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2018 ATSA Conference | Thursday October 18 | POSTER

Predictors of Female Sexual Coercion: Sociosexuality, Psychopathy, and Fantasies

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Female sexual coercion has been studied infrequently, despite the notable prevalence of female-perpetrated sexual coercion in college samples (e.g., Carvalho & Nobre, 2015) and the possibility that male models of sexual coercion will not generalize to women. Sociosexuality (interest/engagement in sexual activity with minimal investment; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991) and psychopathic traits are possible risk factors for female sexual coercion (Carvalho & Nobre, 2015). The effect of sociosexuality on coercion may be mediated by intimacy-seeking fantasies (e.g., Shea, 1998) and power or dominance fantasies (e.g., Yost & Zurbriggen, 2006). Some women may coerce when their sexual advances are rebuffed due to a desire for intimacy (e.g., Zurbriggen, 2000) whereas others, particularly those high in psychopathic traits, may coerce to dominate or assert power (e.g., Muñoz et al., 2010). A moderated-mediation model was used to test whether fantasies of dominance or intimacy mediate the relationship between sociosexuality and sexual coercion among women higher or lower in psychopathic traits.

Methods

The sample included 103 female undergraduate students (ages 18-29, $M = 19.36$, $SD = 2.05$) enrolled at a large public university in California. Participants were quite diverse: 37.9% Asian, 28.2% Caucasian, 30.1% Hispanic/Latino, 13.6% African-American, 4.9% Pacific Islander, 4.9% Native American, 3.9% other. The Multidimensional Inventory of Development Sex and Aggression (MIDSA; Augur Enterprises, Inc., 2011), a computerized, self-report measure, was used to assess all variables in these analyses. The scales included within the current study assessed sociosexuality, psychopathy (lack of empathy, lack of perspective taking, conning and superficial charm, and impulsivity), and intimacy-seeking and power/dominance fantasies. Coercion included four types: manipulation, seduction, substance, and use of force.

Results

Sociosexuality did not have a direct effect on any of the four coercion strategies. Lack of empathy ($b = .27$, $p = .011$), impulsivity ($b = .16$, $p = .027$), and conning and superficial charm ($b = .17$, $p = .027$) were significantly positively associated with reported power/dominance fantasies. Only the conning and superficial charm scale was associated with intimacy-seeking fantasies ($b = .51$, $p = .001$). Conning and superficial charm was significantly positively associated with reported use of seduction ($b = .12$, $p = .026$), manipulation ($b = .15$, $p = .001$), and substance use tactics ($b = .05$, $p = .025$). A significant interaction ($b = .12$, $p = .025$) indicated conning and superficial charm moderated the impact of power/dominance fantasies on use of seduction tactics, such that this

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relationship was stronger at higher levels of conning/charm. Additionally, sociosexuality had an indirect effect on use manipulation tactics through intimacy-seeking fantasies only among those low in impulsivity ($b = .05, p = .023$).

Discussion

This study bolsters the minimal existing research regarding sociosexuality, psychopathic traits, fantasies, and sexual coercion by females. Results were consistent with previous literature demonstrating a link between psychopathic traits and power/dominance fantasies (Woodworth et al., 2013), but generally did not replicate previous findings that psychopathic traits increase the likelihood that someone will act on these fantasies (Williams, Cooper, Howell, Yuille, & Paulhus, 2009), with the sole exception of conning/superficial charm and manipulation tactics. In contrast, at low levels of impulsivity, sociosexuality had an indirect effect on coercion through intimacy-seeking fantasies. These results suggest that the mechanisms that account for women's coercion may be quite different from men's coercion (e.g., Yost & Zurbriggen, 2006). Limitations and implications of the current study will be discussed within the presentation.

Lisa Cannizzaro, M.S. is in her final year of the Clinical Psychology PhD program at Palo Alto University and currently completing her pre-doctoral internship at Larned State Hospital on the Sexual Predator Treatment Program. Her clinical interests include conducting individual and group therapy as well as forensic assessment with sexual offenders and individuals with mental illness involved in the legal system. Lisa's research interests include exploring predictors of female-perpetrated sexual coercion and examining how the relationship among trauma, pornography consumption, and sexual coercion may differ by gender. In her ever-evaporating spare time, she enjoys taunting her cats with a laser pointer and shamefully practicing guitar.

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