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Reasons for Consenting to Unwanted Sex Scale

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Factor 3: Relationship Length Norms

19. I believe that the need for asking for sexual consent decreases as the length of an intimate relationship increases.
20. I think that obtaining sexual consent is more necessary in a casual sexual encounter than in a committed relationship.
21. I think that obtaining sexual consent is more necessary in a new relationship than in a committed relationship.
22. If a couple has a long history of consenting sexual activity with each other, I do not believe that they need to ask for consent during each sexual encounter.
23. I believe that partners are less likely to ask for sexual consent the longer they are in a relationship.

Factor 4: (Pro) Assuming Consent

24. I think it is okay to assume consent and proceed sexually until the partner indicates “no.”
25. If a sexual request is made and the partner indicates “no,” I feel that it is okay to continue negotiating the request.
26. I think nonverbal behaviors are as effective as verbal communication to indicate sexual consent.
27. Not asking for sexual consent is not really a big deal.
28. In making a sexual advance, I believe that it is okay to assume consent unless you hear a “no.”
29. I believe it is enough to ask for consent at the beginning of a sexual encounter.
30. I believe that sexual intercourse is the only sexual activity that requires explicit verbal consent.

Factor 5: Indirect Behavioral Approach

31. Typically I communicate sexual consent to my partner using nonverbal signals and body language.
32. Typically I ask for consent by making a sexual advance and waiting for a reaction, so I know whether or not to continue.
33. It is easy to accurately read my current (or most recent) partner’s non-verbal signals as indicating consent or non-consent to sexual activity.
34. I always verbally ask for consent before I initiate a sexual encounter [R].
35. I don’t have to ask or give my partner sexual consent because my partner knows me well enough.
36. I don’t have to ask or give my partner sexual consent because I have a lot of trust in my partner to “do the right thing.”

Factor 6: Awareness of Consent

37. I have discussed sexual consent issues with a friend.
38. I have heard sexual consent issues being discussed by other students on campus.
39. I have discussed sexual consent issues with my current (or most recent) partner at times other than during sexual encounters.
40. I have not given much thought to the topic of sexual consent [R].

Note. The scale follows each of the statements.

Reasons for Consenting to Unwanted Sex Scale

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The purpose of the Reasons for Consenting to Unwanted Sex Scale (RCUSS; Humphreys & Kennett, 2008; Kennett, Humphreys, & Patchell, 2009) is to assess the amount of endorsement women give to a variety of reasons for why they have voluntarily consented to engage in sexual activity they did not desire. This scale was normed on heterosexual undergraduate females.

Description

The RCUSS was developed on the basis of past research that suggested women voluntarily give in to sexual activity, even though they may have little or no sexual desire or would rather not engage in sexual activity (Meston & Buss, 2007; O’Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998). For example, Zimmerman, Sprecher, Langer, and Holloway (1995) found that, when asked how sure they were that they could say “no” if a boyfriend was trying to talk them into having sex, only 61% of females reported that they could definitely say no to unwanted sex. In a diary study, O’Sullivan and Allgeier (1998) found that 50% of the undergraduate women sampled wrote that they had consented to unwanted sexual activity, ranging from kissing to sexual intercourse, during a 2-week period.

The items of the RCUSS were chosen on the basis of past literature, suggesting that women consent to unwanted

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sexual activity for a variety of reasons, including to satisfy their partner’s needs, promote intimacy, avoid tension, prevent a partner from losing interest in the relationship and/or fulfill perceived relationship obligations (Impett & Peplau, 2002; O’Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Shotland & Hunter, 1995). Items of the RCUSS reflect how characteristic it is for a woman to voluntarily consent to unwanted sexual activity for these reasons.

The RCUSS is an 18-item, self-report questionnaire. Factor analysis with varimax rotation revealed a unidimensional scale that included all 18 items (no factor loadings below .30) accounting for 59.2% of the variance.

Response Mode and Timing

Two alternative modes are possible. When it is a pencil-and-paper survey, respondents circle a number from 0 to 8 corresponding to the degree to which they feel the statement is characteristic of themselves. When it is an online survey (using an internal or external service), respondents click on the bullet response from 0 to 8 corresponding to the degree to which they feel the statement is characteristic of themselves. The scale takes approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Scoring

Items are scored 0 for Not at all Characteristic of Me to 8 for Very Characteristic of Me. There are not any reverse-scored items. Scores are summed. Total scores can range from 0 to 144. The mean scores on this inventory for our two samples were $M = 41.2$, $SD = 33.5$ (Kennett et al., 2009) and $M = 35.9$, $SD = 32.5$ (Humphreys & Kennett, 2008), respectively.

Reliability

Based on two female undergraduate datasets, the reliability for the whole RCUSS was .96 ($N = 150$), with an average inter-item correlation of .75 (ranging from .46 to .85; Kennett et al., 2009) and .96 ($N = 152$), with an average inter-item correlation of .55 (ranging from .18 to .85; Humphreys & Kennett, 2008), respectively.

Over a 6-week period, test-retest reliability in a female student sample ($N = 63$) was .85 (Humphreys & Kennett, 2008).

Validity

Construct validity was examined by comparing the RCUSS to a number of relationship variables: a previously established scale, the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES; Koss & Oros, 1982); and two newly designed scales, Sexual Self-Efficacy and Sexual Giving-in Experiences (Kennett et al., 2009).

The RCUSS is positively correlated with both number of dating partners, $r(152) = .23, p = .004$, and number of steady partners, $r(152) = .19, p = .017$. The greater the number of relationship partners, the more likely a woman will be endorsing a greater number of reasons for consenting to unwanted sex. This makes intuitive sense given that more relationship experience will inevitably lead to discrepancies in sexual desires that need to be negotiated. Some are resolved through relationship maintenance behaviors, such as pleasing the partner. The RCUSS is also correlated positively with two individual questions asking about the extent to which women have experienced unwanted sexual advances from men, $r(152) = .25, p = .002$, and the percentage of relationships in which women have experienced unwanted sexual advances, $r(152) = .26, p = .001$. Therefore, the greater the amount of reported unwanted sexual advances from men, the greater the endorsement of various reasons for consenting to these behaviors was observed.

As predicted, the RCUSS scale was also positively correlated with forced sex play (Koss & Oros, 1982, Items 1–3), $r(152) = .541, p < .001$, and attempted or completed forced intercourse (Koss & Oros, 1982, Items 4–10), $r(152) = .502, p < .001$, in the SES. We found that the greater the experience with nonconsensual sexual behavior, at any level, the greater the endorsement of reasons for consenting to unwanted sexual activity. This could be due to the fact that women with higher levels of nonconsensual sex are involved in more ambiguously consensual situations in total or that many nonconsensual sexual situations are later justified as consensual but not desired.

The Sexual Self-Efficacy (Kennett et al., 2009) scale assesses women’s belief that they have what it takes to deal with or prevent unwanted sexual advances. As expected, this 5-item scale was negatively correlated with RCUSS, $r(152) = -.49, p < .001$. Clearly, believing that you have the ability to deal with unwanted sexual advances should lead to less need to endorse reasons for consenting to unwanted sexual activities. The results described in this section were reported from Humphreys and Kennett (2008); however, they were replicated in Kennett et al. (2009).

Other Information

Permission to use the RCUSS may be obtained from either T. Humphreys or D. Kennett.

References


Exhibit

**Reasons for Consenting to Unwanted Sex Scale**

*Instructions:* When answering these questions, please think of all the times in which you have consented to unwanted sexual activity. Rate each statement as to how characteristic it is of you as your reason for consenting to unwanted sexual activity using the scale provided:

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<th>1</th>
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<td><strong>Not at all Characteristic of Me</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Somewhat Characteristic of Me</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Very Characteristic of Me</strong></td>
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</table>

1. I felt that I would be jeopardizing our relationship if I did not engage in the unwanted sexual activity
2. As his girlfriend, I am obligated to engage in the unwanted sexual activity
3. He verbally pressured me to participate in the unwanted sexual behavior
4. He begged me to engage in the unwanted sexual activity until I could not argue anymore
5. I had been drinking or had consumed other types of drugs
6. I felt guilty for not participating in the unwanted sexual activity
7. I feared that I would lose my boyfriend if I did not consent to the unwanted sexual activity
8. I wanted to avoid tension in our relationship
9. I wanted to prevent my partner from losing interest in our relationship
10. I consented to the unwanted sexual activity to promote intimacy
11. I felt it was necessary to satisfy my partner’s needs
12. I felt that I needed to because I consented to the sexual activity before
13. I didn’t want to hurt my partner’s feelings
14. He physically would not let me leave
15. I didn’t want him to feel rejected
16. I felt that, if I consented to the unwanted sexual activity, he would like/love me
17. I wanted to feel accepted by my partner
18. He sweet talked me into it

*This scale follows each of the scale statements.*