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The relationship between sexual assault perpetrators' tactics and individual difference variables: How do men who use alcohol and verbal coercion differ?

A. Abbey, A. J. Jacques, & M. R. Parkhill. Wayne State University, USA

Sexual aggression continues to be a widespread problem on college campuses. College student perpetrators of sexual assault differ from nonperpetrators on a variety of personality characteristics, attitudes about relationships and women, and experiential variables (Abbey et al., 2005; Malamuth et al., 1995; Murnen et al., 2002; Wheeler et al., 2002). Although most etiological research has compared perpetrators to nonperpetrators, this study focused on the primary tactic men used to obtain unwanted sex from a woman. Based on past research and theory, we hypothesized that men who were willing to take advantage of an intoxicated women would have more extreme scores on common risk factors than would men who were willing to use verbal coercion. Nonperpetrators were expected to have the lowest scores on these risk factors. Participants were 220 single, heterosexual, U.S. male college students aged 21-41, with 56% Caucasian, 31% African American, and 13% multiracial or of another ethnicity. Participants completed a mail survey of sexual attitudes and behaviors. Based on their responses to an expanded version of the Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss et al., 1987), men were categorized into one of three mutually exclusive groups: used the woman's intoxication to obtain sex she did not want to have, used verbal coercion to obtain sex she did not want to have, or did not report committing any type of forced sex. The data were analyzed with MANOVA, ANOVA, and Tukey tests. The hypotheses about nonperpetrators having the lowest scores on common risk factors were largely supported. However, men who used alcohol only differed from men who used verbal coercion on a few risk factors including total number of sexual partners and number of one-night stands. These findings are discussed in terms of their implications for theory regarding different types of perpetrators and for interventions on college campuses.

*Communicating author:
Antonia Abbey; email: aabbey@wayne.edu*