

## **Reiss Extramarital Sexual Permissiveness Scale**

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### **Purpose**

This scale was designed to measure whether people would accept extramarital coitus for themselves under any of four culturally relevant situations.

### **Description**

The four scale questions combine two key important aspects of an extramarital relationships: One aspect focuses on whether the extramarital relation is pleasure centered or love centered, and the other aspect focuses on whether your mate accepts or rejects your having that sort of extramarital relationship. Together these aspects produce a way of classifying four types of extramarital relationships and measuring the degree of extramarital sexual permissiveness. One can then check responses by gender and other demographic variables.

The scale can be answered by those in a marital relationship or by those not married. The unmarried people can answer in terms of how they think they would respond if they were married. I suggest that all respondents be asked to answer the same four questions in two formats—one assuming the marriage they are in is unhappy and the other assuming that the marriage is happy. The differences in these responses would be a measure of the importance of the happiness of a marriage.

In research I carried out on four national samples I found that three factors had a direct impact on what is accepted or rejected in extramarital attitudes: educational level, attitude toward premarital sexuality, and level of marital happiness (Reiss, et .al., 1980, Reiss, 2006). So I would suggest that any research into extramarital sexuality probe those three powerful predictors of extramarital sexual permissiveness as well as other predictors that can be tested (Reiss & Miller, 1979, Weis & Slosnerick, 1981, Weis & Jurich, 1985, Hansen, 1987, Buunk & Bakker, 1995).

### **Response Mode and Timing**

There are four response categories to each of the four questions: a) definitely, b) probably, c) unlikely, d) never. Assuming you would ask these four questions twice: once asking the respondent to assume that he/she is in a happy marriage and one assuming that he/she is in an unhappy marriage, it would take a respondent about 5 or 6 minutes to answer all these questions.

### **Scoring**

Respondents do seem to like having four answer categories but, for scaling, I suggest dichotomizing the answers by counting “definitely” or “probably” as an affirmative response and counting “unlikely” or “never” as a rejecting response and giving one point for each question that the respondent affirms. I would, of course, do this scoring separately for the unhappy marriage condition and the happy marriage condition. So the top score in each of the two scales would be 4 and the lowest score would be 0. I would add that one could gain a rough measure of the equalitarianism of the person by asking them if they would have any problem if their mate gave the same answers as they did. Further, if you were studying married couples it would be worthwhile to compare the scale scores of the two people in the marriage.

### **Reliability**

Reliability can be established by noting that the scales have always met the general Guttman criteria concerning the coefficient of reproducibility and the coefficient of scalability.

### **Validity**

My colleagues and I analyzed four different nationally representative samples from four different years to test for the best predictors of extramarital sexual permissiveness (Reiss, et .al., 1980). The

national samples were carried out by the National Opinion Research Center. Our results were tested and supported by these different samples.

Construct validity was also established by finding the expected differences between men and women and between religiously devout and non-devout groups of people ( Sponaugle, 1993, Banfield & McCabe, 2001). In addition, other researchers reported finding my pleasure/love and mate accepts/rejects aspects of my scale important in their work on measuring extramarital acceptance (Saunders & Edwards, 1984, Glass & Wright, 1992, Treas & Giesen, 2000, Banfield & McCabe, 2001).

### **Other Information**

I give permission to use my scale in any research study. I would ask to be kept informed of such use and of any results of these studies. A researcher could use this same scale and just change “marriage” to a “committed relationship” and study cohabitation and other intimate dyadic arrangements. You would then be measuring ‘Extradynamic Sexual Permissiveness” and your results could be compared to those for studies of Extramarital Sexual Permissiveness.

### **References**

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## **Exhibit**

### *Reiss Extramarital Sexual Permissiveness Scale\**

Answer in terms of your personal values concerning what you would accept in your marriage under the conditions stated. If you are not currently married answer in terms of a possible future marriage.

1. Would you accept extramarital sexual intercourse in which physical pleasure is your focus even though your mate would not accept your having such a relationship?  
a) Definitely b) Probably c) Unlikely d) Never
2. Would you accept extramarital sexual intercourse in which physical pleasure is your focus if your mate would accept your having this type of relationship?  
a) Definitely b) Probably c) Unlikely d) Never
3. Would you accept extramarital sexual intercourse in which love is emphasized even though your mate would not accept your having such a relationship?  
a) Definitely b) Probably c) Unlikely d) Never
4. Would you accept extramarital sexual intercourse in which love is emphasized if your mate would accept your having this type of relationship?  
a) Definitely b) Probably c) Unlikely d) Never

\*Ask the single people to assume they are in a happy marriage when answering these four questions and then give them these same four questions again and ask them to assume they are in an unhappy marriage. Also ask married people to answer these questions twice—once for being in a happy marriage and once for being in an unhappy marriage. At the end, for married people, you should ask if in their own marriage they feel they are closer to a happy marriage or closer to an unhappy marriage.