Differences in Sexually Coercive Women

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The number of girls and women entering the criminal justice system in recent years points to the urgent need for more research into the origins of crime in women. As with men, there are likely to be many various potential pathways to female sexual offending. To develop our comprehension of those pathways, this symposium will address the theme of differences (regional, gender, and age) on many scales already known to be related to offending and sexual offending in particular. To do so, data were collected on a variety of samples (adults and juveniles, adjudicated and non-adjudicated, females and males, French Canadians and Americans) with the Multidimensional Inventory of Development, Sex, and Aggression (MIDSA). The MIDSA is a computerized inventory that measures the core domains related to the assessment of sexual aggressive. It examines specific thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors. It has been administered to over 5000 individuals including both community and custodial samples of adult and juvenile men and women. Previous research (Schatzel-Murphy, Harris, Knight, & Milburn, 2009; Harris & Sims-Knight, under review) has shown that the MIDSA has validity with University students. This symposium will present results on two populations that have not been widely studied. One presentation presents the first data on incarcerated juvenile females. The other two presentations address sexual coercion in University students. Although college students have traditionally been seen as a convenient community comparison group, it is an important population in its own right. President Barack Obama of the U.S. launched several initiatives in 2014 to help combat rape on campus.

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The MIDSA is available commercially through Augur Enterprises, owned by Judith Sims-Knight. Her commitment is all voluntary and she receives no financial remuneration from it.
Are French Canadian Women Different from American Women on Sexual Coercion?

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In general, Canadians and Americans are very similar. However, there seems to be a cultural difference between the people living in the province of Québec (more liberal), the south of the United States (more conservative) and the rest of those two countries (more moderate) (Baer & Johnston, 1993). In general, previous studies indicate that French Canadians seem to present more characteristics related to sexual aggression in general (sexual precocity, alcohol abuse, aggressiveness, and hostility) even if their sexual crime rate is lower (Garriguet, 2005; Gibson et al., 2008; Statistics Canada, 2013, 2014; Wu & Baer, 1996). This presentation addresses those contradictions and other differences and replicates Schatzel-Murphy's (2011) etiological model for sexual coercion for women. To do so, a sample of 181 women from the University of Montréal (Québec) and a sample of 141 women from University of Massachusetts Dartmouth and San Jose State University in California. All participants completed the Multidimensional Inventory of Development, Sex, and Aggression (MIDSA). Preliminary results indicate that French Canadian women are different from American women on many aspects. Moreover, the replication of Schatzel-Murphy's (2011) etiological model for sexual coercion for women doesn't seem to have a good fit with French Canadian women while her etiological model for sexual coercion for men does.

Learning Goals and Objectives:

- Evaluate the differences of the use of various sexual coercion tactics between a sample of French Canadian and American women.
- Compare French Canadian and American women lifestyle characteristics (e.g. sociosexuality, alcohol abuse).
- Compare French Canadian and American women personal characteristics (e.g. impulsivity, psychopathy, hyperfemininity).
- Replicate Schatzel-Murphy's (2011) etiological model for sexual coercion for women with French Canadian women.
- Replicate Schatzel-Murphy’s (2011) etiological model for sexual coercion for men with French Canadian women.
An Examination of Girls in Custody

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The extent to which psychopathic traits are relevant in understanding crime in women or adolescents remains to be seen, but emerging data supports the extension of these constructs to female adolescent samples. This presentation represents the first application to female juveniles of the Multidimensional Inventory of Development, Sex, and Aggression (MIDSA). The MIDSA was administered to 50 girls in custody at a juvenile facility in Northern California. Individual reports were generated, and their aggregate results were analyzed. Results are presented at an aggregate level and an individual case study is offered to provide an especially rich description of the available data. Preliminary results underscore the importance of identifying individual criminogenic risks and needs and indicate that many of the psychopathic traits identified in adult samples are present in delinquent girls, specifically “conning and superficial charm/manipulation”, “lack of empathy”, and “sexual promiscuity.” That the detection of psychopathic traits in delinquent young women are better understood as potential coping mechanisms or as an outcome of extensive histories of sexual abuse and neglect is discussed.

Learning Goals and Objectives:

- Present results from the first application of the MIDSA to a juvenile female sample
- Compare MIDSA results from incarcerated girls with an ethnically similar sample of college women.
- Describe the ways in which boys and girls differentially experience trauma and how that plays out in their subsequent offending.
- Discuss the connection between sexual abuse and the subsequent development of psychopathic traits as coping mechanisms.
- Discuss the importance of trauma informed responses for juvenile girls in detention, especially those who are survivors of sexual abuse.
Do Gender Differences in Interpersonal Experiences Differentially Predict Sexual Coercion?

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The limited research on gender differences underlying sexual coercion by men and by women has suggested that whether there are gender differences in traits predictive of sexual coercion depends on the nature of the traits. Some research finds that traits that predict sexual coercion in men also predict it in women, even though women are less likely to exhibit those traits (Gámez-Guadix, Straus, & Hershberger, 2011; Harris & Sims-Knight, under review; Krahé et al., 2003). Other research finds different correlates for men and women (e.g., Zurbriggen, 2000). One possible explanation for the differences in results is that the relation between traits and sexual acting out may depend on the kind of sexual acting out.

To test this, a sample of 104 university males and 161 university females were given the MIDSA plus additional measures. A survey of sexual harassment was added, that included such questions as “I have tried to touch someone in a way that made them uncomfortable.” From the MIDSA we constructed a measure of sexual coaxing (e.g., “Even when a person was unwilling to have sex with me, I have tried to get them to have sexual intercourse by using gentle physical means such as petting, stroking, massaging, tickling, or pinching”) and one of sexual coercion (e.g., “I have had sexual intercourse with someone who was so drunk or high on drugs that they were not able to say no”). We found that the variables that predict sexual harassment—physical aggressiveness, psychopathic and pervasive anger traits—are quite alike for men and women. For sexual coaxing there were no common predictors. For sexual coercion there was one common predictor for both genders—physical aggressiveness. Distinctive predictors for men were intimacy measures, which were negatively related to sexual acting out. For women anxious attachment predicted sexual harassment, psychopathic and pervasive anger traits predicted sexual coaxing, and relational aggression and alcohol/drug use predicted sexual coercion. These results suggest that experiencing intimacy is a protective factor for men, but not for women. It also suggests that sexual coaxing for women is aggressive, like sexual coercion, and is more a function of relationship status for men. More generally, the findings support the previous literature that shows in some ways women’s sexual coercion is like that of men and in other ways it differs.

Learning Goals and Objectives:

- Assess the predictive power of interpersonal relationship variables in sexual acting out in a University population.
• Demonstrate that certain core traits—physical aggressiveness, psychopathic and pervasive anger traits—predict sexual acting out consistently in men and women.
• Understand how women’s sexual coercion is similar and different from that of men.
• Discuss why sexual harassment is predicted by similar variables for both genders and sexual coaxing is not.
• Discuss why sexual coaxing is different in men and women.