.9% are either bisexual or bicurious. Females' motivation for seeking casual sex ranged from a desire to be validated as being sexually desirable (i.e., rebound sex), seeking a bisexual experience, and having a heightened sex drive). Our study also examined men's motivations as well as examining the relationship between a man's age and desired type of sexual encounter preferred (i.e., long term or casual). We found that as men aged there was a heightened interest in establishing long term relationship over casual sexual encounters.

Keywords: casual sex, female preferences, mate preferences, dating website

Introduction

Casual sex is a topic that has become quite popular in both contemporary cultural contexts and scientific accounts. Casual sexual encounters, with no implications of a long-term commitment, are a conundrum to evolutionary psychologists. The risks of sex to females are many, including the possibility of contracting a sexually transmitted infections (STI), the chance of an unplanned pregnancy, or the social stigma associated with casual sex. Yet, the incidence of casual sex has

been noted to be a prominent feature in modern society (Grello et al. 2006; Lambert et al. 2003; Paul et al. 2000) with a number of colloquial terms, including “hooking up” and no-strings attached sex (NSA) (for excellent overview see Hatfield et al, n.d.). If true, hooking up is representative of a historic shift in female sexual behavior.

The topic is startling in its cultural and psychological implications: women are no longer interested in establishing a relationship as much as they are in engaging in “no strings sex” with someone they know or do not know very well. In effect, women’s sexual behavior has come to resemble men’s in its embrace of short term sexual opportunities. If there is an increase in these behaviors in both men and women, what is the reason driving these behaviors? Does an increase in seeking casual sex imply a decrease in seeking a long-term commitment?

The ubiquitousness of sex sites posts a potential challenge to evolutionary theory of human sexuality and its consistent and replicable documentation of sex differences in male and female erotic perception, imagination, and behavior. Donald Symons (1979) was the first anthropologist to point out that men favored sexual variety for its own sake, a view that finds support from various lines of evidence: Males more commonly utilize prostitutes, consume pornography, require less time before consenting to sex, are more likely to consent to sex with a stranger, and display higher rates of sex with farm animals (Mealey 2000). In contrast, females give greater weight to cues that suggest commitment to long-term relationships (Buss 2003; Regan and Berscheid 1999; Schmitt et al 2001).

Building upon Symons’ work, David Schmitt et al advance the proposition that “men’s short term strategy is strongly rooted in their desire for sexual variety” (2001: 213). While both sexes can and do engage in short term mating, men much more than women desire short-term mating. In contrast, women who can gain material benefits from a short-term exchange (e.g.,

obtain high quality genes, gain access to protection and goods) are less interested in sexual gratification than they are in establishing a long-term relationship or marriage.

Research has consistently found that when women seek a short term mate, or a casual sexual encounter, it has less to do with seeking momentary sexual pleasure and everything to do with either resource accumulation (Buss 2008; Hrdy 1999; Symons 1979); mate switching (Betzig 1989); or a desire to evaluate a prospective long-term mate (Buss 2008; Buss and Schmitt 1993; Greiling and Buss 2000; Meston and Buss 2007). Additionally, it has been noted that women find one-night stands less emotionally satisfying than men (Campbell 2008). Clearly, what appears to resemble male short-term sexual behavior on closer investigation is nothing of the sort.

There are two exceptions that may prove the rule. One is the emerging research that finds bisexual women have on average more sexual partners than heterosexual or lesbian women. This research also finds that bisexual women often have higher androgen levels than women in the general population. The higher testosterone levels may contribute to bisexual women having a stronger sex drive and thus desire to seek out more opportunities for short-term sexual encounters. The second exception is the swingers or married women who seek out sexual variety within a spouse exchange context (See Jankowiak 2008). In this setting, women are engaged in short term mating encounters that allow for the possibility of a physiological release, while also signaling they are sexually attractive and thus desired (See Gangestad & Simpson 2000). Previous literature has also noted that extra-pair mating may be the stimulus necessary to activate women's short-term mating strategies (Pillsworth and Haselton 2006). Clearly, some women can and do engage in short term mating for reasons other than material benefit. It is significant, however, that short term mating for sexual pleasure generally only takes place when a woman is

in an established long-term relationship.

Aside from popular media accounts of “hooking up”, with high rates in college populations, further evidence of a shift in female’s sexual appetites for short-term sexual trysts is seen in the appearance of numerous sexually-centered websites. In the 1990’s, due to the increased popularity of the web, there appeared numerous sex sites that advertised to serve as a link for individuals who want to engage in non-monetary “no strings” sexual trysts, including sections of Fling.com, Craigslist.com, CasualPal.com, AshleyMadison.com, and AdultFriendFinder.com. These websites are designed to provide a means for individuals who are interested in a potential sexual tryst to “hook up” for a sexual encounter. For example, while Craigslist offers a variety of options in their “personals” section, at least one of these (Casual Encounters) is specifically tailored for people wishing to seek a casual, sexual meeting.

Is the popularity of these sex sites suggestive of a shift in female sexual practices that has enabled some, albeit a minority, of women to pursue short term mating for no other reason than for sexual pleasure? Are these women harbingers of an emerging cultural shift in U.S. female’s sexual behavior? To this end, we wanted to see if the conventional evolutionary principles for sex differences in mate selection and erotic behavior, especially as they apply to short term mating strategies, continue to provide compelling insights into contemporary U.S. women’s sexual behavior.

Anthropologists often focus on the social margins as one way to identify possible cultural shifts taking or that will take place within the larger society. If there has been a shift in cultural mores or female sexual behavior it should most readily be manifested amongst a society’s socially experimental outliers. We decided, therefore, to investigate one popular sex site - Adult Friend Finder - that claims to be the largest online sex and swinger personals community website

in the world. It is consistently ranked between the 40th and 60th most visited website on the Internet with claims to have over 20 million members. If there is a shift in American female sexual behavior, it should be most vividly revealed in female sexual advertisements and personal statements that participants on Adult Friend Finder construct about themselves, their sexual desires, and public personas.

Methods

AdultFriendFinder.com (AFF) is an “adult personals” website where individuals can create a profile to advertise their availability and seek other individuals who may be interested in the same type of relationship or activities as themselves. Similar to other large profile dating websites, such as Match.com or Chemistry.com, individual profiles include photographs of themselves, descriptive information from chosen categories, and written information providing additional information about the individual and the type of person he or she is looking for. Dissimilar to websites tailored to find a relationship (or more directly, to “find love”, as one popular dating outlet states) AFF advertises itself as a website to find sexual partners. While the layout of the AFF site may be similar to other dating websites, the content, photographs, and expectations may be much more sexually inclined.

We assumed that men and women who placed an ad on a popular sex dating site should have a greater interest in short-term mating encounters compared to men and women who use more standard and socially respected dating sites (e.g., Match and EHarmony). Because we want to determine if there is a shift amongst a particular sample, we focused on a sex site. Many other outlets for finding casual sexual encounters are available via websites. These include sections of Craigslist.com, CasualPal.com, Mate. 1, Fling.com, and AshleyMadison.com. For this project, we focused on AFF for several reasons. While Craigslist does offer a section for casual

encounters, a large number of postings were found to be hinting towards prostitution. Recently, Attorney Generals from ten states request Craig's List to better police its erotic service site and delete the most obvious ads. In our own sample of Nevada's Craig's List found (42 out of 106) or 40 percent of the ads had been deleted by the server as improper. Given the site's demonstrated bias toward listing profiles that hinted at sexual service for monetary exchange, it was decided that Craig's Lists casual sex profiles could not be used for our study. One new site Ashley Madison has gained recent popularity due to the specific nature of the website in offering an outlet for individuals who are already partnered or married and who are looking for an affair, or sexual liaison outside of their relationship. Because our intent is to focus on females and males mating preferences who are not currently partnered, we did not use that site. Finally, we did read and examine over fifty profiles from two other popular web sites: Mate. 1 and Fling.com. We found these profiles were remarkable similar to those found on AFF, the largest on-line dating site in the world. Given the commonality between these sites, we are confident that AFF is not only typical but highly representative of other non-prostitution oriented on-line sex dating services.

AFF offers two membership options. The gold membership is offered at \$135.00 for one year's membership and gives unlimited access to look at and respond to multiple ads. The silver membership costs \$27.00 per monthly membership and there are a limited number of times to contact someone. Due to initial uncertainty regarding individual or profile differences between gold and silver members, profiles were selected from each category equally. After initial analyses, there were no differences in gold versus silver profiles, which allowed the researchers to combine the profiles together for further analysis. Sample methods included a randomized

selection of male and female profiles from a variety of geographical regions in the continental U.S.

We did not assume when it came to sexual experimentation that the United States was unified cultural whole. We were, thus, not sure if there would be regional variation in our findings. Following Kinsey's findings that more educated individuals tend to be more sexually experimental, we suspected that more educated states (i.e., those states with higher number of college graduates such as Massachusetts and Minnesota) would have a higher percentage of profiles stressing a desire for a casual sex encounter compared to states (e.g., Mississippi and Louisiana) with smaller percentage of college graduates. Similarly, we wondered if more transient states such as Nevada and Florida with their large population of recent arrivals would be more open to entering into casual sexual encounters compared to states (e.g., Montana or Maine) with a more stable population.

The regions we sampled include the East coast, South, Midwest and Western U.S. We selected four states from each region. These states in alphabetical order are: California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Utah. Analyses and observations by multiple research assistants showed no differences in sexual or relationship content by region. Certain cultural styles were evident in local areas; an example being a larger number of beach photographs and surfer images in California and Florida over the other states. In total, 50 ads per sex were randomly selected from each state to give us an original sample of 1508 profiles, equal number of males and females.

The site asks individuals to list their age, height, body type, education level, race, and sexual orientation from a set selection of choices. In many cases, members are given the option

to refuse disclosure of such information. Sexual orientation was by far the category most often checked as "prefer not so say." We treated these ads as a separate category unless we were able to determine their orientation from information in their profile. In most cases we were able to determine a person's sexual orientation if they were asking for men, women, or both. For example, a male might say heterosexual and then note he "likes to suck cock" or a female might say she is "looking for a straight couple (especially the female) to have fun with." In these instances the person was re-coded as having a bisexual sex orientation. For the most part, we took individuals' acknowledgment of their sexual orientation as stated. There were four primary sexual orientations: Heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual and bicurious. We dropped homosexuals from our sample but kept the categories of bisexual, bicurious and heterosexual (2). Of these categories, 56.6% of females and 76.1% of males describe themselves as heterosexual. Bicurious and bisexual females were modest in percentages (17.2 and 21.6, respectively) while males self-coded themselves in these categories to a lesser degree (6.9 and 6.6, respectively). A small number of males (10.3%) and females (4.6%) did not disclose sexual orientation nor were researchers able to classify their sexual orientation based on profile content. Further details of the breakdown of our sample size categories can be seen in Table 1.

The researchers wanted to determine what types of relationships were sought in the population and the level of sexual services offered versus demanded from a desired partner. To do so, the researchers printed and coded each profile by analyzing the content of the profiles, as well as the listed relationship type and/or activities sought. Of our initial 1508 profiles, there were 141 vague ads (e.g., had minimum or no information on what they desired). These ads were dropped from our sample. Only 14 ads, all females, were clearly about prostitution (ads saying they wanted to be rewarded, they wanted to buy expensive clothes, do anything for special

material treat). These ads were also dropped from the sample. We also identified (as stated in a person's ad) 130 swinger or spouse exchange requests. Many more females (n=110) than males (n=20) coded themselves as swingers. The swinger ads were dropped from many of the analyses. However, when we analyzed male and female preferences and demands for specific sexual services we included them. After dropping prostitution, swinger and vague ads our original sample was reduced to 677 males and 546 females (n=1223).

Relationship desired ranged from casual or "no strings attached" (NSA) to "friends with benefits" (sometimes also referred to as a "fuck buddy") to "long-term" relationship. NSA ads stressed a preference to meet numerous members of the prefer sex, no mention for a preference to establish an on-going relationship, and emphasized a desire for sexual satisfaction. Friends with benefits (FB) were identified from key phrases in profiles that highlighted a preference for establishing some type of emotional involvement. For women this met a partner who would be available for a weekend of walks, talks, dinner, movies and sex; whereas for men "fuck buddy" (FB) almost exclusively met a sex partner who would meet at an appointed place for a set allotted time. In fact, we found three ads in our sample where the women specifically explained that a "friends with benefit" was not the same thing as a "fuck buddy." Women overwhelmingly stated they had no interest in being anyone's "fuck buddy" but they were interested if the right guy came along in establishing a friend with benefits relationship. Profiles listing that they desired casual sex or a variety of partners with no desire for any long-term arrangement or commitment were coded as seeking "numerous men (or women)" (NM). Some of the ads were conflicted in stressing different competing motives (desire for a boyfriend and no strings attached (NSA) sex in different parts of his or her profile). Those with conflicted motives, with the exception of bisexual women, showed women overwhelmingly were divided over 'seeking a

boy friend', or a 'long-term relationship', or the more sexually explicit "friend with benefits", whereas men were divided between desiring partner variety and forming a relationship. We treated conflict ads (C) as a separate category. Swingers are individuals who are in a long term stable relationship and do not constitute true single women and thus for purpose of our analyses are not included in most of, but not all, of our analyses.

All data were analyzed using SPSS 16.0 for Windows. Data were entered and coded as ordinal data based on the group types specified previously. Except where stated, all analyses used a Chi-squared goodness of fit test and all tests assumed a .05 probability.

Hypotheses

If there is a shift in female sexual intentions, females' profiles should specifically seek casual, non-committal sex. Based on evolutionary literature, the authors hypothesized that regardless of the advertised intent of AFF (short-term sexual encounters), females and males would still maintain more traditionally sought patterns where females seek more committed males and males seek more variety in sexual partners. The authors also hypothesized that females would be more demanding in sexual services offered by males and more specific in traits and characteristics of a mate. Conversely, we suspected that males would be more flexible in both offering sexual services and in traits sought of a female mate.

The conclusions we draw from the profiles are no different from conclusions based on written statements or questionnaires/surveys of participants. We are under the assumption that individuals are truthful in writing who they are and what they are looking for. The discrepancy is between the photograph of themselves and/or what being on a sex site implies, and what they

state they are looking for. What we are reporting is not necessarily actual behavior but only what they state they desire.

Findings

A chi-squared test of independence finds that motivation significantly differs by gender ($\chi^2=130.915$, $df=3$, $n=1223$, $p<0.001$) (See Table 1). Females' profiles (31.9%; $n=174$) were more likely to specifically seek a long-term relationship than males' profiles (9.7%; $n=66$). The majority of males (51.7%; $n=350$) sought casual sex or a variety of partners versus only 26.2% (143) of females. Conflicted profiles were fairly evenly distributed between males (24.4%; 165) and females (22%; 120). Analysis showed females had slightly higher percentages of seeking friends with benefits than males (females = 20%, $n=109$; males = 14.2%, $n=96$). These findings are consistent with our hypothesis that females should seek a stable relationship more so than males while males should seek casual sex more than females.

The authors sought to see if there was any association between individual physical characteristics and desired motives on AFF. For this, we analyzed a person's relative attractiveness, body type and age with motives for seeking a particular type of relationship. Relative attractiveness was determined by asking multiple research assistants whether they considered the profile picture to be very attractive, attractive, or not attractive. Body type and age was determined by self disclosure from pre-set drop-down tab choices. There was a weak statistical association between body type and relationship desired for females ($\chi^2=30.813$, $df=15$, $n=546$, $p=.009$) but not for males ($\chi^2=11.545$, $df=15$, $n=677$, $p=.714$). The weak, albeit statistically salient, association between body type and preferred relationship was found strongest amongst 'small or petite' body type who wanted a long-term relationship. This, however, is confounded upon small sample sizes among those who self-reported themselves as 'small or

petite'. For the other body types, no pattern was found. There was an association between age of the subject and relationship desired for both males ($\chi^2=33.778$, $df=15$, $n=677$, $p=.004$) and females ($\chi^2=40.700$, $df=15$, $n=546$, $p<.001$). Of the females between the ages of 18-24 ($n=40$), 17 (42.5%) expressed an interest in casual sex versus 6 (15%) who were looking for a boyfriend or committed relationship. Female percentages seeking boyfriends are higher than percentages seeking casual sex except for females 35+ and increase as the age cohort increases. Of the 93 females who are 45 and above, 46 reported seeking a relationship (49.5%) while only 11 (11.8%) wanted variety or casual sex. While coders analyzed for perceived attractiveness of the photographed individuals, a large majority of the photographs did not include a clear view of the face and were coded as "unknown" (females – $n=385$, 70.5%; males – $n=539$, 79.6%). There was no noticeable association between perceived attractiveness and motives desired. For further details, please refer to Table 2.

All profiles were coded to determine whether males or females were more inclined to demand or offer services, sexual or non-sexual, to potential partners ($\chi^2=109.568$, $df=4$, $n=546$, $p<.001$). Besides requesting sexual services, a number of the ads offered sexual services - that is they listed things they would do such as oral sex, massage, types of kissing, and sexual positions. Only 7% ($n=38$) of females offered services, while 19.4% ($n=131$) of men offered services. As the evolutionary literature may have predicted, in the context of arranging a potential first time sexual encounter males are the sex that is not only less demanding (F: $n=79$, 14.5%; M: $n=12$, 1.8%) but also the most willing to provide sexual services. In effect, men's ads were more likely to offer service than women, while females were more likely to demand services. This is consistent with evolutionary theory that asserts coitus is a service women render to men and not vice versa (Symons 1979).

Additionally, profiles were coded for instances of listing specific traits desired of a partner. These traits could include sexual characteristics or personality characteristics (e.g. wanting someone with certain types or standards of looks, intelligence, sexual openness to specific acts or behaviors, etc.). Profiles of individuals who expressed flexibility in traits or characteristics of a partner were coded as 'trait flexible'. Examples of profiles that are trait flexible include females or males stating that they are open to all age groups, looks, backgrounds, etc. Males and females are overwhelmingly trait flexible. We suspect this is due to both sexes wanting to attract the largest number of responses possible. Trait flexibility was reported for 405 females (74.2%), while 139 females (25.5%) were coded as trait specific. Males followed a similar pattern with 556 men (82.1%) were trait flexible and 116 (17.1%) of the men being trait specific (See Table 3 for trait flexibility/specificity by age cohorts).

As noted above, females' motives were more inclined to seek a long-term relationship than partner variety. While the results are consistent with our hypothesis, it is still interesting that 26.2% of the female sample were interested in seeking casual sexual encounters with 'no strings attached.' As these women are representative of an evolutionary anomaly, the authors sought to determine if there was any correlation between females who seek casual sex or partner variety and sexual orientation. Because of literature suggesting bisexual females have higher sex drives than heterosexual females, we suspected that the bisexual and bicurious females in our sample would be more likely to seek casual sex than heterosexual females in our sample.

Additional analyses show that a majority of bisexual and bicurious women combined (53.9%, n=77) were more inclined toward short term sexual opportunities than the percentage of straight women (42%, n=60) (See Table 4). Within the females who specified seeking a long-term relationship (n=174) straight women were the overwhelming majority (71.3%, n=124) over

bisexual and bicurious females (10.3%, 13.8%; n=18, 24). When analyzing bisexual females alone (n=118), we found that bisexual females were more likely to seek casual sex or variety (42.4%, n=50) over a 'friends with benefits' relationship (20.3%, n=24) or a long-term relationship (15.3%, n=18). One reason for the high number of bisexuals may be due to the site being a place where women with that sexual orientation can find a similar partner. Significantly, bisexual ads expressed a preference to form an emotional relationship with one sex while pursuing a causal encounter with another sex. There was no clear delineation for which sex (males or females) bisexuals stated preferring for a type of relationship (emotional or sexual); what does stand out is that there is a division of emotional and sexual labor.

Post-hoc analysis of the 60 heterosexual female advertisements who are seeking casual sex found 20 ads that explicitly stated they were coming out of a recent sexless marriage or relationship and wanted to be desired once again. This may be due to the women seeking sexual validation more than physiological pleasure. Moreover, no long-term analysis was conducted so it is unclear if their pursuit of no strings sex is continuous or abandoned for additional sexual or relationship motivations.

Discussion

Over the last fifty years there has been a profound shift in American social norms. Unlike the 1950's, a woman's reputation is not damaged by acknowledging that she is not a virgin and also has a potent sexual appetite. The shift away from sexual restraint to a greater openness in public expression of affection does not mean that there has been a corresponding shift in women's interest in short term mating. Laumann et al's (1994) extensive survey of sexual behavior in the U.S. did not find strong evidence for this, nor did our on-line study of female relationship preference. Women, regardless of their erotic photo's content or the rawness of sexually explicit

language used, overwhelmingly stated they prefer sex in an ongoing relationship. Evidence that women want “no strings” sex or sexual variety for its own sake continues to be absent, even in modern society’s more sexually charged avant guard outlets. Concurring, Peter Gray (email correspondence) found Jamaican female “sex tourism” whereby single American women travel to Jamaica not so much for NSA sex as much as the opportunity to create a pseudo-romantic experience with an exotic male who they support during their visit. Both Gray’s observation and our finding are consistent with other studies (Buss 2008; Jankowiak, Gray, & Hattman 2008; Schmitt, Buss, & Shackelford 2001; Symons 1979) that repeatedly found women to be the choosier sex.

Kathleen Bogle (2008) research on contemporary college “dating” provides another correction to the media’s assertion that there has been a fundamental shift in female sexual behavior. Her research on co-ed sexual behavior found female casual sexual encounters are confined only to their college years. Upon graduation men and women return to more conventional forms of dating in an effort to find a long term mate. Further, Bogle reports that college women who did engaged in numerous casual sexual encounters showed disappointment, perhaps even objection, to the dissemination of the casual encounter.

In contrast, men, especially men in our sample that were in their twenties, remain intensely focused on seeking out a variety of sex partners. It is a motivation that makes young men more than any other age cohort attracted to finding “no strings attached” sex opportunities. As men age, however, we found a shift in their use of language that was away from an exclusive emphasis on no-strings-attached (NSA) sex to one more open to the possibility of forming an ongoing relationship. Is this shift in the men’s language representative of a shift in male sexual desire or only evidence of a shift amongst more mature or experienced males in their

understanding of what females want? We suspect it may be a little of both. As men learn that women do not want NSA sex, they also realize they too want some of the emotional benefits that can only be gained from being in an ongoing relationship. In this way, men may be the more conflicted sex. On the other hand, women's motivational conflict may be nothing more than a byproduct of a new cultural tolerance to acknowledge, if not advertise, an interest in sexual pleasure. Our study found that, at least for women who constructed ads on Adult Friend Finder, the "new" female sexual persona is essentially a tease - appearing to be sexually loose and thus available to any and all, while remaining insisting upon engaging in sex only within an established relationship. We are not alone in this interpretation: in our sample we would occasionally find a male ad that screamed in large bold print - "DOES ANYONE ON THIS SITE RESPOND TO ADS AND EMAILS? COME ON LADIES!"

It is revealing that of the females who expressed the strongest desire for partner variety, the majority are bisexual. It is significant that 53.9 percent of females who stated or strongly hinted at wanting (we cannot determine if individuals actually engaged in the behaviors they expressed an interest in) "NSA" sex are bisexual/bicurious. This is a rather high percentage and requires further commentary.

There is a relationship between levels of testosterone and number of sexual partners in women (van Anders et al 2007). There is also a relationship between testosterone and sexual activity itself, as noted that postmenopausal women using testosterone patches report an increase in sexual activity (Bergner 2008:5). Other research has found that bisexuals tend to have higher levels of testosterone, which may contribute to their having a stronger sexual desire (Brizendine 2006). Richard Lippa (2006) survey research, which did not collect testosterone data, did find that women, but not men, who admitted to having a high sex drive also stated they had a greater

sexual attraction to both sexes. Whatever the relationship between testosterone and heightened or diminished sex drive turns out to be, it cannot account in and of itself for a woman's sexual orientation. Lisa Diamond notes that prenatal androgen exposure does not produce a lesbian or bisexual woman. Rather, it appears to produce heterosexual women with periodic same-sex attraction (Diamond 2008). Diamond does not discuss if a high amount of prenatal androgen can account for a woman having a stronger sex drive. However, research on polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), characterized by higher than normal androgen levels in women, have suggest higher reports of bisexuality and changing sexual orientation than control women (Manlove et al 2008).

Many bisexuals acknowledged that they were sexually attracted to one sex while being emotionally drawn to forming a relationship with a different sex. Moreover, the sex they were more emotionally attracted to was the sex they wanted to form a monogamous relationship with, while the sex they were physically attracted to was the one they prefer to have no strings sex with. Typical of these women is the following ad written by a 43 year-old bisexual who desires an emotional connection more than straight forward sexual satisfaction. She writes that "Men capture my attention in an instant with their muscle, strength, cologne, deep voice, a 5 o'clock shadow, the feel, smell and taste of them. How they are different from me." She adds, however, "women too hold a fascination for me: softness, unexplored yet familiar territory, physical knowing, the emotional connection. How they are similar to me." She concluded by noting she "longs to give the same things that I seek in another friendship, passion, desire, comfort, humor tenderness, mental stimulation, soulful nourishment and perhaps even love."

One aspect of sex addiction is the desire to stay in the anticipatory stage – viewing the number of hits on one's ad and studying who responds with no intention of responding may

trigger a dopamine release and thus enhance anticipatory excitement. Diamond (2008) suggests that for females there is a strong link between intimacy and sexual desirability. Women want, first and foremost, to be validated; thus, seeking casual sexual opportunities has less to do with sexual pleasure than it does with wanting to be desired. Psychologist Marta Meana, in a published interview, suggests that women's primary personal validation is based in a narcissistic need to be seen as sexually desirable more than it does with finding a physiological outlet for sexual fulfillment (Bergner, 2008). In this way it is significant that 20 of the 60 straight women who expressed a strong interest in no strings sex also noted they were coming or just about to come out of, in their words, a "long term sexless marriage." Rebound dating is more about ego validation that one is still sexually desirable as it is about obtaining sexual satisfaction. For example, a 24 year-old woman writes "I'm on the prowl for athletic guys that take very good care of their bodies and have a great style. Finally ended a bad relationship and am ready for something totally new and different. I'm fun, athletic blond and brown with crazy night and a very active day life. If you are fat or gross don't bother, yes you know who you are. My age limit is 26, if over that don't bother."

In time, however, rebound sex dating usually leads to the establishment of another relationship. For example, a 38 year-old straight woman who is preparing to leave a sexless marriage writes: "My situation is changing rapidly. I need something to get out of the rut I'm not single yet, but I will be VERY soon. Looking for a guy that has his own things in life that he enjoys... I totally believe in family, and romance for that matter, and if I was with a man that I love you would be all mine and no one else's, that's just how I feel about it." Another example is a 41 year-old woman's ad that stresses: "Friends first, fuck second." She writes "I am sexy, attractive, down to earth woman who is easy going and extremely non judgmental. I do not get

sexually jealous but one of my favorite sexual activities is sucking cock. Watching a man enjoy having his cock sucked dry by me, gets me oh so hot. I also want him to go down on me and get me off. I can cum over and over again and want to cum morning noon and night.” But then she adds, “I have been in a dull sexless relationship for 16 years and I want to end this. I want to meet a man who wants to fulfill me in every way. But I expect my man to be discrete and know how to interact with a hot woman.”

If the bisexuals, bicurious and women coming out of a “dead marriage” are dropped from the sample, there are only 40 women, or 7.33 percent, who stated they are only interested in no strings attached sex. Of the 40 women who expressed this interest, it is difficult to know if they truly want a series of anonymous sexual encounters or are only using a highly suggestive ad to see who responds as a means to validate their own sexual desirability. It is revealing that the women who advertise for “no strings attached sex” had the less sexually raw or explicit ads compared to women who want sex within an ongoing relationship. There is almost a modesty in acknowledging their interest in meeting a variety of men. For example, a 36 year-old straight woman who wants a no strings relationship writes she has explicit rules: My first rule: You must have a web cam and current face pics to verify yourself. Rule 2: Do not waste time sending me network invites and winks. ...I am your average next door girl who is horny and looking for the “right” one. No strings attached ... zero.” Although we code these ads as women seeking partner variety, we cannot be certain that these women desired sexual variety as much as dating variety. We suspect the percentage of women who were coded as open to short term sexual encounter is much lower. In contrast, men who wanted no strings attached sex were not modest in their description or the photographic display of their genitals. Women who stressed they wanted to form a relationship often had the more sexually explicit photographs. Having announced they

would only have sex in a relationship context, they felt secure in stating their sexual needs and sexual fantasies. This was especially evident for female swingers, who, secured in their marriage, felt no hesitation in being trait specific and sexually demanding.

At first it may seem contradictory that females would use a sex site to find a relationship. But as we thought more about this it made some cultural sense: females appear to be engaging in a form of intrasexual competition with other females. In a culture that has come to embrace sexual satisfaction as an important aspect of a satisfactory life, and where 30 percent of the U.S. female population report having a low or nonexistent sex drive (Diamond 2008), it may be a good mating strategy to demonstrate the presence of a strong interest in sexual enjoyment. By demonstrating you are not sexually inhibited, you may make yourself a more attractive partner to men. This may account for the high frequency in which females pose nude photographs of themselves, while also stressing they only want sex within a committed relationship.

Many examples of females qualifying the type of relationship desired are found in the female's profiles:

1. 32-year-old straight woman with conflicted motives: "I want to be fuck until I cannot walk and then I want to do it some more. I want to be fed cum everyday of my life. I also want to be missed when I go away on vacation." "I am not looking for a NSA [no strings attached] or Friends with benefits. I am also not looking for an "exclusive" LTR. But, yeah now I am looking for a relationship of sorts. Let call it a friends with benefits with potential. This excludes married men."
2. 25-year-old straight woman with conflicted motives: "Hey, I am a post-feminist slut. Spare me the philosophy and fuck me silly. I am looking for some adventure and to push my limits.

Would love to try a group experience. Toys and BDSM is super fun too.” “My ideal person is not a perfect stranger. I have to know the person before I will consider sleeping with them. If you would like to get to know me, please send a message introducing yourself.”

3. 32-year-old bicurious woman with conflicted motives: “I am not looking for a relationship on Adult Friend Finder, I would still prefer someone to have some type of companionship with every now and then. That is my ideal. Yes, I am a sexual person, but that does not mean I want you to rip off my clothes upon first meeting. I like to get fucked, but I like to cuddle too. I love to kiss and can say that I am good at it too.” “ I am not interest in married or attached men, Girls are a possibility since I think about it a lot but have never done it.”

4. 38-year-old straight woman: “whereas this is an adult site I still do not want to read that you want to fuck and suck and lick me all over – enjoying sex does not make me a whore or available to any dick on this site.”

5. 39-year-old straight woman: “I love men, I love your bodies, your voices, your legs, your hands, the way you smell, your arms, your chest, your....mmmmmm I can go on and on. Oops... how could I forget your minds. I love intelligent man, a man who can have a conversation about anything and make it interesting. Throw in a sense of humor and wit and you have got me! I appreciate the emails I get here... but please... spare me the one liners “Lets fuck.” those get deleted with no thought. I’m looking for more than “a fuck”. That will come once I get to know you... Beside I prefer making love.”

In the world of intrasexual competition, women are making two claims: 1) they are sexually available and willing; and 2) they prefer sex within a steady relationship. Women’s preference to insert double or competing messages, we suspect, accounts for the high number of conflicted codings. The high percentage is more the result of a stated ambivalence that arises

from woman wanting to appear sexually desirable, while also wanting to form an emotionally stable relationship. Buss (2003) refers to this female strategy as “bait and switch.” The female preference for sex within a relationship context makes it is more difficult for women to enter into short term mating for no other purpose than sexual pleasure. The value of sex with a relationship context is also critical for female swingers’ own sexual enjoyment too (Jankowiak and Mixson 2008).

Unlike women’s ads that repeatedly stressed they were not interested in meeting married men or men who only wanted one night stands, men’s ads never mention a woman’s marital status or a disinterest in having a one night stand. Clearly, men are willing participants to any and all offers for casual sex. For example, a 27-year-old man writes that he is “looking for a semi-occasional discreet adult fun. All ages welcome, let’s do it.” He adds “I am focused on my career, but I still have a sex drive to deal with, whether it is weekly appointments or semi-occasional fun, I am your man; and for the ladies, the older the more experience.... don’t hesitate to say hi.” The ad is highly representative in that its focus is less on revealing his personality or even acknowledging an interest in meeting a specific personality type. Rather, his focus is on having straightforward sexual trysts and thus he is open to anyone from almost every age cohort responding. Another example of male ad wanting NSA sex is found in a 26-year-old man’s ad that states he is “interested in meeting couples for group sex or single females for wild one on one sex...I am a hard body that wants to enjoy all women and the richness they bring to sex.”

Additional evidence for men’s interest in casual or short term mating can be found in comparing the percentage of men versus women who place an ad on the site. The ratio of males to females who register on the site is more than ten to one. For example, New York lists 360,691 male ads compared to 35,510 female ads. Nevada lists 59,767 males compared to 6,649 females.

These ratios are consistent in all fifty USA states. Clearly, at the beginning of the 21st century, short term mating continues to be a male preference, whereas females continue to seek sexual fulfillment within an established relationship. In this and other ways, we found no evidence even amongst modern U.S.'s more sexually experimental culture that there is a shift away from relationship-oriented sex toward short-term anonymous sex.

Men are more overt in stating their desire for no strings attached sex; however, that does not mean it is their only motivation for being with a woman. An example of this comes from a 37-year-old man who writes he is “just your average horny guy that likes to play. I’m basically looking for friends as well as sex so don’t be afraid to talk to me. I’m actually fairly intelligent and don’t bite hard...I am looking for a woman (not women) that is open-minded and willing to laugh and be too shy.”

Amongst men’s ads sampled we found a strong interest in forming an emotionally based relationship. Ninety-six (14.2%) of males stated they were less interested in no strings attached sex and more in establishing, albeit sexually charged, long term emotionally intense relationship. For example, a 36 year-old man who is “looking for a sexy female who would like to get together on occasions for some erotic times, sensual pleasures or just ordinary fun!! An adventurous, good sense of humor, a great personality and fun is a must.”

Our survey also found 66 (9.7%) males who were straightforward in acknowledging they were more interested in finding a steady girlfriend than engaging in anonymous sex. This seems to be slightly correlated with age. A majority of males (>50%) from 18-39 list casual sexual encounters as the desired motive; however, by 40 and above more men’s ads were stating an interest in multiple motives, that is, they continued to state a willingness for “no strings sex” while also noting an openness to a long term relationship. The correlation between male’s age

and desiring an LTR is not simply an artifact of men becoming more clever in their way of creating a personal profile. Mathes, King, Miller and Reed (2002) found a strong correlation between increasing age and men's desire to form stronger emotional bonds (See Hatfield nd). Similarly, Del Giudice (2009) notes that, "males throughout the world tend to shift from high mating effort in young adulthood to a phase of increased parental investment" (also see Winking et al. 2007). While our findings did see a trend for a majority of males on the website who were seeking casual sex, it is also important to note that men may not be solely seeking sex with no emotional implications. Men too, have been noted to have romantic inclinations and fall in love just as women do. As sex and sexuality is an important facet of human evolutionary lineage, "choosing mates carefully and establishing long-term mateship were adaptive problems faced by both sexes, not just females, throughout evolutionary history" (Salmon and Symons 2003:68). For example, a 43 year old wrote that his ideal person is "someone who is not interested in one night stands or likes to sleep around...if that's you, please pass me up... I'm worth more than that and wish for someone who feels the same. I know that lots of women won't make it this far [reading the ad] but I trust that if you have that you will give me some feedback... good or bad." He adds "he would very much like to meet someone who was looking for a short term/long term lover or great friend with benefits relationship to enjoy." A 36 year old man concurs and writes "I am a good looking male that is currently looking for one and only one awesome lady to spend some one on one time with having fun in and out of the bed." He adds, "there are a lot of game players out there but I am willing to wait to meet my special lady...."

Men compared to women tend to use a broader sex strategy that suggests an openness to enter into any type of sexual encounter: no strings attached sex, regular sex at a specific time (i.e., fuck buddy), and a long-term relationship. This does not mean, however, that men do not

also crave emotional intimacy. Research has document that the desire to form a love attachment is as strong in males as it is in females (Ellison and Gray 2009; Fisher 2006; Jankowiak 1995, 2008). Other work has noted that some men try to establish an emotional relationship with prostitutes and strippers, which speaks loudly to the male need for emotional intimacy (Jankowiak and Paladino 2008). For men, the pull toward seeking sexual variety is impossible to satisfy (Symons 1979) and often undermines a man's ability to sustain his relationship based in emotional monogamy and sexual intimacy. Roy Baumeister and Dianne Tice (2001) aptly refer to this very male dilemma as: the tragedy of male sex drive.

Conclusion

The web site advertised itself as being able to locate and facilitating casual sexual encounters. However, our research found that the site functions more as a dating site in which women, in spite of sexually suggestive ads, seek to establish some type of pair bond relationship. Straight women may tease an interest in a "hook up" or willingness to enter into a casual sex tryst when most have no intention of ever doing so. What women's ads repeatedly emphasize - on this overtly explicit sex site - is an overwhelming desire to form some type of ongoing relationship that could lead to something even more permanent.

With the exception of some bisexuals, women are not interested in short term mating for the primary purpose of seeking sexual pleasure, nor do they struggle, like men, with desiring partner variety while also wanting a steady relationship. For most women, being noticed and desired may be fulfillment enough. In the end, this popular adult dating web site may prove to be women's ultimate sporting arena.

Endnotes:

- 1) We would like to thank David Buss, Dan Benyskek, Peter Gray, Thomas Gregor, Helen Fisher, Elaine Hatfield, Robert Moore, Alice Schlegel, Jennifer Thompson, and Don Symons for insights, comments, and encouragement.
- 2) Lisa Diamond (2008), in a ground breaking book, argues that bisexuality (she prefers the term nonexclusive) is a deeply problematic category as “it is not clear if it refers to sexual identity, sexual behavior or sex orientation” (Diamond 2008:13).
- 3) Bisexual/bicurious interest may also be associated with childhood abuse. The Laumann et al. 1990's USA sexual survey found women who claimed to be bisexual also reported a high level of childhood sexual abuse. Perhaps a difficult parent-child relationship makes it more difficult to bond emotionally with one sex and thus contributes to a greater willingness to state a preference for both sexes.
- 4) We suspect the sexual/emotional internal conflict may be more a male preoccupation than a female proclivity (Baumeister and Tice 2001: 180).
- 5) Martin Daly and Margo Wilson (1988) note a similar age related trend whereby a drop in testosterone levels is correlated with lower frequency of stepfather-child aggression.
- 6) The only women who seem to be able to engage in short term sexual encounters for sexual pleasure are those in a stable relationship/marriage. Once in a relationship, these women (i.e., swingers) can become sexually promiscuous. However, if a woman is not in a relationship, and, is not bisexual or in a swinger relationship, her overriding quest is to form a new relationship, barring that, she simply abstains from sex altogether.

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Table 1: Descriptives of the sample

	Females ^a	Males ^a
Age		
18-24	40 (7.3)	36 (5.3)
24-29	67 (12.3)	92 (13.6)
30-34	130 (23.8)	127 (18.8)
35-39	130 (23.8)	163 (24.1)
40-45	86 (15.8)	104 (15.4)
45+	93 (17)	155 (22.9)
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	404 (74)	537 (79.3)
Black	72 (13.2)	81 (12)
Hispanic	27 (4.9)	24 (3.5)
Asian	8 (1.5)	0 (0)
Other/No Data	35 (6.3)	35 (4.8)
Education		
High School	67 (12.3)	71 (10.5)
Associate's Degree	29 (5.3)	25 (3.7)
Some college	146 (26.7)	145 (21.4)
Bachelor's Degree	220 (40.3)	342 (50.5)
No Data	84 (15.4)	94 (13.9)
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	309 (56.6)	515 (76.1)
Bicurious	94 (17.2)	47 (6.9)
Bisexual	118 (21.6)	45 (6.6)
No Data	25 (4.6)	70 (10.3)
Body Type		
Slim/Petite	8 (1.5)	1 (.1)
Athletic	99 (18.1)	379 (56)
Average	173 (31.7)	227 (33.5)
Extra Padding	188 (34.4)	53 (7.8)
Ample	68 (12.5)	10 (1.5)
Not Determinable	10 (1.8)	7 (1)
Attractiveness		
Very Attractive	21(3.8)	7(1)
Attractive	28 (5.1)	7 (1)
Average	96 (17.6)	118 (17.4)
Unattractive	16 (2.9)	6 (.9)
Unknown*	385 (70.5)	539 (79.6)
TOTAL	546 (100)	677 (100.1)

a. listed as n(%)

*Unknown profiles were listed when photographs did not contain the face of the individual (e.g. genital photographs)

Table 2
Type of encounter sought by males and females

Motives	Males ^a	Females ^a	n	χ^2	df	p
Boy/girlfriend	66(9.7)	174(31.9)	1223	130.915	3	<.001
Conflicted	165(24.4)	120(22)				
Friends with Benefits	96(14.2)	109(20)				
Casual/Variety	350(51.7)	143(26.2)				
TOTAL	677(100)	546(100)				

Motives By Body Type	LTR** ^b	Conflict ^b	FB** ^b	Casual ^b	n	χ^2	df	p
Males					677	11.535	15	.714
Small/Petite	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(100)				
Average	21(9.3)	59(26)	42(18.5)	105(46.3)				
Athletic	37(9.8)	88(23.2)	47(12.4)	207(54.6)				
Ample	1(10)	3(30)	0(0)	6(60)				
Extra Padding	6(11.3)	14(26.4)	5(9.4)	28(52.8)				
No Data	1(14.3)	1(14.3)	2(28.6)	3(42.9)				
Females					546	30.813	15	.009
Small/Petite	5(62.5)	1(12.5)	0(0)	2(25)				
Average	65(37.6)	37(21.4)	27(15.6)	44(25.4)				
Athletic	29(29.3)	20(20.2)	13(13.1)	37(37.4)				
Ample	12(17.6)	20(29.4)	20(29.4)	16(23.5)				
Extra Padding	61(32.4)	38(20.2)	46(24.5)	43(22.9)				
No Data	2(20)	4(40)	3(30)	1(10)				

Motives By Age	LTR** ^c	Conflict ^c	FB** ^c	Casual ^c	n	χ^2	df	p
Males					677	33.778	15	.004
18-24	4(11.1)	11(30.6)	1(2.8)	20(55.6)	36			
25-29	5(5.4)	18(19.6)	10(10.9)	59(64.1)	92			
30-34	4(3.1)	34(26.8)	16(12.6)	73(57.5)	127			
35-39	16(9.8)	39(23.9)	19(11.7)	89(54.6)	163			
40-44	15(14.4)	28(26.9)	20(19.2)	41(39.4)	104			
45+	22(14.2)	35(22.6)	30(19.4)	68(43.9)	155			
Females					546	40.700	15	<.001
18-24	6(15)	11(27.5)	6(15)	17(42.5)	40			
25-29	12(17.9)	21(31.3)	17(25.4)	17(25.4)	67			
30-34	39(30)	21(16.2)	25(19.2)	45(34.6)	130			
35-39	43(33.1)	31(23.8)	26(20)	30(23.1)	130			
40-44	28(32.6)	20(23.3)	15(17.4)	23(26.7)	86			
45+	46(49.5)	16(17.2)	20(21.5)	11(11.8)	93			

* LTR – Long-term relationship; ** FB – Friends with benefits/ “fuck buddy”

a. listed as n(% within gender)

b. n(% within body type)

c. n(% within age)

Table 3
Sexual content of profiles

Sexual Content By Age	Trait Flexible ^a	Trait Specific ^a	No Data ^a	Total(%) ^a	χ^2	df	p
Males	556(82.1)	116(17.1)	5(.7)		13.683	10	.188
18-24	34(6.1)	1(.9)	1(20)	36(5.3)			
25-29	78(14)	15.8(12.1)	0(0)	92(13.6)			
30-34	106(19.1)	21(18.1)	0(0)	127(18.8)			
35-39	137(24.6)	25(21.6)	1(20)	163(24.1)			
40-44	79(14.2)	24(20.7)	1(20)	104(15.4)			
45+	122(21.9)	31(26.7)	2(40)	155(22.9)			
Females	405(74.2)	139(25.5)	2(.4)		9.183	10	.515
18-24	30(7.4)	10 (1.8)	0(0)	40(7.3)			
25-29	54(13.3)	13(9.4)	0(0)	67(12.3)			
30-34	99(24.4)	30(21.6)	1(50)	130(23.8)			
35-39	95(23.5)	35(25.2)	0(0)	130(23.8)			
40-44	56(13.8)	30(21.6)	0(0)	86(15.8)			
45+	71(17.5)	21(15.1)	1(50)	93(17)			

a. listed as n(% within sexual content)

Table 4
Females motives listed by sexual orientation*

Motives	Bicurious	Bisexual	Straight	No Data	Total
Long-term Relationship					
Count	24	18	124	8	174
% within Motives	13.8%	10.3%	71.3%	4.6%	100.0%
% within Sexual Orientation	25.5%	15.3%	40.1%	32.0%	31.9%
Conflict					
Count	21	26	67	6	120
% within Motives	17.5%	21.7%	55.8%	5.0%	100.0%
% within Sexual Orientation	22.3%	22.0%	21.7%	24.0%	22.0%
Friends with Benefits/ "Fuck Buddy"					
Count	22	24	58	5	109
% within Motives	20.2%	22.0%	53.2%	4.6%	100.0%
% within Sexual Orientation	23.4%	20.3%	18.8%	20.0%	20.0%
Casual/Variety					
Count	27	50	60	6	143
% within Motives	18.9%	35.0%	42.0%	4.2%	100.0%
% within Sexual Orientation	28.7%	42.4%	19.4%	24.0%	26.2%
Total					
Count	94	118	25	309	546
% within Motives	17.2%	21.6%	4.6%	56.6%	100.0%
% within Sexual Orientation	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*($\chi^2=36.360$, $df=9$, $p<.001$)