

A 30-Item Schedule for Assessing Assertive Behavior¹

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A 30-item schedule for measuring assertiveness is presented. The schedule is shown to have moderate to high test-retest reliability ($r = .78$; $p < .01$) and split-half reliability ($r = .77$; $p < .01$). Validity in terms of the impressions respondents make on other people ($.33 \leq r's \leq .62$; $p's < .01$) and in terms of their indications of how they would behave in specific situations in which assertive, outgoing behavior can be used with profit ($r = .70$; $p < .01$) is satisfactory. Item analysis shows that 27 of the 30 items correlate significantly with the total scale score and 19 of 30 correlate significantly with external criteria. Considerations regarding the usage of a shorter version of the scale are discussed, as are the implications of the finding that assertiveness covaries negatively with impressions of respondents' niceness.

Assertion training has received much attention as a behavior therapy technique for directly shaping assertive behavior (Rathus & Ruppert, 1972; Salter, 1949; Wolpe, 1958, 1969, 1970; Wolpe & Lazarus, 1966). Thus the need for an instrument for measuring behavioral change in assertion training has arisen. Wolpe (1969) and Wolpe & Lazarus (1966) report that they assess patients' pretreatment assertiveness by asking them several questions, but they report no method for quantifying and thus determining the reliability and validity of these data. The old "A-S Reaction Study" (Allport, 1928) comprised a quantified method for evaluating assertiveness, but many of the items on this scale appear to be in need of updating. For example, Item Three on the 1939 Revision of the Form for Women reads

At church, a lecture, or an entertainment, if you arrive after the program has commenced and find that there are people standing but also that there are front seats available which might be secured without "piggishness" but with considerable conspicuousness, do you take the seats?

The *Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey* (Guilford & Zimmerman, 1956) contains a scale of social ascendance, but this instrument also contains 270 items which assess traits other than assertiveness.

¹ Reprints of this article are available from the author at 3596 Hunt Road, Wantagh, N. Y. 11793.

TABLE 1
Rathus Assertiveness Schedule

Directions: Indicate how characteristic or descriptive each of the following statements is of you by using the code given below.

- +3 very characteristic of me, extremely descriptive^a
- +2 rather characteristic of me, quite descriptive
- +1 somewhat characteristic of me, slightly descriptive
- 1 somewhat uncharacteristic of me, slightly nondescriptive
- 2 rather uncharacteristic of me, quite nondescriptive
- 3 very uncharacteristic of me, extremely nondescriptive

- ___ 1. Most people seem to be more aggressive and assertive than I am.*
- ___ 2. I have hesitated to make or accept dates because of "shyness."*
- ___ 3. When the food served at a restaurant is not done to my satisfaction, I complain about it to the waiter or waitress.
- ___ 4. I am careful to avoid hurting other people's feelings, even when I feel that I have been injured.*
- ___ 5. If a salesman has gone to considerable trouble to show me merchandise which is not quite suitable, I have a difficult time in saying "No."*
- ___ 6. When I am asked to do something, I insist upon knowing why.
- ___ 7. There are times when I look for a good, vigorous argument.
- ___ 8. I strive to get ahead as well as most people in my position.
- ___ 9. To be honest, people often take advantage of me.*
- ___ 10. I enjoy starting conversations with new acquaintances and strangers.
- ___ 11. I often don't know what to say to attractive persons of the opposite sex.*
- ___ 12. I will hesitate to make phone calls to business establishments and institutions.*
- ___ 13. I would rather apply for a job or for admission to a college by writing letters than by going through with personal interviews.*
- ___ 14. I find it embarrassing to return merchandise.*
- ___ 15. If a close and respected relative were annoying me, I would smother my feelings rather than express my annoyance.*
- ___ 16. I have avoided asking questions for fear of sounding stupid.*
- ___ 17. During an argument I am sometimes afraid that I will get so upset that I will shake all over.*
- ___ 18. If a famed and respected lecturer makes a statement which I think is incorrect, I will have the audience hear my point of view as well.
- ___ 19. I avoid arguing over prices with clerks and salesmen.*
- ___ 20. When I have done something important or worthwhile, I manage to let others know about it.
- ___ 21. I am open and frank about my feelings.
- ___ 22. If someone has been spreading false and bad stories about me, I see him (her) as soon as possible to "have a talk" about it.
- ___ 23. I often have a hard time saying "No."*
- ___ 24. I tend to bottle up my emotions rather than make a scene.*
- ___ 25. I complain about poor service in a restaurant and elsewhere.
- ___ 26. When I am given a compliment, I sometimes just don't know what to say.*
- ___ 27. If a couple near me in a theatre or at a lecture were conversing rather loudly, I would ask them to be quiet or to take their conversation elsewhere.

TABLE 1 (Continued)

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- ____28. Anyone attempting to push ahead of me in a line is in for a good battle.
 ____29. I am quick to express an opinion.
 ____30. There are times when I just can't say anything.*
-

* Total score obtained by adding numerical responses to each item, after changing the signs of reversed items.

* Reversed item.

The schedule in the present study consists of the 30 items shown in Table 1. Some of these are based on Wolpe's (1969, p. 63) and Wolpe and Lazarus's (1966, p. 43) situations, and on items from the Allport (1928) and Guilford and Zimmerman (1956) scales. Others were suggested by diaries the author requested be kept by two classes of college juniors and seniors. In them were recorded behaviors the student would have liked to exhibit but refrained from exhibiting because of fear of aversive social consequences.

The reliability and validity and an item analysis of the resultant instrument, the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS), are discussed below.

RELIABILITY

Test-retest reliability. Test-retest reliability of the RAS was established by administering the instrument to 68 undergraduate college men and women ranging in age from 17 to 27, and then retesting them after 2 weeks had passed. The mean pretest score was 29.2941, the standard deviation 29.121.² Mean posttest score was 27.6176, and the standard deviation 27.6319. A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was run between respondents' pre- and posttest scores, yielding an r of .778 ($p < .01$), indicating moderate to high stability of test scores over a 2-month period.

Split-half reliability. Internal consistency of the RAS was determined by having 18 college juniors and seniors administer the test to 67 people off campus. They were instructed to choose three or four persons whom they knew quite well. Ss thus chosen were male and female, ranging in age from 15 to 70. Their RAS scores varied from the +60's to the -70's.

A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was run between total odd and total even item scores, yielding an r of .7723 ($p < .01$), suggesting that the qualities measured by the RAS possess moderate to high homogeneity.

² Data presented in this article were processed by the UNIVAC 1108 Computer at the State University of New York at Albany Computing Center. The author is grateful to Larry J. Siegel, currently of the College of Criminal Justice at Northern Arizona University, for his aid in programming.

VALIDITY

The validity of the RAS was established by comparing self-reported RAS scores to two external measures of assertiveness.

Study 1. In the first validating study, the 18 college students who administered the RAS to the 67 subjects they knew well then rated these subjects on a 17-item schedule (Table 2) constructed according to semantic differential technique (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957). The modifiers "very" were attached to the extreme positions of each scale, "slightly" to the central positions, and "rather" or "quite" to the moderate positions. The extreme positive pole of each scale was assigned to the number +3, and positions were numbered consecutively, omitting zero because of the absence of a center point, to -3, the negative pole of each scale.

The factor structure of the 17-item rating schedule was determined by factor analyzing raters' responses using a principal component procedure, followed by a varimax rotation of the raw factors. Four factors, accounting for 71.2% of the total variance were thus obtained: assertiveness, contentment, intelligence and prosperity, and health.³ Pearson product moment correlation coefficients were then run between the 67 RAS scores and the student raters' impressions of their personality traits on each of the 17 scales. RAS scores correlated significantly ($p < .01$)

TABLE 2
17-Item Rating Schedule

1. bold	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	timid
2. poor	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	prosperous
3. quiet	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	outspoken
4. intelligent	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	stupid
5. assertive	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	nonassertive
6. awful	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	nice
7. unhealthy	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	healthy
8. aggressive	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	withdrawing
9. happy	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	unhappy
10. satisfied	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	dissatisfied
11. unfair	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	fair
12. ill	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	well
13. confident	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	uncertain
14. smart	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	dumb
15. strong-willed	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	weak-willed
16. active	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	inactive
17. discontent	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	:	_____	content

³Data concerning the loadings of the semantic differential scales presented in Table 2 with each of the factors are available from the author.

with each of the five scales comprising the assertiveness factor of the rating schedule: boldness ($r = .6124$), outspokenness (.6163), assertiveness (.3424), aggressiveness (.5374), and confidence (.3294). RAS scores also covaried significantly but negatively ($r = -.3593$; $p < .01$) with scale No. 6, indicating niceness, but did not covary at above chance expectation with any of the 11 remaining scales. RAS scores thus serve as valid indicators of respondents' assertiveness in terms of the impressions they make on other people. Failure of RAS scores to covary with scales indicative of intelligence, happiness, fairness, and so on is suggestive that RAS scores are not confounded by a desire on the part of respondents to answer items in the manner they feel is socially desirable.

Study 2. Another index of the RAS's validity was determined by comparing 47 coeds' RAS scores to ratings of their responses to five questions asking them what they would do in situations in which assertive, outgoing behavior could be used with profit. The questions were as follows:

1. You have worked very hard on a term paper and you receive a very poor grade, say a D or an F. What would you do? (If the subject says that she would discuss it with her professor, she is further asked "What if the professor is uncooperative or nasty?")

2. You are seated at a restaurant counter, waiting for service. The waitress begins to serve someone who came in after you, a couple of seats away. What would you do?

3. A casual acquaintance remarks "That's a pretty sweater you're wearing." What would you do?

4. You have tried on five pairs of shoes and none of them is quite what you are looking for. The salesman seems to be a bit disgusted. He says "Lady, this is what everybody's wearing these days. If you don't find what you want here, you're not going to find it anywhere." What would you do?

5. You are trying to take a nap. Your roommate is talking to a friend on the other side of the room. They are trying to speak softly, but you are being kept awake. What would you do?

The subjects were questioned by neutral interviewers, and question and answer sessions were audiotaped. Tapes were then played for raters who knew neither the subjects nor how they had scored on the RAS. Responses to the questions were rated from "very poor" to "very good" according to the following standards: very poor—"Don't know" or would do or say nothing; poor—attempted assertion that is inadequate; fair—some assertion shown, but not carefully thought out

or "natural"; good—appropriate assertiveness shown, but with rough edges; very good—appropriate assertion shown with good expressiveness. Attention was paid to Ss' tones of voice and credibility as well as to the content of their remarks. Answers were given from 1 point to a very poor response to 5 points for a very good response. Total ratings could thus vary from 5 to 25 points per S. Interrater reliability for ratings of audiotaped responses was very high: $r = .9382$ ($p < .01$).

Each subject's score for these question and answer sessions was determined by taking the mean of the two raters' totals. Scores from the audiotaped sessions thus ranged from 5.5 to 23. Their RAS scores ranged between -52 and $+49$. A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was then run between RAS scores and scores from the audiotaped sessions, yielding an r of $.7049$ ($p < .01$). Thus, RAS scores are also valid in terms of impartial raters' impressions of the behaviors that subjects report they would exhibit in specific social encounters.

ITEM ANALYSIS

To determine each item's contribution to the RAS and its validity in terms of external criteria, Pearson moment correlation coefficients were run between item scores, total RAS scores, and semantic differential ratings of six personality traits for the 67 subjects discussed in the first of the above validity studies. Table 3 shows the resultant correlation matrix, indicating the correlations between each of the 30 RAS items, total RAS scores, the five semantic differential scales that comprise the assertiveness factor of the 17-item rating schedule, and the semantic differential scale indicating niceness.

Results. Of the 30 items, 27 correlate significantly with the total RAS score. None of the remaining three detracts from the total score, however, and it is suggested that these items be maintained. Items 1 and 21 indicate, respectively, whether respondents consider themselves to be as aggressive and assertive as their peers and whether they consider themselves to be open and frank about their emotions. Although a client's own conception of his current status is not valid in terms of the impressions he makes on others, his self-concept is likely to be related to his willingness to undergo certain types of treatments. For example, the meek individual who looks upon himself as assertive is likely to resist assertion training, though he be in dire need of it. The therapist can make use of such information. It is suggested that item 18 be maintained since it is significant in its relationship to the total score at the .10 level of confidence, and it is desirable to know whether a client feels that he would contradict a respected person in a public situation.

Perusal of the correlations between test items and the independent in-

dications of respondents' boldness, outspokenness, assertiveness, aggressiveness, and confidence indicate that 19 of the 30 items correlate significantly with at least one of these external criteria. The other 11 items may nevertheless be maintained in the scale for several reasons: none of them correlates significantly negatively with external criteria; the RAS possesses moderate to high internal consistency; and they offer useful information concerning respondents.

Of the 30 RAS items, 28 were found to correlate negatively with semantic differential ratings of respondents' niceness, and 6 of these do so significantly. The social desirability of assertiveness is thus brought into question. While this finding is further suggestive that assertiveness as measured by the RAS is not likely to be confounded with social desirability, it implies that therapists who are attempting to instigate assertive behavior in clients must take care to point out the distinction between demanding that one be treated with fairness and justice and the gratuitous expression of nastiness.

Therapists should consider that a global stimulating of clients to

TABLE 3
Correlations between Assertiveness Schedule Items, Total Assertiveness Schedule Scores, Assertiveness Factor Items and the Niceness Item from the 17 Item Semantic Differential Rating Scale^a

R.A.S. Item	Total Score	Items from 17 Item Semantic Differential Rating Scale					
		Boldness	Outspoken- ness	Assertive- ness	Aggressive- ness	Confidence	Niceness
1	.1110	-.0223	.0907	-.0033	.1177	.0926	-.0138
2	.7006**	.5680**	.5073**	.2397*	.5313**	.3065*	-.2408*
3	.4176**	.2718*	.1853	.1695	.1620	.1274	-.0896
4	.5030**	.1630	.3200**	.1860	.2749*	.1315	-.1508
5	.2362*	.1295	.0247	.0304	.0560	.0383	-.0078
6	.4149**	.3098*	.2787*	.3127*	.3505**	.3615**	-.1178
7	.3369**	.1450	.1562	.1000	.0522	.0077	-.1275
8	.4813**	.2014	.1514	-.1098	.0972	.0182	-.1206
9	.2385*	.0985	.1236	-.0928	.2388*	.1445	.1301
10	.4218**	.1734	.1773	.0072	.1696	.2246	-.0902
11	.5003**	.3359*	.4169**	.2443*	.2251	.2325	-.1193
12	.5783**	.3459**	.3069*	.1308	.2897*	.2398*	-.2165
13	.4211**	.3340**	.3621**	.1065	.2650*	.0397	-.0994
14	.4514**	.3999**	.3007*	.3550**	.4272**	.2247	-.0619

TABLE 3 (Continued)

R.A.S. Item	Total Score	Items from 17 Item Semantic Differential Rating Scale					
		Boldness	Outspoken- ness	Assertive- ness	Aggressive- ness	Confidence	Niceness
15	.4077***	.0832	.2025	.1717	.1520	.1862	-.2181
16	.3619**	.3152**	.2711*	.2369*	.2133	.0363	-.2906*
17	.6465***	.4878**	.4731***	.2627*	.4130***	.2850*	-.3160***
18	.2318	.0887	.0223	.0337	.0554	.1800	-.1633
19	.5227***	.4698**	.3796***	.2304	.3606***	.3382***	-.2040
20	.2826*	.1112	.1615	.1013	.1650	.0606	-.1048
21	.2107	-.0202	-.0125	-.0424	.0268	-.0590	-.0297
22	.4442***	.3544***	.3347***	.0997	.2205	.0225	-.2530*
23	.5236***	.3378***	.3954***	.2642*	.2845**	.2889*	-.3395***
24	.5428***	.2586*	.3925***	.2161	.2824*	.2253	-.0732
25	.4982***	.3831***	.3683***	.2566*	.3930***	.1382	-.1566
26	.3060*	.0784	.0809	.0616	.1531	.0705	.0115
27	.4198***	.0939	.1818	-.0117	.1086	-.0805	-.1245
28	.4459***	.2925*	.2947*	.1739	.1151	.0581	-.2236
29	.5507***	.4267***	.4378***	.2077	.4105***	.2151	-.2017
30	.6078***	.3100*	.3052*	.1280	.2083	.1008	-.2865***

$N = 67.$

* $p < .05.$

** $p < .01.$

behave more assertively (e.g., as suggested by Salter, 1949) may result in strong aversive social feedback which the client receiving assertion training is likely to be particularly ill-equipped to handle. As has been pointed out elsewhere (Rathus & Ruppert, 1972), it is often the case that others have a stake in the client's remaining nonassertive, and that they will resist his efforts to reconstruct his relationships such that favors and deficiencies are reciprocated rather than one-sided. In so doing, they are likely to suggest that he is failing to behave "nicely." Such remarks will be highly punitive to the client who possesses little confidence and experiences the therapist's encouragement and approbation for but 50 minutes once or twice a week. Thus, in the early stages of assertion training assertiveness may be most effectively fostered through practice in specific situations in which the client is likely to arouse either positive social feedback or limited amounts of negative feedback. In this manner, he

may gradually develop confidence and increased tolerance for negative feedback.

DISCUSSION

The data show that the self-reporting RAS permits reliable and valid assessment of assertiveness or social boldness. Such an instrument can be used both in research that investigates the efficacies of various procedures for shaping assertive behavior and for obtaining pre- and post-measures of patients' assertiveness in clinical practice. An item analysis suggests that a shortened 19-item version of the RAS may be used with accurate results, but that retaining all items will not detract from the instrument's validity. It is recommended that all 30 items be retained since they will provide the therapist with useful information concerning his patients' impressions of their own assertiveness and frankness, and of the behaviors which are most typical of them in a variety of situations.

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