

ATTACHMENT STYLE AND SEXUAL COERCION IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

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by Lauren M. Bieritz

There have been mixed findings in the research linking insecure attachment styles (i.e., anxious or avoidant) and experiences with sexual coercion in romantic relationships (Davis, Shaver, & Vernon, 2004; Flanagan & Furman, 2000; Wekerle & Wolfe, 1998). Additionally, few studies have examined subtle examples of sexual coercion (i.e., using tactics other than physical force or violence to obtain sex). This study examined the relationship between attachment style and experienced sexual coercion within the context of romantic relationships in a sample of 729 women in heterosexual relationships. Results indicated some small yet statistically significant relationships between experienced sexual coercion and the dimensions of attachment-related anxiety and avoidance. Both dimensions yielded significant positive correlations with experienced sexual coercion in the participants' relationships. When examining attachment styles categorically, the group with low scores on both the anxiety and avoidance dimensions had a significantly lower mean than that of the group with high scores on both dimensions. These findings support the link in previous research between insecure attachment styles and experienced sexual coercion. A discussion of the implications of this study is provided, including the need for further research on other variables related to experienced sexual coercion. Future examination of attachment styles and other possible variables could lead to a better understanding of the factors that predict experiences with sexual coercion within romantic relationships.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Attachment Style and Sexual Coercion in Romantic Relationships

This study aims to examine the association between attachment style and sexual coercion in romantic relationships. This field of research has yielded discordant results to date and requires further study (Davis, Shaver, & Vernon, 2004; Flanagan & Furman, 2000; Wekerle & Wolfe, 1998). The evolving conceptualizations of attachment styles in adult relationships and the disagreement among researchers over the definition of sexual coercion have contributed to the difficulty in studying the potential relationship between attachment styles and experienced sexual coercion in romantic relationships.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is focused on the interaction between a child and his or her caregiver (Bowlby, 1973). Guerrero (2008) argues that although attachment theory can be extended to any significant relationship (e.g., siblings, romantic partners, friends, etc.), the foundation for all subsequent relationships lies in the dynamic between a child and his or her caregivers. According to Bowlby's (1973, 1982) landmark theory, early interaction with primary caregivers has the most profound impact on a child's attachment style development. Bowlby argued that on a biological level, attachment with one's caregiver is rooted in two functions: proximity and security. Infants rely on a caregiver to provide protection and use the caregiver as a secure base from which they can explore their environments. The quality of the protective relationship between caregiver and child can have a strong effect on future relationships. Bowlby believed that the attachment style that is created acts as a "working model" for future relationships

(Bowlby, 1973). This “working model” affects a person’s schemas about others and the self. It is from this model that individuals develop beliefs and expectations about relationships; the model also determines to what degree individuals believe they deserve love and attention. Subsequently, their attachment style shapes their personality, as well as social and psychological adjustment.

Bowlby’s theory (1973, 1982) of attachment was expanded by Ainsworth and colleagues (1978) with the formulation of three types of attachment: secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant. Ainsworth and colleagues used a simple experiment, called the Strange Situation test, to determine the characteristics common in the relationships between child and caregiver across all three types of attachments. During the Strange Situation test, the caregiver (i.e., the mother of the child, in the Ainsworth et al. Strange Situation test) interacts with the child through play, is separated from the child, and then is ultimately reunited with the child. Some children interacted affectionately with their caregiver and were distressed when the caregiver was separated from them. Subsequently, they were comforted by their caregiver upon the reunion and were able to resume the play activities without difficulty. This type of parent-child dynamic was labeled a “secure” attachment. Other children exhibited wavering feelings toward the caregiver (i.e., exhibiting both approach and avoidance behaviors) and were markedly distressed when there was a separation from their caregiver. Upon the return of the caregiver, the children displayed a variety of negative responses to the caregiver (e.g., anger, resentment, refusal to seek proximity to the caregiver). The children were not easily soothed by the caregiver and found it difficult to resume any activities. This type of parent-child dynamic was labeled an “anxious-ambivalent” attachment. Other children displayed little affection when interacting with the caregiver and showed slight to no distress when the caregiver was separated from them. Additionally, the

children exhibited minimal to no response when the caregiver returned. Throughout the test, these children appeared withdrawn and also acted out in rebellious ways, ignoring any response from the caregiver. This type of parent-child dynamic was labeled an “avoidant” attachment. Ainsworth and colleagues (1978) purported that these three attachment styles (secure, anxious-ambivalent, and avoidant) act as the blueprints for all future relationships that children develop.

Research suggests that the associations that are learned from the early development of attachment styles have an impact on multiple components of human interaction (Guerrero, 2008). Depending on one’s attachment style, a person can acquire varied perceptions of relationships. Researchers have referred to these associations as “working models” (Bowlby, 1973; Collins & Read, 1994; Collins, Guichard, Ford, & Feeney, 2004) to explain that the psychological underpinnings of attachment theories are not fixed or permanent but that they simply act as guidelines for people to refer to when navigating relationships throughout the lifespan. Collins et al. (2004) argued that “working models” are akin to schemas about the complicated realm of relationships and “play an important role in guiding cognitive, affective, and behavioral response patterns in attachment-relevant contexts” (p. 229). In other words, people develop hypotheses about how relationships operate from the initial relationships that they have with caregivers. These hypotheses can influence the way people think about and behave in all subsequent relationships. Hatfield and Rapson (2010) explained that “working models” are altered by the attachment style a person exhibits, leading to differences in what people expect from relationships. One example of this difference would be the amount of intimacy versus independence a person wants in a romantic relationship.

Attachment within adult romantic relationships became a focal point of research in the 1980s. Hazan and Shaver (1987; Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, 1988) used the basic tenets of

Bowlby's (1973, 1982) theory to explain attachment styles within romantic relationships. According to Hazan and Shaver (1987), a secure attachment describes people who are comfortable with intimacy; they do not worry about a partner either getting too close or leaving them. An avoidant attachment describes people who find it difficult to get close to or trust others; they fear intimacy with potential partners. An anxious attachment describes people who seek out intimacy aggressively, which is often met with reluctance by others. They often fear the loss of their partners' love and attention. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) took the classification one step further by dividing the avoidant category into "dismissing" and "fearful," due to the theoretically dichotomous nature of the responses of individuals who display avoidant personalities within a romantic relationship setting. Those who endorse "dismissing" avoidance tend to deny the importance of intimacy and value self-reliance; those who endorse "fearful" avoidance tend to yearn for approval from others and therefore avoid relationships to protect themselves from rejection.

Hatfield and Rapson (2010) proposed a categorical model that combines the theory of Hazan and Shaver (1987) with the developmental theory of Erikson (specifically, the stages that involve trust of others; 1982). Hatfield and Rapson (2010) developed a six-category model that is delineated based on the amount of independence and intimacy that is desired in a romantic relationship and referred to the categories as individual and unique love schemas. According to this model, individuals fall into one of the following categories within what Hatfield and Rapson call a two-by-two typology of independence and intimacy: secure (i.e., comfortable with independence and intimacy), clingy (i.e., uncomfortable with independence but comfortable with intimacy), skittish (i.e., comfortable with independence but uncomfortable with intimacy), or fickle (i.e., uncomfortable with independence and intimacy). This model also includes two

additional two categories (separate from the typology). The categories of casual (i.e., only desires easy relationships), or uninterested (i.e., detached and lacking desire for relationships) include individuals who display little to no interest in relationships, something that Hatfield and Rapson believe is missing in earlier theories of attachment. Nonetheless, the researchers point out that four of their terms map onto the aspects of the three terms presented by Hazan and Shaver (1987). Hatfield and Rapson explained that their terms of secure and clingy correspond with Hazan and Shaver's terms of secure type and anxious/fearful type, respectively, while skittish and uninterested correspond with an avoidant/dismissive type. This love schema theory is unclear in how the latter most categories (i.e., casual and uninterested) would be separate from the former four categories. This vague differentiation becomes more confusing when one considers that Hatfield and Rapson stated that the skittish and uninterested categories are similar to Hazan and Shaver's avoidant/dismissive attachment type. It is unclear if the uninterested category is actually separate from the skittish category if they both align with the same attachment type of Hazan and Shaver's theory. Ultimately, the most perplexing feature of Hatfield and Rapson's theory is that it seems to lack overall cohesion since the casual and uninterested categories are separate from the two-by-two typology of the first four categories.

The practice of theorizing attachment using categorical variables has been criticized by researchers who favor using a dimensional approach (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998; Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Fraley & Spieker, 2003). Supporters of the dimensional approach argued that the use of categorical models leads to difficulty in measurement, since differentiation among people within the same category is not possible. Many self-report questionnaires of attachment are scored by averaging the underlying scales of the measure and placing participants in categories based on the averages. The categories are typically determined by simply dividing the averaged

group in half (i.e., developing a “high” and a “low” group). This median split does not allow for useful differentiation among people within the same group, resulting in the loss of potentially useful information about the participants since there is little (if any) discrimination. For example, when grouped into categories, there is seemingly no difference between someone who scores at the extreme end of the category and someone who scored just high enough to be placed into the category. The lack of precision in measurement when using categorical variables can lead to low statistical power and erroneous conclusions about the underlying theory. Therefore, proponents of the dimensional process argue that viewing attachment using the two dimensions of anxiety and avoidance improves upon the methodological problems in using categories to evaluate attachment styles.

Fraley, Waller, and Brennan (2000) conducted a principal-axis factor analysis to determine if the conceptualization of attachment into dimensions of anxiety and avoidance, first introduced by Fraley and Waller in 1998, was accurate. The Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR; Brennan et al., 1998), a measure of attachment theory consisting of items that correspond to relationship anxiety and avoidance, was used for the factor analysis. A pool of 323 items was used to identify 30 clusters that were factor analyzed and then rotated using a varimax rotation (as it was assumed that the dimensions of anxiety and avoidance should not correlate since the goal of the Brennan et al. study was to examine the dimensions as separate underlying concepts). The pool consisted of items on the ECR, as well as the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS; Collins & Read, 1990), the Relationship Styles Questionnaire (RSQ; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994), and Simpson’s (1990) unnamed attachment questionnaire. Fraley and colleagues (2000) identified items that met an a priori set criterion of a minimum correlation of .40 with one factor while also having a maximum correlation of .25 with the other factor. For

example, to be considered a valid anxiety item, a single item had to have a minimum correlation of .40 with the anxiety factor and a correlation of no more than .25 with the avoidance factor. The results identified 40 items that mapped onto the anxiety dimension and 50 items that mapped onto the avoidance dimension. This factor analysis suggests that it is possible to examine the underlying dimensions individually with sufficient differentiation between the two dimensions. The presence of a two-dimensional relationship between anxiety and avoidance has been supported by other independent factor-analytical studies (Brennan et al., 1998; Brennan & Shaver, 1995).

Fraley and Shaver (2000) pointed out that the dimensions of anxiety and avoidance underlie the four-category model of Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), mentioned previously. Figure 1 illustrates the dimensional model of Fraley and Waller, as it compares to Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) four-category model

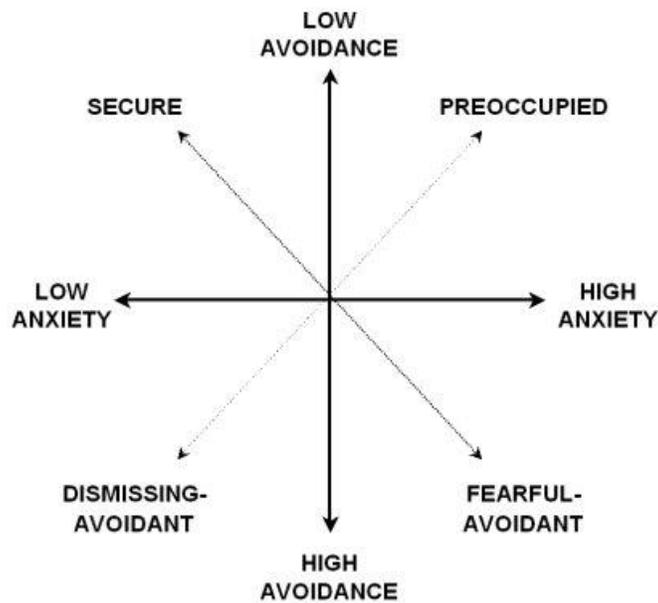


Figure 1. *Fraley and Waller's (1998) Model of Adult Attachment.*

Fraley and Shaver noted that their conceptualization of the dimensions of anxiety and avoidance could be used to categorize people into one of the categories of Bartholomew and Horowitz. According to this model, the first quadrant describes an individual displaying secure attachment scores (i.e., low on both the anxiety and avoidance dimensions). The second quadrant describes an individual displaying preoccupied attachment scores (i.e., scoring high in anxiety and low in avoidance). The third quadrant describes an individual displaying fearful-avoidant attachment scores (i.e., high on both dimensions). Finally, the fourth quadrant describes an individual displaying dismissing-avoidant attachment scores (i.e., low in anxiety but high in avoidance). However, Fraley and Shaver discouraged the practice of categorizing individuals based on continuous scores due to the aforementioned concerns (i.e., imprecision in measurement and low statistical power). Fraley and Spieker (2003) argued that “it does not appear that thinking continuously about categorical variables can have the same adverse consequences [as treating a continuous variable as if it were categorical]” (p. 428). Therefore, a dimensional conceptualization of attachment could have methodological advantages. However, the rebuttal to that advantage is that a dimensional conceptualization may not necessarily lend itself to a useful interpretation of the results. The bulk of the research on attachment theory uses the categorical conceptualization, making comparison to past research potentially more difficult than necessary.

Sexual Coercion

As is the case with much psychological research, the operational definition for sexual coercion varies across studies. Numerous other terms have been used interchangeably with sexual coercion, including sexual assault, acquaintance rape, sexual pressure, and unwanted sex.

(DeGue & DiLillo, 2005). The various terms have led to inconsistencies in how sexual coercion is defined across various studies. Muehlenhard and Schrag (1991) divided sexual coercion into two basic types: direct and indirect. Muehlenhard and Schrag argue that direct coercion can occur through verbal, chemical, or spontaneous tactics. Some examples of direct verbal tactics are “threats to end the relationship, persistent arguments, making the victim feel guilty, questioning the person’s sexual orientation, claiming a biological necessity, and threatening to do self-harm” (Spitzberg, 1998, p. 189). Direct spontaneous tactics (referred to as ‘rape without force’ by Spitzberg, 1998) can refer to ignoring direct refusals to sexual advances without the use of physical force. In other words, the victim initially objects to sexual contact, and the perpetrator continues despite the victim’s refusal.

Direct chemical tactics, as the name implies, can include using drugs or alcohol in order to obtain sexual contact with another person. However, this definition of direct chemical tactics is unclear in regards to the deliberate intention to use alcohol to obtain sexual contact. Previous research (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Yeater & O’Donohue, 1999) calls into question defining a sexual encounter as coerced if the presumed perpetrator was not the person who provided the drugs or alcohol. For example, a common population for research on sexual coercion is the college population (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Yeater & O’Donohue, 1999). Research in this context is difficult because it can lack explicit explanation of whether alcohol or drugs were used with the intention of obtaining sex from someone. (The ambiguity regarding intent is not necessarily unique to the college population, as this problem could be argued with any situation in which both sexual partners had been drinking. Intent can be difficult to define or prove.) In the college population, alcohol and drug use (at times to the point of excess) has been argued to be part of the culture (Dawson, Grant, Stinson, Chou, 2004; Wechsler & Nelson, 2006). It is

very possible, then, for a person to choose to consume drugs or alcohol on his or her own before being pressured or coerced into sexual activity. There is also the problem with determining a presumed perpetrator's culpability for sexual activity if he or she is under the influence of drugs or alcohol as well. This point becomes increasingly more ambiguous if there is no element of coercion or force when two people engage in sexual activity while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. There is no clear distinction among the various ways that alcohol could play a role in sexual coercion.

According to Muehlenhard and Schrag (1991), indirect coercion is much more subtle and is rooted in social and cultural underpinnings. Various researchers have argued that adherence to stereotypical sex roles and scripts is the driving force behind indirect coercion (Armstrong, Hamilton, & Sweeney, 2006; Morgan & Zurbriggen, 2007; Muehlenhard, Goggins, Jones, & Satterfield, 1991; Muehlenhard & Schrag, 1991). Therefore, sexual coercion does not necessarily correspond to the behaviors of a potential perpetrator but also the subtleties of society's influence on sexual behavior. Muehlenhard and Schrag (1991) argue that society's emphasis on sex as the inevitable goal of a relationship has a system-wide influence on a person's decision of whether to engage in sex. However, Muehlenhard and Schrag's research on this social and cultural theory tends to be heterocentric and fails to be inclusive of sexual orientations other than heterosexuality. This social theory also does not address the possibility that both genders (regardless of sexual orientation) can potentially be victims and perpetrators of sexual coercion. The theory suggests that sexual coercion only occurs in heterosexual relationships with the man using coercive tactics to obtain sexual activity from the woman.

A 1995 study by McConaghy and Zamir indicates that the social theory of Muehlenhard and Schrag is inaccurate when considering male and female victims (of both heterosexual and

homosexual orientation). McConaghy and Zamir found that “forms of coercion not involving threat or use of force [i.e., indirect forms of sexual coercion] were more common, more exclusively heterosexual, and carried out by more equivalent percentages of men and women [than previously believed]” (p. 489). Although indirect forms of coercion were more common among heterosexual participants, all forms of coercion (ranging from indirect to direct) were also reported by homosexual participants. When asked to report the context of a coercive situation, 50% of male victims and 25% of male aggressors reported that the coercion took place in the context of a homosexual experience. The opposite percentages were found for female participants (i.e., 25% of victims and 50% of aggressors reported that the coercion took place in the context of a homosexual experience). McConaghy and Zamir also found a correlation between sexually coercive behavior and higher levels of adherence to masculine sex roles and argued that it is more accurate to claim that a person’s level of masculinity, rather than gender, could predict sexually coercive behavior. Yet, the aforementioned research indicates that sexual coercion does not only take place in heterosexual relationships with males as the perpetrators. Additionally, sexual coercion research can be further obscured by the fact that a homosexual sexual orientation is not synonymous with a homosexual experience. For example, someone who identifies as heterosexual could have homosexual experiences, and someone who identifies as gay or lesbian could have heterosexual experiences. This further complicates conclusions that can be reached regarding this research.

Although the aforementioned research discussed dividing sexual coercion into indirect and direct types, other researchers have alternate theories for conceptualizing sexual coercion. Spitzberg (1998) and Schur (2007) noted that there have been other attempts to operationalize sexual coercion using dimensions or continuums. DeGue and DiLillo (2005) proposed a

conceptual model for sexual misconduct (Figure 2). Figure 2 illustrates that DeGue and DiLillo’s model consists of two dimensions: ‘type of sexual contact’ and ‘tactics for obtaining sexual contact.’ The ‘type’ dimension is the x-axis of the model, ranging from fondling to intercourse. The ‘tactics’ dimension is the y-axis of the model, ranging from verbal coercion to physical force. Sexually coercive acts, therefore, would be represented in the lower two quadrants of the chart. The research defined verbal coercion as a type of manipulation, including “lies, guilt, false promises, continual arguments, or threats to end the relationship...[or] the intentional use of drugs or alcohol to impair the victim’s judgment and/or resistance to sexual advances” (p. 516).

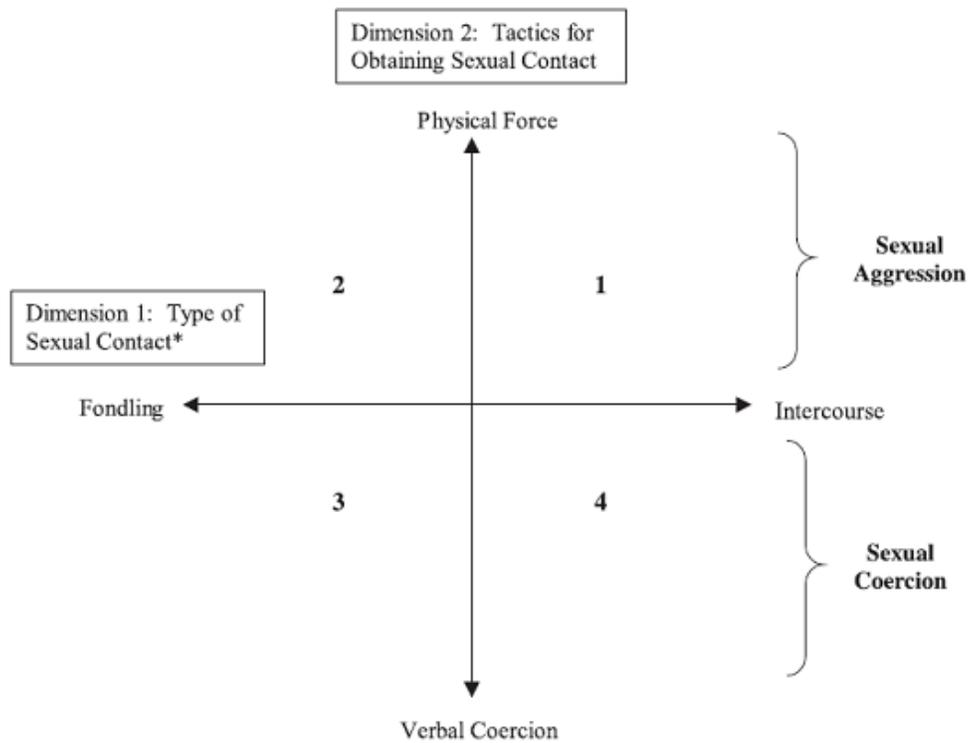


Figure 2. *DeGue and DiLillo’s Conceptual Model for Misconduct.*
**Note. All sexual contact is defined as coerced and unwanted.*

DeGue and DiLillo's conceptual model is somewhat ambiguous and can lead to various interpretations of what is meant by the dimensions. First, the dimensional model lacks a place for no coercion. It is more logical to have 'no sexual contact' or 'no sexually coercive tactics' at one extreme of each of the dimensions. Second, it can be argued that physical force and verbal coercion should be on separate continua. It is unclear what the graded progression of behaviors would be from verbal coercion to physical force, and it fails to account for instances in which both verbal coercion and physical force occur simultaneously. Third, placing sexual coercion on continua could lead to the assumption that the behaviors are graded in terms of the severity of the behavior (e.g., that verbal coercion is less severe than physical coercion). Although this may seem like a rational explanation, the concept is biased in assuming that every person would view the range of sexually coercive acts in the same way.

Spitzberg (1998), on the other hand, devised a single continuum to illustrate the spectrum of sexual coercion. The continuum ranges from rape to foregone sex (i.e., a sexual encounter that is terminated at the first refusal of one of the partners). The spectrum contains ten anchors: "rape, attempted rape, sexual contact, sexual pressure, unwanted sex, deceptive sex, consensual sex, refused sex, token resistance, and foregone sex" (p. 185). Sexually coercive behavior can be present in three of those anchors: sexual pressure, unwanted sex, and deceptive sex. Spitzberg (1998) explained that sexual pressure can include the following components: "continual arguments, getting a partner to drink alcohol, threatening to end the relationship, and threatening to leave the person stranded without a ride" (p. 186). Spitzberg (1998) explained that 'unwanted sex' is an ambiguous term, in that it can refer to situations that can be viewed as coercive but also to situations that are not coercive. In the most basic sense, 'unwanted sex' can occur when one acquiesces to sex in order to avoid an established pattern of sexually coercive tactics or to

avoid negative reactions from his or her partner (e.g., anger, resentment, imposed guilt). ‘Unwanted sex’, however, can also denote situations that are not coercive (e.g., wanting to promote intimacy or please a partner). ‘Deceptive sex’ can refer to behaviors such as falsely claiming to love someone or misrepresenting oneself in any way in order to obtain sex. The continuum of Spitzberg, like the DeGue and DiLillo (2005) model, fails to include an explanation of how to differentiate between situations involving alcohol or drugs and whether it is considered sexual coercion if the presumed perpetrator was not the one to supply the alcohol or drugs. Therefore, overlapping categories have led to further confusion and lack of concurrence amongst sexual coercion researchers (DeGue & DiLillo, 2005; Spitzberg, 1998).

Sexual Coercion in Romantic Relationships

Before the 1970s, terms like *date rape* or *courtship violence* did not exist (Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999). Muehlenhard and Kimes (1999) explained that sexual violence of any kind was not considered illegal if it took place within the context of an intimate relationship (especially a marriage). Additionally, an intimate relationship was considered private, and any conflicts that arose within the relationship were also private. Muehlenhard and Kimes (1999) noted that this attitude stemmed from 17th century legal precedents, which “declared that a husband cannot be guilty of raping his wife because once she has given her sexual consent in marriage, she cannot retract this consent” (p. 235). Katz and Myhr (2008) found that these notions of privacy within romantic relationships and disbelief that rape can take place within a romantic relationship have remained common ideas in society. Therefore, the idea that sexual coercion can take place within the context of a romantic relationship has not been easily accepted. Research on sexual coercion, however, highlights the high prevalence of coercion within romantic relationships. A

study by Testa and Livingston (1999) found that 93% of instances of sexual coercion of women were perpetrated by men with whom they had a relationship (e.g., boyfriend or dating partner). Other research has supported the finding that sexual coercion is more likely to occur within relationships (Abbey et al., 1996; Logan, Cole, & Shannon, 2007), and the continued prevalence of sexual coercion in romantic relationships provides evidence that it warrants continued study. However, studies involving romantic relationships are a small sub-section of the field of sexual coercion research.

According to a PsycInfo title search in May 2007 by Camilleri and Quinsey (which was discussed in their 2009 article), only 59 of the 2,949 publications on sexual coercion actually explicitly examined sexual coercion within the dynamics of romantic relationships. To inspect if this marked lack of research still exists, an identical PsycInfo search to that run by Camilleri and Quinsey was run for this study for all publications in the database up to April 2012. The title search was done with the following entries for 'title': rape, sex* coerc*, or sex* assault; and wife, partner, or marital. The asterisks refer to any combination with that particular root of a word (e.g., coerc* could refer to coercion, coerce, coercive, coercing, coerced, etc.). The results of this title search revealed that only 91 of 3,957 publications on sexual coercion explicitly included titles that indicated that sexual coercion within the dynamics of a romantic relationship was a focus of the research. Although this is not an exhaustive list of the potential variables that could be used in a title, the goal was to replicate the same search by Camilleri and Quinsey to gauge if there was any change within the five years since they first ran the search in 2007. Therefore, research focusing on romantic relationships seems to be dramatically underrepresented in sexual coercion research. This stark discrepancy illustrates the importance of continued research of sexual coercion in romantic relationships.

Katz and Myhr (2008) and Gavey (2005) argue that the high prevalence of sexual coercion in romantic relationship is inextricably linked to the expected sexual scripts and sexual roles discussed previously. In the context of romantic relationships, however, those sexual scripts and roles are amplified, as not adhering to them may lead to the end of the relationship. Sexually coercive tactics within intimate relationships can be considered socially acceptable (Katz & Myhr, 2008). Spitzberg (1998) makes the argument that people can be socially conditioned by the media and their peers to perceive sexually coercive tactics as acceptable. In fact, O'Sullivan and Allgeier (1998) and Phillips (2000) found that adolescents tend to adhere to what sexual scripts state is "common" in dating relationships. These schemas about the way sexual encounters "should" occur is validated by and amplified through the use of sexual coercion. Similarly, women often believe that sexual encounters wrought with sexual coercion are "normal" occurrences in a romantic relationship (Gavey, 2005). The following passage from an interview is an example of a 31-year-old woman's perspective on her boyfriend's repeated requests for sex:

Like he always, when I used to stay the night a couple of times a week, he's always wanted to have sexual intercourse in the morning and that was just, that was just how it was...I was in a *relationship*, we were going out together and, isn't this what everybody does? And, you know, all that sort of stuff. (Gavey, 2005, p. 140)

This passage was a part of a qualitative analysis of sexual coercion in romantic relationships. Gavey (2005) found that the acceptance of sexual coercion in committed relationships was common among the participants of the study. The repeated theme across participants was the belief that sexual coercion was a part of all relationships; it was deemed "normal" behavior in the

committed relationship. Gavey argued that this acceptance impedes a person from recognizing (and refusing) sexually coercive behavior, which perpetuates the prevalence of such behavior. This acceptance of “normal” sexual behavior is further complicated by the possibility that people in abusive relationships may still want to engage in sexual acts with their partners at times, making the delineation between wanted and unwanted sex unclear. This confusion would subsequently make it difficult for partners to know if they are being coercive in the first place.

Although many of the sexually coercive tactics mentioned previously are common in the context of romantic relationships, there are some tactics that are unique to committed relationships. Spitzberg (1998) reported that common verbal tactics that apply to all coercion (in the context of a relationship or not) include: verbal manipulation (e.g., making the target feel guilty for saying no) and verbal pressure (e.g., repeatedly begging for sex). Other tactics are more commonly found within the context of a committed relationship. Logan et al. (2007) examined such sexually coercive strategies in the context of physical and psychologically abusive relationships. These strategies included: implying a sense of duty of the woman to have sex, making accusations of infidelity of the female, negatively evaluating the woman’s sexual prowess, comparing the woman’s sexual ability to past lovers, and forcing her to watch graphic pornography. Logan and colleagues (2007) failed to elaborate on what is meant by “forcing” someone to watch graphic pornography. It is unclear if the force was physical (e.g., tying the woman to the piece of furniture in front of the television) or if it was psychological (e.g., the woman acquiescing to watching pornography out of fear of the consequences of refusing). Although Logan et al. (2007) referred to women as the victims of sexual coercion, these same points could be relevant if the pressured partner were male. Muehlenhard et al. (1991) noted that economic coercion is also common in committed relationships. If a woman is financially

dependent on her partner, she may view sexual intimacy as mandatory in order to preserve the relationship and her well-being (Muehlenhard & Schrag, 1991). This economic pressure is exacerbated when the woman has children to consider as well. Once again, these same points regarding economic coercion could be relevant if the pressured partner were male. All of these examples of sexual coercion help to explain why sexually coercive behavior can be particularly prevalent in intimate relationships.

Like the previously mentioned research on sexual coercion, the research on sexual coercion in romantic relationships is heterocentric and focuses on the scenario of the man as the perpetrator and the woman as the victim. According to Busby and Compton (1997), research beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s shed light on the fact that sexual coercion of men by women does occur. Busby and Compton argued that “prevailing attitudes about masculinity have mitigated strongly against the recognition, study, and treatment of such abuse” (p. 83). The results of Busby and Compton’s work revealed that both men and women reported experiencing sexual coercion from their partners and that mutual coercion within heterosexual relationships was also reported, a finding that they had not anticipated. Brousseau, Bergeron, Hebert, and McDuff (1999) added to the research using heterosexual dyads. Experience of sexual coercion was reported by 45% of women and 30% of men and mutual coercion was reported for 20% of the couples. This research is evidence for the importance of abandoning the singular focus on only female victims that is so prevalent in the study of sexual coercion.

Research also has shown that sexual coercion exists in gay and lesbian relationships (Baier, Rosenzweig, & Whipple, 1991; Brand & Kidd, 1986; Duncan, 1990; Waldner-Haugrud & Gratch, 1997). The research on the sexual coercion in gay and lesbian relationships has been mixed. Some research indicates that sexual coercion is more common in gay and lesbian

relationships than in heterosexual relationships (Baier et al., 1991) and that lesbians tend to experience more sexually coercive behavior than gay men (Duncan, 1990). However, Waldner-Haugrud and Gratch (1997) pointed out that most research on sexual coercion in homosexual relationships does not control for past heterosexual experiences, as it is plausible that gay and lesbian participants have had heterosexual dating experiences before coming out. The authors argue that the research struggles to differentiate between gay men and lesbians, in favor of comparing homosexual to heterosexual experiences. The Waldner-Haugrud and Gratch (1997) study calls into question the results of the aforementioned research on the prevalence of sexual coercion in homosexual relationships (Baier et al., 1991; Duncan, 1990), as it is unclear if past heterosexual experiences affected the responses of participants who identified as homosexual at the time of the studies. This branch of sexual coercion research could benefit from increased attention to this distinction. Waldner-Haugrud and Gratch's study, which did compare lesbian and gay relationships, indicated that gay men were just as likely to be victims of sexual coercion as lesbians and that there was no difference between both groups on the types of sexually coercive acts experienced. This finding seems contradictory with the 1995 McConaghy and Zamir study which a correlation between sexually coercive behavior and higher levels of adherence to masculine sex roles.

Although the aforementioned tactics of sexual coercion have been repeatedly identified in psychological research, one caveat to sexual coercion research makes this concept markedly difficult to study accurately. Literature on sexual coercion is careful to make a clear distinction between sexual coercion and sexual compliance (Basile, 1999; Katz & Tirone, 2009; Katz & Tirone, 2010; Livingston, Buddie, Testa, & VanZile-Tamsen, 2004). Sexual compliance is synonymous with the previously mentioned term of 'unwanted sex' (Spitzberg, 1998). Sexual

compliance refers to acquiescing to a partner's sexual advances despite not wanting to engage in sexual activity. Some research has reported positive motives for sexual compliance: promoting intimacy, wanting to satisfy a partner's needs, and not wanting to hurt the feelings of one's partner (Impett & Peplau, 2002; Impett & Peplau, 2003; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998).

However, even in the instance of sexually complying for positive motives, negative outcomes are associated with sexual compliance. O'Sullivan and Allgeier's 1998 study found that of those participants who reported sexual compliance for positive underlying motives, 65% also reported negative consequences of sexually complying. These negative outcomes included relationship tension, emotional discomfort, and physical discomfort. However, these negative outcomes are not the result of the partner's desire to protect against retaliation or consequence from his or her partner. Therefore, this explanation of unwanted sex would not be considered sexual coercion.

A criticism of this distinction between the types of unwanted sex is that some of the same consequences could be present for wanted sex, also. For example, negative consequences such as emotional or physical discomfort could occur in wanted sex, as sex in relationships can evoke complicated emotions and thoughts. To differentiate between wanted and unwanted sex may not be so simple, especially in the context of a romantic relationship.

Nonetheless, sexual compliance can take place as the result of negative motives. Cooper, Shapiro, and Powers (1998) refer to negative motivations for sexual compliance as 'avoidance motives.' Essentially, avoidance motives refer to complying with unwanted sex in order to avoid any undesirable consequences from a partner (without any sexually coercive tactics being perpetrated by a partner). Avoidance motives can operate on the fear of the possibility of sexually coercive behavior (among other emotionally and verbally abusive behavior) if one does not comply with sexual advances. Sexual compliance can become automatic for a woman if her

partner has a history of using sexual coercion to obtain sex, and sources have found that this is a common occurrence in abusive relationships (Gavey, 2005; Katz & Tirone, 2009; Livingston et al., 2004). Gavey (2005) argues that, in order to bypass the coercion, women sometimes find it easier to comply rather than endure the consequences of refusing a sexual encounter. Another personal account from an interview in Gavey's 2005 book illustrates an example of sexual compliance with an avoidance motive:

[Woman]: And um, really getting, like getting into major arguments because I didn't want to have sex. Like, that- not actually being forced to have sex, but sometimes saying yes when I didn't really want to-

[Interviewer]: To avoid the argument?

[Woman]: Yeah. And the argument standing out as the most unpleasant thing. Things like actually being called a fucking bitch and having the door slammed. And trying always to explain that it didn't mean that I didn't care because I didn't want to have sex, but never ever succeeding. (p. 156)

Thus, a history of sexual coercion can lead to sexual compliance that could actually be thought of as indirect sexual coercion. However, Gavey's 2005 book was focused on rape and sexual assault in abusive relationships, making this example not analogous to the experience of relationships void of physical, emotional, or psychological abuse. Nonetheless, it is important to note that sexual coercion can be taken to such an extreme and highlights the fact that the coercion can be quite powerful. The distinction between sexual compliance arising from positive or negative motives is an important one. It is not enough to parse out sexual coercion from sexual compliance (Katz & Tirone, 2009; Livingston et al., 2004). This unclear area of sexual

coercion research has led to methodological issues when conducting studies that gather qualitative data from participants.

Consequences of Sexual Coercion in Romantic Relationships

Prior to 1990, little was known about the consequences of sexual coercion in intimate relationships (Muehlenhard et al., 1991). Since then, research examining the consequences has flourished. A study by Andersen and Cyranowski (1994) revealed that women with negative schemas regarding sex are prone to feelings of embarrassment about future sexual experiences. Being a victim of sexual coercion can lead to maladaptive schemas regarding sex, hindering a person from feeling comfortable with or finding enjoyment in sexual intimacy (Offman & Matheson, 2004). Other negative outcomes of sexual coercion include reduced self-esteem (Gidycz & Koss, 1991; Frazier, 2000; Jezl, Molidor, & Wright, 1996; Katz, Arias, & Beach, 2000; Offman & Matheson, 2004), symptoms of depression (Frazier, 2000; Gidycz & Koss, 1991; Migeot & Lester, 1996; Offman & Matheson, 2004), confusion (Gidycz & Koss, 1991), guilt (Gidycz & Koss, 1991; Glenn & Byers, 2009), and resentment (Gavey, 2005). The empirical evidence of these various consequences demonstrates the potential side effects of sexual coercive behavior in romantic relationships.

Moreover, Leonard and Senchak (1996) found that sexual coercion can be a precursor to verbal and physical abuse between intimate partners. Escalation from sexual coercion to forms of abusive behavior could result in increasingly grave consequences for the victim. Research by Katz, Moore, and May (2008) revealed that combined physical and sexual victimization is common among abusive dating relationships and typically has more severe consequences than sexual victimization alone. Katz et al.'s 2008 study revealed that women who experienced both

physical and sexual victimization “sustained more frequent unwanted sexual activity than women who reported unwanted partner sexual activity only” (p. 975). In other words, the presence of physical victimization leads to more frequent occurrences of sexual victimization. This connection between physical and sexual victimization was also validated by Smith, White, and Holland (2003). Of those participants who reported at least one instance of victimization, 63% reported that the incident qualified as a case of combined physical and sexual victimization. The potentially severe consequences of sexual coercion in the context of romantic relationships demonstrate the importance of continued research in the area.

Attachment Theory and Sexual Coercion in Romantic Relationships

Despite the increase of sexual coercion research in the last 20 years, most of the research has focused on descriptive features of the topic (e.g., prevalence rates and accurate definitions; Spitzberg, 1998). Little attention has been placed on determining what makes an individual vulnerable to sexually coercive behavior. Spitzberg (1998) proposed that the attachment style that one holds in romantic relationships is a possible explanation for being vulnerable to sexual coercion. While much of the research has focused on the attachment style of the perpetrator of sexual coercion, few studies have focused on the victim (Davis, 2006). Research has shown that women who endorse insecure attachment styles (i.e., anxious or avoidant) report more experiences with sexual coercion than those women who endorse a secure attachment style (Davis et al., 2004; Flanagan & Furman, 2000; Wekerle & Wolfe, 1998). Each of these studies will be examined more closely in the subsequent paragraphs.

The link between attachment styles and sexual coercion within romantic relationships was first found in Wekerle and Wolfe’s 1998 study of 321 high school students, an examination

of whether a history of child abuse and insecure attachment styles were risk factors for conflict in romantic relationships. The participants first completed a questionnaire to assess their attachment styles in romantic relationships and then questionnaires to measure both a history of child abuse and conflict within their romantic relationships in the six months leading up to the study. Wekerle and Wolfe (1998) used an attachment security ratings questionnaire (which the researchers did not name, simply calling it attachment security ratings) stemming from Hazan and Shaver's work (1987), in which secure, anxious, and avoidant descriptions were rated by the participants. Participants were given a description of each attachment style and asked to rate each description on a scale from 1 ("not at all like me") to 7 ("very like me"). The Conflict in Relationships Questionnaire (CIRQ) was used to assess abusive behaviors in the participants' relationships. The CIRQ required participants to indicate if they had experience with physically and sexually abusive behavior as either the victim or perpetrator. Results indicated that a history of child abuse was a stronger predictor than attachment style of being a victim of verbal, physical, and sexual conflict in romantic relationships. The study did yield a gender difference in the results pertaining to the link between attachment style and sexual victimization. Romantic attachment styles (specifically, avoidant attachment) proved to be predictive of victimization for the female participants. No significant findings were revealed for male participants.

Ultimately, the weaknesses of the Wekerle and Wolfe (1998) study lie in the measures used. The attachment security ratings called for the participants to rate the descriptions of each of the attachment styles on a scale from 1 to 7. Assignment of attachment style to the participants was, therefore, based on three ratings, one for each style; participants were categorized into the style in which they endorsed the highest rating. There are methodological issues with choosing to use a categorical conceptualization over a dimensional one. Information

is essentially lost when individuals are categorized so a better approach might be to study the concepts of anxiety and avoidance on a continuum. For example, it would be difficult to justify categorizing a participant if there was only a small discrepancy between ratings on the descriptions of the attachment styles (e.g., a rating of 7 on the secure description but a rating of 6 on the anxious description). It would be interesting to find out if there is more of a relationship between attachment style and experience of sexual coercion if analyzed using individual continuums of anxiety and avoidance, since a continuum would allow for more variability in scores. Additionally, the CIRQ measured only sexual and physical abuse and did not include more subtle forms of sexual coercion. The lack of a more inclusive measure of sexual coercion (i.e., one that includes a range of overt and subtle sexually coercive experiences) could provide more information about the relationship between attachment styles and experienced sexual coercion. Therefore, this study may be an underestimate of the link between attachment style and experienced sexual coercion.

Flanagan and Furman (2000) conducted two separate studies that yielded discordant results regarding the link between experiences with sexual coercion and attachment styles. In the first study, 154 female undergraduate students completed questionnaires examining attachment style and experiences with sexual victimization. The Behavioral Systems Questionnaire (BSQ; Furman & Wehner, 1999) was used as a global assessment of the participants' social support and included questions pertaining to attachment, caregiving, and affiliation with loved ones. The Sexual Experiences Scale (SES; Koss & Gidycz, 1985) was used to measure the situations in which participants may have been victims of sexual victimization. Results indicated that 47% of participants reported engaging in sexual activity (e.g., fondling or oral sex) following a partner's continual arguments. Twenty-eight percent of participants reported engaging in sexual

intercourse following a man's continual arguments. Those participants who reported engaging in sexual coercion were more likely to have endorsed an anxious attachment style. The second study collected the same information from 48 high school girls. Results indicated that 35% of participants reported engaging in sexual activity following a partner's continual arguments; 27% reported that the activity culminated in sexual intercourse. However, unlike the first study, no correlation was found between reported experienced sexual coercion and attachment style.

Similar to the problem with Wekerle and Wolfe's 1998 study, the measure used to examine sexual coercion in the Flanagan and Furman study (2000) is rather restrictive in its items. Of the ten items included in the survey (SES), only two of the items involved a subtle example of sexual coercion (i.e., engaging in intercourse as a result of a partner's continual arguments). The rest of the survey included more direct examples of victimization (e.g., engaging in sexual activity after consuming alcohol or engaging in sexual activity following threat of bodily harm). Therefore, a more comprehensive list of sexually coercive behavior would have added to the information taken from this study. Additionally, Flanagan and Furman chose to categorize the attachment styles instead of analyzing them dimensionally. Like the Wekerle and Wolfe study, this results in a loss of potentially valuable information by artificially forcing participants into groups. This issue does not necessarily negate the findings by Flanagan and Furman, as it is speculative yet if inclusion of more examples of sexual coercion would lead to a stronger correlation with attachment styles.

It is worth noting that the results of the Flanagan and Furman study (2000) also highlighted the necessity of studying sexual coercion in romantic relationships. Of those cases of reported sexual coercion, the majority of participants (99% in study one and 98% in study two) stated that the sexual coercion was perpetrated by an acquaintance or significant other. Of

those percentages, 41% of the cases in study one and 39% in study two involved a significant other. Despite highlighting the presence of sexual coercion in romantic relationships, the hypothesized relationship with corresponding attachment styles was not supported.

Further support for the association between attachment styles and experiences with sexual coercion was found by Davis et al. (2004). This study included 1,999 participants (1,241 of whom were women) recruited on the Internet. The researchers posted a link to the study on three different site categories within the Yahoo search engine: Dating, Tests and Experiments, and Surveys. Participants were asked to complete a series of questionnaires, including the Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire (ECR; Brennan et al., 1998) to assess attachment style. The researchers adapted the Affective and Motivational Orientation Related to Erotic Arousal (AMORE) measure (Hill and Preston, 1996) to assess various sexual motivations. The measure examined positive reasons (e.g., to increase intimacy) and negative reasons (e.g., to avoid a partner's anger) for engaging in sex. The results indicated that there is a strong relationship between attachment style and the various motivations for engaging in sex. Endorsing an anxious attachment style was strongly associated with engaging in sex in order to avoid a partner's negative reaction (e.g. becoming angry or threatening to end the relationship).

A notable strength of the Davis et al. study (2004) is the use of the ECR to assess attachment-related anxiety and avoidance using dimensions, instead of categorizing the participants into separate categorical styles. However, Davis et al.'s study (2004) suffers from the same problem as that of Flanagan and Furman (2000). The majority of the items related to sexual coercion focused on a person's experience in using sexually coercive tactics to obtain sex. The researchers only used three items to determine if respondents had *experienced* sexual coercion from a romantic partner. Given the diverse ways in which sexual coercion can be

experienced, the survey did not include an adequate number of items related to experienced sexual coercion. A measure that addresses numerous types of sexual coercion (especially more subtle, indirect types) could yield more information than that of the Davis et al. study. This problem does not negate the findings of the study, but a more exhaustive list of experienced covert coercion would potentially increase the likelihood that participants will endorse more items. In other words, just because a participant did not endorse one of the items of subtle coercion on the AMORE does not mean that she had not experienced subtle sexual coercion in her relationship. It is possible that she had experienced other coercive behaviors that were not among the options to endorse on the provided measure.

The Current Study

Given the mixed findings in research examining the link between attachment style and experiences with sexually coercive behavior in adult romantic relationships, the goal of this study was to aid in clarifying the discordant results of the current research. This study examined whether attachment-related avoidance and anxiety were predictive of the experience of overt and subtle sexual coercion within romantic relationships. Fraley et al.'s (2000) dimensional conceptualization of attachment styles (i.e., the separate dimensions of anxiety and avoidance) was used given the methodological and theoretical advantages of viewing the variables as dimensions instead of categorizing the participants. This strategy was used to protect against the loss of information that could occur if categories were used instead of dimensions. Additionally, the measures of experienced sexual coercion used in much of the previous research (Davis et al., 2004; Flanagan & Furman, 2000; Wekerle & Wolfe, 1998) were limited to mostly overt examples of coercion. Therefore, the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (SCIRS;

Shackelford & Goetz, 2004) was used to query for a range (i.e., including overt and subtle items of varying degrees) of experienced sexual coercion within romantic relationships. Items on the SCIRS fall into one of three categories: resource manipulation/violence (e.g., “My partner threatened to physically force me to have sex with him/her”), commitment manipulation (e.g., “My partner hinted that if I loved him/her I would have sex with him/her”), and defection threat (e.g., “My partner told me that other people were willing to have sex with him/her, so that I would have sex with him/her”). It was thought that a more inclusive list of sexually coercive experiences could help to explain the discrepancy in the research to date and add to the literature linking sexual coercion and attachment-related anxiety and avoidance.

The available information on attachment-related anxiety and avoidance and sexual coercion helped to frame the hypotheses for the study. According to Hazan and Shaver (1987) and Davis and Follette (2000), people who endorse a secure attachment exhibit minimal or no attachment-related anxiety and avoidance. Conversely, people who endorse an insecure attachment report either attachment-related anxiety or avoidance (or both). Research has shown that women who endorse insecure attachment styles (i.e., anxious or avoidant) report more experiences with sexual coercion than those women who endorse a secure attachment style (Davis et al., 2004; Flanagan & Furman, 2000; Wekerle & Wolfe, 1998). This association between attachment-related anxiety and avoidance and sexual coercion could be explained when one considers the characteristics of people who may endorse attachment-related anxiety and avoidance. Those people who display attachment-related anxiety fear the loss of their relationship, and those people who display attachment-related avoidance do not view relationships as a source of safety and do not turn to their partners in times of need. Therefore, those people who endorse attachment-related anxiety and avoidance may tolerate or experience

more sexual coercion in their romantic relationships, either out of fear of losing the relationship or out of the underlying belief that relationships are not typically a source of safety or support.

Given this possibility, two initial hypotheses were predicted:

H1: Women who endorse higher levels of attachment-related anxiety would report more experiences with sexual coercion within their current romantic relationships.

H2: Women who endorse higher levels of attachment-related avoidance would report more experiences with sexual coercion within their current romantic relationships.

Additionally, the review of the literature (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Fraley & Waller, 1998) on attachment styles describes attachment-related anxiety and avoidance at times as underlying dimensions of a four-category model of attachment (i.e., secure, preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant, and fearful-avoidant). Although anxiety and avoidance were examined using individual continua for this study, the aforementioned research indicated that the level of anxiety is influenced by the level of avoidance in order to create a categorical understanding of attachment. Therefore, a third hypothesis was predicted:

H3: There would be a significant interaction between attachment-related anxiety and avoidance on experiences with sexual coercion.

Finally, the three subscales (resource manipulation/violence, commitment manipulation, and defection threat) of the sexual coercion questionnaire (SCIRS; Shackelford & Goetz, 2004) were considered in relation to reports of sexual coercion. The first three hypotheses examined the total reported experiences of sexual coercion according to the questionnaire. Given the definitions of attachment-related anxiety and avoidance mentioned previously, two final hypotheses were predicted:

H4: Commitment manipulation and defection threat would be more strongly associated with attachment-related anxiety than with avoidance.

H5: Attachment-related anxiety would be more strongly associated with commitment manipulation and defection threat than with resource manipulation/violence.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants

The initial sample consisted of 1,285 participants recruited from three primary sources: Facebook, the electronic subject pool (Sona-Systems) at Central Michigan University, and the online classified ads of *The Morning Sun* (a local newspaper in Mount Pleasant, Michigan). A thorough examination of the data was completed to exclude any participants who did not meet all of the following criteria: female gender, age of at least 18 years old, and currently in a heterosexual romantic relationship. In addition, anyone with missing responses was excluded, as were those who provided incorrect responses to the validity checks. This resulted in the exclusion of 556 participants, leading to a final sample size of 729 women.

Measures

Demographics

The demographics page was created for this study to gather basic information about participants: gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, country of residence, region of the United States, community type, current relationship, length of relationship, description of current relationship, and source of survey ad. (Appendix A contains the response options for the demographic variables.) Response options for the different questions were devised to be as inclusive as possible, and “Other” response options were followed by a textbox, in order to allow for a free response from participants. If participants entered an age younger than 18, Survey Monkey directed them to a page explaining that they must be 18 years or older to participate.

The categories for length of relationship were formed after a Google search of suggestions for appropriate response options.

Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) Questionnaire

The Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Questionnaire (ECR-R; Fraley et al., 2000; Appendix B) was used to measure attachment-related anxiety and avoidance of the participants in regards to their romantic relationships. The ECR-R is a 36-item questionnaire that instructs participants to respond based on how they typically experience relationships. The questionnaire consists of 18 items pertaining to attachment-related anxiety (e.g., “I’m afraid that I will lose my partner’s love”) and 18 items pertaining to attachment-related avoidance (e.g., “I am nervous when partners get too close to me”). Items are rated using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). Reliability coefficients have yielded high alpha levels for both the anxiety and avoidance scale, $\alpha = .92$ and $\alpha = .93$, respectively (Fairchild & Finney, 2006). The ECR-R has also shown acceptable convergent validity with the Relationship Questionnaire, another popular measure of attachment style (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). The ability to analyze anxiety and avoidance as dimensions made this an optimal measure for providing the most information linking attachment-related anxiety and avoidance with sexually coercive experiences.

The ECR-R (Appendix A) was scored by summing the items corresponding to anxiety and avoidance and obtaining an average total score for both dimensions. Anxiety items correspond to the odd-numbered items on the scale; avoidance items correspond to the even-numbered items on the scale. The following items were reverse-keyed before being averaged: 4, 8, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, and 36.

Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (SCIRS)

The Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (SCIRS; Shackelford & Goetz, 2004; Appendix C) was used to measure participants' experiences with sexual coercion. This 34-item scale was chosen because it screens for both overt and subtle sexual coercion. Items fall into one of three categories: resource manipulation/violence (e.g., "My partner threatened to physically force me to have sex with him/her"), commitment manipulation (e.g., "My partner hinted that if I loved him/her I would have sex with him/her"), and defection threat (e.g., "My partner told me that other people were willing to have sex with him/her, so that I would have sex with him/her"). The CBI, VAI, and IAI are commonly-used measures in domestic violence research; the research of Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, and Lewis (1995) has revealed acceptable reliability and validity of these scales. According to Dobash et al.'s 1995 meta-analysis, the SCIRS yielded strong internal consistency across all three components: resource manipulation/violence ($\alpha = .95$), commitment manipulation ($\alpha = .92$), and defection threat ($\alpha = .96$), as well as for the total scale ($\alpha = .96$). Additionally, Dobash et al. (1995) found that the SCIRS correlated significantly with the Controlling Behavior Index (CBI; $\alpha = .35$), the Violence Assessment Index (VAI; $\alpha = .32$), and the Injury Assessment Index (IAI; $\alpha = .40$). The modest correlations in other studies between the SCIRS and the CBI, VAI, and IAI indicate that the SCIRS measures a variety of sexually coercive behaviors beyond that of the CBI, VAI, and IAI alone.

The SCIRS (Shackelford & Goetz, 2004; Appendix B) is keyed using a 6-point Likert scale that asks participants to report the frequency in which they have experienced different types of sexual coercion. It was the hope that using the SCIRS would allow for a more detailed examination of the relationship between attachment-related anxiety and avoidance and the

frequency of experienced sexual coercion within romantic relationships. Not only does the scale include more items than have typically been used in related research, but the division of the items into the three sub-scales could allow the researcher to determine if participants varied in the *types* of sexual coercion that they experience. The division of the items into the sub-scales was as follows and the numbers correspond to the assigned item numbers:

Resource manipulation/violence (R-scale) items:

1, 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 28, 31

Commitment manipulation (C-scale) items:

3, 6, 9, 12, 16, 18, 23, 26, 29, 32

Defection threat (D-scale) items:

4, 7, 10, 13, 24, 27, 30, 33, 34

Debriefing Form

A debriefing form (Appendix D) created for this study directly followed the completion of the surveys. It included a summary of the study's purpose and additional reading for participants who might be interested in learning more about attachment theory and sexual coercion. Additionally, given the potentially sensitive topic of sexual coercion, resources for available crisis lines and counseling services were provided. The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) has a national telephone and an online hotline. Given that participants were from across the country, this free national resource was available to all participants. The telephone hotline is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and can be reached by the toll-free number 1.800.656.HOPE(4673). The online hotline has an instant message option that is also available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and can be found at

<https://ohl.rainn.org/online/>. In addition to the ability to instant message a hotline worker instantly, the website also contains information for victims or for friends and family of victims of sexual assault. The telephone and online hotlines are both confidential sources of support.

Procedure

Participants were first taken to a module to obtain informed consent before beginning the survey. Consent (Appendix E) was obtained in the first module of the online questionnaire; participants were then asked to check a box that indicated they had agreed to participate in the study and were over the age of 18. (If participants chose the option to not participate, the subsequent page indicated that they had declined participation and instructed them to close out of the website.) The consent module also informed the participants that they were free to stop participating at any point throughout the study. The subsequent modules had participants complete demographic information first, the two measures used for the study [the Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised (ECR-R) Questionnaire and the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (SCIRS)], and the debriefing module. (A validity item was included in each of the measures. For the ECR-R, the item “Choose 5 for this item” was inserted between items 17 and 18. For the SCIRS, the item “Choose 3 for this item” was inserted between items 24 and 25. If participants failed to provide the correct answer for both validity items, their data was also excluded from the final sample.)

Participants were provided with two possible incentives for participating in the online study. The last module of the online survey instructed participants to click on a separate link to provide either an email address for the VISA gift card drawing or for extra credit through the Sona-System at Central Michigan University. Directing participants to a separate link ensured

anonymity, as email addresses were not able to be matched with the completed surveys. The list of email addresses for the drawing was used to randomly select winners for the gift cards, and winners will be notified via the provided email address. The list of email addresses for the Sona-System participants allowed the researcher to grant extra credit to the students.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Demographics

Demographic information is presented in Table 1. The final sample contained 729 women currently in heterosexual romantic relationships. The mean age of participants was 23 years ($SD = 6.8$), and ranged from 18 to 62. The majority of the sample identified their relationship status as currently in a relationship (73.3%), with the rest married (21.4%) or engaged (5.3%). Facebook (50.5%) and the Sona-Systems research database at Central Michigan University (43.2%) proved to be the most successful sources for recruitment. The rest of participants reported that they were recruited using another online source (e.g., being notified through email by a friend, family member, or professor; Craigslist). Only two participants reported *The Morning Sun* online newspaper advertisement as their source of the recruitment. (Table 1 contains additional demographic information related to relationship duration, ethnicity, country of residence, and region of residence.)

Table 1. *Frequency Distribution of Additional Demographic Characteristics*

Relationship Duration	<i>N</i>	%
2 to 5 years	308	42.2
7 months to 1 year	165	22.6
Less than 6 months	133	18.2
6 to 10 years	76	10.4
11 years or more	44	6.0
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	660	90.5
Hispanic/Latina	22	3.0
Bi-racial	19	2.6
African American/Black/Caribbean	17	2.3
Asian American/Pacific Islander	5	0.7
Native American	2	0.3
Arab/Middle Eastern	2	0.3
Other	2	0.3
Country of Residence		
United States	724	99.3
Other (International)	5	0.7
US Region of Residence		
Midwest	574	78.7
South	76	10.4
West	51	7.0
Northeast	24	3.3

Note. Midwest = IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI; South = AL, AR, DC, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV; West = AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY; Northeast = CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT.

Additional analyses were run to determine if reports of experiences with sexual coercion varied with regard to any of the following demographic variables: age, ethnicity, relationship type, relationship length, region of residence, or source of recruitment. All analyses produced insignificant results, indicating that participant responses did not vary based on any of the aforementioned demographic variables.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics of the mean number of experiences of sexual coercion revealed that endorsement of experience with sexual coercion was very low ($M = .30$, $M = 1.20$, and $M = .25$ for the Resource Manipulation/Violence Scale, Commitment Scale, and Deception Scale, respectively). A test of data normality using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov equation confirmed that the data significantly deviate from a normal distribution, $K-S = .39$, $p < .001$. Thus, participants tended to not endorse the majority of the items on the sexual coercion questionnaire. Moreover, the average number of endorsed items for the total SCIRS scale was 1.13 and ranged from endorsing one experience with sexual coercion to 18 endorsements, which suggests that the vast majority of participants had very little to no experiences of sexual coercion in their current romantic relationships. The total SCIRS scale yielded strong internal consistency with all three subscales: R-scale ($\alpha = .85$), C-scale ($\alpha = .93$), and D-scale ($\alpha = .83$). (Table 2 shows intercorrelations of the total scale and all three subscales.)

Table 2. *Intercorrelations between SCIRS Total Scale and Subscales*

	Total (α)	R-Scale (r)	C-Scale (r)	R-Scale (r)
Total	---	---	---	---
R-Scale	.85**	---	---	---
C-Scale	.93**	.70**	---	---
R-Scale	.83**	.65**	.61**	---

Note. ** $p < .01$. α = alpha values for internal consistency. r = Pearson product moment correlation coefficient.

Analysis of Attachment Dimensions

The relationships between the individual attachment-related dimensions and reported experiences with sexual coercion were examined first. The first hypothesis predicted that people who endorse higher levels of attachment-related anxiety would report more experiences with sexual coercion within their current romantic relationships. In other words, it was predicted that

there would be a significant positive relationship between the individual anxiety dimension and reports of experiences with sexual coercion. Results indicated that higher scores of attachment-related anxiety significantly predicted ($r = .24, p < .001$) more experiences with sexual coercion within their current romantic relationships.

The second hypothesis predicted that people who endorse higher levels of attachment-related avoidance would report more experiences with sexual coercion within their current romantic relationships. In other words, it was predicted that there would be a significant positive relationship between the individual avoidance dimension and reports of experiences with sexual coercion. Results indicated that higher scores of attachment-related avoidance significantly predicted ($r = .24, p < .001$) more experiences with sexual coercion. Therefore, the data supported the first two hypotheses in predicting that women who endorse higher levels of attachment-related anxiety or avoidance would report more experiences with sexual coercion within their current romantic relationships. However, the correlations indicated that the relationships between the individual dimensions and reports of experiences with sexual coercion were small according to Cohen's (1988) guidelines for interpreting correlations.

Analysis of Interaction Effect of Dimensions

Given that attachment-related anxiety and avoidance can be operationalized as the underlying dimensions of a four-category theory of attachment, the interaction between the two dimensions was analyzed. This analysis determined if the separate dimensions influence one another, which would indicate whether they could be conceptualized categorically as well. The interaction effect between the dimensions of anxiety and avoidance was examined using a hierarchical regression. As stated previously, the third hypothesis predicted that there would be a

significant interaction between attachment-related anxiety and avoidance. First, an interaction term was determined by creating a new variable in which the anxiety and avoidance dimensions were multiplied together. Next, reported sexual coercion was entered as the dependent variable, the individual anxiety and avoidance dimensions were jointly entered as the first independent variable, and finally the created interaction term was added as the second independent variable. Results indicated that the interaction term of anxiety and avoidance accounted for 1.9% of the variance in reported sexual coercion over and above the main effects of the individual anxiety and avoidance dimensions, which reached significance, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $\Delta F(1, 632) = 13.44$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the data supported the third hypothesis in predicting that there would be a significant interaction between attachment-related anxiety and avoidance in relation to experienced sexual coercion within romantic relationships.

Analysis of a Categorical Approach

The categorical approach to defining attachment theory in romantic relationships was also explored to determine if the categories were differentially related to reported experiences with sexual coercion. An ANOVA was used to examine the relationship between categories of attachment style and reported experiences with sexual coercion. A median split was used for the scores of attachment anxiety and avoidance on the ECR-R in order to produce 'high' and 'low' groups for each dimension of attachment. The 'high' and 'low' groups then were organized into the four attachment styles: secure (i.e., low scores on both anxiety and avoidance; $N = 261$), preoccupied (i.e., high score on anxiety and low score on avoidance; $N = 97$), fearful-avoidant (i.e., high scores on both anxiety and avoidance; $N = 218$), and dismissing-avoidant (i.e., low score on anxiety and high score on avoidance; $N = 88$). The results of the one-way ANOVA

revealed that there was a significant relationship [$F(3, 632) = 7.55, p < .001$] between categories of attachment style and reported experiences with sexual coercion. Post hoc comparisons were conducted using the Tukey Honestly Significant Difference (Tukey HSD) test. According to Gravetter and Wallnau (2007), the Tukey HSD test is commonly used in psychological research for post hoc comparison following an ANOVA analysis and “allows you to compute a single value that determines the minimum difference between [group] means” (p. 420). The Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the fearful-avoidant attachment style ($M = 1.94, SD = 4.51$) was significantly different from the secure attachment style ($M = 0.43, SD = 1.06; t = 4.31, p < .001$). In other words, the average report of experiences with sexual coercion was significantly greater for women who endorsed a fearful-avoidant (i.e., high score on both anxiety and avoidance) attachment style than for those women who endorsed a secure (i.e., low score on both anxiety and avoidance) attachment style.

Comparisons among the rest of the attachment styles did not yield significant differences in mean scores of reported sexual coercion. However, two of the comparisons were approaching significance. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the fearful-avoidant attachment style ($M = 1.94, SD = 4.51$) was not significantly different than the preoccupied attachment style ($M = 0.99, SD = 2.51; t = 1.73, p = .08$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the fearful-avoidant attachment style ($M = 1.94, SD = 4.51$) was not significantly different than the dismissing-avoidant attachment style ($M = 0.94, SD = 2.07; t = 1.66, p = .10$). Thus, the mean difference across groups was only significant when comparing the two groups on the extreme ends of the continua. The group with low scores on both anxiety and avoidance (i.e., secure) had a significantly different mean than that of the group with high scores on both anxiety and avoidance (i.e., fearful-avoidant). The

inclusion of a mixed group (i.e., high on anxiety and low on avoidance or vice versa) in the comparison dyad did not yield a significant result.

Analysis of Subscales of Sexual Coercion

The inclusion of the SCIRS allowed for examination of subtypes of sexual coercion, as experiences with sexual coercion can range from subtle to overt. The subscales were used to determine if the subtypes of sexually coercive experiences were related to level of attachment-related anxiety and avoidance. The association between attachment-related anxiety and avoidance and the subscales of the SCIRS were examined to address the final two hypotheses. The fourth hypothesis predicted that commitment manipulation and defection threat would be more strongly associated with attachment-related anxiety than with avoidance. The fifth hypothesis predicted attachment-related anxiety would be more strongly associated with commitment manipulation and defection threat than with resource manipulation/violence. To explore these relationships, new variables were computed to create a total score for each of the subscales: resource manipulation/violence (R-scale), commitment manipulation (C-scale), and defection threat (D-scale). Bivariate correlations were calculated among the various SCIRS subscales and the corresponding dimensions of attachment-related anxiety and avoidance. Fisher's z-tests (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) were calculated to examine if there were significant differences between the correlations.

The fourth hypothesis was not supported by the data. The C-scale was significantly associated with both attachment-related anxiety, $r(690) = .21, p < .001$, and attachment-related avoidance, $r(683) = .21, p < .001$. These correlations were not significantly different,

$z = -.06, p = .95$. Similarly, the D-scale was significantly associated with both attachment-related anxiety, $r(687) = .17, p < .001$, and attachment-related avoidance, $r(682) = .20, p < .001$. These correlations were not significantly different, $z = 0.57, p = .57$. Thus, neither the commitment manipulation nor defection threat was more strongly related to attachment-related anxiety than avoidance.

The fifth hypothesis was also not supported by the data. Attachment-related anxiety was significantly associated with the C-scale, $r(690) = .21, p < .001$, and the R-scale, $r(680) = .25, p < .001$. These correlations were not significantly different, $z = -.64, p = .52$. Similarly, attachment-related anxiety was significantly associated with the D-scale, $r(687) = .17, p < .001$, and the R-scale, $r(680) = .25, p < .001$. These correlations were not significantly different, $z = 1.47, p = .14$. Therefore, attachment-related anxiety was not more strongly associated with commitment manipulation and defection threat than with resource manipulation/violence.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Attachment theory was first applied to the context of romantic relationships in the 1980s (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Using this theory, researchers have developed characteristics of people who may endorse attachment-related anxiety and avoidance within romantic relationships. People who display attachment-related anxiety fear the loss of their relationship, and people who display attachment-related avoidance do not view relationships as a source of safety and do not turn to their partners in times of need. Therefore, those people who endorse attachment-related anxiety and avoidance may tolerate or experience more sexual coercion in their romantic relationships, either out of fear of losing the relationship or out of the underlying belief that relationships are not typically a source of safety or support. Previous research (Davis, Shaver, & Vernon, 2004; Flanagan & Furman, 2000; Wekerle & Wolfe, 1998) on the link between insecure attachment styles (i.e., anxious or avoidant) and experiences with sexual coercion in romantic relationships has produced mixed results. This study aimed to clarify some of the mixed results.

The present study examined whether women who endorse higher levels of attachment-related anxiety or avoidance would report more experiences with sexual coercion within their current relationships. Results indicated that this relationship between attachment-related anxiety or avoidance and reported experiences with sexual coercion was present. In other words, as insecure attachment qualities (i.e., anxiety and avoidance) increased so did the reports of sexual coercion. These initial findings are consistent with Wekerle and Wolfe's (1998) conclusion that avoidant attachment styles were predictive of victimization for participants and with Davis et al. (2004) and Flanagan and Furman's (2000) conclusions that participants who reported experiencing sexual coercion were more likely to have endorsed an anxious attachment style.

When examining attachment styles categorically, there was a significant difference between the two groups on the extreme ends of the continua. The secure group (i.e., low scores on both anxiety and avoidance) had a significantly different mean from that of the fearful-avoidant group (i.e., high scores on both anxiety and avoidance). However, the mixed groups (i.e., high on anxiety and low on avoidance or vice versa) did not yield significantly different mean scores when compared to any of the other categories. These results were consistent with the results of the individual dimensions of anxiety and avoidance. The significantly different means of the most and least secure groups confirmed that reported experience with sexual coercion was a function of the degree to which participants endorsed attachment-related anxiety and avoidance. This interaction effect was considered logical, given that attachment-related anxiety and avoidance have been found to be underlying continua of the four-group categorization of secure, preoccupied, dismissing-avoidant, and anxious-avoidant attachment styles. The presence of a significant interaction effect is consistent with the work of Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) and Fraley and Waller (1998) on attachment styles, which describes attachment-related anxiety and avoidance at times as underlying dimensions of the four-category model of attachment.

The present study also focused on the types of sexually coercive experiences that individuals may encounter within their romantic relationships. It was believed that the ability to examine a range of experiences with sexual coercion would be a strength of this study, as the measures of sexual coercion used in much of the previous research (Davis et al., 2004; Flanagan & Furman, 2000; Wekerle & Wolfe, 1998) were limited to mostly overt examples of coercion. It is possible that the mixed results in previous research were attributable to the restricted types of sexually coercive experiences, lacking examples of more subtle tactics that are sometimes used

to coerce a partner into sexual activity. Therefore, participants of previous studies may have experienced types of sexual coercion that were simply not included on the measures used. The predictions about the specific types of coercion were developed based on the theory that those people who endorse attachment-related anxiety fear the loss of a romantic partner and would, therefore, be more vulnerable to threats by their partners to end the relationship (commitment manipulation) or threats to find other partners (defection threat) than of threats to withhold things like money (resource manipulation) or threats of violent behavior. People endorsing attachment-related avoidance do not show this same fear of losing a significant other. However, the data did not support any of these predictions, likely because the types of sexual coercion yielded intercorrelations of .61 to .70. Such high correlations may have made it difficult to find differentiation between the three overlapping types of sexual coercion. The strong correlations possibly suggest that experience of a single type of sexual coercion is rare. Rather, it may be more common that people experience a range of sexual coercion within the context of a relationship, as the element of control could lead perpetrators to utilize various tactics to coerce a partner.

Overall, the results of this study yielded small yet statistically significant relationships between experienced sexual coercion and attachment-related anxiety and avoidance. It is possible that attachment-related anxiety and avoidance (and attachment theory in general) simply do not have a strong relationship with reported experiences of sexual coercion. There may be other variables that account for a large part of reported experiences with sexual coercion that are separate from a person's type of attachment within a romantic relationship and which were not captured in the present study. The fact that attachment-related anxiety and avoidance accounted for a small amount of variance (less than 2% in any of the hypotheses) suggests that there are

other variables that better account for predicting experiences with sexual coercion. It is also possible that there are many variables, each contributing a small amount of variance, that contribute to experienced sexual coercion. Nonetheless, being able to add any amount of information is beneficial to this field of research and to future studies on the prediction of sexually coercive experiences.

Also, the average endorsement of experience with sexual coercion by women in this sample was very low. It is possible that the chosen measure for this study did not include important examples of sexual coercion that could have been endorsed by participants. Narrowing the timeframe to the previous month may have been too stringent, given that participants could have experienced sexual coercion within their current relationship, just not within the month prior to participating in the study. It is also possible that the sample used did not actually experience much sexual coercion within their current romantic relationships.

Finally, it is also possible that the outcomes were statistically significant due to the statistical power that accompanies having a substantial sample size. With 729 participants being included in the data analyses, the sheer number of participants could have led to reaching statistical significance, as increases in sample size can lead to finding significant results. Again, it is possible that the findings were accurate and the relationship between sexual coercion and attachment styles is simply small. This possibility highlights the utility of a dimensional approach to examining attachment style, as it can uncover even small relationships between variables. Given that psychological constructs and theories are often influenced by more than one variable, the ability to detect relationships of any size is beneficial to the accuracy of the literature.

Several other limitations are important to note. First, there was a lack of diversity in the sample, which consisted mostly of Caucasian women in the Midwest region of the United States. Although conducted online and distributed using three different sources (i.e., Facebook, Sona-Systems research database at Central Michigan University, and *The Morning Sun* online newspaper), this strategy proved to be an ineffective way to collect data from a diverse sample. This study may have benefitted from utilizing other ways to advertise research on the internet (e.g., websites that screen participants and reimburse them for completing surveys). With such a specific demographic for the majority of the sample, extrapolating results to the general population is not advisable. Second, the low endorsement of sexually coercive experiences was potentially a limitation. It is unclear if the low endorsement is an accurate reflection of the participants' experiences. The use of a sample that is known to have experienced sexual coercion within romantic relationships (e.g., through a sexual assault advocacy center or agency) would increase the endorsement of sexually coercive experiences. Given that a general population sample produced significant relationships between the sexual coercion and attachment, much information could be gained from a population in which there is a known prevalence of sexual coercion. Another possibility is that recognizing sexual coercion is not an easy task, as it can become quite complicated within the context of an intimate relationship. As mentioned previously, it is possible for people to experience sexual coercion and wanted sexual contact within the same intimate relationship. Therefore, cognitive dissonance may occur when thinking about the dynamics of one's romantic relationship, possibly making it less likely that the individual will recognize sexual coercion. However, this cognitive dissonance may have protective properties, and an argument could be made that not recognizing sexual coercion also means that one does not experience the potential negative repercussions of sexual coercion.

Another argument could be made that if a person does not feel coerced (even with the presence of coercive tactics), then the experience simply cannot be considered coercive. Nonetheless, a more consistent definition for what constitutes sexual coercion would help to clarify the literature, as well as aid in education and prevention efforts with the public.

A better understanding of what factors predict experiences with sexual coercion is needed within the literature. Further examination of alternative variables that could be related to experiencing sexual coercion could prove useful. Most psychological constructs at the focus of research are multi-determined, and there are always variables that are not included in a research project, either for methodological reasons or due to ignorance of other variables. It is quite possible that attachment theory is just one of many variables that contribute to people's experiences with sexual coercion. Further research regarding a consistent and clear definition of what sexual coercion is would also be a useful topic for future studies, especially if alternative variables continue to yield small relationships with experienced sexual coercion. If the field of sexual coercion research can reach a consensus on how to define or label sexual coercion, then determination of the variables that contribute to sexually coercive experiences (from the stances of both victim and perpetrator) would be easier to research. More information on how participants interpret and respond to sexual coercion measures would likely aid in reaching a reasonable consensus.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHICS: PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING DEMOGRAPHIC ITEMS

1. Gender
 - Male
 - Female
 - Transgender
 - Other (please specify) _____

2. Age

3. Which of the following do you consider yourself to be?
 - White/Anglo or European American
 - Black/African American, Caribbean
 - Asian American, Pacific Islander
 - Hispanic/Latino(a)
 - Native American
 - Arab/Middle Eastern
 - Bi-racial
 - Other (please specify) _____

4. Which of the following describes your sexual orientation?
 - Bisexual
 - Straight/Heterosexual
 - Gay/Lesbian
 - Prefer Not to Say
 - Other (please specify) _____

5. What country do you live in?
 - United States
 - Other (please specify) _____

6. If you live in the United States, which region of the country do you live in?
 - Midwest - IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI
 - Northeast - CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT
 - South - AL, AR, DC, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV
 - West - AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY

7. How would you describe the area in which you live?
 - Rural (Country/Small Town)
 - Urban (Large City)
 - Suburban (Suburb of Large City)
 - Other (please specify) _____

8. What is your relationship status?
- Single
 - In a Relationship
 - Engaged
 - Married
 - Separated
 - Divorced
9. If yes, how long have you been in this relationship?
- Less than 6 months
 - 6 months to 1 year
 - 1 to 5 years
 - 5 to 10 years
 - 10 years or more
10. How would you describe your current relationship?
- Same-Sex Relationship
 - Opposite-Sex Relationship
 - Prefer Not to Say
 - Other (please specify) _____
11. Where did you find out about this survey?
- Facebook
 - Online Newspaper Ad
 - Sona-Systems Research Database at Central Michigan University
 - Other (please specify) _____

APPENDIX B

EXPERIENCES IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS-REVISED (ECR-R) QUESTIONNAIRE

The statements below concern how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships. We are interested in how you *generally* experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by circling the number to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strong Disagree				Strongly Agree		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The statements below concern how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships. We are interested in how you *generally* experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by circling the number to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strong Disagree				Strongly Agree		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I worry a lot about my relationships.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. I rarely worry about my partner leaving me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Choose 5 for this item.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. My romantic partner makes me doubt myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The statements below concern how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships. We are interested in how you *generally* experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by circling the number to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strong Disagree				Strongly Agree		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. I tell my partner just about everything.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. I talk things over with my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won't like who I really am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. I find it easy to depend on romantic partners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The statements below concern how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships. We are interested in how you *generally* experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by circling the number to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strong Disagree			Strongly Agree			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. My partner only seems to notice me when I'm angry.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. My partner really understands me and my needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX C

SEXUAL COERCION IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS SCALE (SCIRS)

Below is a list of acts that can occur in a romantic relationship. Please use the following scale to indicate **HOW OFTEN** in the past **ONE** month these acts have occurred in your current romantic relationship.

Options are defined as follows:

- 0 = Act did not occur in the past month
- 1 = Act occurred 1 time in the past month
- 2 = Act occurred 2 times in the past month
- 3 = Act occurred 3 to 5 times in the past month
- 4 = Act occurred 6 to 10 times in the past month
- 5 = Act occurred 11 or more times in the past month.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
1. My partner threatened violence against me if I did not have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
2. My partner threatened to physically force me to have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
3. My partner persisted in asking me to have sex with him/her, even though he knew that I did not want to.	<input type="radio"/>					
4. My partner told me that other people were interested in a relationship with him/her, so that I would have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
5. My partner physically forced me to have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
6. My partner hinted that if I loved him/her I would have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
7. My partner told me that other people were willing to have sex with him/her, so that I would have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					

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Below is a list of acts that can occur in a romantic relationship. Please use the following scale to indicate **HOW OFTEN** in the past **ONE** month these acts have occurred in your current romantic relationship.

Options are defined as follows:

- 0 = Act did not occur in the past month
- 1 = Act occurred 1 time in the past month
- 2 = Act occurred 2 times in the past month
- 3 = Act occurred 3 to 5 times in the past month
- 4 = Act occurred 6 to 10 times in the past month
- 5 = Act occurred 11 or more times in the past month.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. My partner hinted that I was cheating on him/her, in an effort to get me to have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
9. My partner told me that if I loved him/her I would have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
10. My partner hinted that other people were interested in having sex with him/her, so that I would have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
11. My partner gave me gifts or other benefits so that I would feel obligated to have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
12. My partner told me that if I were truly committed to him/her I would have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
13. My partner hinted that other people were willing to have sex with him/her, so that I would have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
14. My partner reminded me of gifts or other benefits he/she gave me so that I would feel obligated to have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					

Below is a list of acts that can occur in a romantic relationship. Please use the following scale to indicate **HOW OFTEN** in the past **ONE** month these acts have occurred in your current romantic relationship.

Options are defined as follows:

- 0 = Act did not occur in the past month
- 1 = Act occurred 1 time in the past month
- 2 = Act occurred 2 times in the past month
- 3 = Act occurred 3 to 5 times in the past month
- 4 = Act occurred 6 to 10 times in the past month
- 5 = Act occurred 11 or more times in the past month.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
15. My partner threatened to pursue a long-term relationship with another person if I did not have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
16. My partner hinted that if I were truly committed to him/her I would have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
17. My partner accused me of cheating on him/her, in an effort to get me to have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
18. My partner pressured me to have sex with him/her against my will.	<input type="radio"/>					
19. My partner initiated sex with me when I was unaware (for example, I was asleep, drunk, or on medication) and continued against my will.	<input type="radio"/>					
20. My partner threatened to withhold benefits that I depend on if I did not have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
21. My partner told me that it was my obligation or duty to have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					

Below is a list of acts that can occur in a romantic relationship. Please use the following scale to indicate **HOW OFTEN** in the past **ONE** month these acts have occurred in your current romantic relationship.

Options are defined as follows:

- 0 = Act did not occur in the past month
- 1 = Act occurred 1 time in the past month
- 2 = Act occurred 2 times in the past month
- 3 = Act occurred 3 to 5 times in the past month
- 4 = Act occurred 6 to 10 times in the past month
- 5 = Act occurred 11 or more times in the past month.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
22. My partner hinted that he/she would give me gifts or other benefits if I had sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
23. My partner told me that other couples have sex more than we do, to make me feel like I should have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
24. My partner told me that other women were interested in having sex with him, so that I would have sex with him.	<input type="radio"/>					
Choose 3 for this item.	<input type="radio"/>					
25. My partner withheld benefits that I depend on to get me to have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
26. My partner made me feel obligated to have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
27. My partner hinted that he/she would have sex with another person if I did not have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					

Below is a list of acts that can occur in a romantic relationship. Please use the following scale to indicate **HOW OFTEN** in the past **ONE** month these acts have occurred in your current romantic relationship.

Options are defined as follows:

- 0 = Act did not occur in the past month
- 1 = Act occurred 1 time in the past month
- 2 = Act occurred 2 times in the past month
- 3 = Act occurred 3 to 5 times in the past month
- 4 = Act occurred 6 to 10 times in the past month
- 5 = Act occurred 11 or more times in the past month.

	0	1	2	3	4	5
28. My partner hinted that he/she would withhold benefits that I depend on if I did not have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
29. My partner and I had sex, even though I did not want to.	<input type="radio"/>					
30. My partner hinted that he/she might pursue a long-term relationship with another person if I did not have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
31. My partner threatened violence against someone or something I care about if I did not have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
32. My partner hinted that it was my obligation or duty to have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
33. My partner threatened to have sex with another person if I did not have sex with him/her.	<input type="radio"/>					
34. My partner hinted that other women were interested in a relationship with him, so that I would have sex with him.	<input type="radio"/>					

APPENDIX D

DEBRIEFING

This study asked you to respond to questions about your beliefs related to relationships and possible experiences that you have had in your romantic relationship. The first set of relationship questions looked at how secure you feel in romantic relationships and how comfortable you are with getting close to a partner. Research has shown that there is a possible link between not feeling secure or comfortable in romantic relationships with experiencing pressure to engage in sexual activity. Experiencing pressure to engage in sex can have negative outcomes for people, such as reduced self-esteem, symptoms of depression, confusion, or guilt.

This pressure can be obvious or more subtle. Examples of obvious pressure that is used to obtain sex include:

- Holding a partner down
- Becoming violent (e.g., hitting or kicking) with a partner
- Using drugs or alcohol
- Threatening to end a relationship

Examples of more subtle pressure that is used to obtain sex include:

- Making a partner feel guilty
- Continual arguments
- Making false promises
- Stating that it is a person's job to have sex when he or she is in a relationship

For further reading about relationship beliefs and pressure to engage in sexual activity in romantic relationships:

Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. R. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 511-524.

Spitzberg, B. (1998). Sexual coercion in courtship relations. In W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.), *The dark side of close relationships* (pp. 179-232). New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Or contact Lauren Bieritz (E-mail: bieri1lm@cmich.edu) or Ms. Bieritz's advisor, Elizabeth Meadows, Ph.D. (E-mail: meado1ea@cmich.edu).

If you or someone you know has been a victim of relationship violence, services and support are available through the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN):

National 24-Hour Telephone Hotline: 1.800.656.HOPE(4673)

24-Hour Online Hotline: <https://ohl.rainn.org/online/>

IF YOU WISH, PLEASE PRINT (go to the "File" menu and select "Print") A COPY OF THIS DEBRIEFING PAGE FOR YOUR PERSONAL REFERENCE.

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT

Lauren Bieritz, a graduate student of Clinical Psychology at Central Michigan University, is conducting a study surveying approximately 500 women who are currently in a heterosexual relationship. This study asks you fill out a series of questions assessing your experiences in and beliefs about romantic relationships. You must be at least 18 years of age or older to participate in this research. You should feel free to skip any question that makes you uncomfortable or you do not wish to answer. Participation is beneficial to you by allowing you the opportunity to learn how psychological scales are used in research.

The information that you provide on the questionnaire will be kept anonymous. All data are password protected and accessible only to the experimenter. Results may be presented at professional conferences or analyzed for publication. Additionally, the on-line data collection company that will be used (surveymonkey.com) guarantees that data is stored on a secure database server. The Survey Monkey privacy statement clearly states that they will not access your responses (or sell it to any other operators). However, as it is an independent company, it cannot be guaranteed that the company will honor this commitment. The server may attempt to save a 'cookie' to your internet directory which could be used to identify you through your IP address. You can turn off the cookie option within your internet browser. Instructions on blocking and deleting cookies are available within the help section of your browser.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide not to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty. None of your data will be retained if you choose not to participate. If you have any questions at this time or during participation, please do not hesitate to ask. Feel free to contact Lauren Bieritz (E-mail: bieri1lm@cmich.edu) or Ms. Bieritz's advisor, Elizabeth Meadows, Ph.D. (E-mail: meado1ea@cmich.edu).

If you are not satisfied with the manner in which this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any complaints to the Institutional Review Board by calling 989-774-6777, or addressing a letter to the Institutional Review Board, 251 Foust Hall Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859.

If you want a copy of the informed consent, go to the "File" menu and select "Print." You may also obtain a copy of this informed consent by contacting the researcher above.

IF YOU WISH, PLEASE PRINT (go to the "File" menu and select "Print") A COPY OF THIS INFORMED CONSENT PAGE FOR YOUR PERSONAL REFERENCE BEFORE CHOOSING ONE OF THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS:

Please choose from one the two options below to continue.

- I Agree To Participate and Am At Least 18 Years Old
- I Am Under 18 but Want the Alternative Assignment for Extra Credit through CMU
- I **DO NOT** Agree to Participate

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