Revised Attitudes Toward Sexuality Inventory

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In an attempt to develop a scale providing a focus for sexuality issues of the 1990s, we undertook the construction of this attitude scale, with a particular focus on sexual coercion.

Description

The 1980s and 1990s had seen a focus on attitudes toward sexual coercion, both in terms of their implications for female and male psychological development and their relationship to unintended pregnancy and Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). As such, a broad array of items focusing on attitudes toward sexual relationships, in addition to more specific issues, such as abortion, masturbation, homosexuality, contraception, sexuality in childhood and the aged, and sexuality education, were seen as important for inclusion in the inventory.

The initial Attitudes Toward Sexuality Inventory (Patton & Mannison, 1993) was a 72-item questionnaire representing 10 attitudinal categories designed to evaluate a university course in human sexuality. There were 5 to 11 items in each category. The categories were selected to represent the main content areas of the course and included (a) contraception, (b) masturbation, (c) sexuality across the lifespan, (d) gender roles, (e) gay and lesbian relationships, (f) abortion, (g) STDs, (h) child sexual abuse, (i) rape, and (j) sexuality education.

Items in the initial inventory were derived from a number of different sources. These questionnaires included a number of the Burt (1980) scales, such as Sexual Conservatism, Rape Myth Acceptance, Interpersonal Violence, and Sex Role Stereotyping. Other measures used included those focusing on attitudes toward homosexuality (Herek, 1988), AIDS (Greiger & Ponterotto, 1988), rape (Deitz, Blackwell, Daley, & Bentley, 1982; Dull & Giacopassi, 1987; Feild, 1978), dating relationships (Giarusso, Johnson, Goodchild, & Zellman, 1979), and women (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973).

As a result of preliminary research (Patton & Mannison, 1993, 1994), evaluations from independent experts in university sexuality education, and a review of item content and wording by a group of secondary school sexuality educators, changes were made. Several items were deleted, the focus of a number of items was changed, and other items were reworded to reflect subtle language shifts in the young adult population (Hall, Howard, & Boezio, 1986). Also, new items were added to capture various topical questions. In all, 35 items reflecting diverse issues in sexuality, including masturbation, sexuality in children and the aged, sexual coercion and assault in childhood and adulthood, homosexuality, abortion, and contraception were included in the revised inventory. Five items focusing on attitudes toward women (adapted from Spence et al., 1973) were also included, making a total of 40 items in the Revised Attitudes Toward Sexuality Inventory.

Three reliable and clear factors were found in a factor analysis, and two other factors were less clear (Patton & Mannison, 1995). The three factors were Attitudes Toward Sexual Coercion and Assault (Items 2, 5, 6, 13, 17, 18, 25, 27, 29, 33, 37, 38), Attitudes Toward Sexuality Issues (Items 4, 7, 8, 15, 19, 20, 23, 35), and Attitudes Toward Gender Roles (Items 9, 28, 31, 32, 35).

Response Mode and Timing

The response format is a 6-point scale to which respondents reply from Strongly Agree through Strongly Disagree. The 6-point format was chosen in order to avoid a midpoint and invite a choice for one side or the other. The inventory typically requires 5–10 minutes to complete.

Scoring

Items were worded to counter any tendency to simply agree (or disagree) with all of them. This resulted in the reverse scoring of the following items: 4, 7, 13, 15, 19, 20, 23. On the Attitudes Toward Sexual Coercion and Assault factor, higher scores reflect greater acceptance of rape myths and sexual coercion. Higher scores on the Attitudes Toward Sexuality factor reflect less traditional attitudes toward sexuality. Higher scores on the Attitudes Toward Gender Roles factor reflect more traditional attitudes toward gender roles.

Reliability

The Cronbach alpha for the overall revised inventory was .85, and for the three clear factors, the alphas were .85, .79, and .68, respectively (Patton & Mannison, 1995).

Validity

The initial version of the Attitudes Toward Sexuality Inventory has been used to evaluate attitude change following a university course. Pre- and posttest data were received from 115 students (Patton & Mannison, 1993). Patton and Mannison (1994) also used the initial version of the inventory in a study designed to measure attitude and behaviour.

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change (measured by responses to problem situations) following a university human sexuality course. Patton and Mannison (1995) found significant differences. For Factor 1, there was a significant difference between men and women on all 12 items, with 10 of these at the $p < .001$ level. In every instance, men reported less disagreement with the item, indicating that women have a more negative response to sexual coercion. A similar pattern emerged with regard to the attitudes toward rape myths, as well as those items which reflected sexual coercion between people who knew each other. It must be noted that the difference was one of degree; all means were between 1.00 and 3.00 (i.e., between Strongly Disagree and Mildly Disagree).

On Factor 2 there were fewer items (four of eight) with a significant gender difference. The significant items showed women more accepting of the expression of sexuality in children and in the elderly, and more rejecting of the notion that male and female homosexuality is a threat to society. Again, the difference was one of degree on most items.

In Factor 3, all five items showed significant differences between women and men. These differences reflected greater acceptance of traditional gender role attitudes by men—that women being whistled at in public is a compliment, intoxication in women is worse than in men, and homosexuality is a threat to societal institutions.

Analyses of variance were also performed on the summed factor scores for the reliable factors, Factors 1, 2, and 3. As expected, the consistent gender differences found on individual items generally remained for the total factor score, with Factors 1 and 3 showing significant gender differences. Overall means for Factor 2, the general attitudes toward sexuality factor, showed no significant difference between women and men. Although the items reflected specific area differences, the summed score results reflected a representative look at gender differences, illustrating differences on some dimensions of sexuality attitudes only.

Patton and Mannison (1995) indicated that additional redefinition of the measure is necessary. Although the first two factors may be used as independent measures, accepting the multidimensional complexity of attitudes toward sexuality suggests further refinement while continuing to include a wide range of content.

References


Exhibit

Revised Attitudes Toward Sexuality Inventory

Your Attitudes

This page and the next asks you about your attitudes toward a number of sexual issues. Please offer your frank opinion by ticking one of the following options:

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<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>MA</th>
<th>MD</th>
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<td>1. Some girls will only respond sexually if a little force is used.</td>
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<td>2. Women falsely report rape in order to call attention to themselves.</td>
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3. Engaging in sex, e.g., for athletes, does not affect their energy and concentration.

4. A woman’s decision to have an abortion is a good enough reason to have one.

5. A girl will often pretend she doesn’t want intercourse because she doesn’t want to seem loose, but she’s really hoping the guy will force her.

6. In the majority of rapes, the woman already has a bad reputation.

7. Children should be encouraged to accept the practice of masturbation.

8. Easily accessible abortion will probably cause people to become unconcerned and careless.

9. There’s nothing wrong with a little sweet talk to get what you want.

10. A woman cannot be forced to have intercourse against her will.

11. The primary goal of sexual intercourse should be to have children.

12. Sexual inaccessibility of a man’s partner is a common cause of child sexual abuse in the home.

13. It’s not okay for a guy to pressure for more sex even if he thinks the girl has led him on.

14. Normal males can commit rape.

15. Children should be ignored if found playing “doctors and nurses” or other games of sexual exploration.

16. It doesn’t hurt children to have a little bit of sex play with their older relatives.

17. If the couple have dated a long time, it’s only natural for the guy to pressure her for sex.

18. Women who are raped are usually a little to blame for the crime.

19. The elderly in nursing homes should have as much sexual access to each other as they want.

20. Contraceptives should be readily available to teenagers.

21. Even if the guy gets sexually excited, it’s not okay for him to use force.

22. Rape is usually planned and premeditated.

23. Masturbation is a normal sexual activity throughout life.

24. Women should receive preferential treatment right now to make up for past discrimination.

25. If a guy spends a lot of money on a girl, he’s got a right to expect a few sexual favours.

26. Forcing a woman to have sex when she doesn’t want to is rape.

27. A woman who initiates a sexual encounter will probably have sex with anybody.

28. Being whistled at in public is like getting a compliment.

29. You can’t blame a guy for not listening when the girl changes her mind at the last minute.

30. No woman harbours a secret desire to be raped.

31. Sexuality education probably leads to experimentation and increased sexual activity.

32. Intoxication among women is worse than among men.

33. A girl should give in to a guy’s advances so as not to hurt his feelings.

34. Rape has nothing to do with an uncontrollable desire for sex.

35. Male and female homosexuality is a threat to many of society’s institutions.

36. If there are rules about corporal punishment in schools, they should apply equally to boys and girls.

37. If a girl engages in necking or petting and she lets things get out of hand, it is her own fault if her partner forces sex on her.

38. A woman who claims she was raped by a man she knows can be described as a “woman who changed her mind afterward.”


40. No clubs should be allowed to refuse membership, terms, or conditions of membership on the basis of gender.