

Defining Compulsive Behavior

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A brief report in the October 2003 *Monitor on Psychology*, published by the American Psychological Association, detailed a study on compulsive sexual behavior among gay and bisexual men conducted by Jeffrey Parsons, Ph.D., of Hunter College of the City University of New York.

The report matter-of-factly makes the following observations about Parsons' study:

“His research compared gay and bisexual men who reported sexual-behavior problems with a control group on noncompulsive gay and bisexual men. Compulsive men averaged 39 sex partners in three months, whereas noncompulsive men had seven. “

This equates to an average of 156 sexual partners in a year for

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the compulsive group, and 28 per year for the noncompulsive men.

This finding begs the question: Is this how compulsive sexual behavior is now defined for gay and bisexual men? While 28 sexual partners in a year may not be considered compulsive by the community standards of gay and bisexual men themselves, there would seem to be little doubt that this level of nonmonogamy is likely to be detrimental to the physical well-being of these men, as well as to the health of the society in which they live.

Reference:

Holloway, J.D. (2003, October). Understanding compulsive sexual behavior. *Monitor on Psychology*, 34(9), 20.