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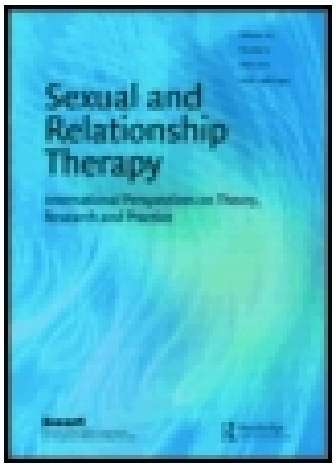

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The Golombok Rust Inventory of Marital State (GRIMS)

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ABSTRACT *The Golombok Rust Inventory of Marital State (GRIMS) is a new short (28 item) questionnaire for the assessment of the quality of a relationship. The GRIMS is a companion test to the Golombok Rust Inventory of Sexual Satisfaction (GRISS) which is in use in sex therapy and sexual dysfunction clinics and research. Its development and construction are described, together with details of item analysis and other psychometric procedures. The scale, which can be used for either men or women, has good reliability (.90 for women and .92 for men). Content and face validity are good. Some evidence of discriminative validity is also given. The GRIMS will have clinical and research application for marriage guidance and marital therapy clinics. Some further consideration is given to various differences between men and women in their perceptions of a good relationship.*

Introduction

Demographic and clinical research in marital therapy in the United Kingdom has been disadvantaged by the lack of a good, short and recent questionnaire to assess objectively the state of a marriage. Most of the questionnaires that have been used were developed in the United States, thus introducing a culture bias into assessment. Of the existing questionnaires, the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1957) was one of the earliest instruments developed and is now somewhat dated in conceptualisation. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) whilst widely used suffers from the same culture bias. The Spouse Observation Check List (Weiss & Margolin, 1977) comprises 400 items and is therefore tedious to complete. Other scales used in the assessment of marital satisfaction include the Marital Communication Inventory (Bienvenu, 1978), the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (Snyder, 1982), the Areas of Change Questionnaire (Weiss *et al.*, 1973, and the Marital Precounselling Inventory (Stuart & Stuart, 1972). Some of these instruments were developed to be consistent with a theoretical perspective of

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marital satisfaction and as such have a restricted definition of marital adjustment/satisfaction.

The scales mentioned above, while receiving subsequent validity and reliability estimations, have not generally been psychometrically constructed and consequently tend to contain a large number of redundant items. A more popular scale used in this country has been the Maudsley Marital Questionnaire (Crowe, 1978). Yet while this scale has been successful in both nine and twenty item versions at demonstrating reliability and validity (Arrindell *et al.*, 1983a,b; Arrindell & Schaap, 1985) it still raises doubts concerning the comprehensiveness and specificity of its original development.

The Golombok Rust Inventory of Marital State (GRIMS) has been constructed to address the shortcomings of existing instruments. In developing the inventory a great deal of attention has been paid to the conceptual blueprint of marital discord. Widespread consultations among a range of practising counsellors, therapists and clients provided a test specification to reflect the practical situations encountered by them. The specification particularly addressed the areas in which change was required or noted throughout the course of therapy. A large number of items under this specification have been reduced, first conceptually and then psychometrically, to yield a short efficient scale. The GRIMS is a companion scale to the Golombok Rust Inventory of Sexual Satisfaction, GRISS, (Rust & Golombok, 1985a,b,c; Bennun *et al.*, 1985).

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Design of the Pilot Version

Stage 1

In order to obtain relevant items, both marital therapists and their clients were used in generating specific areas of distress. Fifteen couple therapists were asked to identify (i) areas which they believed to be important in marital harmony and (ii) the areas they would assess during initial interviews. Information from clients was obtained in the context of a marital therapy study (Bennun, 1985) where 57 couples were specifically requested to identify their targets for change.

Stage 2

These responses were collated, reviewed and structured to produce a two-dimensional test specification. Axis one specified areas of (i) Interests shared (work, politics, friends, etc.) and degree of dependence and independence, (ii) Communication, verbal and non-verbal, (iii) Sex, (iv) Warmth, love and hostility, (v) Trust and respect, (vi) Roles, expectations and goals, (vii) Decision making, and (viii) Coping with problems and crisis. Axis two specified areas in which the content of axis one may become manifest: (i) beliefs about, insight into, and understanding of the nature of dyadic relationships, (ii) Behaviour within the actual relationship, (iii) Attitudes and feelings about relationships, (iv) Motivation for change, understanding the possibility of change, and commitment to a future together, (v) Extent of agreement within the couple. This 8×5 design produces 40 cells.

Stage 3

Between three and six items were constructed for each cell of the test specification, generating 183 items. Items were sought which could meaningfully be answered by either sex. Consultation and review among experienced marital therapists led to a reduction of this item pool to a 100 item pilot version of the test, with between two and four items per specification cell. Six lie items were also included. Items were prepared as statements to which the respondent was asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. The items were thus forced choice (there was no 'don't know' category), but also allowed for strength of feeling to affect scores where views were strongly held.

The Pilot Sample

The pilot version of the test was administered to both partners in 60 client couples from marital therapy and marriage guidance clinics throughout the country, but predominantly from the South.

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Item Analysis

Preliminary item screening of the data eliminated all items which had a difficulty value of greater than .8 or less than .2 for either men or women. That is, items to which less than 20% either agreed or disagreed (whether strongly or otherwise) were excluded. Further items were excluded where the number of non-responses exceeded 1%. While clients were strongly urged to answer all the items, there are invariably some items within a pilot version which they find impossible to answer due to non-applicability or other special reasons. The remaining 58 items were factor analysed using principal factoring. This was done for the men and women separately. Apart from some differentiating items the overall results were similar. The factor structure clearly suggested a main factor which accounted for about 20% of the variance. For men, four subsequent factors accounted for 7.2%, 4.6%, 3.1% and 2.6% of the variance respectively, with a similar pattern for women. Factor identification by inspection of both the male and female items identified factor one as a general marital discord factor with some relation to a second factor which had an increased emphasis on sexuality and lie items. The low commonality of subsequent factors at this stage is a strong indication of a unidimensional scale. However steps were taken to at least attempt to identify a subscale structure as this can be informative in certain circumstances. Reanalyses of the first 4, 5, 6 and 7 factor solutions with oblique rotations were carried out to identify signs of stability. These analyses looked at men and women combined and separately. Factors other than the first proved to be unstable under these conditions, although factors which could be named e.g. jealousy, the traditional marriage, outside relationships, sex problems, violence, the 'man-at-the-pub' marriage, etc. did occasionally emerge. It seemed that, although these various elements are important to the quality of a marriage, the interactions across and between possible sub-categorisations are so strong that they

cannot on their own generate unidimensional scales. Directions of causality can point in either direction, and non-linear relationships may well abound. In spite of this the large general factor indicates that from this pool of interactive situations, feelings, motivations and coping strategies, there does arise a strong and measurable single scale of marital quality.

Elimination of items with low commonalities on first a five- and then a three-factor solution reduced the 58 items to 42. These were further reduced to six major criteria (a) balance across the original test specification, (b) balance of positive and negative items to avoid acquiescence, (c) balance of items to which >50% agreed with items to which <50% agreed, to reduce social desirability bias (d) similarity of item behaviour in men and women, (e) size of loading on the general factor, and (f) low correlation with 'lie' items. Criteria 'a' ensured content validity and eliminated duplication, criteria 'b', 'c' and 'f' reduced bias, while criterion 'e' achieved the aim of classical item analysis in selecting items with good discrimination. Criteria 'd' enabled us to develop an identical scale for men and women which simplifies administration. The resultant scale had 28 items. The scale is available from the authors.

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Scale Characteristics

For the 60 couples (120 subjects) in the pilot sample the mean score on the scale for men was 46.88 (SD=10.99), and for women 42.46 (SD=11.26). The split half reliability of the scale was .92 for men and .90 for women. Content validity of the scale is high with respect to its specification, and high face validity has been incorporated into the item selection.

To obtain evidence of diagnostic validity we made use of the fact that many presenters at marital clinics come with primary sexual problems and with marriages which are otherwise satisfactory. Therapists were asked to make this diagnosis for the sample on the basis of their clinical interviews. Of the 60 subjects, nine were diagnosed as having a sexual rather than a marital problem, and another 15 as having a heavy sexual element within their marital problem. For men these three groups had means of 43.13 for the marital group, 51.46 for the sexual complications group, and 56.11 for the sexual problems only group. Analysis of variance gave a significance of .0028 for the difference between these means. For women the means were 38.63, 45.77 and 53.89 respectively ($p<.0003$).

The Relationship Between Partners' Assessments of Marital State

While the scores of both the male and female partners are indicators of the state of the relationship itself, we would expect some differences between them, particularly when one of the partners is tired of the relationship while the other is keen on its continuation. The scores of both partners can be seen as representing some common and some specific variance. The extent of the commonality is indicated by the

correlation between the partners' scores which, for the pilot study was .73 (representing a common variance of 50%). The size of this correlation is a good indication of the power of the test, and is of such a size as to give us some confidence in predicting the state of a relationship from one of the partners alone.

For the data from the pilot study an investigation was made of the extent it was possible to predict the score of an absent partner from all the 100 data items collected on a presenter. A multiple regression was carried out with the male score as the dependent variable and the female score and all 100 female items as independent variables. A step-down procedure was used to extract successive amounts of variance. As would be expected the first variable to be extracted was the female score which accounted for .52 of the variance. But in addition a further eight items added extra information to such an extent that when all were included the multiple correlation was .89, showing a predictive power of 79% of the variance. This is indicative of a very high level of reliability for the scale. Of the eight further items which contributed, four were clearly suppressor variables. These are to be expected if we assume that, although male and female scores are closely related, couples in the sample tend to have one partner who is less satisfied with the relationship than the other. In this case a relatively good GRIMS score by one person can give extra evidence that it is their partner who has the poor GRIMS score that led to the couple presenting for therapy. For the prediction of the female scale by the male score and male items, again 52% of the variance was common, and eight further items made significant additional contributions up to a multiple correlation of .88 (79% of variance). In this case five of the eight items were clearly suppressor variables.

In looking at the four remaining female items and three remaining male items, several of these indicate an irritation of one person with the negative attitude to the relationship by the other. Thus "We waste too much time trying to make decisions" predicts a high GRIMS score by the partner for both men and women, as does "My partner has sometimes refused to talk to me" by men about their partner.

Some interesting patterns emerged which indicate differences between the sexes in the perception of relationships. Particular attitudes in both men and women can predict the likelihood of the partner finding the relationship unsatisfactory. Thus the belief (or recognition) by women that "Marriage is more about money and security than about love" significantly predicts ($p<.0002$) that the male partner will have a poorer GRIMS score. The belief by a woman that she "has fixed roles within her marriage for which she is responsible" makes it more likely that the man will not perceive a problem. Perhaps paradoxically (or perhaps not!), the reverse holds for the male view of tradition in marriage. The agreement by men that "They both have fixed roles within the marriage" makes it more likely ($p<.002$) that the woman will see the marriage as problematical. A final difference between the sexes lies in the perception by either partner that "We are on the brink of separation". For men this adds no extra prediction to the woman partner's score, while for women its additional predictive power is about 4% and significant at the .0002 level. This seems to suggest that women are much better than men at recognising what their partner is thinking in terms of ending the relationship.

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