

New Zealand Student Norms for the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule¹

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Assertion training appears to be a well established treatment modality in New Zealand. The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule is one psychometrically-sound and useful measure of assertion but there do not appear to be any local norms available. The Rathus was administered to 116 undergraduate student volunteers. Norms were developed and these were similar to North American student samples although the sex difference previously found was reversed. Males in the present sample scored lower than females and significantly lower than their American counterparts. The split-half reliability obtained was higher than for American students. These data should greatly increase the utility of the Rathus in this country.

Assertion training is now well established as a form of treatment in this country. Recent New Zealand Psychological Society conference papers (e.g. Dugdale, 1979), published studies (e.g. Gilmour, McCormick & de Ruiter, 1981) and a group training manual (Manthei, 1979) indicate the level of interest. The evaluation of assertion training often includes the use of self-report measures and only some of these measures have proved to be psychometrically sound. The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (Rathus, 1973) (RAS) is one such measure with high split-half reliability (Rathus & Nevid, 1977; Quillan, Besing & Dinning, 1977) and high test-retest reliability (Rathus, 1973; Heimberg & Harrison, 1980). This measure has been cross validated (Rathus & Nevid, 1977) and factor analysed (Nevid & Rathus, 1979; Hull & Hull, 1978; Heimberg & Harrison, 1980). Norms have been established for North American: college students (Nevid & Rathus, 1978; Quillin, *et al.* 1977); psychiatric patients (Rathus & Nevid, 1977); and adult male prisoners (Heimberg & Harrison, 1980). To date there do not appear to be any norms that have been established for New Zealand

and the development of such norms will greatly increase the utility of the RAS.

Method

As part of a larger study on the development of assertiveness measures the RAS was given to 116 volunteer undergraduate Education students (34 male, 82 female). Forms were completed during class time.

Results

Percentiles developed from the distribution of RAS scores are presented in Table 1. Overall the New Zealand norms are highly similar to the North American norms with the local means falling between the means of the two overseas studies. The ranges for New Zealand women's scores (47 to -38) and men's scores (56 to -32) are slightly larger than for the Nevid & Rathus (1978) sample of American women (45 to -34) and men (48 to -24). The means for American women ($\bar{x} = 8$) are non-significantly higher ($t < 1$, d.f. = 842) than for New Zealand women ($\bar{x} = 6$) and the same trend applied to men (USA, $\bar{x} = 11$; NZ, $\bar{x} = 2$) but in this case it reached significance ($t = 2.34$, d.f. = 669, $p < .02$). The Quillin *et al.* (1977) study that gives data for combined male and female scores indicated that this American mean is lower than the local mean (USA $\bar{x} = 0$, NZ $\bar{x} = 6$). The lack of data given in this

¹The author wishes to express his thanks to Dr L. Bird, Education Department, Victoria University, for her assistance.

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Table 1
Percentile ranks of RAS scores for males and females from New Zealand and USA and ranks of combined male and female scores from New Zealand and a second USA sample.

| Per-centile | Women's Scores | | Men's Scores | | Combined male & female scores | |
|-------------|--------------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|-------------------------------|-----|
| | USA | NZ | USA | NZ | USA | NZ |
| | (Sample 1 ^a) | | (Sample 1 ^a) | | (Sample 2 ^b) | |
| 95 | 45 | 47 | 48 | 56 | 35 | 51 |
| 90 | 37 | 43 | 40 | 41 | 25 | 43 |
| 85 | 31 | 36 | 33 | 25 | 21 | 36 |
| 80 | 26 | 29 | 30 | 22 | 20 | 29 |
| 75 | 23 | 22 | 26 | 15 | 15 | 23 |
| 70 | 19 | 17 | 24 | 12 | 11 | 17 |
| 65 | 17 | 15 | 19 | 10 | 10 | 15 |
| 60 | 14 | 12 | 17 | 8 | 6 | 11 |
| 55 | 11 | 10 | 14 | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| 50 | 8 | 6 | 11 | 2 | 0 | 6 |
| 45 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 1 | -4 | 1 |
| 40 | 2 | -2 | 6 | 0 | -5 | 0 |
| 35 | -1 | -4 | 3 | -1 | -9 | -3 |
| 30 | -4 | -7 | 1 | -5 | -13 | -7 |
| 25 | -8 | -10 | -3 | -10 | -14 | -10 |
| 20 | -13 | -16 | -7 | -14 | -19 | -15 |
| 15 | -17 | -22 | -11 | -15 | -20 | -17 |
| 10 | -24 | -28 | -15 | -27 | -25 | -23 |
| 5 | -34 | -38 | -24 | -32 | -35 | -27 |

^a Sample 1 from: Nevid & Rathus (1978).

^b Sample 2 from: Quillan, Besing & Dinning (1977).

American study preclude statistical significance testing.

The mean for males ($\bar{x} = 2$) was less but not significantly less than the mean for females ($\bar{x} = 6$) in the local sample, ($t < 1$, d.f. = 114) and this was the reverse of the trend that reached significance in the Nevid & Rathus (1978) study.

A Pearson product moment split-half reliability of .82 was achieved and this was slightly higher than the results of Rathus, 1973 ($r = .77$) and Quillan *et al.*, 1977 ($r = .76$).

Discussion

On the basis of the current student sample the New Zealand RAS norms are highly similar to those of the two North American studies. Sex differences were found with local males scoring lower than females which is the reverse of the American finding. This trend is not accounted for by obvious population differences as it appears that persons in all groups were social science students, so presumably cultural factors are responsible.

Hughes (1979) found that on the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1974) New Zealand male first year social science students were significantly lower than their American counterparts on masculinity ratings. Butler (1976) has suggested that there are links between assertiveness and sex-roles and this idea is consistent with the similar levels of responding on both the RAS and the Bem in the two cultures. That is, the New Zealand males had both lower masculinity and assertiveness scores compared to the American males.

Hughes (1979) was unable to draw clear conclusions about sex-role differences between cultures for women and therefore his work is less helpful in this area. It is of interest, however, that the RAS scores for American and New Zealand females are highly similar. A further possible explanation of the sex difference is that social attitudes are changing rapidly and as the Nevid & Rathus (1978) study is now four years old it may be the current trends would also now be more evident in the USA. Subsequent research should clarify these points.

The initial New Zealand norms established in the present study should increase the utility of the RAS in this country. The data indicate high split-half reliability although future research is needed to validate the measure for the New Zealand population.

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Erratum

Roberts, C. L. A behaviouristic basis for an ethic. *New Zealand Psychologist*, 1981, 10 (2), 80-85.

The author of this article and the previous editor of the journal have requested that an error made in the original manuscript be corrected. Page 83, between lines 6 and 7, left column, should include the phrase: "... without making such provisions contingent on behaviour . . ."