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MALE COERCIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AS A FUNCTION OF MALE  
RESOURCE-POTENTIAL AND RESPONDENT GENDER

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of Psychology

East Tennessee State University

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

---

by

Christy D. Wolfe

December 2000

APPROVAL

This is to certify that the Graduate Committee of

CHRISTY D. WOLFE

met on the

20<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2000.

The committee read and examined her thesis, supervised her defense of it in an oral examination, and decided to recommend that her study be submitted to the Graduate Council, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Masters of Arts in Psychology.

---

Chair, Graduate Committee

Signed on behalf of  
the Graduate Council

---

Dean, School of Graduate Studies

## ABSTRACT

### MALE COERCIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AS A FUNCTION OF MALE RESOURCE-POTENTIAL AND RESPONDENT GENDER

by

Christy D. Wolfe

The present study examined whether the resource-potential (RP) of a male dater (i.e., potential financial success and status) and/or respondent gender related to attitudes toward coercive sexual behavior by the male. Participants (59 males and 82 females) read a hypothetical dating scenario in which a heterosexual couple went out for dinner and then returned to the female's apartment to watch a movie. The RP of the male dater was set at high and low. Following the scenario, rating scales posing increasing levels of coercive sexual behavior (a sexual advance, verbal persuasion, and physical coercion) were presented. The participants rated the likelihood and acceptability of each behavior on a 7-point scale. A 2 (respondent gender) x 2 (high or low RP) between-subjects multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed on the six dependent variables (DVs): the likelihood of the three coercive behaviors and the acceptability of the three coercive behaviors. The combined DVs were significantly affected for respondent gender and RP but not by their interaction. Univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were performed on each DV. Significant differences were found between males and females on all DVs except the acceptability of a sexual advance. Significant differences were also found between the high RP scenario respondents and the low RP respondents for the likelihood of a sexual advance and the likelihood of verbal persuasion. For exploratory purposes, univariate analyses were performed and an interaction was found between respondent gender and RP for the acceptability of verbal persuasion and the acceptability of physical coercion. While all hypotheses were not fully supported, overall the present study yielded very promising results. First, additional support was given to the coercive sexual behavior literature by the finding that females find coercive sexual behaviors more likely while males find them more acceptable. Secondly, social equity theory was supported by the finding that high RP scenario respondents found the coercive sexual behaviors more likely than the low RP scenario respondents did. Finally, the finding that females were more accepting of coercive sexual behaviors from a male with high RP than from a male with low RP offers support to the mating strategy assertions of sociobiological theory.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to sincerely thank Otto Zinser, my thesis chair, for his consistent interest in and support of my project. His willingness to meet with me, offer suggestions, and allow my ideas made my thesis work a meaningful learning experience. Also, I would like to thank Roger Bailey and David Marx for their time and invaluable contributions to my project. They were always eager to assist by reading drafts, making suggestions, and lending their students as subjects. Further, the thesis would probably still be on the list of “Things to Do” had it not been for the encouragement and support of my mom and dad, Sally Lee, and last but not least, my husband Rick. I love and appreciate you all very much.

On a lighter note, I would like to dedicate the following story to my thesis committee. I came across the story a few years ago. The title and author are unknown.

One sunny day a rabbit came out of her hold in the ground to enjoy the fine weather. The day was so nice that she became careless and a fox snuck up behind her and caught her.

“I am going to eat you for lunch!” said the fox.

“Wait!” replied the rabbit, “you should at least wait a few days.”

“Oh yeah? Why should I wait?”

“Well, I am just finishing my thesis on ‘The Superiority of Rabbits over Foxes and Wolves.’”

“Are you crazy? I should eat you right now!” said the fox. “Everybody knows that a fox will always win over a rabbit.”

“Not really, not according to my research. If you like, you can come into my hole and read it for yourself. If you are not convinced, you can go ahead and have me for lunch.”

“You really are crazy rabbit!” But since the fox was curious and had nothing to lose, it went with the rabbit. The fox never came out.

A few days later the rabbit was again taking a break from writing and sure enough, a wolf came out of the bushes and was ready to set upon her.

“Wait!” yelled the rabbit, “you can’t eat me right now.”

“And why might that be, my furry appetizer?”

“I am almost finished writing my thesis on ‘The Superiority of Rabbits over Foxes and Wolves.’”

The wolf laughed so hard that it almost lost its grip on the rabbit.

“Maybe I shouldn’t eat you. You really are sick...in the head. You might have something contagious.”

“Come and read it for yourself. You can eat me afterward if you disagree with my conclusions.” So the wolf went down into the rabbit’s hole...and never came out.

The rabbit finished her thesis and was out celebrating in the local lettuce patch. Another rabbit came along and asked, “What’s up? You seem very happy.”

“Yup, I just finished my thesis.”

“Congratulations. What’s it about?”

“The Superiority of Rabbits over Foxes and Wolves.”

“Are you sure? That doesn’t sound right?”

“Oh yes. Come and read it for yourself.”

So together they went down into the rabbit’s hole. As they entered, the friend saw the typical graduate student abode, albeit a rather messy one after writing a thesis. The computer with the controversial work was in one corner. To the right there was a pile of fox bones, to the left a pile of wolf bones, and in the middle was a large, well-fed lion.

The moral of the story:

The title of your thesis doesn’t matter.

The subject doesn’t matter.

The research doesn’t matter.

All that matters is who your advisor is.

## CONTENTS

	Page
APPROVAL . . . . .	2
ABSTRACT . . . . .	3
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	4
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	9
LIST OF FIGURES . . . . .	10
 Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	11
The Role of Familiarity . . . . .	11
Dating Relationships . . . . .	11
Coercive Sexual Behavior . . . . .	12
Theories of Sexual Aggression . . . . .	13
Sociobiological Theory . . . . .	13
Mating Strategies . . . . .	13
Mate Selection . . . . .	14
Aggression . . . . .	15
Social Exchange Theory . . . . .	16
Equity Theory . . . . .	16
Research on Coercive Sexual Behavior . . . . .	17
Student Experiences . . . . .	17
Male Experiences . . . . .	19
Student Perceptions . . . . .	19
Effects of Gender . . . . .	19
Effects of Coercion Intensity . . . . .	20
Support for Sociobiological Theory . . . . .	21
Research on Physical Attractiveness . . . . .	21

Chapter	Page
Research on Resources . . . . .	22
Statement of The Problem . . . . .	23
Hypotheses . . . . .	25
Gender Hypotheses . . . . .	25
Resource-Potential (RP) Hypotheses . . . . .	25
Interaction Hypotheses . . . . .	25
2. METHOD . . . . .	26
Participants . . . . .	26
Materials . . . . .	26
Informed Consent . . . . .	26
Cover Sheet . . . . .	27
Resource-Potential Scenarios . . . . .	27
Questionnaire . . . . .	27
Experimental Design . . . . .	28
Procedure . . . . .	28
Experimental Procedure . . . . .	28
Reliability Study Procedure . . . . .	29
Validity Study Procedure . . . . .	30
3. RESULTS . . . . .	33
Preliminary Data Analysis . . . . .	33
Tests of Parametric Assumptions . . . . .	33
Normality . . . . .	34
Linearity . . . . .	34
Homogeneity of Variance-Covariance Matrices . . . . .	34
Multicollinearity and Singularity . . . . .	34
Correlation Matrix: Dependent Variables . . . . .	35

Chapter	Page
Examination of Main and Interaction Effects . . . . .	35
Effects of Gender . . . . .	36
Effects of Resource-Potential . . . . .	36
Effects of Gender by Resource-Potential . . . . .	46
4. DISCUSSION . . . . .	49
Interpretation of Results . . . . .	49
Gender Hypotheses . . . . .	49
Resource-Potential Hypotheses . . . . .	50
Interaction Hypotheses . . . . .	51
Summary . . . . .	52
Limitations . . . . .	53
Future Research . . . . .	54
REFERENCES . . . . .	56
APPENDICES . . . . .	63
Appendix A: Informed Consent Form . . . . .	64
Appendix B: Cover Sheets . . . . .	66
Appendix C: Male Resource-Potential Scenarios . . . . .	69
Appendix D: Reading Verification and Manipulation Check Questions . . . . .	72
Appendix E: Experimental Questionnaire . . . . .	74
Appendix F: Validity Questionnaire . . . . .	76
VITA . . . . .	78

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. TWO-WEEK TEST-RETEST RELIABILITY COEFFECIENTS . . .	32
2. CORRELATION MATRIX FOR THE SIX DEPENDENT VARIABLES .	37
3. PILLAI'S TRACE MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS F-TABLE . . . .	38
4. UNIVARIATE F-VALUES AND STEPDOWN VALUES FOR GENDER, RESOURCE- POTENTIAL, AND INTERACTION EFFECTS . . . .	39
5. MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS . . . . .	40

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. OVERALL MEANS FOR THE LIKELIHOOD AND ACCEPTABILITY RATINGS OF COERCIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR . . . . .	41
2. MEAN LIKELIHOOD RATINGS OF COERCIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR BY GENDER . . . . .	42
3. MEAN ACCEPTABILITY RATINGS OF COERCIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR BY GENDER . . . . .	43
4. MEAN LIKELIHOOD OF COERCIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR RATINGS FOR HIGH AND LOW RESOURCE-POTENTIAL GROUPS . . . . .	44
5. MEAN ACCEPTABILITY OF COERCIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR RATINGS FOR HIGH AND LOW RESOURCE-POTENTIAL GROUPS . . . . .	45
6. MEAN ACCEPTABILITY RATINGS FOR THE USE OF VERBAL PERSUASION . . . . .	47
7. MEAN ACCEPTABILITY RATINGS FOR THE USE OF PHYSICAL COERCION . . . . .	48

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The 1980s and 1990s have seen a proliferation of interest in the topic of acquaintance rape, or “forced, unwanted sexual intercourse in which the attacker and the victim know each other” (Parrot, 1991, p. 2). One reason is the recognition that the incidence of acquaintance rape (the number of rapes that occur during a given period of time) is much higher than the incidence of rape by strangers. Research indicates that only 11% to 12% of all rapes occur between strangers, while 88% to 89% occur between acquaintances (Baier, Rosenzweig, and Whipple, 1991; Koss, Dinero, Siebel, & Cox, 1988; Russell, 1984).

#### The Role of Familiarity

Acquaintance rape, by definition, implies some degree of familiarity between the perpetrator and the victim, and it is the familiarity that contributes to the continued and frequent occurrence of acquaintance rape. Like an infant who becomes habituated to a once novel stimulus and is no longer compelled “to keep an eye on it”, familiarity between two people promotes a sense of security. That is, one does not expect aggressive sexual behavior from an acquaintance (i.e., a dating partner, a friend, or a co-worker).

Further, if one has been raped by an acquaintance, familiarity deters reporting the incident to authorities for at least two reasons. First, the victim of an acquaintance rape often believes that he/she is responsible in part for the transgression and consequently fails to label the rape as such (i.e., unacknowledged rape). Secondly, it is easier and therefore more likely to implicate a stranger in a crime than an acquaintance, i.e., someone he/she might have to see everyday.

#### Dating Relationships

Within the context of a dating relationship, the problems associated with familiarity are compounded. Conceivably, members of a dating couple are, or are becoming, increasingly familiar with

one another. With increasing familiarity, and increasing levels of comfort and trust, the more likely that undesirable behaviors or intentions from either partner will be disregarded. In fact, researchers have well established that the more intimate the relationship between the couple, the less likely the act will be judged as coercive or as rape (Goodchilds et al., 1988; Jenkins & Dambrot, 1987; Johnson & Jackson, 1988; Shotland & Goodstein, 1983 as cited by Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1991).

Fifty-three percent of the acquaintance rapes reported by Koss et al. (1988) were actually date rapes. Twenty-one percent of stranger rapes supposedly had been reported to the police in contrast with fewer than 1% of date rapes (Koss et al., 1988). Grauerholz & Koralewski (1991) report that more women had been raped by steady dates than by casual dates, and according to Koss et al. (1988) of the 147 women who had been raped by a steady date, not one reported it to the police.

### Coercive Sexual Behavior

Due to the nature of the acquaintance relationship, violent and aggressive acts associated with stranger rape, such as surprise attacks and the use of weaponry, are generally unnecessary; the acquaintance rapist can use less violent behaviors to achieve his/her goals.

One common strategy used by the perpetrator in an acquaintance rape is sexual coercion. Sexual coercion has been defined as “the act of being forced, tricked, or pressured to engage in a sexual act or acts” (Grauerholz & Koralewski, 1991, p. ix). Coercive sexual behavior ranges from the use of persistent verbal pressure, to sexual stimulation, and to the use of physical force (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1991). Coercive sexual behavior is now known to be a common occurrence among young adults and is recognized as a major problem on college campuses (Abbey, 1991; Koss, Dinero, & Siebel, 1988; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987; Ogletree, 1993; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1991).

Parrot (1991) explains that the college population is particularly vulnerable because students are subjected to relatively few restrictions, and they have little experience dealing with the freedom afforded by independent living. Additional risk factors for the college population include an increased level of

social interaction, specifically dating relationships; the presence of homosocial relationships, for example all male peer groups, such as fraternities and athletic teams; stereotypic attitudes acquired through social learning; and frequent experiences with and exposure to alcohol.

### Theories of Sexual Aggression

Aggression, defined as an “unprovoked attack” or “hostile or destructive behavior” (Oxford Dictionary, 1996), has been addressed and debated as a facet of human behavior for centuries. The French philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, asserted that man is good by nature, but is ultimately corrupted by society. Similarly, John Locke purported that man enters this life as a blank slate, thus, an aggressive personality is shaped by the environment.

### Sociobiological Theory

Sociobiology has been defined as the systematic study of the biological basis of animal and human social behavior (Wilson, 1975). Sociobiologists draw upon the principles of evolutionary theory, specifically the concept of natural selection, to explain much of human social behavior. They contend that the primary goal of all human behavior is the perpetuation of one’s genes to the next generation, and that social behaviors are selected by evolution in support of this objective.

Mating Strategies. While there is one main goal of all human behavior, the perpetuation of one’s genes into the next generation, there are two strategies by which this may be accomplished – the strategy of the male and the strategy of the female. According to Wilson (1975), males and females use different strategies because of the biological differences between them.

Males have the ability to produce a very large supply of sperm with very little energy. In fact, it has been suggested that a male can compensate for the energy expended in one act of copulation by eating one grape (Wallace, 1979 as cited by Hergenhahn & Olson, 1999). If successful, the act of copulation results in the passing of his genes into the next generation. For males, the cost of copulation is very low and the potential benefits are very high.

Females, on the other hand, have much more at stake with the reproductive act. Females produce one egg in comparison to the thousands of sperm produced by the male. If the act is successful, it is the female who must produce a placenta, nourish the unborn child, undergo the metabolic and hormonal stresses of pregnancy, carry around an embryo that grows in bulk and weight, and nurse the child when it is born (Barash, 1979). For females, the cost of copulation is very high, and it behooves her to be highly selective when searching for a mate. If she makes the wrong decision and mates with an unfit male, then her chances for passing genes into the next generation are significantly jeopardized.

Mate Selection. With this fundamental contrast in male-female mating strategies in mind, it is understandable that males and females use different criteria when selecting a mate. According to the theory, males are less choosy in their choice of a mate than females are. However, it is advantageous for males to choose mates who have a high reproductive value, that is, females who are healthy and fertile. These qualities have long been designated by the physical attractiveness of the individual - clear and smooth skin, lustrous hair, white teeth, clear eyes, and full lips (Wilson, 1975).

For females, because the cost of copulation is very high, it is advantageous for them to be highly selective when choosing a mate. Like males, females are enticed by physical attractiveness. In the animal kingdom, males are often brightly colored and beautifully marked; these characteristics exude qualities of health and “good genes”. However, females are even more interested in the male’s superiority in resourcefulness (Wilson, 1975) and his ranking in the male dominance hierarchy. Halliday (1980) claims that females are “more likely to mate with those males highest in the male dominance hierarchy, who are not necessarily the most handsome males” (p. 78). Females seek males who will be able to provide for and protect her and her offspring while she uses energy for nurturing behaviors. Male “resourcefulness” is delineated by the male’s acquisition of resources; a female determines this by surveying the richness of the territory he claims or evaluating the resources he offers during courtship, such as food and nesting arrangements (Wilson).

Males tend to seek mates who are physically attractive, and females tend to seek mates who are resourceful. It would follow that males' and females' perceptions, specifically situations involving opportunities to perpetuate one's genes into the next generation (i.e., dating/mating situations), would be significantly influenced by these factors. In fact, research has consistently upheld physical attractiveness as a major factor influencing one's perceptions of the other.

Aggression. Sociobiological theory holds that humans will not be aggressive unless it is advantageous for them to do so. That is, it is best for them to conserve energy and expend it only when the chance for them to pass their genes into the next generation is threatened, approximating a cost-benefit analysis (Barash, 1979). Sociobiologists contend that male sexual aggression and rape are prescribed by natural selection. In the evolutionary past of the species, it has been advantageous for males to copulate with as many females as possible to increase the likelihood of passing their genes into the next generation. If for some reason the male cannot interest the female by the usual measures, such as attractiveness or resources, then forced copulation with the female may be necessary.

Two research teams, Thornhill & Thornhill and Shields & Shields, propose hypotheses with the same basic premise: Men who rape leave more descendants than equivalent men living under the same conditions who do not rape. Thornhill and Thornhill (1992) argue that some men may rape because they were unable to attract a woman due to their being less attractive, less physically fit, less intelligent, or poor.

Shields and Shields (1983) also claiming rape as a reproductive strategy of the male, outline three types of dating strategies employed by the male: honest courtship, deceitful or manipulative courtship, and rape. If a male is unable to attract a female by honest courtship, then he may resort to one of the other strategies. Physical aggression, such as rape, is effective, but also risky. If unsuccessful, the aggressor may hurt him/herself (Bjorkqvist, 1994). Further, physical force is apt to be judged as "socially inappropriate", is likely to be termed "rape", and is likely to inhibit future female interests. Deceitful or manipulative courtship is a more practical strategy as it is less risky and offers satisfactory results; that is, it limits costs with a potential high return. Coercive sexual behavior falls within the

province of deceitful or manipulative courtship. While females are theoretically less capable than males of physically overpowering an opposite-sexed partner to achieve copulation, the deceitful and manipulative courtship strategies do fall within the repertoire of the female.

### Social Exchange Theory

Based largely on economic principles, social exchange theory attempts to explain human behavior as a function of resources, rewards, costs, and self-interest. Specifically, social exchange theory purports that one will trade resources and justify costs to gain rewards in line with his/her self-interest. Roloff (1981) defines exchange as the transfer of something from one entity to another in return for something else. According to Foa, Converse, Tomblom, and Foa (1993) a resource is any commodity, material or symbolic, that can be transmitted through interpersonal behavior (i.e., love, status, services, goods, information).

Although, social exchange theory is heavily influenced by economic theory, there are significant differences between economic exchanges and social exchanges (Blau, 1964). For example, economic exchanges often involve highly specific obligations: Time frames, legal support, well-defined rates, and consistent values. For social exchanges, the logistics are significantly less clear. Social exchanges involve unspecific obligations, such as trust rather than legalities and personal obligation rather than business requirements. An example of a social exchange is dating behavior: A male provides a female with certain tangible rewards (i.e., a meal, a movie, or flowers) and the female becomes obligated to return attention, such as affection or sexual favors.

Equity Theory. In a sense, equity theory is an extension of social exchange theory. Equity is defined as fairness (Oxford, 1996). The theory describes an equitable relationship as one in which some person (a participant in the exchange or outside observer) perceives that the relative gains of two people in an exchange are equal (Roloff, 1981). That is, what one gets out of a relationship should be proportional to what one puts into the relationship.

Walster, Walster, and Berscheid (1978) list four propositions of equity theory. First, individuals will try to maximize their outcomes (where outcomes equal rewards minus costs). The second proposition applies to groups and the maximizing of a collective reward. The third proposition states that if an individual is in an inequitable relationship, then he/she will become distressed. Fourth, if an individual finds him/herself in an inequitable relationship, he/she will attempt to restore equity. Walster, Berscheid, and Walster (1976) further purport that “so long as individuals perceive they can maximize their outcomes by behaving equitably, they will do so. Should they perceive that they can maximize their outcomes by behaving inequitably they will do so” (p. 16).

### Research on Coercive Sexual Behavior

With an increase in awareness of acquaintance rape within the last 15 years, there has been an escalation of research on the topic of coercive sexual behavior. It has shown that both males and females are victims of unwanted sexual contact and coercive sexual behavior at a disturbing rate. Research by Muehlenhard and Linton (1987) showed that 77.6% of women and 57.3% of men had been involved in some form of coercive sexual behavior. Similarly, research by Baier, Rosenzweig, and Whipple (1991) indicated that one-eighth of men and one-fourth of women had engaged in sexual intercourse against their will because they felt coerced to do so. Research on student attitudes indicates that while students overwhelmingly reject violent and coercive behaviors, many expect this type of behavior in a variety of situations, and females expect it more often than males (Cook, 1995).

### Student Experiences

Brownmiller (1975) and other feminists purport that sexual aggression and victimization are generally women’s issues. Until 1992, the Federal Bureau of Investigation defined rape as “carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and without her consent” (FBI, 1996). Research tends to support this view, as only about one-tenth of all rape victims are males, and most of those rapes are perpetrated by other men (Warshaw, 1988).

Koss et al. (1987) surveyed 6,159 (3,187 females and 2,972 males) higher education students on the subject of sexual assault. Results showed that, from the age of 14, 15% of women had been raped and 12% of the women surveyed indicated that they had experienced an attempted, but an uncompleted, rape. Further, 14.4% of the female respondents experienced sexual contact (defined as unwanted sex play) and 11.9% reported having been victimized by sexual coercion. These data are consistent with those collected by similar measures, with variations owing to the use of different terminologies and operational definitions. It is important to note that these data do not include unacknowledged rapes; that is, in some cases, rape occurs and the victim fails to label it as such.

The survey by Koss et al. (1987) also assessed male activities. Male respondents were asked about their experiences as the perpetrator of the following: Unwanted sexual contact, sexual coercion, attempted rape, and rape. According to the results of the survey, 25% of the male respondents reported engaging in some form of coercive sexual activity. Of these males, 10.2% admitted to having engaged in unwanted sexual contact; seven percent reported using sexual coercion; three percent stated that they engaged in attempted rape; and four percent stated that they had raped.

Rapaport and Burkhart (1984) found that only 39% of the men sampled denied coercive involvement. Further, 28% of the male respondents admitted to having used a coercive method at least once, and 15% admitted they had forced a woman to have intercourse at least once.

With regard to verbal coercion and persuasion, Fischer (1996) revealed that about 25% of college males had told lies or made false promises to gain the cooperation of females to have sex. These lies were told most often at parties (66%) or at the male or female's apartment (34%), and the lies told most often indicated caring or commitment (58%) or that this was not casual sex or a one-night stand (38%). Further, research by Fischer suggests that deceptive, verbally coercive males were somewhat more likely to admit they might rape if sure of not being caught. Cook (1995) found that 42% of males had engaged in verbal sexual coercion. Research by Craig, Kalichman, and Follingstad (1989) indicated that nearly half of all college men report having verbally coerced women into engaging in sexual activities.

Male Experiences. While females report coercive sexual experiences at an alarming rate, recent research indicates that males, too, have experienced unwanted sexual contact by women under coercive circumstances. Larimer, Lydum, Anderson, and Turner (1999) investigated the phenomenon of sexual coercion in a college Greek system. Their results suggest that men are as likely as women to report unwanted experiences of sexual coercion and that both men and women report instigating unwanted sexual intercourse.

According to Anderson and Aymami (1993), over 90% of men reported receiving a sexual advance from a woman. Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (1994a) report that as many as 30% to 40% of college men had experienced pressure or even force from women to engage in sexual activities. Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (1991) report that 12% to 16% of males have felt forced into sexual intercourse by women, and further 34% of men report experiencing some form of sexual coercion from female acquaintances since the age of 16 (Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson, 1994b).

### Student Perceptions

Understanding student perceptions of coercive behavior is necessary for the creation and the implementation of successful prevention strategies. Previous research has shown that student perceptions of coercive sexual behavior are related to such factors as gender and coercion intensity.

Effects of Gender. Overwhelmingly, the research indicates that males view the world in a more sexualized manner than women (Abbey, 1982; Abbey & Harnish, 1995). Males expected sexual intimacy sooner in a relationship than females did (Roche, 1986). Males were perceived as more likely than females to initiate sexual activity (Corcoran & Thomas, 1991).

Margolin (1990) investigated college students' perceptions of a minimal violation of sexual consent (i.e., a kiss). Participants were given a narrative in which a male and female were on a date in a restaurant. One of the partners attempted to kiss the other - is told not to - but does so anyway.

Participants were asked how acceptable they found this violation of sexual consent. The results indicated that males were more tolerant of a minimal violation of sexual consent than females were.

Haworth-Hoepfner (1998) examined male and female college students' support for the use of sexual coercion across a range of dating encounters. Participants read vignettes depicting a dating couple with varying degrees of relational familiarity. The results indicated that males expressed less objection (or more acceptance) to the use of sexual coercion in dating relationships than females did.

Finally, O'Sullivan, Byers, and Finkelman (1998) examined college students' reactions to sexually coercive experiences. Participants were mailed a questionnaire assessing the types and contexts of coercive sexual behavior, as well as the participants' reactions to the events. The results indicated that females reported more negative reactions and stronger resistance to the use of sexual coercion than males did.

Effects of Coercion Intensity. Also relevant to the present investigation are studies that examine the effects of coercion intensity on student attitudes toward coercive sexual behavior. The results of studies support the existence of a coercive, sexual behavior continuum.

Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (1993) investigated male and female perceptions of sexual coercion when the gender of the initiator and the coercion intensity are varied. Participants were given vignettes and were asked to imagine that they were the recipients of an uninvited sexual touch from an acquaintance. The vignettes were varied so that the acquaintance was of the opposite or the same gender as the subject, and the touch was either gentle or forceful. Results indicated that the men anticipated almost no negative effects in response to receiving a gentle or a forceful coercive sexual touch from a casual female acquaintance. Women, on the other hand, expected strong negative effects as the result of either type of touch from a casual male acquaintance.

Garcia, Milano, and Quijano (1989) investigated students' perceptions of different levels of sexual coercion, specifically, how males and females differ in their perceptions of coerciveness. Each participant read a scenario depicting a heterosexual acquaintance encounter. Different versions of the scenario were created to accommodate various levels of coercion and perpetrator gender. The results

indicated that each behavior was perceived to be coercive to some degree. The depicted behaviors were ranked by the study participants from least coercive to most coercive in the following manner: (1) inviting someone to go to his/her place, (2) encouraging someone to drink excessively, (3) reminding someone of the amount of money spent, (4) physically restraining a person in a car, (5) threatening someone with loss of employment, and (6) physically forcing one's self on the other person. In general, females perceived the behaviors as more coercive than the males.

Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (1991) assessed college students' perceptions of the acceptability of using coercive behaviors to obtain sexual intercourse from an unwilling dating partner. Participants were given vignettes and instructed to rate the acceptability of the coercive strategy on a 7-point Likert scale. Participants objected to the coercive strategies, from least to greatest, in the following manner: verbal pressure, sexual stimulation, mock force, intoxication, and physical force. While participants generally rejected all coercive tactics, results show that females were more rejecting of all strategies than males were.

### Support for Sociobiological Theory

Research on Physical Attractiveness. It is well documented that one's level of physical attractiveness has a direct impact on others' perceptions of him/her. There are considerable advantages to being physically attractive, because "what is beautiful is good". Physical attractiveness provides a positive stereotype; people who are physically attractive are deemed to have other positive qualities, such as intelligence, credibility, good health, friendliness, and happiness (Eagly & Wood, 1991; Feingold, 1992).

In line with sociobiological theory, males tend to place greater value on physical attractiveness than females do (Feingold, 1990). With regard to coercive sexual behavior, research by Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (1994b) indicates that physically attractive coercers invoke less negative reactions than unattractive coercers do. Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson investigated male's reactions to hypothetical female advances and how those reactions were influenced by the physical attractiveness of the initiator and the intensity of coercion used. Results showed that men

had more positive (or less negative) reactions to the actions of an attractive initiator than they did to an unattractive initiator. Similarly, Carter, Hicks, and Slane (1996) investigated female's reactions to hypothetical male sexual advances and how those reactions were influenced by the physical attractiveness of the initiator. The results indicated that females were more accepting of a sexual advance by an attractive perpetrator than an unattractive one.

Research on Resources. No research appears to have been done examining the role of resources, status, or financial-potential on college student attitudes toward coercive sexual behavior, a major objective of the present investigation. However, previous studies (Bereczkei, Voros, Gal, and Bernath, 1997; Hirschman, 1987) have supported the sociobiological contention that females tend to seek mates who boast resources.

Research by Hirschman (1987) examined the contents of personal advertisements placed by males and females seeking companionship. Findings indicated that women tended to offer physical attractiveness resources and to seek monetary resources in their ads, while men tended to offer monetary resources and to seek physical attractiveness in their prospects.

A similar study of personal advertisements by Bereczkei et al. (1997) indicated a "bargaining" of reproductive values. Females were more likely to prefer resources in mates, and further those females who offered physical attractiveness made higher demands for resourceful males than those who did not offer physical attractiveness. That is, the higher the physical attractiveness females offered, the greater financial and occupational status they required in potential mates. Likewise, the more resources men had, the greater the demands they made about the potential partner's physical attractiveness.

McIntosh and Tate (1992) investigated resources (wealth and education), along with attractiveness and prestige, as a characteristic that may facilitate the experience of jealousy. Participants read one of six different scenarios in which a jealousy-evoking situation was portrayed, a third party expressing romantic interest in one's partner. The third party was described - relative to the partner - as either of high or low prestige (in or not in a pledge organization), high or low resources (wealthy and educated or not wealthy and unemployed), or high or low attractiveness (more attractive or less

attractive). The participants were then asked to rate how jealous they would feel. The results of this investigation indicated that when a more prestigious or a more physically attractive third party expressed romantic interest in one's partner, the participant experienced increased levels of jealousy. The results did not indicate that wealth or resources provoked the experience of jealousy.

### Statement of the Problem

Despite extensive research and awareness efforts, coercive sexual behavior, defined as any action that verbally or physically intimidates another into unwanted sexual activity (Garcia, Milano, & Quijano, 1989), continues to be a problem on most college campuses. Many theories have been offered to explain this phenomenon, and each has contributed to the understanding of sexual aggression and to the perpetuation of research on the topic.

Sociobiology purports a highly controversial, yet very simple, theory of sexual aggression. The theory suggests that rape and sexual aggression are extreme behaviors prescribed by evolution to ensure the passing of one's genes into the next generation (Barash, 1979; Shields and Shields, 1983; Thornhill & Thornhill, 1992). However, humans will not behave aggressively unless it is advantageous for them to do so, that is, when the benefits outweigh the costs (Barash, 1979). Physical aggression, including forced copulation, is not a particularly adaptive strategy, as it expends much energy, and the perpetrator runs a very high risk of getting injured or caught. Deceitful and manipulative courtship strategies are more adaptive forms of aggression as there is less at stake when one verbally persuades or physically coerces another into sexual intercourse.

Considering the distinct male-female mating strategies prescribed by biological differences – males copulating with as many females as possible and females maintaining high selectivity and restriction – it follows that males and females would also have different mate selection criteria (Wilson, 1975). Sociobiological theory purports that when choosing a mate, males seek females who are physically attractive (an indication of fertility and reproductive ability), while females most often look for males who are resourceful, that is, males who will be able to provide for and protect the female and her offspring (e.g., Barash, 1979; Bateson, 1983; Halliday, 1980; Wilson, 1975).

In line with sociobiological theory's contention that males are better served to "play fast and loose" and females to be highly selective, research on the topic of coercive sexual behavior indicates that males are inclined to be more accepting of the use of coercive sexual behaviors than females (Garcia, Milano, & Quijano, 1989; Haworth-Hoepfner, 1998; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1991, 1993). While males find coercive sexual behavior more acceptable than females do, females expect males to use coercive sexual behaviors more than males do (Cook, 1995); perhaps this could be attributed to variations in male's and female's perceptions of similar behaviors (Abbey, 1982; Abbey & Harnish, 1995).

Supporting the sociobiological notion that physical attractiveness is preferred, coercive sexual behaviors are perceived less negatively when the initiator is physically attractive; this is the case for both males and females (Carter, Hicks, & Slane, 1996; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994b). Resourcefulness has also been identified as a factor in dating relationships (Hirschman, 1987; McIntosh and Tate, 1992), but the effects of resources have not been examined within the context of a coercive sexual behavior situation. If physical attractiveness, a major factor in the sociobiological theory of mating strategies, influences students' perceptions of coercive sexual behavior, then resourcefulness, the counterpart to physical attractiveness, should influence students' perceptions of coercive sexual behavior as well.

Social equity theory, a fairness theory, contributes to the understanding of coercive sexual behavior. In short, equity theory contends that what one puts into a relationship should be proportional to what one gets out of the relationship. If the perception of outcome (rewards minus costs) is unequal, then steps, justly or unjustly, will be taken to regain equity (Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1976). It would follow, within the context of a dating situation, that the resource-potential of male and female daters would influence students' perceptions of coercive sexual behavior.

The purpose of the present study was to extend knowledge in the area of coercive sexual behavior and to lend support to the assertions of sociobiological theory and social equity theory by examining the factor of resource-potential. Specifically, the present study proposed to examine whether

the resource-potential of a male dater (i.e., potential financial success and status) and/or respondent gender affect attitudes (likelihood and acceptability) toward coercive sexual behavior by the male. Participants read a dating scenario in which a heterosexual couple goes out for dinner and then returns to the female's apartment to watch a movie. The resource-potential of the male dater was varied between high (medical student) and low (history student). Following the scenario, rating scales posing increasing levels of coercive sexual behavior (a sexual advance – a gentle kiss and gentle body contact, verbal persuasion, and physical coercion) were presented. The participants were asked to rate the likelihood and acceptability of each behavior on a 7-point scale.

## Hypotheses

### Gender Hypotheses

Females will perceive the sexual advance (gentle kiss and gentle body contact), verbal persuasion, and physical coercion as more likely than the males. Males will perceive the sexual advance, verbal persuasion, and physical coercion as more acceptable than the females.

### Resource-Potential (RP) Hypotheses

Participants responding to the high RP male scenario will perceive the sexual advance, verbal persuasion, and physical coercion as more likely and more acceptable than those participants responding to the low RP male scenario.

### Interaction Hypotheses

It is anticipated that females responding to the high RP male scenario would perceive the sexual advance, verbal persuasion, and physical coercion as more acceptable than those females responding to the low RP male scenario, while males respondents would perceive the sexual advance, verbal persuasion, and physical coercion equally acceptable across both RP scenarios.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

#### Participants

The participants were 141 (59 males and 82 females, mean age = 24.98) undergraduate students from a four-year state university located in the southeastern United States. Volunteers were recruited from psychology and sociology courses, and some were offered extra credit toward their course grade.

#### Materials

Each participant received a booklet consisting of an informed consent form, a cover sheet with written instructions and a treatment group identification letter (A = high resource-potential male scenario or B = low resource-potential male scenario), a resource-potential dating scenario, eight reading verification questions, a set of rating scales assessing perceptions of the scenario, and a few demographic questions. Two versions of the resource-potential scenario were created to accommodate the manipulation of male resource-potential (high or low).

Informed Consent. The current project was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The study (IRBNo: 98-027e) qualified as exempt from coverage under the federal guidelines for the protection of human subjects as referenced in Title 45--Part 46.101. The informed consent form (See Appendix A) was created for and presented to the study participants in accordance with the IRB specifications. The form included the name of the principal investigator, the title of the project, a brief description of the project (i.e., purpose, procedures, and duration), expected risks, and contact information should the participant have further questions about the study. After the form was explained by the researcher and signed by the participants, it was removed from each packet and collected to assure the anonymity of the participants.

Cover Sheet. The booklet cover sheet (See Appendix B) served three purposes. First, the cover sheet discouraged the participants from proceeding through the booklet, as it provided the following instructions: “Please do not open the booklet until you are instructed to do so. Thank you”. Second, as there were two versions of the resource-potential scenario (high and low), the cover sheet displayed a letter (A or B) to identify the experimental version. Third, the cover sheet provided written instructions for the study participants.

Resource-Potential Scenarios. Each scenario (See Appendix C) portrayed a hypothetical dating situation in which a heterosexual couple goes out for dinner and then returns to the female’s apartment to watch a movie. In the high resource-potential scenario, the male was described as having high potential for professional success. That is, he was described as an excellent academic student who has been accepted to a prestigious medical school, while the female was described as a history major with no certain plans for the future. In the low resource-potential male scenario, the resource-potential of the male was downplayed; that is the male was described as a history major, like the female, with no concrete plans for the future.

Questionnaire. Eight reading comprehension questions (See Appendix D) were included to determine if participants were actually reading the scenario. Four manipulation check questions, inquiries about the resource-potential of the male and female, were presented within the context of four other reading comprehension questions in this section. Appropriate responses to these questions ensured that the participants read the scenario and were answering the questions based on the manipulated information.

A set of rating scales (See Appendix E) followed the presentation of the reading verification questions that posed increasing levels of coercive sexual behavior by the male dating partner (a sexual advance – a gentle kiss and touch, verbal persuasion, and physical coercion). Participants were asked to rate the likelihood and the acceptability of the coercive behaviors on a 7-point Likert scale (1=Totally

Unacceptable/Unlikely and 7=Totally Acceptable/Likely). Lastly, a short demographic section was presented to the participants, requesting their gender, age, and year in school.

### Experimental Design

The design of the present study is a 2 (gender of subject) x 2 (high and low resource-potential) independent groups factorial with six dependent variables. A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze all six dependent variables, grouped by the two independent variables. Then a 2 x 2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and a stepdown analysis (Roy-Bargman) were conducted on each dependent variable. Post hoc testing was not needed because both independent variables were dichotomous. Pearson *r* correlation coefficients were also calculated for all pairs of the dependent variables. An alpha level of .05 was used for all analyses.

### Procedure

Experimental Procedure. Course instructors were contacted and arrangements were made regarding access to the participants. Arrangements were made regarding administration time, location, and duration. Potential inducements for the participants were discussed at that time, as well as alternative extra credit opportunities for those students who chose not to participate or were absent.

The study was announced as an investigation of college students' perceptions of coercive sexual behavior. Then, the students were given the study booklet. An even and quasi-random distribution of the two scenarios among participants was achieved by randomly ordering each set of two booklets; for example, AB, BA, BA, AB, AB, and so on (where A = the High Resource-Potential Male and B = the Low Resource-Potential Male). There was a stack for male participants and a stack for female participants.

Once the booklets had been distributed and it was established that everyone was ready to proceed, the informed consent was explained thoroughly by the researcher, signed by the participants, and then collected. The participants were asked to wait for further instruction before proceeding. The following directions were read aloud by the researcher:

Please do not begin until instructed to do so. The booklet you've received contains a narrative and a questionnaire; you will be asked questions about the content of the narrative. Please read the narrative carefully two times. Then, continue to the questionnaire that follows. Remember, your answers will be completely anonymous.

Participants were allowed to complete the next two pages of questions at their leisure. After they had completed the questionnaire, they were asked to raise their hands and the booklet was picked up. After all participants had completed the questionnaire, they were thanked for their participation and advised that information regarding the study results would be made available from the Psychology Department at the conclusion of the project.

Debriefing the participants as to the purpose of the study – an investigation of college students' perceptions of coercive sexual behavior by the target male as a function of the target male's resource-potential and respondent gender – was debated. However, it was decided best to withhold specific information about the study (i.e., the male-resource potential factor) until the conclusion of the study, at which point participants would be free to inquire about the study logistics. This decision was largely influenced by the possibility of participants sharing information about the study with classmates and friends, hence potentially jeopardizing the results. It is important to note that the participants were informed of the study as an investigation into college students' perceptions of coercive sexual behavior by a male.

Reliability Study Procedure. Because the reliability of the resource-potential scenarios was unknown, a separate reliability study was conducted using only the high resource-potential scenario. Using the test-retest reliability method, the questionnaire was administered twice to the same set of participants ( $n = 17$ ), with approximately two weeks between administrations. Participants were asked to write a four-digit identification number on the questionnaires at both administrations, in order to match the two questionnaires completed by each participant while maintaining anonymity. Pearson  $r$  correlation coefficients were computed for each dependent variable. Significant correlations were found for all

dependent measures, with the exception of the acceptability of physical coercion variable, from the first and second administrations leading to the reliability of the results over a two-week time period. (See Table 1). SPSS was unable to compute the Pearson  $r$  correlation coefficient for acceptability of physical coercion variable due to a restriction of range, or a constant score, from the first administration ( $M = 1.00$ ,  $SD = .000$ ).

Validity Study Procedure. Because the validity of the resource-potential scenarios was unknown, a separate validity study was conducted to evaluate the measure's construct validity evidence via content-related validity evidence, reliability testing, and the confirmation of the experimental hypotheses. Content-related validity refers to the relevance and representativeness of the measure. Referencing theory and similar measures, it was determined that the dependent variables were relevant to and were representative of the construct in question (i.e., students' perceptions of coercive sexual behavior by a male dater).

Also, using a strategy suggested by Whitley (1996), the study participants were asked about their perceptions regarding the content of the measure. Using only the high resource-potential scenario ( $n = 18$ ), a separate questionnaire was created to specifically assess participant perceptions of the male character. The questionnaire included the reading comprehension questions and the manipulation check questions that were utilized in the experimental procedure, with the addition of one question assessing students' perceptions of the male character's ability to care for and provide for the female character as a spouse or mate. (See Appendix F). A Pearson  $r$  correlation coefficient was computed for the participant's rating of the male character's financial success and status and for their rating of the male character's ability to care for and provide for the female character as a spouse or mate. A significant correlation was found between the variables ( $r = .431$ ,  $p < .05$ ) lending support to the validity of the results yielded by the instrument.

Also, by comparing responses to the potential financial success and status question for the high resource-potential group and the low resource-potential group, participants' responses indicated that the pre-med student (high resource-potential male) would be very successful in terms of financial

success and status, while the history major (low resource-potential male) would be significantly less successful ( $p < .000$ ; pre-med student:  $M = 6.5270$ ,  $SD = .6667$ ; history major:  $M = 3.5224$ ,  $SD = 1.1059$ ; where 1 = not successful and 7 = very successful). These responses are in line with the operational definition of resource-potential specified by the present study. Two additional sources of validity evidence were the measure's reliability (discussed in the previous section) and the confirmation of the experimental hypotheses in support of the theories from which they were derived (Whitley, 1996).

Table 1

Two-Week Test-Retest Reliability Coefficients

	Dependent Variables					
	Likelihood Sexual Advance	Acceptability Sexual Advance	Likelihood Verbal Persuasion	Acceptability Verb Persuasion	Likelihood Physical Coercion	Acceptability Physical Coercion
Likelihood Sexual Advance	.738*					
Acceptability Sexual Advance		.644*				
Likelihood Verbal Persuasion			.811*			
Acceptability Verbal Persuasion				.916*		
Likelihood Physical Coercion					.852*	
Acceptability Phys Coercion						**

\* $p < .01$

\*\*Could not compute; Constant for Test 1

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

A 2 x 2 between-subjects multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed on six dependent variables: the likelihood of a sexual advance, verbal persuasion, and physical coercion and the acceptability of a sexual advance, verbal persuasion, and physical coercion. Independent variables were target male resource-potential and respondent gender.

#### Preliminary Data Analyses

Before the analysis, all variables were examined for accuracy of data entry, missing values, and univariate and multivariate outliers. One case (a male responding to the low resource-potential male scenario) with a single missing value on acceptability of verbal persuasion was discovered; the missing value was estimated from the group mean. One case in the female group was a univariate outlier because of her age; because the age variable was not critical to the present study, this case was included in all analyses.

Using Mahalanobis distance with  $p < .001$  (suggested by Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996), two cases were identified as multivariate outliers. While both cases were female, one case was from the high resource-potential male scenario group and the other was from the low resource-potential male scenario group; both cases were excluded from the analysis. With the exclusion of these two cases, 141 cases remained.

#### Tests of Parametric Assumptions

The six dependent variables were examined through various SPSS procedures to identify possible violations of the parametric assumptions regarding normality, linearity, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity and singularity.

Normality. First, to determine if the dependent variables were normally distributed (within each of the four groups created by the independent variables), skewness and kurtosis values and their standard errors were calculated, and these were compared with 0 using the  $z$  distribution. While the shape of most of the distributions was satisfactory, one variable, the acceptability of physical coercion, yielded extreme non-normality for all four groups; no adjustments were made for this violation.

Linearity. The assumption of linearity is often evaluated by the examination of within-cell scatterplots for all pairs of dependent variables. However, according to Tabachnick and Fidell (1996), with numerous variables, it is acceptable to use statistics on skewness to identify those variables likely to depart from linearity. Because this was the procedure used in the present study and the group distributions for one particular variable (the acceptability of physical coercion) were positively skewed, it is likely that deviations from linearity occurred for this variable as well.

Homogeneity of Variance-Covariance Matrices. The Box's  $M$  statistic was used to test the homogeneity of variance-covariance assumption. The test yielded significance indicating that the assumption was not met; that is, the variance of the dependent variables was not similar across the four groups. It is likely that the extreme non-normality of the acceptability of physical coercion contributed to this undesirable result. In this case, Tabachnick and Fidell (1996) suggest the use of Pillai's trace criterion to evaluate multivariate significance.

Multicollinearity and Singularity. Finally, the variables were evaluated for multicollinearity and singularity. Multicollinearity and singularity are problems that occur when variables are too highly correlated. Logically, if two variables are very highly correlated, then one of them is not needed – because they are practically the same variable. Statistically, if two variables are very highly correlated, then problems will arise with matrix inversion, or division (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). The following criteria, suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell, were used to detect multicollinearity: a conditioning index greater than 30 and at least two variance proportions greater than .50 on the SPSS REGRESSION

output. Multicollinearity was not detected for any of the dependent variables. To test for singularity, the same authors suggest running the main analysis to see if the computer “balks” (p. 86); according to Tabachnick and Fidell, singularity will cause the analysis to abort. Singularity was not detected for any of the dependent variables.

### Correlation Matrix: Dependent Variables

To assess the relationships among the dependent variables in this study, Pearson  $r$  correlation coefficients were computed for each possible pairing of variables. Significant correlations were found between 9 of the 15 dependent variable pairings (See Table 2). Most of the nonsignificant correlations involved the likelihood and acceptability of physical coercion variables.

### Examination of Main and Interaction Effects

A MANOVA was performed, using SPSS, on all of the dependent variables in the 2 (gender of subject) x 2 (male resource-potential) design, relying on the Pillai's Trace multivariate F-values due to small sample size, unequal cell sizes, and violation of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices. The combined dependent variables were significantly affected for gender,  $F(6, 132) = 5.025, p < .001$ , and resource-potential group,  $F(6, 132) = 2.851, p < .01$ , but not by their interaction, gender by resource-potential group,  $F(6, 132) = 1.760, p > .05$  (See Table 3).

Univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were performed on each dependent variable (See Table 4). Because correlations were found among the dependent variables, a Roy-Bargman stepdown analysis was used to determine which dependent variables were the contributing the most after accounting for the shared variance (See Table 4). Both the univariate  $F$  and the stepdown  $F$  statistics are presented. However, because the correlations found between the dependent variables were small to moderate and there was no compelling reason to prioritize the dependent variables, the univariate  $F$  statistics will be emphasized in this section. The means and standard deviations for the experimental groups are presented in Table 5.

### Effects of Gender

Between-subject univariate analyses revealed significant differences between the means of males and females for all of the dependent variables, with the exception of the acceptability of a sexual advance. Males perceived the likelihood of a sexual advance, verbal persuasion, and physical coercion less likely than the females did. Males were more accepting of verbal persuasion and physical coercion than females were.

Males perceived a sexual advance less likely than females did,  $F(1, 137) = 6.80, p < .01$ , (Males:  $M = 5.32, SD = 1.27$ ; Females:  $M = 5.79, SD = 1.12$ ). Males perceived the use of verbal persuasion less likely than females did,  $F(1, 137) = 5.23, p < .05$ , (Males:  $M = 4.25, SD = 1.56$ ; Females:  $M = 4.74, SD = 1.46$ ). Males perceived the use of physical coercion less likely than females did,  $F(1, 137) = 4.42, p < .05$ , (Males:  $M = 2.51, SD = 1.58$ ; Females:  $M = 3.07, SD = 1.72$ ). Males were more accepting of the use of verbal persuasion than females were,  $F(1, 137) = 11.11, p < .001$ , (Males:  $M = 3.75, SD = 1.80$ ; Females:  $M = 2.81, SD = 1.63$ ), and males were more accepting of the use of physical coercion than females were,  $F(1, 137) = 5.39, p < .05$ , (Males:  $M = 1.56, SD = 1.04$ ; Females:  $M = 1.22, SD = 0.80$ ).

### Effects of Resource-Potential

Between-subject univariate analyses revealed significant differences between participants responding to the high resource-potential (RP) male scenario and the low RP male scenario on two of the dependent variables: likelihood of a sexual advance and likelihood of verbal persuasion. Participants responding to the high RP male scenario perceived a sexual advance more likely than those participants responding to the low RP male scenario did,  $F(1, 137) = 7.68, p < .01$ , (High RP male:  $M = 5.82, SD = 1.15$ ; Low RP male:  $M = 5.34, SD = 1.21$ ). Likewise, participants responding to the high RP male scenario perceived the use of verbal persuasion more likely than those participants responding to the low RP male scenario did,  $F(1, 137) = 15.25, p < .001$ , (High RP male:  $M = 4.96, SD = 1.36$ ; Low RP male:  $M = 4.08, SD = 1.55$ ).

Table 2

Correlation Matrix for the Six Dependent Variables

	Correlations					
	Likelihood Sexual Advance	Acceptability Sexual Advance	Likelihood Verbal Persuasion	Acceptability Verb Persuasion	Likelihood Physical Coercion	Acceptability Physical Coercion
Likelihood Sexual Advance	1.000	.421**	.433**	.171*	.211*	-.033
Acceptability Sexual Advance		1.000	.217**	.343**	-.156	.096
Likelihood Verbal Persuasion			1.000	.189*	.503**	.018
Acceptability Verbal Persuasion				1.000	-.093	.267*
Likelihood Physical Coercion					1.000	.120
Acceptability Physical Coercion						1.000

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 3

Pillai's Trace Multivariate Analysis F-Table

Effect	Value	F	<u>df</u> <sub>1</sub>	<u>df</u> <sub>2</sub>	p
Gender	.186	5.025	6	132	.000
Resource-potential	.115	2.852	6	132	.012
Gender x Resource-Potential	.074	1.760	6	132	.112

Table 4

Univariate F-Values and Stepdown Values for Gender, Resource-Potential, andInteraction Effects

<u>EFFECT</u>	<u>DV</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>SIG</u>	<u>STEP. F</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>SIG</u>
GENDER	1	6.80	1/137	.010	6.80	1/137	.010
	2	.722	1/137	.397	5.54	1/136	.020
	3	5.23	1/137	.024	1.72	1/135	.192
	4	11.11	1/137	.001	12.86	1/134	.000
	5	4.42	1/137	.037	.037	1/133	.848
	6	5.39	1/137	.022	1.70	1/132	.194
RESOURCE- POTENTIAL	1	7.68	1/137	.006	7.68	1/137	.006
	2	.831	1/137	.363	.231	1/136	.631
	3	15.25	1/137	.000	8.74	1/135	.004
	4	.791	1/137	.375	.042	1/134	.838
	5	2.54	1/137	.113	.325	1/133	.569
	6	.013	1/137	.910	.021	1/132	.886
GENDER BY RESOURCE- POTENTIAL	1	1.37	1/137	.243	1.37	1/137	.243
	2	.064	1/137	.801	.869	1/136	.535
	3	1.05	1/137	.307	.369	1/135	.544
	4	3.96	1/137	.049	5.14	1/134	.025
	5	.155	1/137	.695	.703	1/133	.403
	6	4.42	1/137	.037	1.99	1/132	.161

Note. 1 = likelihood of sexual advance; 2 = acceptability of sexual advance; 3 = likelihood of verbal persuasion; 4 = acceptability of verbal persuasion; 5 = likelihood of physical coercion; 6 = acceptability of physical coercion.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for the Experimental Groups

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	GENDER	HIGH RP	LOW RP	Total
Likelihood of sexual advance	M	5.67 (1.16)	4.89 (1.28)	5.32 (1.27)
	F	5.95 (1.14)	5.63 (1.09)	5.79 (1.11)
	Total	5.82 (1.15)	5.34 (1.21)	5.60 (1.20)
Acceptability of sexual advance	M	5.33 (1.53)	5.15 (1.57)	5.25 (1.54)
	F	5.17 (1.56)	4.85 (1.67)	5.01 (1.61)
	Total	5.24 (1.54)	4.97 (1.62)	5.11 (1.58)
Likelihood of verbal persuasion	M	4.79 (1.24)	3.58 (1.68)	4.25 (1.56)
	F	5.10 (1.45)	4.39 (1.39)	4.74 (1.46)
	Total	4.96 (1.36)	4.08 (1.55)	4.54 (1.51)
Acceptability of verbal persuasion	M	3.61 (1.97)	3.92 (1.57)	3.75 (1.80)
	F	3.22 (1.67)	2.39 (1.50)	2.81 (1.63)
	Total	3.39 (1.80)	2.99 (1.69)	3.20 (1.76)
Likelihood of physical coercion	M	2.76 (1.62)	2.19 (1.50)	2.51 (1.58)
	F	3.24 (1.76)	2.90 (1.69)	3.07 (1.72)
	Total	3.03 (1.71)	2.63 (1.64)	2.84 (1.68)
Acceptability of physical coercion	M	1.42 (.75)	1.73 (1.31)	1.56 (1.04)
	F	1.39 (1.09)	1.05 (.22)	1.22 (.80)
	Total	1.41 (.95)	1.31 (.89)	1.36 (.92)

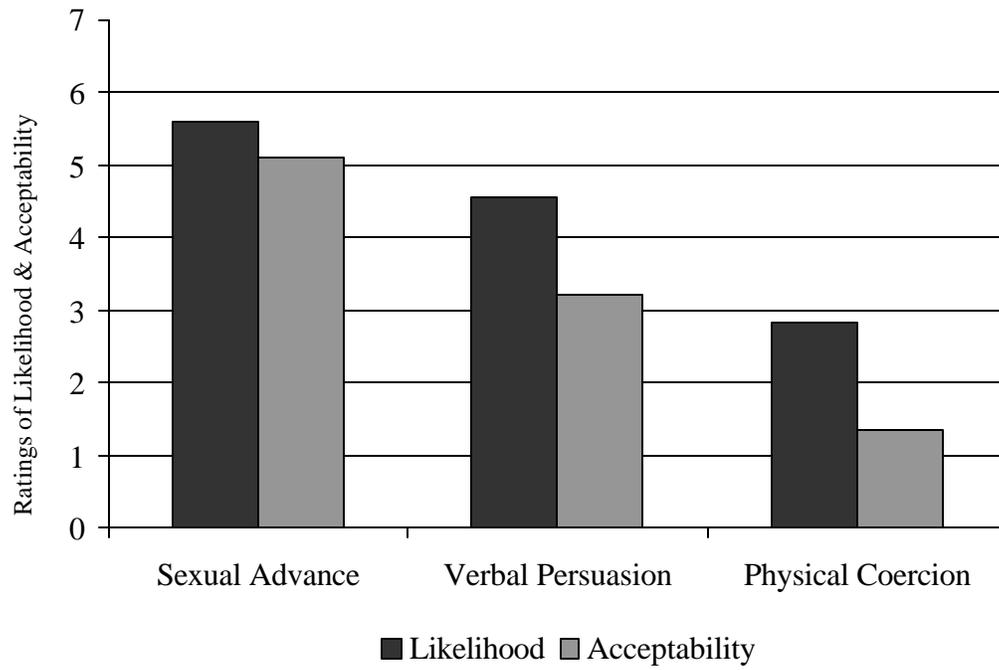


Figure 1. Overall mean for the likelihood and acceptability ratings of coercive sexual behavior.

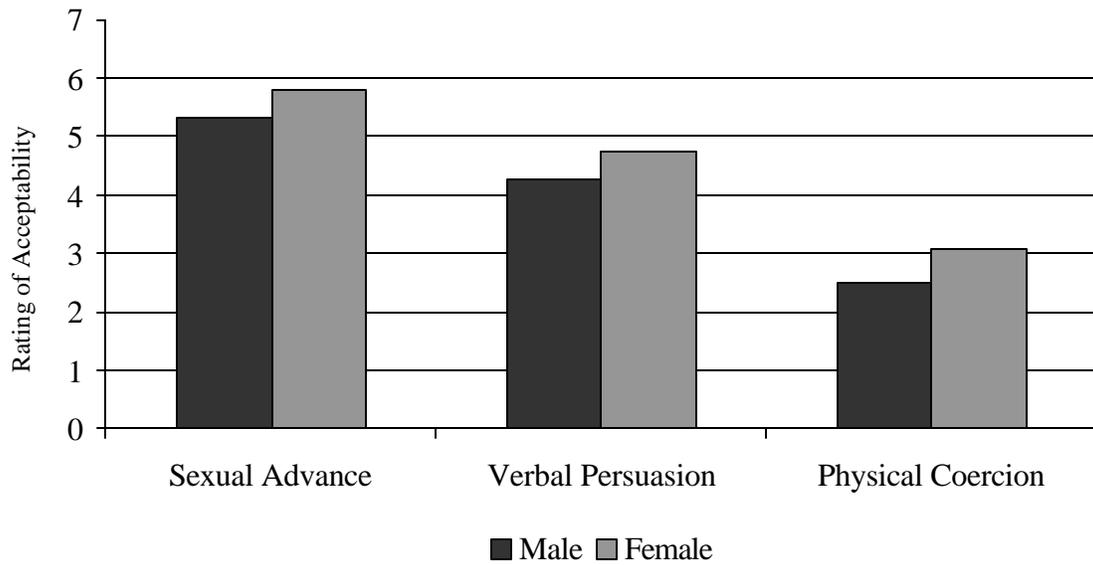


Figure 2. Mean likelihood ratings of coercive sexual behavior by gender. For each level of coercive behavior, female respondents found the behavior of the male significantly more likely than the male respondents did.

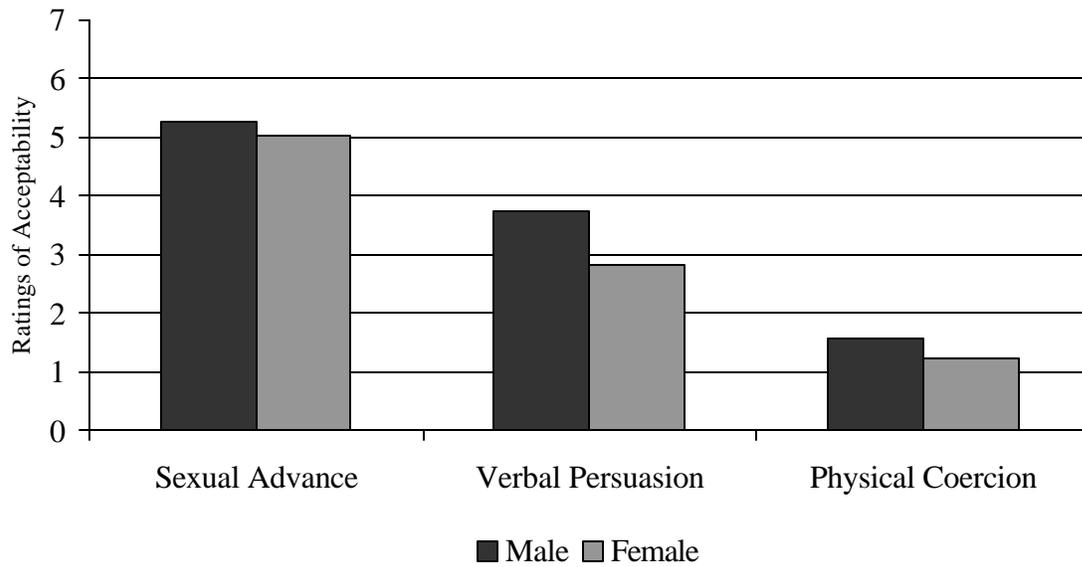


Figure 3. Mean acceptability ratings of coercive sexual behavior by gender. Significant differences were found between the means of the male and female respondents for the verbal persuasion and physical coercion variables.

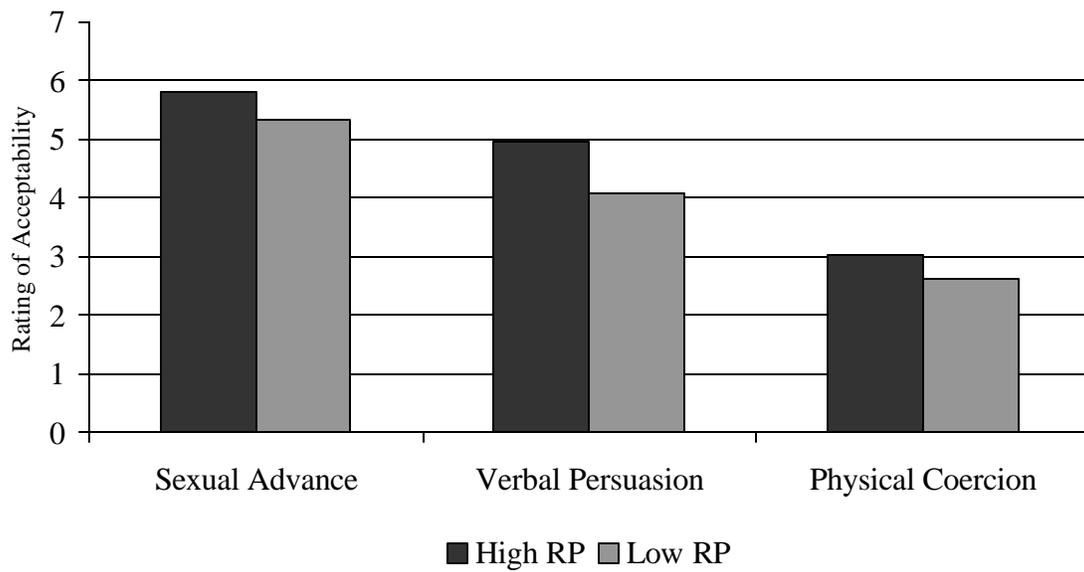


Figure 4. Mean likelihood of coercive sexual behavior ratings For the high and low resource-potential groups. Significant differences were found between the means of the high and low resource-potential scenario respondents for the sexual advance and the verbal persuasion variables.

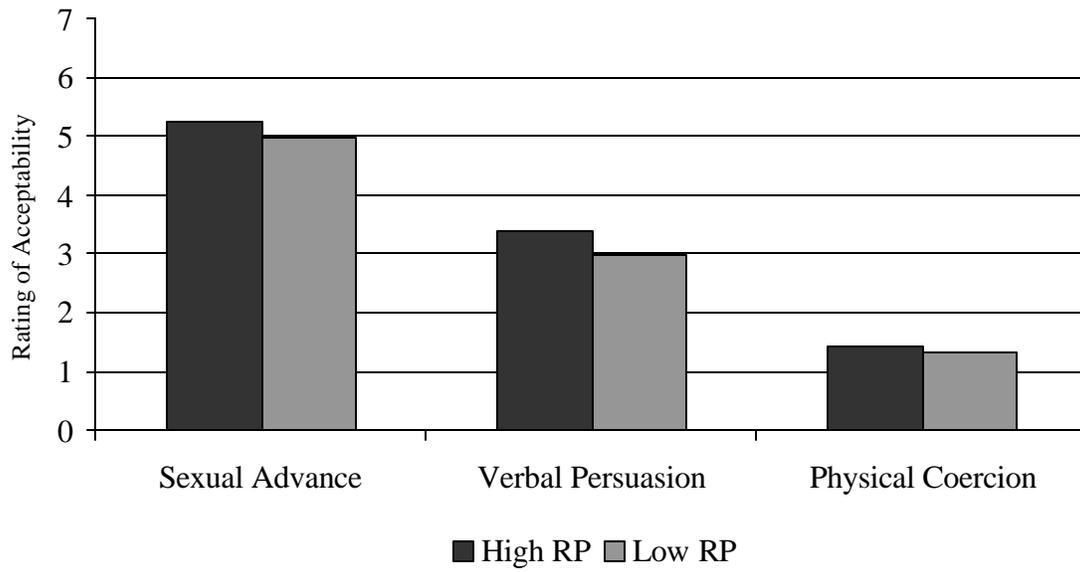


Figure 5. Mean acceptability of coercive sexual behavior ratings for high and low resource-potential groups. No significant differences were found between groups.

### Effects of Gender by Resource-Potential

MANOVA results showed no significant interaction for the variables of gender and resource-potential,  $p < .12$ . However, for exploratory purposes, between-subject univariate analyses were performed on each dependent variable. Results revealed interaction effects between the gender of the participants and the resource-potential of the male dater for two dependent variables: acceptability of verbal persuasion [ $F(1, 137) = 3.96, p < .05$ ] (See Figure 1) and acceptability of physical coercion [ $F(1, 137) = 4.42, p < .05$ ] (See Figure 2).

Females responding to the high RP male scenario ( $M = 3.22, SD = 1.67$ ) were more accepting of the use of verbal persuasion than the females responding to the low RP male scenario were ( $M = 2.39, SD = 1.50$ ). Similarly, females responding to the high RP male scenario ( $M = 1.39, SD = 1.09$ ) were more accepting of the use of physical coercion than the females responding to the low RP male were ( $M = 1.05, SD = 0.22$ ). Males responding to the low RP male scenario ( $M = 3.92, SD = 1.57$ ) were more accepting of the use of verbal persuasion than the females responding to the low RP male scenario were ( $M = 2.39, SD = 1.50$ ). Likewise, males responding to the low RP male scenario ( $M = 1.73, SD = 1.31$ ) were more accepting of the use of physical coercion than the females responding to the same scenario ( $M = 1.05, SD = 0.22$ ).

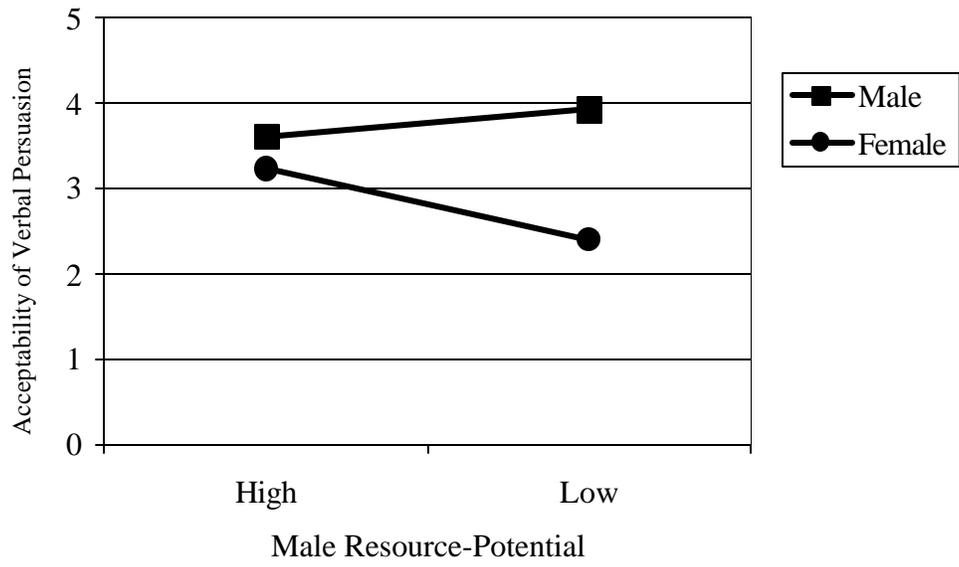


Figure 6. Mean acceptability ratings for the use of verbal persuasion. Females responding to the high resource-potential (RP) male scenario were more accepting of the use of verbal persuasion than the females responding to the low RP male scenario were. Males responding to the low RP male scenario were more accepting of the use of verbal persuasion than females responding to same scenario were.

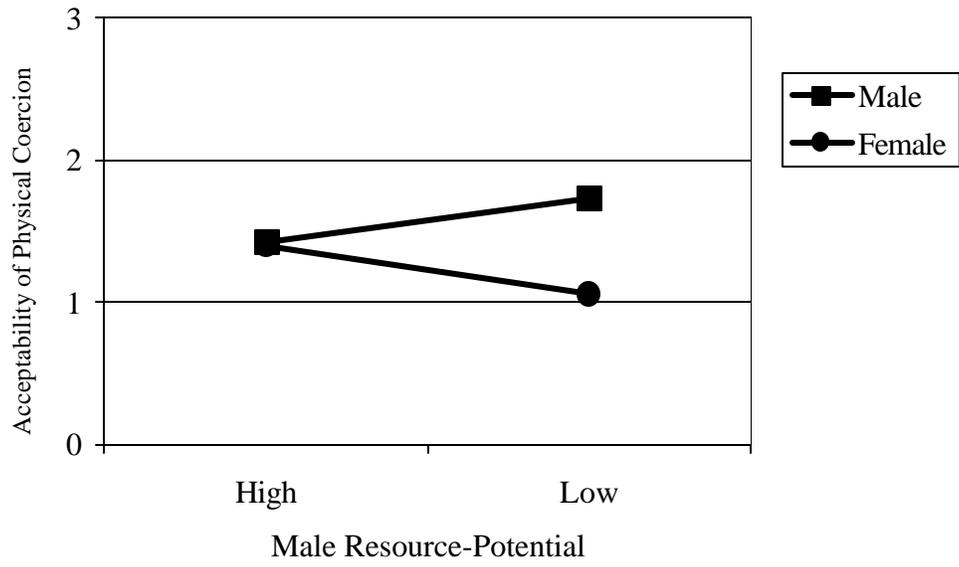


Figure 7. Mean acceptability ratings for the use of physical coercion. Females responding to the high resource-potential (RP) male scenario were more accepting of the use of physical coercion than the females responding to the low RP male scenario were. Males responding to the low RP male scenario were more accepting of the use of physical coercion than females responding to same scenario were.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

The intent of the present study was to determine whether college students' gender and/or the resource-potential of a male dater would affect students' perceptions of coercive sexual behavior by the male, thereby lending support to sociobiological, social exchange, and social equity theory. Although there appeared to be no research on the effects of male resource-potential on students' perceptions of coercive sexual behavior, sociobiological theory and social equity theory suggest that the resource-potential, defined as potential financial success and status of a male dater, might influence students' perceptions of coercive sexual behavior by him. Further, relevant research (Bereczkei, Voros, Gal, & Bernath, 1997; Hirschman, 1987; McIntosh & Tate, 1992) supports the contention that male resourcefulness is, in fact, an important quality desired by females in a male partner.

The majority of the literature reviewed (Abbey, 1982; Abbey & Harnish, 1995; Garcia, Milano, & Quijano, 1989; Haworth-Hoepfner, 1998; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1991, 1993) suggested that male respondents would rate all three levels of coercive sexual behavior emitted by the male character higher on acceptability than the females would. Moreover, research by Cook (1995) suggested that females would rate the use of the coercive sexual behaviors as more likely than the male respondents would.

#### Interpretation of Results

##### Gender Hypotheses

The gender hypothesis stated that the female participants would perceive the sexual advance, verbal persuasion, and physical coercion as more likely than the males would. Significant gender differences were found for the likelihood of all three behaviors. Female participants perceived all three levels of sexual behavior more likely than the male participants did. This finding is consistent with the results obtained by Cook (1995) that females tend to expect coercive sexual behavior more often than males do.

The gender hypothesis also stated that males would be more accepting of the sexual advance, verbal persuasion, and physical coercion than females would be. Significant gender differences were found for the acceptability of verbal persuasion and the acceptability of physical coercion. Consistent with previous research (Garcia, Milano, & Quijano, 1989; Haworth-Hoeppner, 1998; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1991, 1993), males were more accepting of the use of verbal persuasion and physical coercion than females were. A significant difference was not found between the mean scores of males and females for the acceptability of the sexual advance; this finding suggests that males and females are equally accepting of a sexual advance, and supports the assertion of Roche (1986) that attitudes between males and females with regard to issues like sexual behavior are converging.

#### Resource-Potential Hypotheses

Based on the premises of social equity theory, the resource-potential hypothesis states that the participants responding to the high resource-potential scenario would perceive the sexual advance, verbal persuasion, and physical coercion more likely and more acceptable than those participants responding to the low resource-potential scenario. A significant difference was found between the means of the participants responding to the high and low resource-potential scenarios for the likelihood of a sexual advance and the likelihood of verbal persuasion. High resource-potential male respondents perceived the sexual advance and the use of verbal persuasion more likely than the low resource-potential male respondents. This finding suggests that the males with high resource-potential are perceived as more likely to initiate a sexual advance and to use verbal persuasion than males with low resource-potential. Because the hypothetical female dater is described with a low resource-potential herself, the coercive sexual behavior of the high resource-potential male might be viewed as a way of maintaining equity in the relationship. A second interpretation of this finding might involve the perceived secondary characteristics of a pre-med and a history major. Perhaps the pre-med major is seen as a go-getter or a person who knows how to get what he/she wants and usually does, while a history major is seen as less energetic, less ambitious, or even as less talented.

No difference was found between the high and low resource-potential groups for the likelihood of physical coercion. Perhaps this behavior was viewed as an extreme or excessive way of maintaining equity in a relationship. Also, there were no significant differences found between the high and low resource-potential groups for the acceptability of the three behaviors. These findings suggest that students recognize the influence of status and resourcefulness in social interactions and, therefore, the motive for one to maintain equity in a relationship. However, they do not perceive this motive as a desirable quality of human nature or one that should be realized; that is, they do not feel that an inequitable relationship justifies coercive sexual behavior at any level. Or perhaps these results show a tendency for the students to respond in a socially desirable fashion. While students recognize the influence of money and status, they are somewhat embarrassed by it and choose to respond in a more socially acceptable manner.

It is important to note a potential alternative explanation for these findings. The participants could have been responding to the similarity or dissimilarity of the male and female dater's resource-potential. Specifically, in the scenarios, the resource-potential of the two daters was implied by their academic major in college and their future career goals. In the high RP male scenario, the resource-potential of the daters was unequal or dissimilar: the male was a pre-medical student who had been accepted to a prestigious medical school, while the female was a history major with no plans for graduate school. In the low RP male scenario, the resource-potential of the daters was equal or similar: both the male and female were history majors with no plans for graduate school. Applying this notion to the interpretation of results, the high RP respondents (or dissimilarity respondents) perceived the sexual advance and the use of verbal persuasion as more likely than the low RP respondents (or similarity respondents). Future research should investigate this potential confound further.

### Interaction Hypotheses

In light of sociobiological theory, at least one interaction was anticipated: females responding to the high resource-potential male scenario would perceive the sexual advance, verbal persuasion, and physical coercion as more acceptable than those females responding to the low resource-potential male

scenario would, while the males would be equally accepting of the behaviors across both conditions of male resource-potential. While this hypothesis was not supported by the overall MANOVA results, exploratory between-subjects univariate analyses revealed partial support for this notion. Females responding to the high resource-potential scenario were more accepting of the use of verbal persuasion and the use of physical coercion than the females responding to the low resource-potential scenario, while males were equally accepting of the coercive behaviors for both the low resource-potential male and the high resource-potential male. This finding lends support to sociobiological theory and the notion that females' perceptions are influenced by the resource-potential of the male dater.

Similarly, a second interaction occurred involving the low resource-potential respondents. Males responding to the low resource-potential scenario found the verbal persuasion and physical coercion more acceptable than the females responding to the low resource-potential scenario. In this study, the low resource-potential scenarios served as the control condition, and this finding suggests that "all else being equal" males are more accepting of coercive sexual behaviors than females. These results offer further support to the gender difference hypothesis that males are more accepting of coercive sexual behaviors than females are.

### Summary

It was hypothesized that the two independent variables, participant gender and male resource-potential, would significantly affect all of the dependent variables. While all hypotheses were not fully supported, overall, the present study yielded results warranting further research on this topic. Additional support was given to the coercive sexual behavior literature claiming gender differences by the finding that females found coercive sexual behaviors more likely than males did, while males found the behaviors more acceptable than females did. Secondly, support was given to social equity theory by the finding that high resource-potential respondents found the coercive sexual behaviors more likely than those respondents of the alternate scenario. Finally, the finding that females were more accepting of coercive sexual behaviors from a high resource-potential male than from a low resource-potential male offers full support to the mating strategy assertions of sociobiological theory.

### Limitations

While the present study did offer several interesting and encouraging findings, it also had some limitations. First, three assumptions of parametric testing were violated: normality, linearity, and homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices. The response distribution of a single variable, the acceptability of physical coercion, contributed to the violation of all three assumptions. The distribution for the acceptability of physical coercion yielded extreme non-normality. This is to be expected as the rating scale was anchored by “not acceptable” at the low end and “highly acceptable” at the high end. The distribution was positively skewed. While this suggests good intentions of the student respondents, it is unfortunate for meeting the assumptions of parametric testing. Largely due to the extreme non-normality of the distribution, the assumption of linearity was violated by this same variable. Likewise, the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices was violated; Pillai’s trace criterion was used to evaluate multivariate significance in this case. Using a more conservative alpha level could have been employed for the violations of these assumptions as well.

The second limitation is one inherent to any research endeavor; it involves the operational definition of “resourcefulness” as referenced by sociobiological theory. In sociobiology, resourceful describes a male who has the means and capabilities of caring for the female and her offspring; that is, resourceful might be described as having access to resources like food and water, to safety from the weather elements or enemies, to being able to provide nurturing to the offspring. In the present study, resourcefulness was described in terms of potential financial success and status only, vaguely implying the ability and willingness to provide sustenance, shelter, safety, and nurturing.

Third, the present study assessed the students’ perceptions of the male’s behavior based on his projected resource-potential. That is, the male was not currently resourceful, but he had the potential to be resourceful. Two problems readily come to mind with this designation. First, the resourcefulness of the male is a projected event, and there is no way to guarantee that it will or will not occur. Second, the current resourcefulness of the male is not indicated. This could have caused the students to make stereotypical assumptions about his current resourcefulness based on his interests, talents, and future

goals. If so, the students could have been influenced by these assumptions when responding to the questions.

Last, the subject population consisted of undergraduate students from East Tennessee State University. This sample could limit the generalizability of the results. Also, a single methodology was used, the scenario-type experimental procedure. Other methodologies, such as live or videoed role-playing situations, could be added to the design to add support to the findings and increase the validity of the current study.

### Future Research

Other suggestions for future research involve the operational definition of resourcefulness. Efforts should be made to further develop and generate an operational definition of resourcefulness that is comparable to that of sociobiology. Focus groups could be used in which students are questioned about their perceptions of a male's role in a relationship, as well as what characteristics a female looks for in a mate. This process could highlight desirable qualities in males and hence produce new variables to be investigated.

It would be interesting to examine male resource-potential with other variables that have been found to influence students' perceptions in the past, such as relationship longevity of the couple in question, the couple's previous intimacy level, or the addition of alcohol to the situation. Also, sociobiological theory identifies characteristics, other than resourcefulness, that are sometimes considered by females when choosing a mate, such as superiority, dominance, age, size, and physical attractiveness. Each of these variables could be investigated as influencing students' perceptions of coercive sexual behavior.

The current study examined the influence of respondent gender and male resource-potential on college students' perceptions of coercive sexual behavior by the male. Future studies should examine students' perceptions of coercive sexual behavior by a male dater when the male's current resourcefulness is emphasized. It is possible that by emphasizing the resource-potential of the male, a construct other than sociobiology's ideal of resourcefulness was measured. Examining the current

resource status of the male might prove to be more comparable and analogous to resourcefulness as referenced by sociobiology.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
Informed Consent Form

East Tennessee State University

INFORMED CONSENT

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Christy D. Wolfe

TITLE OF PROJECT: College Student Perceptions of Coercive Sexual Behavior

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to investigate college student perceptions of various dating situations.

DURATION

Participation in this study will require approximately 10 minutes of your time.

PROCEDURES

As a research subject, you will be asked to read a short narrative and answer all of the questions that follow.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

No risks or discomforts of any consequence are expected for you.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits for your participation in this study.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

If you have any questions or research-related concerns at any time, you may call Christy Wolfe at 540/381-4287 or Dr. Otto Zinser at 423/439-4424. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423/439-6134 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject.

CONFIDENTIALITY

A copy of records from this study will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the Department of Psychology for at least 10 years at the conclusion of this project. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings. Further, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the ETSU/VA Medical Center Institutional Review Board, the Food and Drug Administration, and the ETSU Department of Psychology have access to the study records. Your study record will be maintained in strictest confidence according to current legal requirements and will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

*The nature of the demands, risks, and benefits of the project have been explained to me as well as are known and available. I understand what my participation involves. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to ask questions and withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty. I have read, or have had read to me, and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily.*

---

SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER

DATE

---

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

DATE

## APPENDIX B

### Cover Sheets

PLEASE DO NOT OPEN BOOKLET  
UNTIL INSTRUCTED TO DO SO.  
THANKS!

INSTRUCTIONS: Please do not begin until instructed to do so. The booklet you've received contains a narrative and a questionnaire; you will be asked questions about the content of the narrative. Please read the narrative carefully two times. Then, continue to the questions that follow. Remember, your answers will be completely anonymous.

A

PLEASE DO NOT OPEN BOOKLET  
UNTIL INSTRUCTED TO DO SO.  
THANKS!

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please do not begin until instructed to do so. The booklet you've received contains a narrative and a questionnaire; you will be asked questions about the content of the narrative. Please read the narrative carefully two times. Then, continue to the questions that follow. Remember, your answers will be completely anonymous.

B

## APPENDIX C

### Male Resource-Potential Scenarios

HYPOTHETICAL DATING SCENARIO  
[High Resource-Potential Male]

Todd and Amy are both students at the University. They were introduced at a party by a mutual friend, and they have been out on a couple of dates since then. Todd is a pre-med student with grades placing him in the top 5% of his class. In fact, he was recently accepted to one of the most prestigious medical schools in the country. Amy is a history major, but she has no intentions of attending graduate school at this point. Tonight, she and Todd are going out for dinner to celebrate the end of the semester. After dinner, they decide to continue the celebration at Amy's apartment with a movie. So, they dim the lights and curl up on the sofa.

## HYPOTHETICAL DATING SCENARIO

[Low Resource-Potential Male]

Todd and Amy are both students at the University. They were introduced at a party by a mutual friend, and they have been out on a couple of dates since then. Todd and Amy are both history majors, and neither of them have intentions of attending graduate school at this point. Tonight, Todd and Amy are going out for dinner to celebrate the end of the semester. After dinner, they decide to continue the celebration at Amy's apartment with a movie. So, they dim the lights and curl up on the sofa.

## APPENDIX D

### Reading Verification and Manipulation Check Questions

1. Where did Todd and Amy meet?
  - A. At the mall
  - B. In line at the grocery store
  - C. At a party
  - D. In an internet chatroom
  
2. How many times have Todd and Amy been out, not counting this date?
  - A. Never
  - B. Two times
  - C. Five times
  - D. Ten times
  
3. Which of the following best describes Todd's academic career?
  - A. Math major with no plans to attend graduate school
  - B. History major with no plans to attend graduate school
  - C. History major with plans to attend graduate school
  - D. Pre-med major with plans to attend medical school
  
4. Please rate Todd's potential financial success and status.
 

*Not Successful*    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    *Very Successful*
  
5. Which of the following best describes Amy's academic career?
  - A. Math major with no plans to attend graduate school
  - B. History major with no plans to attend graduate school
  - C. History major with plans to attend graduate school
  - D. Pre-med major with plans to attend medical school
  
6. Please rate Amy's potential financial success and status.
 

*Not Successful*    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    *Very Successful*
  
7. Why are Todd and Amy going out to dinner tonight?
  - A. To celebrate the end of the semester
  - B. To celebrate Amy's birthday
  - C. To celebrate Todd's birthday
  - D. None of the above
  
8. What did Todd and Amy do after dinner?
  - A. They went dancing.
  - B. They drove around town.
  - C. They played putt-putt.
  - D. They returned to Amy's to watch a movie.

## APPENDIX E

### Experimental Questionnaire

9. What is the likelihood that Todd will make a sexual advance or indicate an interest in sexual activity by gently kissing Amy or softly leaning against her on the couch?

*Not Likely*    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    *Very Likely*

Suppose Todd does indicate an interest in sexual activity by gently kissing Amy or softly leaning against her on the couch. Do you think this would be an acceptable behavior for Todd?

*Absolutely Not*    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    *Yes, Definitely*

10. Suppose Amy slightly moves away from Todd and says, "I don't really think we should be doing this". What is the likelihood that Todd will use gentle, verbal persuasion to gain Amy's interest and cooperation to engage in sexual activity?

*Not Likely*    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    *Very Likely*

Suppose Todd does use gentle, verbal persuasion to gain Amy's interest and cooperation to engage in sexual activity. Do you think this would be an acceptable behavior for Todd?

*Absolutely Not*    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    *Yes, Definitely*

11. Suppose Todd continues to verbally encourage Amy and she says no again. What is the likelihood that Todd will attempt to remove her clothing, passionately kiss, or physically stimulate her, to gain her interest and cooperation to engage in sexual activity?

*Not Likely*    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    *Very Likely*

Suppose Todd does attempt to remove her clothing, passionately kiss, or and physically stimulate her, to gain her interest and cooperation to engage in sexual activity. Do you think this would be an acceptable behavior for Todd?

*Absolutely Not*    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    *Yes, Definitely*

12. What is your gender?     Male     Female

13. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

14. What is your student status?

Freshman     Junior     Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sophomore     Senior

Thank you for your time!

APPENDIX F  
Validity Questionnaire

1. Where did Todd and Amy meet?
  - E. At the mall
  - F. In line at the grocery store
  - G. At a party
  - H. In an internet chatroom
  
2. How many times have Todd and Amy been out, not counting this date?
  - E. Never
  - F. Two times
  - G. Five times
  - H. Ten times
  
3. Which of the following best describes Todd's academic career?
  - E. Math major with no plans to attend graduate school
  - F. History major with no plans to attend graduate school
  - G. History major with plans to attend graduate school
  - H. Pre-med major with plans to attend medical school
  
4. Please rate Todd's potential financial success and status.  
*Not Successful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Successful*
  
5. Please rate Todd's potential ability to provide and care for Amy as a mate/husband.  
*Not Capable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Capable*
  
6. Which of the following best describes Amy's academic career?
  - A. Math major with no plans to attend graduate school
  - B. History major with no plans to attend graduate school
  - C. History major with plans to attend graduate school
  - D. Pre-med major with plans to attend medical school
  
7. Please rate Amy's potential financial success and status.  
*Not Successful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Successful*
  
8. Why are Todd and Amy going out to dinner tonight?
  - A. To celebrate the end of the semester
  - B. To celebrate Amy's birthday
  - C. To celebrate Todd's birthday
  - D. None of the above
  
9. What did Todd and Amy do after dinner?
  - A. They went dancing.
  - B. They drove around town.
  - C. They played putt-putt.
  - D. They returned to Amy's to watch a movie.

