

Abstract for poster presentation at the UVM Student Research Conference

Testosterone, Adaptive Assertiveness, and Female Sexual Behavior

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**Introduction:** Studies have found high levels of testosterone to be associated with sexual behavior and high dominance scores in women (van Anders, 2012; Baucom, Besch, & Callahan, 1985; Grant & France, 2001). It is plausible that by promoting dominance behaviors in women, such as assertiveness, testosterone may enhance the interest for and likelihood of engaging in sexual activity (Dundon, Toufexis, & Rellini, in preparation). Assertiveness is defined as expressing one's feelings, needs, or preferences (Thompson & Berenbaum, 2011). Sexual assertiveness, a subset of assertiveness, refers to willingness to communicate one's sexual needs to a partner (Hurlbert, 1988). Women with greater sexual assertiveness are more likely to ask for and receive what they want during sexual activity.

**Aim:** This study investigated the association between testosterone and assertiveness and whether this relationship predicted frequency of sexual behaviors in women. Assertiveness was also tested as mediator in the relationship between testosterone and frequency of female sexual behavior.

**Methods:** Bioavailable testosterone was measured in 21 women who completed questionnaires on demographics, sexual function, sexual self-schemas, assertiveness, sexual assertiveness, depression, and anxiety.

**Results:** Greater sexual assertiveness was associated with greater desire.

**Conclusions:** While testosterone measures have not yet been analyzed, current data from questionnaires on sexual functioning and behavior indicate sexual assertiveness is related to desire. Further analyses of the testosterone levels will be discussed. These preliminary results support the hypothesis that greater interest in sexual satisfaction is associated with more direct communication during sexual activity. It is also feasible that sexual assertiveness is positively associated with greater sexual satisfaction, which in turn could mediate a greater desire for sexual activity.