

Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale

AARON T. GOETZ,¹ *California State University, Fullerton*

TODD K. SHACKELFORD, *Florida Atlantic University*

Sexual coercion sometimes includes violence and physical force, and in an intimate relationship also may include subtle tactics, such as emotional manipulation. Because relationship partners have a vested interest in each other, one might expect that sexual coercion is sometimes achieved by more subtle manipulations. We developed the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (SCIRS) to assess the prevalence and severity of varied forms of sexual coercion in relationships.

Although other measures of sexual coercion exist, we developed the SCIRS to address limitations of these measures. Previous measures assess the lifetime occurrence of sexually coercive acts but not the frequency and severity of these acts. Also, because some measures of sexual coercion assess lifetime experience with sexual coercion, they cannot differentiate sexual coercion by an intimate partner and, for example, molestation experienced in childhood. Finally, although some measures of sexual coercion include assessments of threats as coercive tactics, they are not able to differentiate types of threats (e.g., threats of physical harm, threats to terminate the relationship).

Description

The 34 SCIRS items assess communicative tactics, such as hinting and subtle manipulations, in addition to tactics such as use of force. The SCIRS assesses use of psychological and behavioral tactics of sexual coercion, such as threats, withholding of resources, and violence. The SCIRS also assesses the use of tactics that range in subtlety.

The SCIRS uses a 6-point scale to assess how often in the past month each of 34 acts has occurred in the participant's relationship. Values are: 0 = *Act did not occur*, 1 = *Act occurred 1 time*, 2 = *Act occurred 2 times*, 3 = *Act occurred 3 to 5 times*, 4 = *Act occurred 6 to 10 times*, 5 = *Act occurred 11 or more times*. A male version of the SCIRS assesses men's self-reports of their own sexually coercive behaviors, whereas a female version assesses women's reports of their partner's sexually coercive behaviors.

Studies using the SCIRS have secured data primarily from heterosexual young adults (mean age 24 years) residing in North America.

Response Mode and Timing

The SCIRS is a self-administered survey but can be adapted for an interview, and standardized instructions make

self-administration uncomplicated. When self-administered, the SCIRS takes about 10 minutes to complete. Although the SCIRS assesses men's sexual coercion in the past month, one can adjust this period to assess the success of an intervention program, for example.

Scoring

Full-scale scores are calculated by summing response values (0–5) for each item in the entire scale. The full scale has a range of 0 to 170 (34 acts × 5). Shackelford and Goetz (2004) conducted a component analysis that produced three components: Resource Manipulation/Violence, Commitment Manipulation, and Defection Threat. Resource Manipulation/Violence includes coercive acts in which men withhold or give gifts and benefits and threaten or use violence and physical force. Commitment Manipulation includes coercive acts in which men manipulate their partners by telling them that the couple's relationship status obligates sexual access. Defection Threat includes coercive acts in which men threaten to pursue relationships with other women.

Reliability

In all studies in which the SCIRS has been used, acceptable reliabilities have been observed, using male samples, female samples, and a combination of both. For example, alpha reliabilities for the three components (Resource Manipulation/Violence, Commitment Manipulation, and Defection Threat) and the total scale were .92, .91, .95, and .96, respectively, in the development and initial validation of the SCIRS (Shackelford & Goetz, 2004).

Validity

A valid measure of sexual coercion might be expected to (a) illustrate that women who are sexually coerced are less satisfied with their relationships, (b) reflect personality differences between men who sexually coerce and those who do not, and (c) differentiate men who would be more upset from those who would be less upset by their partners' denials of sexual access. These predictions have received support. Relationships between men's sexual coercion and women's relationship satisfaction are negative (Shackelford & Goetz, 2004); men who are lower

¹Address correspondence to Aaron T. Goetz, Department of Psychology, California State University, Fullerton, P. O. Box 6846, Fullerton, CA 92834; e-mail: agoetz@fullerton.edu

(relative to men who are higher) on conscientiousness are more likely to sexually coerce their partners (Goetz & Shackelford, 2009); and the more that men report being upset if their partners denied them sexual access, the more sexually coercive these men are (Shackelford & Goetz, 2004).

The SCIRS also has demonstrated convergent and discriminative validity. Correlations between SCIRS scores and scores on a sexual coercion subscale of the Violence Assessment Index are positive and statistically significant, according to men's self-reports and women's partner-reports (Shackelford & Goetz, 2004). Correlations between SCIRS scores and scores on the Controlling Behavior Index (Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 1995), Violence Assessment Index (Dobash et al., 1995), Injury Assessment Index (Dobash et al., 1995), Women's Experience with Battering Scale (Smith, Earp, & DeVellis, 1995), Mate Retention Inventory (Buss, Shackelford, & McKibbin, 2008), and Partner-Directed Insults Scale (Goetz, Shackelford, Schipper, & Stewart-Williams, 2006) are uniformly positive but do not share more than 20% of the response variance, providing evidence of convergent and discriminative validity of the SCIRS (Buss et al., 2008; Goetz & Shackelford, 2006; Shackelford & Goetz, 2004; Starratt, Goetz, Shackelford, McKibbin, & Stewart-Williams, 2008; Starratt, Popp, & Shackelford, 2008; Starratt, Shackelford, Goetz, & McKibbin, 2009). These correlations suggest that the SCIRS measures behaviors that are related to, but distinct from, nonsexual violence and control.

References

- Buss, D. M., Shackelford, T. K., & McKibbin, W. F. (2008). The Mate Retention Inventory—Short Form (MRI-SF). *Personality and Individual Differences, 44*, 322–334.
- Dobash, R. E., Dobash, R. P., Cavanagh, K., & Lewis, R. (1995). Evaluating criminal justice programmes for violent men. In R. E. Dobash, R. P. Dobash, & L. Noaks (Eds.), *Gender and crime* (pp. 358–389). Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Goetz, A. T., & Shackelford, T. K. (2006). Sexual coercion and forced in-pair copulation as sperm competition tactics in humans. *Human Nature, 17*, 265–282.
- Goetz, A. T., & Shackelford, T. K. (2009). Sexual coercion in intimate relationships: A comparative analysis of the effects of women's infidelity and men's dominance and control. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 38*, 226–234.
- Goetz, A. T., Shackelford, T. K., Schipper, L. D., & Stewart-Williams, S. (2006). Adding insult to injury: Development and initial validation of the Partner-Directed Insults Scale. *Violence and Victims, 21*, 691–706.
- Shackelford, T. K., & Goetz, A. T. (2004). Men's sexual coercion in intimate relationships: Development and initial validation of the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale. *Violence and Victims, 19*, 541–556.
- Smith, P. H., Earp, J., & DeVellis, R. (1995). Measuring battering: Development of the Women's Experience with Battering (WEB) Scale. *Women's Health, 1*, 273–288.
- Starratt, V. G., Goetz, A. T., Shackelford, T. K., McKibbin, W. F., & Stewart-Williams, S. (2008). Men's partner-directed insults and sexual coercion in intimate relationships. *Journal of Family Violence, 23*, 315–323.
- Starratt, V. G., Popp, D., & Shackelford, T. K. (2008). Not all men are sexually coercive: A preliminary investigation of the moderating effect of mate desirability on the relationship between female infidelity and male sexual coercion. *Personality and Individual Differences, 45*, 10–14.
- Starratt, V. G., Shackelford, T. K., Goetz, A. T., & McKibbin, W. F. (2009). *Only if he thinks she's cheating: Perceived risk of female infidelity moderates the relationship between objective risk of female infidelity and sexual coercion*. Manuscript under editorial review.

Exhibit

Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale

Instructions: Sexuality is an important part of romantic relationships and can sometimes be a source of conflict. Your honest responses to the following questions will contribute profoundly to what is known about sexuality in romantic relationships and may help couples improve the sexual aspects of their relationships. We appreciate that some of the questions may be uncomfortable for you to answer, but keep in mind that your responses will remain confidential.

Below is a list of acts that can occur in a romantic relationship. Please use the following scale to indicate HOW OFTEN in the *past ONE month* these acts have occurred in *your* current romantic relationship. Write the number that best represents your response in the blank space to the left of each act.

- 0 = Act *did NOT* occur in the past month
 1 = Act occurred *1 time* in the past month
 2 = Act occurred *2 times* in the past month
 3 = Act occurred *3 to 5 times* in the past month
 4 = Act occurred *6 to 10 times* in the past month
 5 = Act occurred *11 OR MORE times* in the past month

- ___ 1. My partner *hinted* that he would withhold benefits that I depend on if I did not have sex with him.
- ___ 2. My partner *threatened* to withhold benefits that I depend on if I did not have sex with him.
- ___ 3. My partner withheld benefits that I depend on to get me to have sex with him.
- ___ 4. My partner *hinted* that he would give me gifts or other benefits if I had sex with him.
- ___ 5. My partner gave me gifts or other benefits so that I would feel obligated to have sex with him.
- ___ 6. My partner reminded me of gifts or other benefits he gave me so that I would feel obligated to have sex with him.
- ___ 7. My partner persisted in asking me to have sex with him, even though he knew that I did not want to.

- ___ 8. My partner pressured me to have sex with him against my will.
- ___ 9. My partner initiated sex with me when I was unaware (for example, I was asleep, drunk, or on medication) *and continued against my will.*
- ___ 10. My partner *threatened* to physically force me to have sex with him.
- ___ 11. My partner physically forced me to have sex with him.
- ___ 12. My partner made me feel obligated to have sex with him.
- ___ 13. My partner *hinted* that he would have sex with another woman if I did not have sex with him.
- ___ 14. My partner *threatened* to have sex with another woman if I did not have sex with him.
- ___ 15. My partner told me that other couples have sex more than we do, to make me feel like I should have sex with him.
- ___ 16. My partner *hinted* that he might pursue a long-term relationship with another woman if I did not have sex with him.
- ___ 17. My partner *threatened* to pursue a long-term relationship with another woman if I did not have sex with him.
- ___ 18. My partner *hinted* that if I were truly committed to him I would have sex with him.
- ___ 19. My partner *told me* that if I were truly committed to him I would have sex with him.
- ___ 20. My partner *hinted* that if I loved him I would have sex with him.
- ___ 21. My partner *told me* that if I loved him I would have sex with him.
- ___ 22. My partner *threatened* violence against me if I did not have sex with him.
- ___ 23. My partner *threatened* violence against someone or something I care about if I did not have sex with him.
- ___ 24. My partner *hinted* that other women were interested in a relationship with him, so that I would have sex with him.
- ___ 25. My partner *told me* that other women were interested in a relationship with him, so that I would have sex with him.
- ___ 26. My partner *hinted* that other women were interested in having sex with him, so that I would have sex with him.
- ___ 27. My partner *told me* that other women were interested in having sex with him, so that I would have sex with him.
- ___ 28. My partner *hinted* that other women were willing to have sex with him, so that I would have sex with him.
- ___ 29. My partner *told me* that other women were willing to have sex with him, so that I would have sex with him.
- ___ 30. My partner *hinted* that it was my obligation or duty to have sex with him.
- ___ 31. My partner *told me* that it was my obligation or duty to have sex with him.
- ___ 32. My partner *hinted* that I was cheating on him, in an effort to get me to have sex with him.
- ___ 33. My partner *accused me* of cheating on him, in an effort to get me to have sex with him.
- ___ 34. My partner and I had sex, even though I did not want to.
-

Sexual Beliefs Scale

CHARLENE L. MUEHLENHARD,¹ *University of Kansas*
 ALBERT S. FELTS, *San Marcos, Texas*

We developed the Sexual Beliefs Scale (SBS) to measure five beliefs related to rape: the beliefs (a) that women often indicate unwillingness to engage in sex when they are actually willing (the Token Refusal, or TR, subscale); (b) that if a woman “leads a man on,” behaving as if she is willing to engage in sex when in fact she is not, then the man is justified in forcing her (the Leading On Justifies Force, or LOJF, subscale); (c) that women enjoy force in sexual situations (the Women Like Force, or WLF, subscale); (d) that men should dominate women in sexual situations (the Men Should Dominate, or MSD, subscale); and (e) that women have a right to refuse sex at any point, at which time men should stop their sexual advances (the No Means Stop, or

NMS, subscale). There were existing measures of rape-related beliefs that yielded one global score (e.g., Burt’s Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, 1980) or that measured one belief (e.g., Burt’s Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale, 1980), but we could find no scales that yielded separate scores for different beliefs.

Description

The short form of the SBS is a 20-item scale consisting of five 4-item subscales; the long form is a 40-item scale consisting of five 8-item subscales. Each item is rated on a 4-point scale, from *Disagree Strongly* (0) to *Agree Strongly*

¹Address correspondence to Charlene Muehlenhard, Department of Psychology, University of Kansas, 426 Fraser Hall, 1415 Jayhawk Blvd., Lawrence, KS 66045-7556; e-mail: charlene@ku.edu