Supplementary Materials for:

On Guard: Public Versus Private Affection-Sharing Experiences in Same-Sex, Gender-Diverse and Mixed-Sex Relationships

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https://osf.io/rxwe4/

In these supplementary materials, we provide more detailed information about study measures than is feasible in the main manuscript, given word limits.

Descriptions of Previously-Validated Measures

Relationship Well-Being

Relationship well-being was assessed with the 18-item Personal Relationships Quality Components Inventory (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000), with each item measured on a 7-point scale, ranging from *not at all* (1) to *extremely* (7). This measure assesses six different components of relationship well-being (satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, passion, love), but it is also appropriate to average across all 18 items to assess a single higher-order construct of overall relationship well-being. The measure has shown good reliability and construct validity in previous research (Fletcher et al., 2000).

Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being was assessed with the 21-item Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (Henry & Crawford, 2005), which asks participants how much they have experienced a variety of mental distress symptoms over the past week, with responses ranging from *did not apply to me at all* (1) to *applied to me very much, or most of the time* (4). It can be divided into subscales for depression, anxiety and stress, or the scales can be combined and used as one overall measure, as was done in the current study. For ease of interpretation, responses were

scored such that higher numbers indicated better mental well-being, or the absence of psychological distress.

Physical Health

Physical health was assessed using the Cohen-Hoberman Inventory of Physical Symptoms (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983), a 33-item scale indicating the degree to which various minor physical symptoms or complaints (e.g., headache, sleep problems, poor appetite) had bothered the respondent over the past month, with scores ranging from *never bothered* (0) to *extremely bothered* (4). Again, for ease of interpretation, items were reverse-scored so that higher numbers indicated better physical health or an absence of health problems.

Details on Measures Created or Modified for the Current Study

Relationship Type

Participants answered two questions regarding their relationship type:

1) **Would you describe your relationship as being:**

   ○ Select one of the following categories or specify via text if *not listed*
     - Same-sex (e.g., two women, two men, matching gender identities)
     - Mixed-sex (e.g., man and woman)
     - Not listed: please describe

2) **Most people (e.g., strangers who see you together on the street) would perceive your relationship as being:**
   ○ Select one of the following categories or specify via text if *not listed*
     - Same-sex (e.g., two women, two men, matching gender identities)
     - Mixed-sex (e.g., man and woman)
     - Not listed: please describe

Note that we chose the terms *same-sex* and *mixed-sex* over *same-gender* and *mixed-gender* because gender is a very complex and multifaceted construct, making it likely that

couples who are attuned to these nuances might describe themselves as being a mixed-gender couple, if offered that option. For example, a lesbian couple may consider themselves and be viewed by others as being two women, yet may still embrace different gender identities (e.g., butch and femme). They might select the *mixed-gender* option were it available, yet still have very different experiences with public affection-sharing than a cisgender heterosexual mixed-gender couple would. We used two questions, selected the terms we did, gave examples, and offered write-in options, all in an effort to provide us with two meaningful groups for comparison on our main hypotheses, while still allowing flexibility for participants to provide information on their own unique circumstances.

People who selected the same category (i.e., same-sex or mixed-sex) for both questions were classified within that category. If participants neglected to answer one or both questions, or chose *not listed*, their responses were more closely investigated. In some instances, they were readily categorized as being in either mixed-sex or same-sex relationships by reviewing their open-ended descriptions, and /or assessing additional demographic information (e.g., gender identity, sexual identity). For example, in a number of cases, participants reported being gay or lesbian, and described their relationship as same-sex, but wrote that people on the street would perceive them as being friends or siblings with their partner. They were categorized as being in same-sex relationships. In other instances, participants might have not answered one question, but their relationship type could be inferred with high confidence from other measures. For example, if a participant neglected to respond to the question about how they described their own relationship, but then reported being a straight cisgender man in a relationship with a straight cisgender woman, whose relationship was perceived by others as being mixed-sex, they were categorized as mixed-sex.

Other responses were not so readily classified, however. For example, participants might report themselves or their partner to be non-binary, genderqueer or agender; or report their sexual identities as queer or pansexual; or write in that how they appear to others varies substantially depending on how they choose to dress or present themselves on a given day. Although our hypotheses centered on mixed-sex and same-sex relationships, there were enough participants in this additional group to allow for investigation of their experiences with affection sharing, on an exploratory basis. This group was quite heterogeneous, but almost all contained some aspect of diverse gender identities, so the group was labeled *gender diverse*.

General Approach to Affection Measures

Developing Measures. We required measures of each affection-related construct that were conceptually distinct from the other aspects (e.g., cleanly separated out desire, comfort, and frequency), were specific to romantic relationships, would work in both private and public contexts, and would work for both same-sex and mixed-sex relationships. As we were unable to find suitable measures in the literature, measures of affection sharing were created for the current study. Items were developed by the current authors, each working with a student. Literature reviews were conducted, and items from existing measures were used or adapted where appropriate. As necessary, additional items were generated to assess each construct. After initial work within each author-student pair, the pairs exchanged items for critique and refinement. We then solicited input from other lab group members and a small pilot sample, including both straight and LGBTQ+ participants, to make sure that item wording was clear and that items tapped cleanly into the appropriate constructs. All item-total correlations and inter-item correlations were strong, suggesting we were successful at developing a cohesive set of items for each construct.

Preliminary Definitions. At the beginning of the study, affection sharing was defined for participants as "your preferred method of sharing physical affection with your partner in a non-sexual manner." Some examples were given (e.g., holding hands, kissing, cuddling), but it was noted that it could include whatever method was most common and enjoyable for a given participant. Allowing participants to include their own methods of showing affection was important, because preliminary discussions with LGBTQ+ individuals suggested they often adopted more idiosyncratic, and frequently more subtle, means of sharing affection when in public (e.g., touching feet under a table). "Private" was defined for participants as "only you and your partner present," and "public" was defined as "others are present." We emphasized that responses might be the same or different across contexts. Participants were instructed that if their answers to questions in the public context varied depending on who else was present, they should respond with whatever was most typical for them. To make sure participants had read and understood the definitions provided, they were asked to provide examples of types of physical affection they commonly shared with their partner, and of times or places when they might be in private or in public with their partner.

For frequency, desire, and comfort, participants were asked identical questions, repeated in each context. The header "When I am in public with my partner…" or "When I am in private with my partner…" appeared, followed by the relevant set of questions. To help participants attend to the different contexts, the word "public" always appeared in red throughout the survey, while the word "private" always appeared in blue. Responses were always given on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7).

Frequency of Affection Sharing. The items were prefaced with the statement: "These next questions will ask you about how frequently you and your partner **actually** engage in

physical affection sharing, regardless of how much you want to do so, in **private** and in **public".**

Participants then responded to the following items in each of the two contexts.

- I often share physical affection with my partner
- My partner and I are very cuddly or 'touchy-feely' with each other
- My partner and I usually avoid sharing physical affection (R)
- My partner and I engage in physical affection sharing on a regular basis
- It is common for my partner and I to display physical affection toward each other

Desire for Affection Sharing. Participants were told, **"**These next questions will ask you about how much you **want** or **desire** to engage in physical affection sharing with your partner, **in private** and **in public**, regardless of how much you actually do so." Desire for affection sharing in each context was then assessed with the following six items. Five were developed for the current study, and one was adapted from de Jong's (2016) *Explicit Partner-Specific Sexual Desire Scale*.

- My desire to share physical affection with my partner is strong
- If I were in an ideal world, my partner and I would share physical affection often
- I do not have a strong need to share physical affection with my partner (R)
- If it were just up to me, my partner and I would always share physical affection
- We would ideally not share any physical affection with each other (R)
- When it comes to sharing affection with my partner, I can take it or leave it (R)

Comfort with Affection Sharing. Participants were told, "These next questions will ask you about how **comfortable** or **at ease** you feel about engaging in physical affection sharing with your partner, **in private** and **in public**, regardless of how much you actually do so." Comfort with affection sharing was then assessed with the following five items. The first three were adapted from Webb and Peck's (2015) *Comfort with Interpersonal Touch Scale,* and the last two were created for the current study.

- I feel comfortable engaging in physical affection sharing with my partner
- I like it when my partner shares physical affection with me
- It is natural for me to engage in physical affection sharing with my partner

- It feels appropriate to share affection with my partner
- Sharing physical affection with my partner makes me feel awkward (R)

Frequency of Refraining from Affection Sharing. A 4-item measure was created for the current study, assessing how frequently participants refrain or pull back from sharing affection, even though they wish to engage in it. Participants utilized a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *never* (1) to *frequently* (7). As above, the same items were repeated in both the private and public contexts.

- I refrain from sharing physical affection with my partner, even though I want to
- My partner and I refrain from being as 'cuddly' or 'touchy-feely' as we would like to be
- My partner and I share physical affection whenever we want to (R)
- It is common for my partner and I to hold back on sharing affection with each other, even if we want to

Affection Sharing Across Multiple Contexts. Participants were told "Below, you will be asked about different behaviours you might engage in with your partner. Each item will be rated based on different contexts: at home, in public, in front of friends, in front of family. In public refers to being away from your home or workplace and generally near strangers more than people you know. If your answer would differ based on being near your partner's family vs. your own family, please answer based on your feelings in front of <u>your own family members</u>."

Participants were then presented with 11 items selected and adapted from Webb and Peck's (2015) *Comfort with Interpersonal Touch Scale.* Adapting the items primarily consisted of changing "people" or "other people" to "my partner"; for example, the original item "I often put my arm around people" was changed to "I often put my arm around my partner." The stem of each item, as shown below, appeared first, and then the four contexts appeared below each item ("when we are at home, alone", "when we are in public together"; "when we are in front of our

friends", "when we are in front of family members"). Participants rated their attitudes in each

context on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7).

- It is natural for me to hug my partner
- I often put my arm around my partner
- When I greet my partner it often involves touch
- When I am talking to my partner I often touch them on the arm
- I can't help touching my partner when I am talking to them
- I am comfortable hugging my partner
- I am comfortable with my partner touching me
- During conversation, I don't mind if my partner touches me
- I find myself pulling away when my partner touches me (*)
- I typically don't mind receiving touch from my partner
- I don't mind if my partner places their hand on my back to guide me into a room

PDA-Related Vigilance. An 11-item measure was developed for the current study,

assessing vigilance associated specifically with sharing physical affection in public, over the past

month. The first 5 items were adapted from the *Brief Hypervigilance Scale* (Bernstein et al.,

2015). For example, the original "I feel that if I don't stay alert and watchful, something bad will

happen" was adapted to "When I begin sharing physical affection with my partner in public, I am

worried something bad may happen". The remaining items were constructed for the purposes of

this study. Responses were on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *not at all like me / never*

true (1) to *very much like me / always true* (5).

- When I begin sharing affection with my partner in public, I am worried that something bad might happen
- When I am sharing affection with my partner in public, I think ahead about what I would do (or where I would go) if someone would try to harass or harm us
- When sharing affection with my partner in public or in new places, I tend to scan my environment to see who is around and to pay attention to their reactions
- When sharing affection with my partner in public, I feel overwhelmed because I cannot keep track of everything going on around me
- When sharing affection with my partner in public, I feel that if I don't stay alert and watchful, something bad will happen

- As soon as I begin to share affection with my partner in public, I begin scanning my environment to see who is around and to pay attention to their reactions
- I am more aware of my surroundings when sharing affection in public
- When sharing affection with my partner in public, I feel that I need to be alert and watchful of my surroundings
- When sharing affection with my partner in public, I notice other people staring at us
- When sharing affection with my partner in public, I perceive that people are judging us
- When sharing affection with my partner in public, we avoid certain places and situations that may not be safe for us

Data Quality Checks

At the end of the survey, we asked participants two questions to assist us with our data quality checking. Participants were asked to provide an indication of the quality or honesty of their responses, as well as to indicate the number of times they had taken the survey. Participants who admitted to taking the survey more than once were removed from the data set. The honesty question was phrased as follows: "People decide to take online surveys for many different reasons. Some people give serious answers, some people give joking responses. Other times, people just want to see what the survey is about, so they put in random responses to continue advancing through the survey. What best describes the manner in which you completed this survey?" Response options included: "My answers are honest and serious throughout the survey," "My answers are mostly honest and serious, but sometimes I got tired and didn't read the questions fully," and "Many of my answers are not real answers, they're either jokes or just random responses so that I could test/preview/explore the survey." Participants who selected the third option were not included in the analysis (n = 4). Participants (n= 131; 7.8%) who selected the second option were retained within the data set provided that their open-text responses made sense and that they were not removed for any other reasons (described within the participant

section of the main manuscript).

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