Handbook of Sexuality-Related Measures

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Intimate Relationships Questionnaire

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The Intimate Relationships Questionnaire (IRQ) was created to measure assertive, nonassertive, and aggressive tendencies specific to safer-sex behaviors in unmarried adolescents and young adults (Yesmont, 1992b). The AIDS epidemic has highlighted the serious health problems created by less fatal, yet more prevalent, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The rates of STDs are highest in the young adult population. The IRQ is a convenient and promising measure that is easily incorporated into assertiveness training to increase safer-sex behaviors and reduce the incidence of STDs. The IRQ offers a structured format that can be used in an individual or group setting, or with couples. It may be used in conjunction with role-play and rehearsal of precautionary behaviors and to identify those aspects of safer sex behaviors that are especially difficult for respondents.

### Description

The IRQ consists of 10 items, each with three response alternatives that measure assertive, nonassertive, and aggressive tendencies. The items describe intimate situations involving the precautionary behaviors of condom use, asking a date about his (her) STD history, about prior AIDS testing, and wanting to know a date better before engaging in sexual intercourse. The assertive, nonassertive, and aggressive responses are randomly sequenced throughout the items. There are an additional four items (1, 3, 5, and 8), pertaining to nonsexual intimate situations that are included as detractors. The IRQ items present the three types of responses in a 5-point Likert scale, from (1) not at all like me to (5) just like me. Respondents are asked to rate each alternative according to their own probable cognitive or behavioral response in each scenario.

The precautionary sex situations were inspired by research in AIDS-prevention programs (Kelly, St. Lawrence, Hood, & Bransfield, 1989; Rotheram-Borus & Koopman, 1989). The assertive, nonassertive, and aggressive response alternatives were formulated from the most universally accepted definitions of these terms (Alberti & Emmons, 1986). In a content validation procedure, a panel of clinicians rated the three response alternatives according to the given definitions of the three assertiveness dimensions. Further revisions resulted in the present content that had been unanimously rated by a second group of clinicians, according to the intended conceptualizations of assertiveness.

Although the IRQ was normed on predominantly heterosexual college students, its gender-nonspecific format renders it useful for individuals with other sexual orientations.

### Response Mode and Timing

Respondents circle the number from 1 to 5 on each of the three alternatives to every test item, according to their self-perceived similarity to the proposed response. The IRQ requires approximately 10 minutes to complete.

### Scoring

The numerical values of the Likert-type choices (1 to 5) are summed for each assertiveness dimension (assertiveness, nonassertiveness, and aggression) according to the response key. The answers to the detractor items (1, 3, 5 and 8) are not added into the score. The score range is from 10 to 50, with larger sums representing a stronger response tendency. Correlational analysis of the IRQ assertiveness dimensions revealed a significantly positive relationship between assertive and aggressive scores, $r = .15$ and a significantly negative relationship between assertiveness and nonassertiveness, $r = -.21$ (Yesmont, 1992a). Nonassertive and aggressive scores were unrelated.

### Reliability

In a sample of 253 unmarried, predominantly white undergraduates (159 females; 94 males), the Cronbach alphas for the three assertiveness categories on the safer sex questions were as follows: assertiveness, .77; aggressiveness, .67, and nonassertiveness, .71 (Yesmont, 1992b). Using a Spanish version of the IRQ, Batista (1995) reported similar alpha coefficients in a sample of 103 older high school students in Puerto Rico (assertiveness, .76; aggressiveness, .76, and nonassertiveness, .76).

### Validity

In the Yesmont study (1992b), the college students’ IRQ assertiveness scores were significantly correlated with their degree of using Caution in a new, intimate relationship ($r = .35$) and Asking (inquiry about drug use, STD history, prior contact with high-risk partners and AIDS testing;) $r = .36$. Their aggressiveness scores also were significantly related to Caution, $r = .22$ and Asking, $r = .19$. As predicted, the students’ nonassertiveness scores correlated negatively and significantly with their degree of Caution ($r = -.41$) and Asking ($r = -.34$).

IRQ assertiveness was significantly correlated to the percentage of time that condoms were used for coitus, $r = .24$. IRQ nonassertiveness had a significantly negative relationship to condom use, as expected, $r = -.25$.
The students who reported 100% condom use, as compared to nonusers, had higher assertiveness scores ($M = 35.01$ vs. $M = 33.74$), $t(87) = -2.17$, $p < .05$ and significantly lower nonassertiveness scores ($M = 14.65$ vs. $M = 19.53$), $t(85) = 4.95$, $p < .001$. The females were significantly more assertive and aggressive on the IRQ than the males. Conversely, the males endorsed nonassertive responses to a significantly greater extent than the females.

References


Exhibit

Intimate Relationships Questionnaire

Each item below describes a situation and three responses that are thoughts or behaviors. These intimate situations involve a dating couple. Try to imagine a situation in your life that is as close to the one described as possible.

After reading each item, circle a number to the right of each response, indicating how similar it might be to the thought you might have or the behavior you might show, in the actual situation.

Please rate every response to each situation. Use the following scale for your ratings:

1        2        3        4        5  
Not at all  Slightly  Somewhat  Mostly  Just like me  like me  like me  like me  like me

1. During the past few weeks your boyfriend (girlfriend) seems less enthusiastic and caring about your relationship.
   (AG) a. You’ll decide to confront him (her) on your next date and let out your angry feelings. 1 2 3 4 5
   (NON) b. You’ll wait for him (her) to call you and you’ll complain to your friends. 1 2 3 4 5
   (AS) c. You’ll decide to speak to him (her) frankly and suggest you try to work things out. 1 2 3 4 5

2. When your date says he (she) won’t have sex with you if you insist on using a condom, you say . . .
   (AS) a. O.K. Then how about trying some other things besides intercourse? 1 2 3 4 5
   (AG) b. Your attitude doesn’t make any sense! That’s it for us. Let’s go home. 1 2 3 4 5
   (NON) c. O.K. You’re more important to me, we don’t need to use it. 1 2 3 4 5

3. You’re at a party with your boyfriend (girlfriend) and notice that he (she) is very attentive to someone of the opposite sex that you’ve never seen before. You think . . .
   (NON) a. I’ll make the best of it—after all, he’s (she’s) going home with me tonight. 1 2 3 4 5
   (AS) b. I really would like more of his (her) attention tonight and I’m going to tell him (her). 1 2 3 4 5
   (AG) c. How could he (she) ignore me like this—I’ll find someone on my own I can talk to and make him (her) jealous. 1 2 3 4 5

4. You want to tell your date that you’d like to use a condom when making love tonight and you think . . .
   (AS) a. If I can’t convince him (her) to use a condom tonight, we can find other safe ways of enjoying ourselves for now. 1 2 3 4 5
   (NON) b. Using a condom is a good idea but I don’t think I have the nerve to ask him (her) to use one. 1 2 3 4 5
   (AG) c. He (she) should do what I ask without any hesitation if he (she) loves me. 1 2 3 4 5

5. Your boyfriend (girlfriend) gets silent instead of saying what’s on his (her) mind. You think . . .
   (AG) a. Here it comes. The big silent treatment. I’m going to get mad and force him (her) to talk to me. 1 2 3 4 5
(NON) b. If I make a joke and distract him (her), maybe he’ll (she’ll) forget what’s bothering him (her).
(A) c. I’ll tell him (her) it bothers me when he (she) gets silent because it leaves me confused about what he’s (she’s) thinking.

6. When you’re asked by your date if you have any disease that you could give him (her) if you make love that night, you think... 

(A) a. Who does he (she) think I am—some degenerate who runs around infecting people? 
(NON) c. I’d better answer or he (she) may get annoyed with me.

7. When your date asks you if you agree to using a condom when you both make love tonight, you think...

(A) a. This is a turn-off. I don’t want anybody telling me what we should do when we make love. 
(NON) b. I’d better do what he (she) says or he’ll (she’ll) be frustrated tonight. 
(AS) c. I’m glad he (she) brought this up, now we’re both protected.

8. Your boyfriend (girlfriend) has criticized your appearance in front of your friends. You say...

(AS) a. It hurt my feelings when you criticized me. If you have something to say, please bring it up before we go out.
(AG) b. How could you do such a rotten thing to me? If you do that again—we’re through! 
(NON) c. I guess I don’t look so great tonight since you criticized me in front of my friends.

9. When you suggest to your date that a condom be used for mutual protection when you make love tonight, your date teases you about being such a worrier...

(NON) a. You then become silent for a while, until he (she) comes around to agreeing with you. 
(AS) b. You then tell your date you’d love to make love with him (her), but you always use condoms. 
(AG) c. You then tell your date he’s (she’s) being really immature.

10. You want to ask if your date’s been tested for AIDS and you say...

(NON) a. I was wondering about... well this is embarrassing to talk about... but... have you ever been tested for AIDS? You don’t have to answer that if you don’t want to. 
(AG) b. I want you to tell me right now if you’ve been tested for AIDS. 
(AS) c. I really like you a lot, but with all this talk about AIDS, I’d like to be a little careful. I’ve been tested for AIDS, have you?

11. If your date refuses to use a condom you think...

(AS) a. I can find out what he (she) has against them and we can talk about it. 
(NON) b. I’m afraid he (she) won’t want to see me again if I insist. 
(AG) c. If he (she) won’t do what I say—that’s it for us.

12. When neither you nor your date has any condoms one evening, you say...

(NON) a. Oh... that’s O.K. I suppose we can do it just once without one. 
(AG) b. That’s irresponsible. If you like me you’d always have them when we’re together. 
(AS) c. I don’t have any either, but we can satisfy each other without intercourse tonight.

13. You tell your date that you’d like to wait until you know each other a little better before having sex. When he (she) gets annoyed you would...

(AS) a. Tell your date that you couldn’t go out with someone who argues with you about this. 
(AG) b. Re-state your feeling that you’d like to wait. 
(NON) c. Change your mind and have sex with him (her) sooner than you’d planned.

14. When you suggest to your date that a condom be used when you make love tonight, he (she) says, “You don’t trust me. I told you I’ve never been exposed to AIDS or herpes, or any other disease.”

(AS) a. You say, “I’m sorry, but we have no way of knowing that. I’d feel so much better if we used condoms.” 
(AG) b. You say, “It’s not a question of trust. You don’t understand what I’m saying.” 
(NON) c. You say, “I’m sorry. I do trust you. Let’s drop the whole subject. I don’t want to argue.”

Response classification: AG = Aggressive; AS = Assertive; NON = Nonassertive