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Choice Reaction Time as an Indicator of Sexual Interests: Stimulus- Versus Task-Related Explanations of the CRT Effect

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In recent years, a growing body of research has focused on the validity of so called *latency-based indirect measures* for the assessment of sexual interests. One of these measures is the *Choice Reaction Time (CRT) task* (Wright & Adams, 1994; <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02229209>). The CRT task requires participants to quickly and accurately locate a target (e.g., a dot) that is superimposed on either sexually relevant or irrelevant pictorial distractors. The relatively slower mean reaction time toward distractors that are congruent with a participant's sexual orientation or preference (compared with incongruent trials) is the CRT effect. Although recent evidence underlines its validity for the assessment of sexual interests (e.g., Dombert et al., 2017; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1027/1015-5759/a000293>), little is known about the nature of the CRT effect. The purpose of the present study is to test two possible explanations of the CRT effect by investigating its stimulus-specificity. According to information-processing models of sexual arousal, delayed reactions to sexually arousing stimuli are due to an automatic shift of attention to the stimulus (e.g. Greer & Bellard, 1996; <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024574915201>). This interpretation implies a stimulus-dependent effect. Another assumption regarding prolonged response latencies is that they result from a higher cognitive load while considering different stimulus features such as a potential mate's age or sex. This notion is similar to the explanation of the effects found in Viewing Time (VT) tasks (e.g. Imhoff et al., 2010; <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-011-9879-1>). Hence, longer viewing times for sexually attractive stimuli might be task-dependent. To contrast these assumptions, 160 homo- and heterosexual participants ($n_1 = 80$ females, $n_2 = 80$ males) will be asked to complete two versions of the CRT with explicitly sexual stimuli (pictures of men and women in bathing suits) and with solely non-sexual semantic symbols (pictographs that indicate a potential mate's age and sex; see Schmidt, Imhoff, & Banse, 2014; poster presented at the annual meeting of the IASR). Homo- and heterosexual interests will be captured both explicitly and indirectly, using a speeded VT task. Statistical analyses will include separate analyses of variance for both types of CRT in order to test for interactions of gender and sexual orientation. Convergent validity will be estimated based on correlations between both types of CRT and the VT task. The results will be discussed with respect to the different theoretical assumptions. Furthermore, the susceptibility of task- and stimulus-dependent measures against faking attempts will be highlighted.

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