



# **Men's Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships: Development and Initial Validation of the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale**

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We report the development and initial validation of the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (SCIRS), a measure designed to assess the prevalence and severity of sexual coercion in committed intimate relationships. We review existing measures of sexual coercion and discuss their limitations, describe the identification of the SCIRS items, perform a principal components analysis and describe the resulting three components, and present evidence for the convergent and discriminative validity of the SCIRS. Because sexual coercion in intimate relationships often takes the form of subtle tactics, the SCIRS items assess communicative tactics such as hinting and subtle manipulations in addition to tactics such as the use of physical force. The SCIRS provides researchers and clinicians with a valid, reliable, and comprehensive measure with which to study the dynamics of sexual coercion in intimate relationships.

**B**etween 10% and 17% of married women experience rape in marriage (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Painter & Farrington, 1999; Russell, 1990). Rape by physical force is just the “tip of the iceberg” of sexual coercion in intimate relationships, however (Koss & Oros, 1982; Weis & Borges, 1973). Broadly defined, sexual coercion is “pressure from an [individual] to engage in sexual behavior” (Waldner, Vaden-Goad, & Sikka, 1999, p. 523). Pressure may take the form of threats of violence, physical force, or intoxication, but also may include more subtle tactics such as emotional manipulation. In an intimate relationship, where two individuals have a vested interest in each other, one might expect that sexual coercion is sometimes achieved by more subtle manipulations rather than by explicit threats and the use of physical force.

Waldner and colleagues' (1999) definition of sexual coercion includes another key component, sexual behavior—which may range from touching and kissing to sexual intercourse. A common outcome of sexual coercion is penile-vaginal intercourse (e.g., Thornhill & Thornhill, 1991; Waldner-Haugrud & Magruder, 1995), referred to in the current article as sexual intercourse. Coerced sexual intercourse is the most traumatic and psychologically painful outcome of sexual coercion because of the associated health, social,

and reproductive costs (Campbell, 1989; Campbell & Soeken, 1999; Gleason, 1993; Plichta & Abraham, 1996; Thornhill & Thornhill, 1990). For these reasons, we focus on coerced sexual intercourse. Most sexual coercion is perpetrated by men against female partners (e.g., Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 1998; Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Hines & Saudino, 2003; Lottes & Weinberg, 1997; O'Sullivan, Byers, & Finkelman, 1998; Waldner-Haugrud & Magruder, 1995; Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 1997), and so in the current article we focus on men's sexual coercion of their female partners.

The current article details the development and initial validation of the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (SCIRS). We begin with a review of existing measures of sexual coercion and discuss their limitations. We next describe the development of the SCIRS, perform a principal components analysis and describe the resulting three principal components. We then present evidence for the convergent and discriminative validity of the SCIRS.

## **PREVIOUS MEASURES OF SEXUAL COERCION IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS**

Most research on sexual coercion and the measures used to assess sexual coercion are not specific to the context of a committed intimate relationship, but instead measure sexual coercion between casually dating partners. Measures assessing sexual coercion in the context of a casual dating relationship include, for example, the Aggressive Sexual Behavior Inventory (Mosher & Anderson, 1986), the Sexual Situation Questionnaire (O'Sullivan & Byers, 1993), and the Coercive Sexuality Scale (Rapaport & Burkhart, 1984). Assessing sexual coercion in the context of a dating relationship is important, but sexual coercion in the context of a committed intimate relationship may be different from dating sexual coercion. Because a couple in a committed intimate relationship is likely to be more compatible and to be more considerate and caring toward one another than is a couple in a casual dating relationship (see Buss, 2004), sexual coercion tactics may be more innocuous, subtle, and discrete in a committed intimate relationship.

Measures of sexual coercion in the context of a committed intimate relationship have been developed, but each has important limitations. The most widely used of these measures is the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES; Koss & Oros, 1982). Indeed, the SES's popularity is attested to by virtue of other researchers' adaptations of the SES in sexual coercion research (e.g., Anderson & Newton, 1998; Cairns & Wright, 1998; Lottes & Weinberg, 1997; McConaghy & Zamir, 1995; Schubot, 2001). The SES is an excellent measure of sexual coercion, but it has several potential limitations. Consisting of 13 Yes-No questions, the SES asks participants if they have ever experienced particular acts of sexual coercion. The SES, therefore, assesses the lifetime occurrence of sexually coercive acts but not the frequency and severity of these acts. The inability of the SES to assess the frequency of sexual coercion prevents a distinction between a woman who has been sexually coerced by an individual only once and a woman who has been repeatedly sexually coerced by an individual. Additionally, because the SES assesses lifetime experience with sexual coercion, it does not allow one to determine if the sexual coercion experienced by the participant occurred in the current relationship or in one or more previous relationships. The SES thus cannot assess the success of an intervention program, for example. Finally, the broad assessment of lifetime experience with sexual coercion does not allow researchers

and clinicians to investigate the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, because lifetime experience may include victimization by more than one perpetrator. It is important to establish the context of sexual coercion to determine, for example, if the participant is reporting sexual coercion by a current intimate partner or sexual coercion by a relative when the participant was a child (i.e., molestation).

Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, and Sugarman's (1996) Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2) includes a seven-item sexual coercion subscale. Because the CTS2 was designed to assess intimate relationship violence broadly, the items in the sexual coercion subscale lack detail. The sexual coercion subscale, for example, is not able to distinguish between different types of threats used to sexually coerce. One item, for example, reads, "I used threats to make my partner have sex." One could threaten physical harm, termination of the relationship, or infidelity, for example. It may be important to know what types of threats men make and to what types of threats women respond.

Waldner and colleagues (1999) developed the Sexual Coercion Inventory (SCI) to measure sexual victimization in an intimate relationship. The SCI assesses coercive tactics (e.g., threats, encouragement to use drugs) and the outcomes of sexual coercion (e.g., touching genitals, intercourse). Although the SCI enables participants to report a range of sexually coercive tactics and outcomes, it is limited in several respects. The SCI does not assess the severity or frequency of sexually coercive acts, only the prevalence of these acts, and the SCI cannot determine if the sexual coercion experienced by the participant is specific to the current partner or a past partner.

## METHOD

### Development of the SCIRS

We developed the SCIRS to address some of the limitations of existing measures of intimate relationship sexual coercion. Previous measures, for example, assess the lifetime occurrence of sexually coercive acts but not the frequency and severity of these acts. Also, because some previous measures of sexual coercion assess lifetime experience with sexual coercion, they cannot differentiate sexual coercion experienced by intimate partners and child molestation experienced by a relative or sexual harassment experienced by a stranger. Finally, although some previous measures of sexual coercion include assessments of threats as coercive tactics, they are not able to distinguish between different types of threats used to sexually coerce (e.g., threats of physical harm, threats to terminate the relationship, threats of infidelity).

The SCIRS items were written following a review of the sexual coercion literature and informal interviews with men and women. Some items were adapted from existing sexual coercion scales. In addition, because previous research has shown that men sometimes attempt to manipulate and control their partners using resources such as gifts and money (Buss, 1988; Buss & Shackelford, 1997; and see Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 1996), we included items that assess the use of resources to coerce sexual intercourse (e.g., "My partner reminded me of gifts or other benefits he gave me so that I would feel obligated to have sex with him").

The SCIRS assesses the use of psychological and behavioral tactics of sexual coercion such as threats, withholding and giving of resources, physical violence, persistence, and manipulation. Previous research indicates that the use of these and related tactics to coerce

sexual intercourse is common (Buss, 1988; Kanin, 1985; Rapaport & Burkhart, 1984; Waldner et al., 1999). The SCIRS also assesses the use of tactics that range in subtlety. Some tactics, such as hinting, are more subtle; whereas other tactics, such as direct threats, are less subtle.

We use a 6-point Likert scale to which the participant indicates how often in the past month each of 34 acts have occurred in the participant's current intimate relationship. Values 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. The scale therefore has a range of 0 to 170 (34 acts  $\times$  5 = 170). A male version of the SCIRS assesses men's self-reports of their own sexually coercive behaviors, whereas a female version of the SCIRS assesses women's reports of their partner's sexually coercive behaviors. The two versions are identical, with the exception of the relevant gender-appropriate word substitutions. Collecting self-report data from men and partner-report data from women provided us with the opportunity to investigate the psychometric properties of the SCIRS using two different and independent data sources. The instructions for the SCIRS are as follows:

Sexuality is an important part of romantic relationships and can sometimes be a source of conflict. Your honest responses to the following questions will contribute profoundly to what is known about sexuality in romantic relationships and may help couples improve the sexual aspects of their relationships. We appreciate that some of the questions may be uncomfortable for you to answer, but keep in mind that your responses will remain confidential.

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. Write the number that best represents your response in the blank space to the left of each act.

## Participants

The SCIRS was administered to 861 people (403 men and 458 women) in committed intimate relationships (men and women were not partnered to one another). Participants were drawn from universities and surrounding communities. The mean age of the men was 24.2 years ( $SD = 7.9$ ), the mean age of their partners was 23.0 years ( $SD = 7.3$ ), and the mean length of their relationships was 37.3 months ( $SD = 59.8$ ). The mean age of the women was 21.5 years ( $SD = 5.4$ ), the mean age of their partners was 23.7 years ( $SD = 6.6$ ), and the mean length of their relationships was 28.8 months ( $SD = 38.5$ ). Analyses were conducted on different configurations of the sample (e.g., all participants, only men, only women) and on a subsample of the women. Table 1 presents a description of the different samples (or Analysis Sets) used in this study.

## Materials

Participants completed a survey that included several indexes. All participants completed the following five sections of the survey. The first section requested biographical information, including the participant's sex (male or female). The second section of the survey asked participants to rate their overall, sexual, and emotional satisfaction with their current partner (following Shackelford & Buss, 2000). The third section asked participants how angry, frustrated, and upset they would feel if their partner denied a request to have sexual intercourse with them (following Shackelford et al., 2002). The SCIRS composed the

**TABLE 1. Description of Analysis Sets**

| Analysis Set | <i>N</i> | Sex         | Sample                                 |
|--------------|----------|-------------|--|
| 1            | 861      | Men & women | All participants (see text)            |
| 2            | 403      | Men         | Men from Analysis Set 1                |
| 3            | 458      | Women       | Women from Analysis Set 1              |
| 4            | 100      | Women       | Subsample of women from Analysis Set 3 |

fourth section of the survey. The fifth section assessed the occurrence and consequences of violence in the participants' relationships. To this end, we included the Controlling Behavior Index, the Violence Assessment Index, and the Injury Assessment Index (Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 1995, 1996).

A subsample of women from Analysis Set 3 completed two additional measures:

1. the Women's Experience with Battering Scale (Smith, Earp, & DeVellis, 1995), which assesses women's subjective experiences with a physically abusive partner, and
2. the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), which assesses the quality of the intimate relationship.

Details of each measure are discussed in subsequent sections. These two measures were added midway through the project to test further the discriminative and convergent validity of the SCIRS.

## Procedures

Two criteria must have been met to qualify for participation: the prospective participant must be at least 18 years of age, and currently involved in a committed, intimate, sexual relationship. Prospective participants were aware of these participation criteria prior to appearing at a scheduled time and location. Upon the prospective participant's arrival at the scheduled time and location, the researcher confirmed that the prospective participant met the two participation criteria.

If the participation criteria were met, the research assistant handed the participant a consent form, the survey, and a 9-inch  $\times$  12-inch brown security envelope. The participant was instructed to read and sign the consent form, complete the survey, place the completed survey in the envelope, and then seal the envelope. The participant was instructed not to seal the consent form inside the envelope to maintain anonymity. Finally, the participant was instructed to place the sealed envelope in a box that contained other sealed envelopes. The participant was asked to place the signed consent form in a separate envelope that contained other signed consent forms. The research assistant explained to the participant the purpose of the study, answered any questions, and thanked the participant for his or her participation.

## RESULTS

### Principal Components Analysis

A principal components analysis (followed by varimax rotation) of the 34 items using Analysis Set 1 revealed three components with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0. The first

component (eigenvalue = 15.6) accounted for 45.8% of the variance, the second component (eigenvalue = 3.2) accounted for 9.5% of the variance, and the third component (eigenvalue = 2.3) accounted for 6.7% of the variance. In order to broadly capture items within a domain, we used the liberal assignment criterion of .30 or greater for an item to be included on a specific component. None of the items assigned to one component loaded greater than .30 on the other two components (the loadings of each item on each of the three factors can be obtained from the first author upon request). Although it could be argued that there is but one general component, we argue at this early stage of scale development (and see Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001) for the retention of all three components, each of which is associated with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 and each of which is interpretable. In addition, together the second and third components accounted for more than 15% of the total interitem variance. The results of the principal components analysis are presented in Table 2.

The Resource Manipulation/Violence component includes acts in which men withhold or give gifts and benefits (e.g., "My partner hinted that he would withhold benefits that I depend on if I did not have sex with him," "My partner gave me gifts or other benefits so that I would feel obligated to have sex with him") and threaten or use violence and force as sexual coercion tactics (e.g., "My partner threatened violence against me if I did not have sex with him," "My partner physically forced me to have sex with him"). The Commitment Manipulation component includes acts in which men manipulate their partners by telling them that the couple's relationship status makes sexual access obligatory (e.g., "My partner told me that if I loved him I would have sex with him," "My partner hinted that if I were truly committed to him I would have sex with him"). The Defection Threat component includes acts in which men threaten to pursue casual affairs with other women, that is, temporary defections, or threaten to pursue long-term relationships with other women, that is, permanent defections, as a sexual coercion tactic. Temporary defection items include, for example, "My partner hinted that he would have sex with another woman if I did not have sex with him," and "My partner told me that other women were willing to have sex with him, so that I would have sex with him." Permanent defection items include, for example, "My partner hinted that other women were interested in a relationship with him, so that I would have sex with him," and "My partner hinted that he might pursue a long-term relationship with another woman if I did not have sex with him."

**TABLE 2. Component Loadings for the Three Components of the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale**

|                                | Loading   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Resource Manipulation/Violence |   |
| .89                            | My partner threatened violence against me if I did not have sex with him.   |
| .81                            | My partner threatened to physically force me to have sex with him.  |
| .71                            | My partner physically forced me to have sex with him.   |
| .69                            | My partner hinted that I was cheating on him, in an effort to get me to have sex with him.                        |
| .64                            | My partner gave me gifts or other benefits so that I would feel obligated to have sex with him.                   |
| .64                            | My partner reminded me of gifts or other benefits he gave me so that I would feel obligated to have sex with him. |

(continued)

**TABLE 2. Continued**

|                                | Loading   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| .61                            | My partner threatened to pursue a long-term relationship with another woman if I did not have sex with him.                             |
| .59                            | My partner accused me of cheating on him, in an effort to get me to have sex with him.  |
| .58                            | My partner initiated sex with me when I was unaware (for example, I was asleep, drunk, or on medication) and continued against my will. |
| .55                            | My partner threatened to withhold benefits that I depend on if I did not have sex with him.   |
| .55                            | My partner told me that it was my obligation or duty to have sex with him.  |
| .51                            | My partner hinted that he would give me gifts or other benefits if I had sex with him.  |
| .48                            | My partner withheld benefits that I depend on to get me to have sex with him.   |
| .48                            | My partner hinted that he would withhold benefits that I depend on if I did not have sex with him.                                      |
| .30                            | My partner threatened violence against someone or something I care about if I did not have sex with him.                                |
| <b>Commitment Manipulation</b> |   |
| .74                            | My partner persisted in asking me to have sex with him, even though he knew that I did not want to.                                     |
| .74                            | My partner hinted that if I loved him I would have sex with him.  |
| .71                            | My partner told me that if I loved him I would have sex with him.   |
| .71                            | My partner told me that if I were truly committed to him I would have sex with him.   |
| .70                            | My partner hinted that if I were truly committed to him I would have sex with him.  |
| .66                            | My partner pressured me to have sex with him against my will.   |
| .66                            | My partner told me that other couples have sex more than we do, to make me feel like I should have sex with him.                        |
| .62                            | My partner made me feel obligated to have sex with him.   |
| .59                            | My partner and I had sex, even though I did not want to.  |
| .57                            | My partner hinted that it was my obligation or duty to have sex with him.   |
| <b>Defection Threat</b>        |   |
| .87                            | My partner told me that other women were interested in a relationship with him, so that I would have sex with him.                      |
| .86                            | My partner told me that other women were willing to have sex with him, so that I would have sex with him.                               |
| .85                            | My partner hinted that other women were interested in having sex with him, so that I would have sex with him.                           |
| .83                            | My partner hinted that other women were willing to have sex with him, so that I would have sex with him.                                |
| .83                            | My partner told me that other women were interested in having sex with him, so that I would have sex with him.                          |
| .69                            | My partner hinted that he would have sex with another woman if I did not have sex with him.   |
| .60                            | My partner hinted that he might pursue a long-term relationship with another woman if I did not have sex with him.                      |
| .52                            | My partner threatened to have sex with another woman if I did not have sex with him.  |

*Note.* Components analysis based on Analysis Set 1,  $N = 861$ .

Alpha reliabilities were calculated for each component as well as for the full scale, for the full sample of men and women and then separately for men's self-reports and women's partner-reports. For the full sample, alpha reliabilities for the three components (Resource Manipulation/Violence, Commitment Manipulation, and Defection Threat) were  $\alpha = .92$ ,  $\alpha = .91$ ,  $\alpha = .95$ , respectively, and the total scale alpha reliability was  $\alpha = .96$ . For men's self-reports, alpha reliabilities for the three components (Resource Manipulation/Violence, Commitment Manipulation, and Defection Threat) were  $\alpha = .87$ ,  $\alpha = .89$ ,  $\alpha = .95$ , respectively, and the total scale alpha reliability was  $\alpha = .95$ . For women's partner-reports, alpha reliabilities for the three components (Resource Manipulation/Violence, Commitment Manipulation, and Defection Threat) were  $\alpha = .95$ ,  $\alpha = .92$ ,  $\alpha = .96$ , respectively, and the total scale alpha reliability was  $\alpha = .96$ . These results indicate that the total scale and its three components have sufficiently high reliability to warrant their use and, moreover, that the 34 items can be grouped into three meaningful components that are theoretically and empirically associated with sexual coercion in the context of intimate relationships. Table 3 displays intercorrelations between the full SCIRS and the three components for the full sample of men and women, for men's self-reports, and for women's partner-reports. These intercorrelations are moderate to large in size, ranging from  $r = .59$  to  $r = .92$ .

**TABLE 3. Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale Component Intercorrelations for Full Sample (Men and Women; Upper Panel), Men's Self-Reports (Lower Panel, Lower Left), and Women's Partner-Reports (Lower Panel, Upper Right)**

|                                       | SCIRS<br>(total) | Resource<br>Manipulation/<br>Violence | Commitment<br>Manipulation | Defection<br>Threat |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| SCIRS<br>(total)                      | 1.00             |                                       |                            |                     |
| Resource<br>Manipulation/<br>Violence | .88*             | 1.00                                  |                            |                     |
| Commitment<br>Manipulation            | .92*             | .71*                                  | 1.00                       |                     |
| Defection                             | .83*             | .61*                                  | .64*                       | 1.00                |
| SCIRS<br>(total)                      | 1.00             | .90*                                  | .92*                       | .82*                |
| Resource<br>Manipulation/<br>Violence | .86*             | 1.00                                  | .72*                       | .63*                |
| Commitment<br>Manipulation            | .92*             | .69*                                  | 1.00                       | .63*                |
| Defection<br>Threat                   | .85*             | .59*                                  | .66*                       | 1.00                |

*Note.* Full sample (men and women) correlations based on Analysis Set 1,  $N = 861$ ; men's correlations based on Analysis Set 2,  $N = 403$ ; women's correlations based on Analysis Set 3,  $N = 458$ .

\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

### SCIRS and VAI Sexual Coercion Subscale

To compare the SCIRS with another sexual coercion measure, we created a sexual coercion subscale from the Violence Assessment Index (VAI; Dobash et al., 1995). We extracted three sexual coercion items from the VAI (i.e., “Forced partner to have sex or some kind of sexual activity,” “Demanded sex when partner didn’t want it,” and “Forced partner to do something against her will”) and summed responses to these items to produce a score. The VAI records how often such acts have occurred in the relationship, using a 6-point Likert scale identical to the SCIRS. Responses to these three acts produced a reliable index of sexual coercion,  $\alpha = .74$ . Correlations between the SCIRS and its components and the VAI sexual coercion subscale using Analysis Sets 1, 2, and 3 appear in Table 4.

Although all correlations between the two sexual coercion measures were positive and statistically significant, the correlations produced by men’s self-reports and women’s partner-reports differed in magnitude. We performed Fisher’s *r*-to-*z* transformations to compare statistically the correlations from men’s reports with the correlations from women’s reports. The results indicated that the correlations from women’s reports were significantly larger than the correlations from men’s reports (all *ps* < .001).

### Sexual Coercion and Nonsexual Relationship Violence

Abusive relationships are often marked by sexual coercion. Several studies have found, for example, that abusive husbands are more likely to sexually coerce their wives than are nonabusive husbands (Apt & Hurlbert, 1993; Campbell, 1989; DeMaris, 1997; Donnelly, 1993; Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Hogben & Waterman, 2000; Koziol-McLain, Coates, & Lowenstein, 2001; Shields & Hanneke, 1983). If the SCIRS is a valid measure of sexual coercion, then we expect positive correlations between the SCIRS and measures of nonsexual relationship violence.

Three measures used to assess the occurrence and consequences of nonsexual violence in intimate relationships are the Controlling Behavior Index (CBI), the Violence Assessment Index (VAI), and the Injury Assessment Index (IAI; Dobash, et al., 1995, 1996). The CBI measures the occurrence of nonphysical controlling and coercive behaviors in relationships. Example items are “Check her movements,” “Deliberately keep her short of money,” and “Restrict her social life.” The VAI measures specific methods of assault,

**TABLE 4. Correlations Between the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (and Three Components) and the Violence Assessment Index Sexual Coercion Subscale**

|                                | VAI Sexual Coercion Subscale <sup>a</sup> |      |       |
|--------------------------------|---|------|-------|
|                                | All Participants                          | Men  | Women |
| SCIRS (total)                  | .50*                                      | .33* | .67*  |
| Resource Manipulation/Violence | .42*                                      | .22* | .62*  |
| Commitment Manipulation        | .49*                                      | .39* | .60*  |
| Defection Threat               | .38*                                      | .25* | .54*  |

*Note.* “All Participants” correlations based on Analysis Set 1, *N* = 861; men’s correlations based on Analysis Set 2, *N* = 403; women’s correlations based on Analysis Set 3, *N* = 458.

<sup>a</sup>Composite of three sexually coercive items from the VAI (see text).

\**p* < .001 (two-tailed).

objects used in assaults, and parts of the body to which assaults are directed. Example items are “Slapped her on the face, body, arms, or legs,” “Pushed, grabbed, or shoved her,” and “Dragged her or pulled her by the hair.” The IAI measures the physical consequences of violence against partners. Example items are “Bruise on her body,” “Blackout or unconsciousness,” and “Split lip.” All three indexes record how often such violence, injuries, and controlling behaviors have occurred in the relationship. Research by Dobash and colleagues (1995, 1996, 1998, 2000) has demonstrated the reliability, validity, and utility of the CBI, VAI, and IAI.

A final scale used in this study to assess another aspect of nonsexual relationship violence is the Women’s Experience with Battering (WEB) Scale (Smith et al., 1995). The WEB Scale measures women’s psychological vulnerability and degradation in the context of abusive intimate relationships. Instead of quantifying the use of abusive tactics, the WEB Scale focuses on the perceptions held by battered women. The scale records how strongly the respondent agrees with 10 statements, ranging from 1 (Agree strongly) to 6 (Disagree strongly). Example items are “I feel like he keeps me prisoner, I feel owned and controlled by him” and “He has a look that goes straight through me and terrifies me.”

Correlations between the SCIRS and its components and the CBI, VAI, IAI, and WEB appear in Table 5. That the correlations between the SCIRS and its components and the measures of nonsexual relationship violence were uniformly positive, but did not share more than 20% of the variance with these measures provides preliminary evidence of convergent validity and discriminative validity of the SCIRS. Correlations between the SCIRS and measures that assess nonsexual relationship violence suggest that the SCIRS measures behaviors that are theoretically related to, but distinct from, nonsexual relationship violence. The SCIRS, therefore, is not simply an assessment of relationship violence.

We correlated separately by sex SCIRS scores with Dobash and colleagues’ (1995, 1996) measures of nonsexual relationship violence (see Table 6). Next, we performed Fisher’s *r*-to-*z* transformations to compare the correlations for men between the SCIRS and Dobash and colleagues’ measures of nonsexual relationship violence to the parallel correlations for women. The results indicated that the correlations for women were larger than the correlations for men (all *ps* < .001).

**TABLE 5. Correlations Between the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (and Three Components), the Controlling Behavior Index (CBI), the Violence Assessment Index (VAI), the Injury Assessment Index (IAI), and the Women’s Experience with Battering Scale (WEB)**

|     | SCIRS<br>(total) | Resource<br>Manipulation/<br>Violence | Commitment<br>Manipulation | Defection<br>Threat |
|-----|------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| CBI | .35*             | .30*                                  | .36*                       | .24*                |
| VAI | .32*             | .30*                                  | .31*                       | .24*                |
| IAI | .40*             | .44*                                  | .33*                       | .30*                |
| WEB | .43*             | .40*                                  | .44*                       | .34*                |

*Note.* CBI, VAI, and IAI correlations based on Analysis Set 1, *N* = 861; WEB correlations based on Analysis Set 4, *N* = 100.

\**p* < .001 (two-tailed).

**TABLE 6. Correlations Between the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (and Three Components), the Controlling Behavior Index (CBI), the Violence Assessment Index (VAI), and the Injury Assessment Index (IAI) According to Men's Reports and Women's Reports**

|     | SCIRS (total) |       | Resource Manipulation/<br>Violence |       | Commitment Manipulation |       | Defection Threat |       |
|-----|---------------|-------|------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
|     | Men           | Women | Men                                | Women | Men                     | Women | Men              | Women |
| CBI | .24*          | .43*  | .21*                               | .35*  | .27*                    | .43*  | .12              | .35*  |
| VAI | .10           | .46*  | .03                                | .43*  | .15                     | .40*  | .06              | .36*  |
| IAI | .11           | .57*  | .09                                | .59*  | .11                     | .45*  | .09              | .52*  |

*Note.* Men's data based on Analysis Set 2,  $N = 403$ ; women's data based on Analysis Set 3,  $N = 458$ .

\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

### Sexual Coercion and Relationship Satisfaction

Women who experience sexual coercion by their partners, even if this coercion is subtle, are expected to experience negative emotions as a result. Mandler's (1975, 1984) theory of emotions posits that negative emotions are experienced as a consequence of interference with a goal. Mandler theorized that emotions function to draw attention to important events, thus allowing an individual to respond appropriately. If men are sexually coercing their partners because women are not willingly granting sexual access to them, men are interfering with women's "goal" of sexual withholding and, therefore, women should experience negative emotions (see also Buss, 1989).

To assess whether and to what extent sexual coercion produces negative emotions in women who experience sexual coercion, we correlated the SCIRS with reports of women's relationship satisfaction. We assessed women's relationship satisfaction using Shackelford and Buss's (2000) measure of relationship satisfaction, which includes the items "How satisfied are you, overall, with your partner?" "How sexually satisfied are you with your partner?" and "How emotionally satisfied are you with your partner?" Responses were scored using a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (Not at all) to 9 (Extremely). We summed responses to these items to produce the composite variable, Relationship Satisfaction ( $\alpha = .76$ ). In addition, we measured the quality of the relationship using Spanier's (1976) Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). The DAS measures relationship quality by assessing dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus, and affectional expression. Correlations between the SCIRS and Relationship Satisfaction and DAS scores appear in Table 7. As predicted, correlations between sexual coercion and women's relationship satisfaction and quality were negative. Women who experience sexual coercion by their partners are less satisfied with their relationships and perceive the quality of their relationships to be poorer than women who are not the victims of a partner's sexual coercion.

### Sexual Coercion and Distress Following Sexual Rejection

A valid measure of sexual coercion might be expected to discriminate between men who are more interested in sex with their partners and men who are less interested in sex with their partners. Men who are less interested in sex with their partners should be less likely to

**TABLE 7. Correlations Between the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (and Three Components) and Women's Relationship Satisfaction**

|   | SCIRS<br>(total) | Resource<br>Manipulation/<br>Violence | Commitment<br>Manipulation | Defection<br>Threat |
|---|------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Relationship<br>satisfaction <sup>a</sup> | -.20**           | -.17**                                | -.24**                     | -.11                |
| DAS                                       | -.27*            | -.26*                                 | -.29*                      | -.16                |

*Note.* DAS = Dyadic Adjustment Scale; relationship satisfaction correlations based on Analysis Set 3,  $N = 458$ ; DAS correlations based on Analysis Set 4,  $N = 100$ .

<sup>a</sup>Composite variable; mean of women's overall satisfaction, emotional satisfaction, and sexual satisfaction.

\* $p < .01$ . \*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

sexually coerce their partners than men who are more interested in sex with their partners, assuming that sexual coercion is, in part, a means of satisfying sexual desires. One method of measuring men's interest in sex is to ask in one form or another, "How interested in sex are you?" This method, however, is subject to social desirability and ceiling effects. An alternative method of measuring men's interest in sex is to assess how distressed they would become if their partner denied their request for sexual intercourse (Shackelford et al., 2002).

To assess men's distress and following Shackelford et al. (2002), we asked them to imagine the next time that they suggest to their partners that they would like to have sex, and then to imagine that their partners declined their request for sex, either in words or with their body language. We asked the questions: "How angry would you feel if your partner declined your request for sexual intercourse?" "How frustrated would you feel if your partner declined your request for sexual intercourse?" and "How upset would you feel if your partner declined your request for sexual intercourse?" Responses were scored using a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (Not at all angry/frustrated/upset) to 9 (Extremely angry/frustrated/upset). We summed responses to these items to produce the composite variable, Distress ( $\alpha = .91$ ). As predicted, correlations between sexual coercion and men's distress following a hypothetical denial of a request for sex were positive (see Table 8). The more men report being angry, frustrated, and upset if their partners denied them sexual access, the more sexually coercive men are.

## DISCUSSION

The SCIRS appears to be a valid and reliable assessment of sexual coercion in an intimate relationship. Other measures of sexual coercion exist but are either not specific to intimate relationships or are limited by their design. Items in the SCIRS were chosen based on men's and women's experience with sexual coercion as well as previous research indicating that such acts are common tactics of sexual coercion. A principal components analysis produced three components: Resource Manipulation/Violence, Commitment Manipulation, and Defection Threat. The three components reflect issues of conflict that are generally found in intimate relationships (see Buss, 2004). The Resource Manipulation/Violence component includes sexually coercive acts in which men withhold or give gifts and benefits

**TABLE 8. Correlations Between the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (and Three Components) and Men's Hypothetical Distress Following Denial of a Request for Sexual Intercourse**

|                       | SCIRS<br>(total) | Resource<br>Manipulation/<br>Violence | Commitment<br>Manipulation | Defection<br>Threat |
|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Distress <sup>a</sup> | .22**            | .19**                                 | .27**                      | .10                 |
| Anger                 | .23**            | .20**                                 | .27**                      | .12*                |
| Frustration           | .20**            | .16**                                 | .25**                      | .08                 |
| Upset                 | .19**            | .16**                                 | .24**                      | .07                 |

Note. Correlations based on Analysis Set 2,  $N = 403$ .

<sup>a</sup>Composite variable; mean of men's anger, frustration, and upset following a partner's hypothetical denial of a request for sexual intercourse (see text).

\* $p < .01$ . \*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

and threaten or use violence and physical force. The Commitment Manipulation component includes sexually coercive acts in which men manipulate their partners by telling them that the couple's relationship status obligates sexual access. The Defection Threat component includes sexually coercive acts in which men threaten to pursue casual affairs or long-term relationships with other women.

The SCIRS appears to measure the theoretical construct of sexual coercion in committed intimate relationships. Scores on the SCIRS correlate positively with a different measure of sexual coercion (i.e., the VAI sexual coercion subscale). Scores on the SCIRS also correlate positively with nonsexual relationship violence, which concurs with previous work indicating that abusive relationships are often marked by sexual coercion. Scores on the SCIRS correlate negatively with women's relationship satisfaction and with the perceived quality of the relationship, demonstrating that women who experience more sexual coercion in their relationships are less satisfied with their relationships and perceive their relationships to be of poorer quality than women who experience less sexual coercion. Scores on the SCIRS correlate positively with men's reports of distress following a hypothetical denial of a request for sex, demonstrating that men who report being more angry, frustrated, and upset if their partners were to deny them sexual access are more likely to be sexually coercive. The SCIRS and its three components have sufficiently high reliability (ranging from  $\alpha = .87$  to  $.96$ ), whether analyzing the data from men's and women's combined reports, men's self-reports only, or women's partner-reports only, to indicate that the scale and its components are theoretically and empirically associated with sexual coercion in the context of intimate relationships. Moreover, intercorrelations among the full SCIRS and each of the three components are positive and moderate in size, suggesting that each component measures a unique facet of sexual coercion, but also indexes a common, underlying sexual coercion dimension.

The SCIRS is unique in that it includes assessments of tactics that vary in subtlety (e.g., withholding benefits and hinting about withholding benefits). The assessment of tactics that vary in subtlety may be important because sexual coercion in intimate relationships can be both conspicuous and discreet. The SCIRS also enables researchers to investigate the content of men's threats of sexual coercion. There exists research on the threat of force, but other types of threats (such as threatening to have sex with other people) have not been

investigated previously. Future research should further investigate the specific content of the threats men make and the specific content of the threats to which women respond.

The SCIRS assesses the frequency and severity of men's sexual coercion, and the format of the SCIRS reduces experimenter bias. It is a self-administered survey but can be adapted for use in an interview, and the standardized instructions make self-administration uncomplicated. One can readily adjust the window of consideration (past month, past 2 months, etc.) to assess the success of an intervention program, for example. In principle, the SCIRS is not specific to Western cultures or to heterosexual relationships and so can be used cross-culturally and in the context of homosexual relationships.

The current research suggests that the SCIRS secures reliable assessments of both men's self-reported sexually coercive behavior and women's reports of their intimate partner's sexually coercive behavior. Although the pattern of relationships between SCIRS scores and the target dependent variables is similar for men's self-reports and women's partner-reports, these relationships tended to be larger for women's partner-reports. Because the two data sources were independent (i.e., the men that provided self-reports were not partnered to the women that provided partner-reports), we cannot assess the possibility, for example, that these sex-differentiated relationships might be attributable to differences in the veridicality of men's and women's reports (see Dobash et al., 1998; Edleson & Brygger, 1986; O'Leary & Arias, 1988). A clear next step for future research is to secure partner-reports from women mated to men who provide self-reports for the SCIRS and the other dependent variables investigated in the current article.

In summary, we developed the SCIRS to address several methodological concerns of existing measures of sexual coercion so that researchers and clinicians may be better able to measure sexual coercion in committed intimate relationships. The results of the current research provide preliminary evidence that the SCIRS is a valid and reliable measure of sexual coercion in relationships that may provide a useful alternative to less comprehensive measures of this troubling and tragic behavior.

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