

## ABSTRACT

Ernulf, K. E. (1995). *Studies on the Bases of Sexual Attraction and its Variants*. Department of Psychology, Göteborg University, Sweden

This dissertation reviews earlier theory and empirical research. It is also aimed at investigating several aspects of sexual attraction and its variants. Firstly, in one of the studies, both males and females rated feminine and androgynous opposite-sex individuals as most sexually attractive. Secondly, in a study of "the gay-prett-boy stereotype," the analysis showed that the female subjects rated three males as significantly more physically attractive when they believed the males were homosexual than when they believed the males were heterosexual. There was no comparable significant effect for female targets. Thirdly, a study on the frequency of asphyxiophilia deaths in Scandinavia found 0.5–1 observed deaths/million inhabitants/year, and another study on asphyxiophilia focused on criteria that can discriminate asphyxiophilia from other causes of death. Fourthly, an unobtrusive study on sexual bondage found the most frequently reported individual experience was playful usage of bondage to explore new areas of sexual pleasure. Other frequent experiences were the exchange of power, intensified sexual pleasure, and tactile stimulation and bodily sensations. Preference for the dominant-initiator role was expressed in 71% of the messages by heterosexual males, in 11% of the messages by heterosexual females, and in 12% of the messages by homosexual males. Preference for the submissive-recipient role was expressed in 29% of the messages by heterosexual males, in 89% of the messages by heterosexual females, and in 88% of the messages by homosexual males. A study on male homosexual restroom graffiti found that the most frequently desired object traits were male genital traits, which comprised 36% of all desired traits. In sexual exchange, the most frequently desired behaviors were oral (33%) and anal (25%) behaviors, while sadomasochism comprised 13% of all desired behaviors. Most contact-seeking messages that did state a role preference expressed that subjects desired a submissive-recipient role in sexual exchange. The submissive-recipient role was most markedly preferred in sadomasochism, desired in 76% of the graffiti messages who stated a role preference.

To interpret the results, it was contended that sexual attraction, as experienced by males and females, seems to have two basic dimensions, *sexual-emotional attraction*, and *sexual-erotic attraction*. Sexual-emotional attraction refers to sexual attraction to the personality characteristics of a target, whereas sexual-erotic attraction refers to sexual attraction to the physical characteristics or behaviors of a target. Both dimensions appear in males and females, but their significance and timing seem fundamentally different in the two sexes. Males appear to define their sexuality primarily in terms of their sexual-erotic attraction, whereas females appear to define their sexuality primarily in terms of their sexual-emotional attraction. This makes sense, as sexual-erotic attraction in males seems usually to precede sexual-emotional attraction. In females, on the other hand, sexual-emotional attraction usually seems to precede sexual-erotic attraction. Thus, for males, the primary sexual attraction is erotic, whereas in females the primary sexual attraction is emotional.

*Key words:* interpersonal attraction, sexual attractiveness, sex roles, paraphilias, asphyxiophilia, sexual bondage, homosexuality

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