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Does Pornography Use Contribute to Antiwoman Aggression? Re-examination of the Confluence Model Considering Third Variable Explanations

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DOES PORNOGRAPHY USE CONTRIBUTE TO ANTIWOMAN AGGRESSION? A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE CONFLUENCE MODEL CONSIDERING THIRD VARIABLE ALTERNATIVES



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Abstract

The confluence model of sexual aggression (e.g. Malamuth, Heavey & Linz, 1996) suggests that pornography use, thought to promote sexual coercion of women through its presentation of submissive female imagery, works in conjunction with sexual promiscuity (SP) and hostile masculinity (HM) to produce antiwoman-aggressive outcomes. The following study re-examined the confluence model's claims using a correlational Internet survey involving 188 adult male participants. As expected, confluence model results were replicated such that men higher in HM and SP were more likely to report sexually aggressing with higher (as compared to lower) pornography use. Furthermore, both HM and SP were strong predictors of consumption of violent compared to non-violent sexual media, suggesting that perhaps men high in sexual risk consume different types of sexual material altogether from men low in sexual risk. Critically, as predicted by the current researchers, substituting a measure of individual male's sex drive for assessment of individual male's pornography use in the confluence model accounted for all of the variance in sexual coercion previously accounted for by pornography. The novelty and statistical significance of these findings warrants a reappraisal of the confluence model's suggestion of pornography as a driving factor behind antiwoman aggression.

Introduction

The confluence model of sexual coercion suggests that the individual difference factors of hostile masculinity (HM) and sexual promiscuity (SP) work in conjunction with frequent pornography use to encourage sexual aggression (e.g. Malamuth, Heavey, & Linz, 1993; Malamuth, Addison, & Koss, 2000). However, this model fails to examine type of sexual content consumed (violent, non-violent, etc), simply defining "pornography use" as consumption of static nude magazines, relying on a sample of college males drawn in 1984. Furthermore, the confluence model has failed to consider third-variable explanations that may account for the effects that are typically observed in correlational studies.

H1a: Taken together, HM, SP, and pornography use should be associated with coercion.

H1b: The interaction between HM and SP should contribute to the prediction of coercion over and above HM, SP, and porn use individually.

H1c: The interaction between HM, SP, and porn use should contribute to the prediction of coercion over and above the two-way interaction between HM and SP, and the associations between HM, SP, and porn use individually.

H2: Men who are high in SP and high in HM will report consuming a greater proportion of violent and coercive sexual media than men who are low in SP and HM.

R1: Does sex drive—an individual difference factor that correlates highly with pornography use—interact with high risk HM and SP factors to increase self-reported acts of sexually coercive behavior?

Method

Participants: Community sample of 188 adult males, recruited through online snowball sampling

Procedure: Participants followed a hyperlink from Facebook to a Qualtrics survey, where they completed a battery of demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral measures.

Measures:

HM = "When I am angry at a woman, I sometimes feel as if I could end up acting on my impulses and behaving violently (using abusive language, breaking something, punching, hitting, kicking,); "Other people would say I am capable of behaving violently toward women"
Cronbach's $\alpha = .66$

SP = "Over the past 5 years, with how many different partners have you engaged in sexual contact, that is penile-vaginal, penile-anal, or oral-genital sex?"; "How old were you when you first voluntarily became sexually active, that is, engaged in penile-vaginal, penile-anal, or oral-genital sex?"
Cronbach's $\alpha = .39$

Pornography use = "In any given week, I read, watch, or look at pornography (e.g. sexually explicit images, videos, sound clips, erotic fiction) ___ times"; e.g. "In any given week, violent pornography (e.g. sexually explicit depictions of violent sexual activity including the use of physical force, rape, sodomy, weapons) makes up ___% of the pornography I consume"

Method (cont'd)

Sex drive = Desired number of orgasms a week, desired frequency of partnered sexual activity a week, number of times one masturbates in a week
Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$

Sexual coercion = Assessed using the validated and reliable Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss & Oros, 1982), including 10 items such as "Over the past 5 years, how many times have you been in a situation where you obtained sexual acts with a woman such as anal or oral intercourse when she didn't want to by using threats or physical force?"
Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$

Data analysis: After standardizing constructs as necessary, all hypotheses were tested using blocked regression analyses, with each predictor entered in a separate step to determine which, if any, factors contribute significantly to coercion.

Results

H1a: Taken together, HM, SP, and pornography use should be associated with coercion.
Together SP and HM, and not porn use*, significantly predict coercion, $F(3, 184) = 23.41, p < .001, R^2 = .28$

* Note: Porn use was not associated with coercion

H1b: The interaction between HM and SP should contribute to the prediction of coercion over and above HM, SP, and porn use.

HM x SP interaction contributes uniquely to prediction of coercion, $F(3, 181) = 14.05, p < .001, R^2 = .14$

H1c: The interaction between HM, SP, and porn use should contribute to the prediction of coercion over and above the two-way interaction between HM and SP, and the associations between HM, SP, and porn use.

HM x SP x Porn use interaction significantly predicts coercion, $F(1, 180) = 4.81, p < .05, R^2 = .02$
Coercion as predicted by HM, SP, pornography use, and their interactions, is shown for high and low pornography use in **Figures 1a, b, and c.**

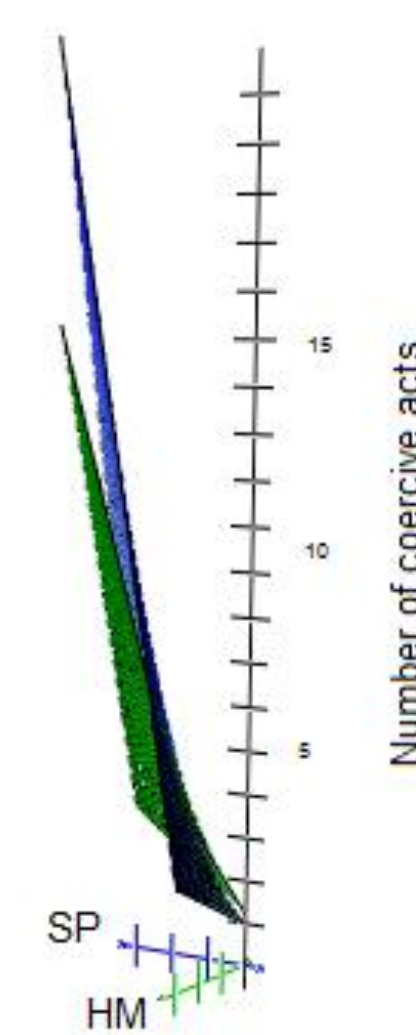


Figure 1a

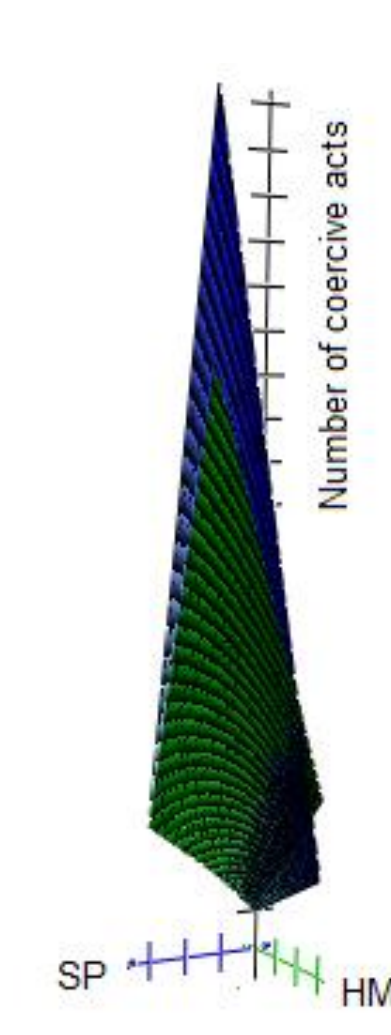


Figure 1b

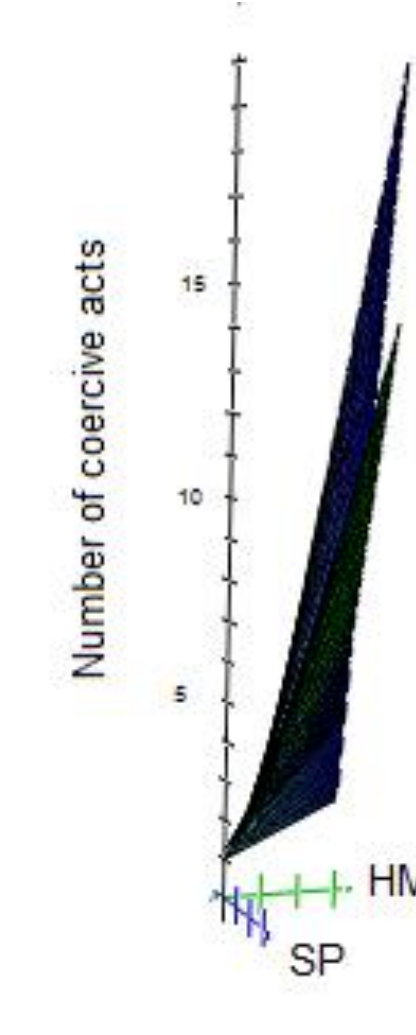


Figure 1c

3D plot of the relationship between HM, SP, pornography use, and coercion using the spotlight method. The green plane represents the prediction of coercion with HM and SP assuming low pornography use (-1 SD from the mean), and the blue plane represents the prediction of coercion with HM and SP assuming high pornography use (+1 SD from the mean). As can be seen, high pornography use was associated with greater coercion among those who were high in HM and SP but not among those who were low on these values.

H2: Men who are high in SP and high in HM will report consuming a greater proportion of violent and coercive sexual media than men who are low in SP and HM.

HM x SP interaction significantly predicts violent pornography use ($F(1, 183) = 27.31, p < .001, R^2 = .12$) and marginally predicts BDSM pornography use ($F(1, 183) = 3.44, p = .065, R^2 = .02$).

Results (cont'd)

R1: Does sex drive—an individual difference factor that correlates highly with pornography use—interact with high risk HM and SP factors to increase self-reported acts of sexually coercive behavior?

HM, SP, and sex drive: $F(3, 184) = 23.30, p < .001, R^2 = .28$
HM x SP, HM x Sex drive, SP x Sex drive: $F(3, 181) = 14.65, p < .001, R^2 = .14$
HM x SP x Sex drive: $F(1, 180) = 7.70, p < .01, R^2 = .02$
Porn use, HM x Porn use, SP x Porn use, HM x SP x Porn use: $F(4, 176) = 0.02, p = ns, R^2 = .00$

The confluence model substituting sex drive for pornography use is shown in **Figures 2a, b, and c.**

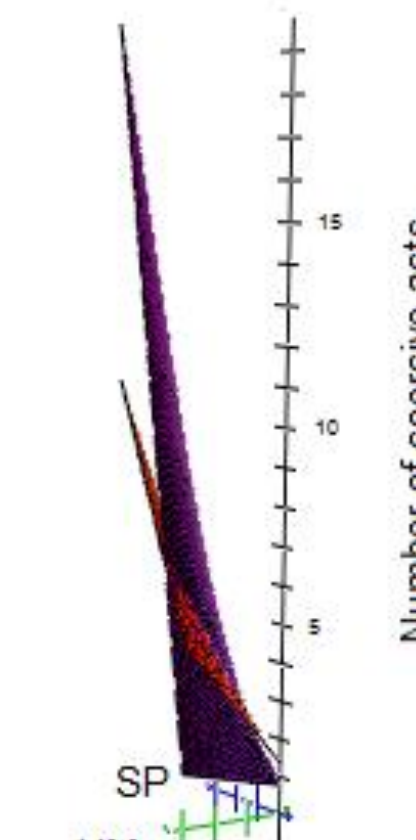


Figure 2a

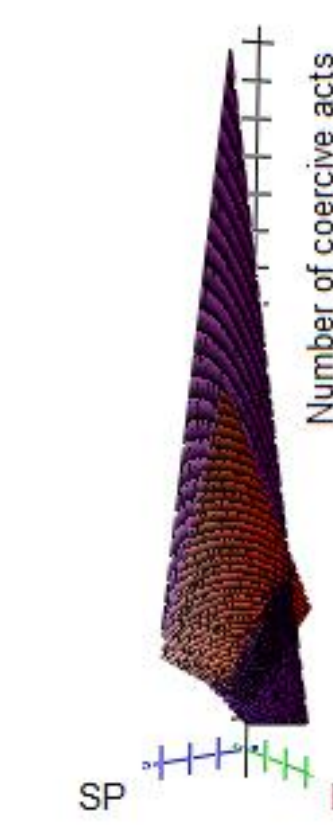


Figure 2b

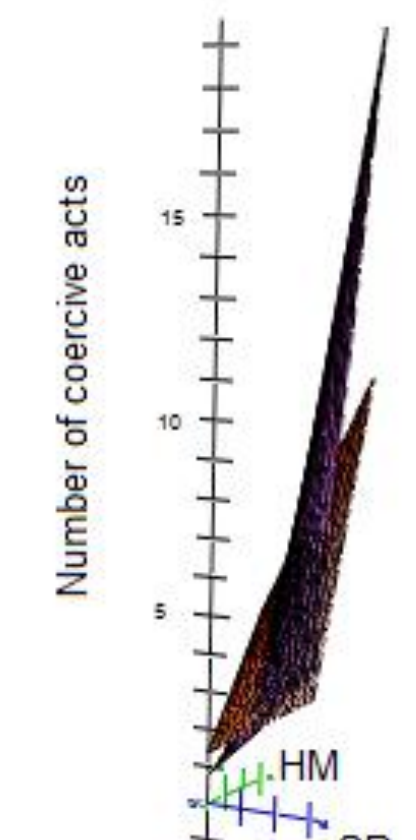


Figure 2c

3D plot of the relationship between HM, SP, sex drive, and coercion using the spotlight method. The red plane represents the prediction of coercion with HM and SP assuming low sex drive (-1 SD from the mean), and the purple plane represents the prediction of coercion with HM and SP assuming high sex drive (+1 SD from the mean), with high sex drive associated with greater coercion at high HM and SP compared to low sex drive. As can be seen, high sex drive was associated with greater coercion among those who were high in HM and SP but not among those who were low on these values.

Discussion

- Confluence model supported: Pornography use increases risk of sexual coercion among high HM, high SP males
- However, high HM, high SP respondents were also more likely than individuals low on HM or SP to consume violent pornography
 - "High risk" respondents consuming different type of sexual media from "low risk" respondents
 - Maybe high HM, high SP, high pornography consumption users are aggressing because they're consuming violent media (rather than sexual media, as suggested by Malamuth in past research)
- Sex drive can be substituted for pornography use in the confluence model without any loss of predictive value of coercion
 - Pornography may not be the driving factor behind sexual coercion
 - Perhaps: High sex drive => More sexual intercourse + Stronger sexual urges = More likely to sexually coerce? Also more likely to consume violent pornography?

Limitations

- HM measure used was unique to this study— Could not access original HM items
- Limited demographic sample: Largely young (modal age = 21), liberal, and atheistic/agnostic
- Pornography metric (indicate proportion of frequency) proved somewhat complicated, resulting in "incorrect" responses
- To be used as an initial study, and will be replicated with improved items

In conclusion, pornography use does not appear to be the primary correlate of sexual coercion, nor can it be called a causal determinant— Further investigation is necessary.

Acknowledgments

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