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The Relationship Between Childhood Maltreatment and Sexual Coercion Proclivity in Women

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Abstract

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MBA, Anderson University, 2003

BA, Franklin College, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Clinical Psychology

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Abstract

Researchers have explored the effects of sociocultural factors on male and female sexual expression, as well as the relationship between sexual objectification and overall sexual well-being; however, few scholars have focused on how, when combined with early experiences of childhood maltreatment, such factors can result in increased long-term risks for a variety of concerns that may impede the development of healthy relationships in women. This quantitative study explores the relationship of childhood maltreatment and sexual coercion proclivity in adult women. The purpose of this study was to measure self-reports of 1 or more experiences with childhood maltreatment (i.e., physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect) to determine if it is significantly correlated with sexual coercion (physical or verbal sexually aggressive behaviors as well as nonverbal or psychological sexually coercive behaviors) in adult women. The differences in the incidence of self-reported experiences of sexual aggression in 211 female participants recruited via an online survey over a 7-day period were explored to examine if there is a relationship between the development of sexually coercive behaviors as a result of their self-reported experiences of childhood maltreatment. Data were collected using the Qualtrics database and indicated a positive correlation between childhood maltreatment and sexual coercion. Positive social change implications resulting from this research are the inclusion of another professional perspective on childhood maltreatment and sexual coercion, providing information to improve existing public health education and training forums, preventing or reducing the potential negative effects of childhood maltreatment, and ultimately improving the delivery of competent mental health services to all clients.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all victims of childhood maltreatment. May they find the courage to expose the reality of child maltreatment in an effort to begin the healing process while advocating for a break in the cycle of abuse and neglect.

Acknowledgments

While there are so many people that have helped me through this process, it is difficult to acknowledge everyone here. I would like to acknowledge the following individuals who contributed in many ways to the development and support of my dissertation. Special thanks and recognition goes to my chairperson and mentor, Dr. Mitchell Hicks, who shaped both my academic and professional abilities and continued to motivate me throughout my graduate education with his knowledge and a great sense of humor. I would also like to acknowledge my committee member, Dr. Brian Zamboni for his technical expertise, patience and continued support throughout the difficult process that has comprised my candidacy.

For all aspects of my education, I am forever indebted to my parents, Calvin and Inge Barker, for promoting a foundation of achievement through perseverance, education and a desire for lifelong learning. I would also like to acknowledge and extend my utmost gratitude the biggest motivators in life – my children, Zachariah and Isabella. Without their ongoing patience and understanding with regard to several aspects of my ongoing education and professional military career as a single mother, this journey would have only been an unaccomplished dream.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Aggressive behavior (i.e., behavior intended to harm or injure another person) continues to be a primary societal concern (Escobar-Chaves & Anderson, 2008). As a result, it is important to research ways to reduce aggression and violence while increasing societal awareness and education of the long- and short-term effects of aggression on oneself, family, friends, and the public in general. Childhood trauma often involves aggression (McCauley et al., 1997), which can result in a variety of adverse mental health outcomes (Briere & Runtz, 1990; Chu & Dill, 1990), and may include victims of childhood maltreatment (i.e., physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect), which continues the cycle of aggression. Sexual abuse is one form of childhood maltreatment that is the primary cause of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in women, affecting an estimated 13 million women in the United States alone (Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes, & Nelson, 1995). As a result, it is important to promote research efforts towards the potential causes of PTSD - to include the various forms of childhood maltreatment. It is also important that research efforts emphasize the importance of public health training and education programs that are geared towards the prevention of the potential causes of PTSD as well as the development of new and useful treatment programs for both short-term and long-term mental health care for victims, perpetrators and their family members.

In this study, I focused on sexual aggression (psychological aggression as well as physical aggression tactics) to determine whether a history of childhood maltreatment is directly associated with sexual coercion proclivity (SCP) in adult women. I theorized that sexual coercion proclivity is most likely the result of early cognitive or attitudinal

priming often associated with maltreatment. For the purpose of this study of adult females, sexual coercion was defined as any physical or verbal sexually aggressive behaviors, including implied, emotional, or psychologically manipulative behaviors that are employed through the use of force or pressure against another nonconsenting person for the purpose of engaging in some form of sexual contact (Shepphard, 2010). In this study, I defined a nonconsenting person as any adult; a personal and/or intimate relationship between the aggressor and the nonconsenting person is not required.

While there are motivations and different tactics involved when considering male and female sexual coercion tactics independently, changing the traditional thought processes and research practices in the study of evolutionary biology as well as more traditional social science disciplines is essential in order to effect positive changes (Anderson & Aymami, 1993; Anderson & Savage, 2005; Anderson & Sorensen, 1999; Judson et al., 2013; Smallbone & Dadds, 2000). Therefore, changing from a more traditional research mindset requires a more balanced scientific approach that considers both male and female sexual coercion tactics in research than what has been the historical norm.

I considered childhood maltreatment in females for this study with the intent of focusing on the adaptive behaviors that many women develop as a result of early childhood experiences. Openly discussing both childhood maltreatment as well as female sexual coercion will promote improved education towards healthier intimate relations, sexual attitudes, and overall physical and emotional well-being. Such practices will also

allow others (to include parents, caregivers, teaching and medical or mental health professionals) to be more prepared to recognize and stop abusive situations.

Background

Victims of sexual coercion suffer from various short-term and long-term psychological effects (Hamel, 2007, 2009; Judson, Johnson, & Perez, 2013). The correlates and risk factors of sexually coercive behavior in females is not well known. Empirical research of sexual coercion perpetrated by adult females is commonly based on a small population or highly selective samples (Hamel, 2007, 2009). While victims commonly choose not to report experiences of sexual coercion, this lack of reporting is primarily related to the sociocultural context of what the public deems to be acceptable or unacceptable behavior, which may be due to the unbalanced power relationship between the victim and their perpetrator (Wagman et al., 2009). The focus of much of the existing research on sexual coercion has primarily been on male aggressors of either male or female victims, with only a limited amount of the existing research focusing on females – particularly institutionalized females–as the aggressor (Judson et al., 2013).

The subject of female aggressors is overlooked for the most part, as the public has historically be concerned with female victims, resulting in a lack of attention on accurately addressing male sexual victimization (Judson et al., 2013). Researchers tend to use terminology and definitions related to male-perpetrated sexual coercion and what it entails, while suggesting that males are not perceived as experiencing unwanted sexual contact (Judson et al., 2013). This may be primarily due to predominant societal beliefs concerning traditional beliefs systems regarding gender roles. For the most part, males

are viewed as the dominant sex who enjoy sexual relations with women. As a result, there is a disagreement on the psychological impact that sexual coercion has on men as portrayed in existing research and the public perceptions of the impact that it has on men (Judson et al., 2013). The predominant public opinion often perceives males as not experiencing distress, but deriving sexual pleasure from female-perpetrated sexual coercion (Smith, Pine, & Hawley, 1988). However, some scholars have indicated that male victims suffer from psychological concerns to include aggression, low self-esteem, depression and anxiety as a result of unwanted sexual coercion from females (Judson et al., 2013). Mohammadkhani, Forouzan, Khooshabi, Assari, and Lankarani (2009) indicated that physical violence is not only linked to sexual coercion, but victims of physical abuse are more likely to be sexually coerced. Victims of physical violence are more likely to practice sexually coercive behaviors (Borowsky, Hogan, & Ireland, 1997; Ryan, Miyoshi, Metzner, Krugman, & Fryer, 1996). Messman-Moore, Walsh, and DiLillo (2010) theorized that women who have previously experienced sexual coercion develop emotionally dysfunctional strategies, such as self-harm or risky sexual behaviors in their attempt to successfully cope with the abuse, resulting in further exposing themselves to risky situations involving sexual coercion – either as the victim or as the perpetrator (Griffin & Read, 2012; Messman-Moore et al., 2010). As a result, the subject of female-perpetrated sexual coercion has begun to garner increasing attention from the general public and the research community.

Problem Statement

Researchers have attempted to address the lack of knowledge about female-perpetrated sexual coercion, the dynamics and circumstances associated with women committing sexually coercive acts, and the similarities and differences between females and males who have experienced childhood maltreatment. While victims commonly choose not to report experiences of sexual coercion, this lack of reporting is primarily related to the sociocultural context of what the public deems to be acceptable or unacceptable behavior (Wagman et al., 2009). This cultural context includes the unbalanced power relationship between the victim and his or her perpetrator (Wagman et al., 2009). The focus of much of the existing research on sexual coercion was on male aggressors of either male or female victims, with only a limited amount of the existing research focusing on females, particularly institutionalized females, as the aggressor (Judson et al., 2013).

Researchers should focus on both genders equally when studying the potential long-term and short-term effects of childhood maltreatment - to include sexual coercion, for comparative purposes rather than favoring one gender over another. One reason that scholars may focus primarily on males is due to domestic violence, which has historically been linked with sexual coercion and has been primarily viewed as being perpetrated by males; although this does not diminish the proportion of violent acts committed by females (Straus, 2004). However, males inflict a greater percentage of severe injuries and deaths (Straus, 2004).

A perpetrator may commit a violent act for many reasons including situational context, motivations for assaults, meaning, and consequences of the assaults (Straus,

2004); however, Felson (2002) indicated that there is no evidence to show a difference in the context, meaning, and motives for assaults by either gender. Straus (2008) indicated that out of 13,601 university students in 32 nations, one-third of the female as well as male students physically assaulted a dating partner in the previous 12 months, and that a bidirectional (i.e., both partners were violent, followed by female-only violence) pattern of violence occurred most frequently. Violence perpetrated only by the male partner was the least frequent pattern noted when looking at both male and female participants (Straus, 2008). Partner violence may not be primarily perpetrated by males. When women are violent, it is usually for self-defense, which indicates that dominance is associated with an increased probability of violence for both genders (Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Straus, 2008). Such assumptions are essential elements in the majority of domestic violence prevention and treatment programs; therefore, such programs must recognize that most partner violence (PV) is bidirectional. Dominance by the female partner is as related to PV as well as dominance by the male partner (Straus, 2008). Males typically hit or threaten to hit with the intent of forcing a particular behavior using pain or injury, whereas women resort to violence or aggressive behaviors to express outrage or frustration in their partner's lack of interest or to coerce their partner into doing something (Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Greenblat, 1983). Overall, less injury is the only difference that has been well documented when comparing female violence versus male violence, and a few studies suggest (but fail to demonstrate), differences in context, meaning, or motives for the violence (Straus, 2004). However, it can be ascertained that each gender uses physical force for coercion.

Research on females being sexually aggressive or using sexual coercion is significantly lacking; therefore, it is important that sexual and behavioral research addresses this topic through continued research efforts. Researchers must investigate and improve potential gender biases in their studies, which, if not properly addressed, could otherwise result in significant errors or incorrect assumptions in research observations, reports, and survey designs (Ostrov, Cric, & Keating, 2005) of their studies because they would otherwise be based on commonly accepted gender norms, etc. that are often an inaccurate representation of each gender.

Nature of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative, associational research design was to determine if a relationship exists between the use of sexual coercion as a result of aggression and the experience of childhood maltreatment among adult females surveyed through the social media tool, Qualtrics. More specifically, I examined the dependent variable of female use of sexual coercion separated into three groups (0 times, 1-5 times, and 6+ times) and measured by the Modified - Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (SCIRS; Goetz & Shackelford, 2010). A further examination of the participant's body image was researched as measured by the Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) Victim Checklist. The independent variable was the responses to prior experiences of child maltreatment (Yes/No) measured by the 27-item Early Trauma Inventory Self Report-Short Form (ETISR-SF). The hypothesis was that there is a relationship between childhood maltreatment and sexual coercion proclivity. A detailed discussion of the research design will be covered in Chapter 3.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Thomas and Gorzalka (2013) explored a variety of predicting factors pertaining to female sexual coercion proclivity. While a multitude of factors are likely related to an individual's tendency to be sexually aggressive, the selection of predictors in this study was guided by theorizing that sexual aggression is linked to a female's prolonged exposure to physical, sexual, or emotional experiences during childhood in the form of childhood maltreatment.

Although there is a limited amount of research on female sexual coercion, a quantitative research design was considered to be an effective methodology to provide significant results about the study population. Chapter 3 includes a more detailed description of the research methodology and the form of analysis that was used to test for possible relationships. This study was guided by the following research questions:

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between an adult female's prior experiences of childhood maltreatment, as measured by the Early Trauma Inventory Self Report-Short Form (ETISR-SF) and the use of sexual coercion (0 times, 1 time, 2 times, 3-5 times, 6-10 times and 11+ times) as measured by the Modified - Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (SCIRS)?

$H_0$1: There is not a significant relationship between a female's prior experiences of childhood maltreatment and the use of sexual coercion during adulthood.

H_A1: There is a significant relationship between a female's prior experiences of childhood maltreatment and the use of sexual coercion during adulthood.

Research Question 2: Is there a relationship between the number of casual sexual partners and the use of sexual coercion (as measured by the Demographic Questionnaire and the Modified SCIRS)?

$H_0$2*:* The use of sexual coercion is not related to the number of casual sexual partners.

H_A2*:* The use of sexual coercion is positively related to the number of casual sexual partners.

Research Question 3: Does poor body image (as measured by the CSA Victim Checklist) moderate the relation between prior maltreatment (as measured by the ETISR-SF) and the use of sexual coercion (as measured by the Modified SCIRS)?

$H_0$3*:* Poor body image does not moderate the relation between past trauma and use of sexual coercion.

H_A3*:* Poor body image does moderate the relation between past trauma and use of sexual coercion.

Purpose of the Study

This study was conducted with the purpose of filling a void in the existing research on the relationship between previous experiences of childhood maltreatment and sexual coercion perpetrated by adult females to determine if the number of casual sexual partners plays a significant role on the use of sexual coercion tactics. A quantitative methodology was applied to address the concerns regarding female sexual coercion against other adults and to explore the experiences from the perspective of the female participants. I also gave special consideration to any prior experience of childhood

maltreatment the female participants may have endured. The goals of the present study were the following:

1. To address the reality and prevalence of the problem of sexual coercion as perpetrated by women.
2. To explore sexual coercion employed by adult females in an attempt to better understand the potential lasting effects and the dynamics associated with childhood maltreatment.
3. To explore the differences and similarities among female victims of childhood maltreatment as related to the expression of sexual coercive behaviors and to determine if there is a difference in the expression of sexual coercion given the number of casual sexual partners a woman has been with.
4. To develop a valid theory related to the process of women engaging in sexual coercion.

Researchers have not gained an accurate view of sexual aggression as perpetrated by females as related to previous experiences of child maltreatment. I attempted to address the lack of available information for this particular group by collecting and analyzing data from study participants who (a) reported previous experiences of child maltreatment, (b) previous experiences of being sexually coerced, or (c) a casual sexual partner history as an adult.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's (1973, 1978) social learning theory of aggression provided the theoretical guidance for the present study of female sexual aggression as related to prior experiences of childhood maltreatment. According to Anderson and Bushman (2002), social learning theory is useful for understanding how aggressive behaviors are acquired and in explaining instrumental aggression, particularly concepts regarding the development and change of expectations and how individuals construe their social world. According to social learning theory, child maltreatment is a learned behavior, and violence within the family unit is commonly seen as a predicting factor of later violence in the adult victim's family of procreation (Newberger, Newberger, & Hampton, 1983). These negative experiences are important to consider when studying interpersonal relationships, as they frequently play a part in how affected individuals define their environment and value themselves through communications with a caregiver about being separated from a significant other or from other things, which they may perceive as being threats to their overall sense of security (Bowlby, 1982). From an early age, any physical or mental aggression that the child is exposed to or experiences first-hand by family members is a likely model for the child to learn aggressive behavior. It also provides a model for determining the appropriateness of such behaviors (Bandura, 1973; Feshbach, 1980); without proper treatment, aggressive behavior may affect intimate sexual relations later in adulthood (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

Children learn behaviors by imitating the behavior of someone else; therefore, at a young age, learned aggressive behavior is likely to be the result of observing or experiencing aggression first-hand within the family as a participant without having a

conscious choice (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980), and then imitating those behaviors (Feshbach, 1980). Baer and Bandura (1963) and Bandura (1978) indicated that an individual's social behavior is acquired from an early age through imitation of his or her adult models. This form of learning is further facilitated by the child's exposure to the adult model's nurturance and power status (Baer & Bandura, 1963). A child's exposure to aggression (as portrayed in real-life or in media), increases the child's aggressive behavior in response to subsequent frustration while also influencing the form that his or her aggression takes (Baer & Bandura, 1963).

Smallbone and Dadds (2000, 2001) explored sexual behavior and found that insecure parent-child attachment relationships are positively linked to aggressive and antisocial behaviors in later adulthood, including the tendency to engage in sexually inappropriate or sexually coercive behaviors. Parental absence (more specifically maternal unavailability), family violence, and poor relationships with parents can result in being at an increased risk for intimacy and adult attachment style difficulties, which are significantly linked to coercive sexual behaviors (Smallbone & Dadds, 2000, 2001).

Early exposure to aggressive or violent behaviors is not only a traumatic experience, but it can negatively affect the child's ability to develop healthy, trusting relationships (Bandura, 1973). Because each generation learns to be violent by being an unconscious participant in a violent or aggressive family, this is the primary reason that the cycle of aggression commonly continues throughout each familial generation (Anderson & Bushman, 2002) when adequate and timely treatment intervention does not occur. It is also important to consider the role that an individual's beliefs play in his or

her preparedness to be aggressive (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Aggression-related beliefs, which children commonly learn from their familial relations and experiences, can significantly predict future levels of aggression (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). Efficacy-related beliefs are of particular importance, as individuals who believe that they can successfully carry out aggressive acts that will result in the desired outcomes are more likely to select aggressive behaviors than those who are not as confident that their aggressiveness will be effective (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Other behaviors, such as extreme anger or agitation, may also influence aggression by reducing inhibitions (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

Definitions

Attachment: An emotional bond developed early in childhood through the infant/ caregiver relationship that serves as survival protection (Bowlby, 1982).

Childhood maltreatment: The experience of physical, induced, short-term adaptive changes in the child's neurobiological system (McCrory, De Brito, & Viding, 2011).

Coping: The thoughts and behaviors used by individuals in their attempt to effectively manage stressful or threatening circumstances or events (Choma, Shove, Busseri, Sadava, & Hosker, 2009).

Entitlement: Involves an individual exhibiting an excessive or exaggerated sense of feeling free to do anything they want and believing that they deserve to have their needs and wishes satisfied regardless of another individual's feelings, needs, and rights (Levin, 1970; as cited by Volkan & Aykan, 2004).

Exploitation: Involves taking advantage of an individual during a time of vulnerability.

Human aggression: Any behavior directed toward and carried out against another individual with the immediate intent and belief that the behavior will cause harm to the other person (target); the target is motivated to avoid the behavior (Baron & Richardson 1994; Berkowitz 1993; Bushman & Anderson 2001; Geen, 2001). Accidental harm is not aggressive because it is unintentional (e.g., pain experienced during an elective dental procedure), and harm resulting from helpful actions is not aggressive because the person doing the harm believes that the target is not motivated to avoid it (e.g., pain solicited for sexual satisfaction). The pain can be actively solicited to fulfill a higher goal in this case (Baumeister 1989).

Sexual aggression: The use of tactics that are more physical in nature and use higher levels of force that are potentially harmful (Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, & Anderson, 2003).

Sexual coercion: The use of physical or verbal sexually aggressive behaviors as well as nonverbal sexually manipulative behaviors used with the intent of eliciting sexual contact or the act of sexual intercourse from another individual that is otherwise considered to be unwilling (Dodge Reyome, 2010; Matte & Lafontaine, 2011; Shepphard, 2010; Struckman-Johnson et al., 2003). For the purpose of this study, sexual coercion was considered to be psychological manipulation including emotional pressure, unwanted arousal, and verbal pressure used with the intent of achieving sexual activity with an unwilling partner (Kernsmith & Kernsmith, 2009; Struckman-Johnson et al., 2003).

Sexual manipulation: Less aggressive forms of sexual coercion to obtain sex are commonly classified as sexual coercion or sexual manipulation.

Assumptions

Researchers have historically focused on males or used male-based research findings to explain behaviors such as sexual aggression in women. However, recently, researchers have attempted to provide a more systematic approach to examine females as sexual aggressors, as it is difficult to generalize the existing research findings to all sex offenders regardless of their gender.

Scope and Delimitations

Scope

The purpose of this study was to examine the reasoning behind the use of sexual coercion in adult women. This understanding will be important for future research in order to provide culturally appropriate, gender-based education and preventive interventions related to health and overall well-being. However, I only examined if there is a relationship between the development of sexually coercive behaviors in adult women as a result of their experiences of childhood maltreatment. As a result, there are delimiting factors that may be considered with regard to the statistically significant gender gaps that exist between genders.

According to Bimber (2000), nearly half of the statistically significant differences noted between men and women on the Internet are fundamentally gender-related with regard to access and usage. The access gap is not the product of gender-specific factors, but is explained by socioeconomic and other differences between men and women. The

reasons that women are less intensive Internet users may involve stereotyping, inherently "gendered" technology embodying male values, content that favors men, sex differences in cognition or communication, as well as socioeconomics. There are also underlying differences in communication styles between genders, which may contribute to stereotypes about Internet usage, as well as Internet production and marketing; therefore, additional and ongoing online research is essential (Bimber, 2000).

While only adults identifying themselves as adult females (age 18+) were recruited for this research study, there was the possibility that some participants had incorrectly identified themselves as being female. Each survey asked the participants to confirm that their assigned gender at birth was female. Participants were also asked if they identify as being transgender or gender variant, as this will also consider transgender males who are not out or who have not transitioned yet. After all participant data were obtained, all transgender respondents were excluded from the study. Participants participated on a voluntary basis and did not receive compensation for their time and participation in the study.

Delimitations

The sample parameters were chosen to meet the requirements of the study. In order to be considered for the study, participants must have identified as being adults in order to answer questions regarding their use of sexual coercion and any questions related to their sexual history. I only used participants who identified themselves as adult females for the purpose of this study. By using Qualtrics as a recruiting tool, a convenience sample was obtained that, otherwise, I would likely not have access to otherwise. As a

result, data could be gathered from participants in various parts of the country and at different stages of their lives. While the measurements used in this study have been tested for reliability and validity, as with any self-report survey, there was the possibility that there were risks of errors, participant dishonesty, and omissions in the data collection. The measurements used in this study encompassed the areas I wanted to explore in a nonthreatening, user-friendly manner in an attempt to reduce the impact of the limitations that may result from the sexual nature of the self-report measures.

The study conclusions may not be applicable to minors given that this population was not studied. I did not address interventions in the event that I found the development of sexually coercive behaviors as a result of childhood maltreatment. A future exploratory or qualitative study can investigate this information in more detail. As the research study was a quantitative study, participants' comments and verbal perceptions specific to their experiences of childhood maltreatment or sexual coercion were not revealed.

Limitations

Childhood trauma is a public health problem, but there are limitations in measuring childhood abuse. The current study also had some limitations and challenges that must be addressed when using online survey data in terms of applying traditional survey research methods. The sample size was a potential limitation of this study due to the small number of participants that were considered for the study. Convenience sampling was used for this study, which may affect the external validity of the study. External validity includes the degree to which the study conclusions would hold for other

individuals in other places and at other times (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The environment could impact the participants and their responses. While the study participants were adult women Internet users, there was no guarantee that other adult women would have the same results.

Although current survey authoring software packages and online survey applications make online survey research and data collection much easier and faster in comparison to face-to-face interviews and written surveys, there are some disadvantages associated with conducting survey research online that must be considered in advance. I may have had difficulty obtaining participants because the participants for this study did not adhere to the traditional societal norms of female gender roles and what is commonly considered to be appropriate sexual behavior for adult women. Prospective participants may fear that the revelation of sexual behaviors that some may consider to be considered inappropriate will result in harm to them or their families or even public humiliation. Moreover, sexual concerns, particularly those involving women being seen in a negative light, are commonly seen as a private matter that is outside of the public research realm (Browne, 2005).

According to Duggan and Smith (2013), 73% of adults online currently use at least one social networking site of some kind. Conducting research via the Internet allowed me to reach a greater number of diverse participants. Studies concerning subjects of a sensitive and/ or intimate nature have previously used various social networks to access individuals who are otherwise considered to be hard to reach and/ or sensitive

populations (Bergeron & Senn, 1998; Eland-Goossensen, Van de Goor, Vollemans, Hendricks, & Garetsen, 1997; Valentine, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c).

Some of the disadvantages of employing online survey research include the uncertainty about the validity of the data and sampling concerns, as not all populations are candidates for Internet survey research (Watt, 1997). There is also a potential concern with some of the general population being reluctant to use computers, as well as potential distrust or fear of answering questions via an Internet survey which asks questions that are of a personal nature (Watt, 1997); incomplete data collection; as well as potential concerns involving the study design, implementation, and evaluation of the online survey (Wright, 2006).

Because the data were derived from online surveys and not in-person, I could not ensure that all survey questions were adequately understood, that only female participants (and not male subjects) answered the survey questions, or that the subjects answered each survey question completely. With regard to incomplete data collection, some of the survey questions may remain unanswered for various reasons (i.e., the subject's avoidance of the question, a lack of understanding of the respective question(s), or difficulty in comprehending written language). The subject's environmental setting and nearby individuals could also dictate the depth of the subject's responses due to their level of comfort at that particular time.

For the current study, a quantitative, nonexperimental design was used in order to determine the level of relationship between sexual coercion proclivity in females (with a prior history of childhood maltreatment) in the United States. Although correlational

scholars can suggest a relationship between two or more studied variables, there are also limitations that must be considered when following this research method. Correlational researchers cannot prove that one variable causes a change in another variable (i.e., a relationship does not equal causation). For example, while I might suggest that there is a relationship between childhood maltreatment and sexual coercion proclivity, I will not indicate if childhood maltreatment increases or decreases sexual coercion proclivity because there are other variables that I may not be aware of that may play a role including social relationships, cognitive abilities, personality, socioeconomic status, as well as a wide array of other factors. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to make a simple cause and effect statement concerning childhood maltreatment and sexual coercion proclivity.

Significance of the Study

The experience of child maltreatment often results in emotional disturbances, revictimization, and difficulties in developing healthy intimate relationships. As a result, the lasting negative effects of childhood maltreatment have a direct social impact on U.S. society and the perpetuation of relational and sexual dysfunction in its victims by increasing their risk for alcohol and drug abuse, self-destructive behaviors, suicidal ideations and behaviors, as well as severe psychological disorders. With regard to the exploration of female sexual coercion of males, the negative emotional and psychological consequences of sexual coercion against another individual can be just as damaging as it is for female victims of male sexual aggression (Dodge Reyome, 2010; Gannon et al., 2012). This study was conducted with the intent of adding to the existing research on

female sexual coercion and to provide useful information both to the ongoing research of child maltreatment and for developing community education programs designed to focus on healthy intimate relations. A clearer understanding of the potential risks associated with childhood maltreatment and female sexual coercion can impart significant social changes through reducing the rate of recidivism and also lowering the emotional and behavioral dysfunction experienced by this population. As a result of this improved understanding, treatment and educational programs will be able to promote prevention as well as the development of building trust, communication skills, frustration tolerance, and socially appropriate assertiveness (Hamberger & Potente, 1994).

Social Change and Implications

A positive social change implication resulting from this research is the inclusion of another professional perspective to the existing body of knowledge about childhood maltreatment and sexual coercion. Additional social change implications include providing information that may improve existing public health education and training forums in order to identify potential warning signs in families that may contribute to childhood maltreatment. This study may also aasint in preventing childhood maltreatment, result in a reduction of the potential negative effects of childhood maltreatment, and ultimately improve the delivery of competent mental health services to all clients, regardless of gender, as therapists working with female sexual offenders are likely to currently feel ill equipped in providing services to their female clients since there is currently a distinct theoretical gap that exists. It is essential that future scholars examine the frequency and correlates of early adverse experiences in order to develop the

understanding of female sex offenders, as there is a limited amount of information that can be used to guide assessment and trauma-informed interventions that respond to the clinical needs of female sex offenders using female-specific data and research (Gannon et al., 2012; Harris, 2010; Levenson et al., 2014).

In an attempt to further understand the possible effects of childhood maltreatment as related to the use of sexual coercion in women, more attempts will be made to consider the potential effects of childhood maltreatment and the use of sexually coercive behaviors in females. This will assist in changing the existing thought process and much of the false assumptions associated with female sexual coercion through the initiation of open and balanced discussions, while advocating for preventive education programs that promote healthy sexual relations, sexual attitudes, and overall physical and emotional health and well-being in a balanced manner. Preventive education practices will allow mental health practitioners to be more prepared to recognize and stop sexually abusive situations or behaviors before they occur. In a therapeutic setting, this will improve the client's overall experience, and it will also improve treatment outcomes for such female populations.

Summary

Despite the limited existing research on female sexual coercion, continued research in this area is essential to promoting healthy intimate relationships and to determine the underlying causes for sexually coercive behaviors in females, which play a role in the development of unhealthy perpetration known as sexual abuse. Such research can also be used to convey the potential psychological impact that childhood maltreatment imparts on its victims, but also to address the dynamics contributing to the

perpetration of sexual coercion. Researchers must attempt to understand all types of sexual coercion in both males and females, the reasons for developing sexually coercive behaviors, and to determine why these behaviors result in harmful offenses. A thorough literature review of existing research of sexual coercion employed by adult females with an emphasis on the relationship between the variables of self-reported body shame and the experience of childhood maltreatment i provided in Chapter 2, and a detailed description of the current study methodology follows in Chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 provide a detailed summary and interpretation of the current study findings, as well as future research recommendations and considerations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this literature review, I focused on sexual coercion employed by adult females with an emphasis on the of childhood maltreatment (i.e., physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect). The focus on childhood maltreatment is important as researchers have not adequately explored it in an unbiased manner. In addition, there may be a relationship between early interpersonal experiences involving childhood maltreatment and subsequent interpersonal difficulties (Cutajar et al., 2010; Dodge Reyome, 2010), particularly sexual coercion, that females may develop as a result. It is estimated that less than 3% of all sex offenses are committed by females (Cortoni et al., 2010); however, various self-report studies primarily focusing on the sexual aggression have shown a higher proportion of female abusers who were never charged with and/ or who never encountered a legal agency as a result of their sexual aggression when compared to their male counterparts (Slotboom et al., 2011). According to Asberg and Renk (2014), rather than researching female distress relative to their life experiences, scholars should also focus on variables that predict their psychological adjustment.

The available literature on sexual coercion was varied according to the gender of the manipulator. While the majority of available literature focused on male sexual aggression, there were a limited number of studies dealing with various forms of female sexual coercion. As a result, multiple searches of available peer-reviewed journals were completed using the Academic Search Complete, ERIC, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, and SocioIndex databases in an attempt to generate articles that provided a review of the

available literature. Article searches generated 4,556 results when using the following keywords: *sexual coercion*, *sexual coercion in females*, *sexual aggression*, *sexual aggression in females*, *sexual manipulation in females*, and *sexual manipulation in women*. In order to reduce the number of articles retrieved, the dates were restricted to the years 1993 through 2015, and the keyword search was restricted to sexual coercion in females, sexual aggression in females, and sexual manipulation. This significantly reduced the number of literature results to over 212 peer-reviewed articles with 19 of the most relevant being used in the literature review.

Articles on severe examples of sexual abuse (e.g., those that focused on female perpetrators as pedophilia and/ or rape) were not deemed relevant to the current study and were omitted as possible sources for this literature review. The primary rationale for not including any information on pedophilia or rape was because the intent of this study was to focus on sexual coercion in the average adult female population, as the majority of existing research appears to focus on female perpetrators of pedophilia and/ or rape of another individual. Therefore, the existing research was limited in scope, as it portrays sexually coercive women as primarily being limited to those who are incarcerated for acts of pedophilia or rape. The literature review predominantly encompassed the timeframe between 2003 and 2011, as there has only been a shift in the scientific community to consider that women are just as likely as men to engage in physical or psychologically aggressive or coercive sexual behaviors towards another individual (male or female).

Sociocultural Influence and Body Image

There is a lack of research on female sexual coercion as being potentially correlated to female body shame and/or early experiences of childhood maltreatment. A significant amount of research exists on the effects of sociocultural factors on male and female sexual expression, as well as the relationship between the sexual objectification of females and overall sexual well-being. However, few scholars focused on how, when combined with early experiences of psychological or physical experiences of childhood maltreatment, these factors can result in increased long-term risks for a variety of psychological concerns including disorders commonly associated with traumatic experiences as well as psychosis (Asberg & Renk, 2014; Cutajar et al., 2010; Ippen et al., 2011) that may impede sexual relations in women (Adekeye, Sheikh, & Adekeye, 2012), including this study's focus of female sexual coercion. For example, having an external locus of control (LOC) whereby the individual exhibits passive or maladaptive coping mechanisms may be an important aspect to consider. Levenson et al. (2014) examined the prevalence of experiences of childhood trauma in a sample of U.S. female sexual offenders ($N = 47$) using the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) scale and indicated that in comparison to females in the general population, sex offenders were more than three times as likely to have experienced child sexual abuse, four times as likely to have experienced verbal abuse, and more than three times as likely to have experienced emotional neglect and having an incarcerated family member. Many female sex offenders were raised within disordered households, as indicated by the co-occurrence of multiple maltreatments commonly occurring in households with other types of dysfunction (Levenson et al., 2014). As such, these findings help to support the argument that

children who are raised in loving, nurturing households with exposure to positive social influences, parental or caregiver models that promote healthy self-regulation, intimacy, and sexual regulation are more readily able to develop appropriate tools and coping mechanisms for developing and maintaining healthy relationships during their childhood and through adulthood.

A majority of female inmates use passive (e.g., avoidant) or maladaptive forms of coping (Asberg & Renk, 2014; Weaver et al., 2000). Such passive strategies of attempting to cope with stressful situations have been related to poorer adjustment outcomes and the individuals' perceptions of control (Asberg & Renk, 2014). For example, when individuals believe that they are not in control and that luck or uncontrollable forces have been responsible for their fate, they use more passive forms of coping relative to the various approaches taken by those who believe that they are in control (Asberg & Renk, 2014). This form of coping may also be linked to an individuals' tendency to not take responsibility for their actions (Hunter, 1994) and to engage in maladaptive behaviors that are self-fulfilling in that they are not perceived as being related to their actions and the ensuing consequences (Page & Scalora, 2004).

Few researchers have examined the characteristics and correlates of females who display sexually aggressive behaviors, whereas the majority of historical research on sexual aggression focuses on males as being the more likely aggressor (Gannon et al., 2012; Harris, 2010; Spidel et al., 2013). One reason for this focus is because cultural norms stress the belief that males present a strong façade while minimizing female-perpetrated abuse (Mooney, 2000; Sorenson & Taylor, 2005). As a result, males are less

likely to verbalize their fear (Dutton et al., 2005). Such research has historically been referred to as the "rape proclivity" (Thomas & Gorzalka, 2013). Not only is female sexual abuse often underreported, unrecognized, or considered ethically more acceptable than male abuse (Tsopelas et al., 2011), but the majority of existing empirical research is misleading. Scientific measures may be able to adequately identify the characteristics that increase an individual's likelihood of engaging in sexually coercive behaviors – not the ability to identify rapists (Thomas & Gorzalka, 2013). Lussier and Gress (2014) identified various risk factors that associated with sexual offending that include negative social influences, deficits related to self-regulation and intimacy, sexual dysregulation, cognitive distortions, and a lack of cooperation with authority figures. The child's early upbringing provides a blueprint which enables them to ascertain the differences between what is considered to be acceptable or unacceptable behavior and thinking in their given environment. If they are raised in a negative environment, they are more likely to learn unhealthy behaviors and ways of thinking in the event an early intervention and treatment program is not put into place. Again, these findings are important, as they help support the finding that individuals are more readily able to develop healthy relationships and thinking when they are exposed to stable, loving, nurturing role models early in life.

Because researchers have focused on males, gender biases and stereotypes may exist in the evaluation of relational aggression and prosocial behavior (Ostrov et al., 2005). In the scientific community, some assume that males exhibit a greater propensity for sexual aggression, whereas females have historically been viewed as being much less likely to be the sexual aggressor (Gannon et al., 2012). Unlike research that suggests that

a strong male persona results in emotionally and physically abusive personalities in males, Dutton (2002) indicated that the fear of attachment, borderline traits, and chronic trauma symptoms are the predominant factors that produce emotionally and physically abusive personalities in males. Female motives and contexts for using aggression mirror the incidence and prevalence of abuse by male perpetrators against females (Dutton et al., 2005; Spidel et al., 2013). As indicated in male participants, factors that must be considered in the diagnosis, management, and treatment considerations for sexual aggression exhibited in females include personality disorders; anger responses; type of violence perpetrated; and posttraumatic stress reactions in females, which have been shown to result in intimate violence (Spidel et al., 2013).

Historically, in male-dominated societies, females have been objectified, and they have been more likely to have a negative perception of their bodies (i.e. referred to as *low body image*) and have been more susceptible to cultural constraints (Carvalho & Nobre, 2010; Choma, Shove, Busseri, Sadava, & Hosker, 2009) or accepted gender norms placed on women. Sociocultural factors have traditionally modulated the ways in which individuals sexually express themselves differently (Carvalho & Nobre, 2010). Females have often felt more body shame in comparison to males when placed in sexually intimate situations, and this could negatively affect their sexual experiences. In such cases, intimate experiences have been shown to further impede the female's continued sexual interest, sexual behavior, and response cycle resulting in additional body shame (Adekeye et al., 2012; Choma et al., 2009). Females must compete against accepted gender norms and various sociocultural factors placed on them, which often place them in

the role of being an object for another individual's gratification. In the event that females do not feel that they meet or even exceed the accepted standard, they will likely develop a low self-esteem which negatively defines how they see themselves or view their physical being and these feelings commonly negatively affect their personal lives and intimate relationships.

Researchers have also examined the negative effects that the media may have on an individual's propensity for aggression, sexual attitudes, and behaviors. According to Northup (2013), there is a positive correlation between violence in the media and an increase in positive attitudes toward acting aggressively, as well as an overall higher level of individual aggression, sexual activity or behaviors, and poor body image. Researchers have focused on three areas in an attempt to determine the effects that the media has on (a) sexual arousal, as research consistently showed that sexually suggestive or explicit media often aroused the individual; (b) desensitized individuals' values and attitudes over time towards being more accepting of sexual behaviors that were once seen as immoral; and (c) disinhibited sexual behaviors or sexual activities over time, such that previously unpermitted sexual behaviors (including sexual intercourse itself) became commonplace (Northup, 2013). In other words, media that promotes sexually suggestive or explicit material has resulted in a change of societal attitudes over time which have made many previously defined unhealthy sexual behaviors and cognitions now seen as every day, normal experiences.

Individuals commonly compare themselves to the ideal body image that is portrayed in the media (Northup, 2013). The body ideals that are most often presented are

almost impossible for the average person to achieve, which commonly result in a poor body image–particularly in females. Body related images are automatically processed and can unconsciously result in negative psychological outcomes - particularly amongst women who are commonly presented as desirable, sexualized, thin or beautiful – in comparison to their male counterparts who are generally portrayed as being muscular (Northup, 2013). Females with a low self-esteem may develop negative psychological concerns related to their poor body image.

Gender Focus

In comparison to females, males are more likely to display sexual aggression against females; however, these data are likely skewed as there has been an increased interest towards a systematic examination of females as sexual aggressors - particularly with regard to the prevalence of sexual aggression (Slotboom et al., 2011). Historically in many disciplines of psychology, it has been common practice to apply male-based knowledge to explain behaviors such as sexual aggression in women (Blanchette & Brown, 2006). One reason provided for this practice has been the assumption that the factors that lead to the specific behavior are universal, regardless of gender (Blanchette & Brown, 2006).

Certain factors affect males and females differently with regard to sexual arousal and sexual performance anxiety. Such factors may include the individual's concerns about his or her reputation, an unwanted pregnancy, hormonal changes, or even differences between females of different age groups that may affect each person differently. Nonetheless, continued sex research in females has provided a greater

understanding as to how the female body and the mind work in conjunction - both to the detriment or to aid in a healthy attitude about their bodies, their sexual attitudes, and lifestyles. Although several scholars have evaluated the effects of human emotions with a particular focus on fear and anxiety (Lewis, 2011), additional research is needed in the development of self-conscious emotions and traumatic memories that may alter the functioning of the human brain -in this case, as related to female sexual aggression (McCrory, De Brito, & Viding, 2011; Mercurio & Landry, 2008). In this study, I addressed this gap by examining the relationship between experiences of childhood maltreatment and sexually coercive behaviors in adult females.

Traditional Gender Role Expectations

Traditional gender role expectations as well as individual views about sexual intimacy and relations, communication, and the manner in which they identify with sex role expectations may play a role in how each gender exhibits sexual aggression and what they deem to be acceptable behavior.. Anderson and Sorensen (1999) suggested that many women may exhibit sexual aggression as a result of being confused by traditional gender role expectations and perceptions versus newer gender role expectations and perceptions. Anderson and Sorensen (1999) compared male and female reports of women's heterosexual initiation and aggression. Of the 24-questionnaire items asked, there were significant reporting differences in comparing male subject responses to those of the female respondents on 12 of the 17 questionnaire items that assessed sexual initiation or aggression (Anderson & Sorensen, 1999). Male subjects also reported that females initiated sexual contact more often than the female subjects self-reported for

every questionnaire item, except items related to mutually consenting contact between both parties (Anderson & Sorensen, 1999. In addition, males also reported receiving female sexual initiation and sexual aggression more often than female subjects reported giving. Anderson and Sorensen supported a difference in the perception of female sexual initiation based on the gender of the respondent. In both samples, male subjects viewed women's sexual initiation as being more aggressive and less conforming to traditional social norms for women than women did. While Anderson and Sorensen hypothesized that role expectations and social desirability may influence male and female perceptions of female sexual aggression in a way that contributes to significant differences in reporting, it is important to consider that how an individual learns about sexual intimacy and relations, how to communicate, or any difficulty in identifying with sex role expectations may also play a role in reporting differences, as each gender may have been exposed to different, accepted traditional gender norms that influenced how their parents or caregivers raised them to communicate about sex, taught them about sexual intimacy and/ or sex role expectations.

Struckman-Johnson and colleagues (2003) concluded that, in using sexual aggression for heterosexual sex, psychological coercion was the means that females used most often; whereas, O'Sullivan and Byers (1993,1996) stated that male respondents reported females using more influence strategies to coerce males into having sex in male-reluctant situations than employed by men in female-reluctant situations. In the event a woman who identifies with the traditional female role aligns her thoughts about sex with traditional gender roles, she may perceive the person who identifies with the traditional

male role as always being ready for sex (Anderson & Ayami, 1993; Anderson & Sorensen, 1999). Therefore, whether exploring sexual aggression in heterosexual relationships involving male/female partners or in homosexual relationships involving female/female partners, the sexually aggressive female may not perceive herself as attempting to obtain unwanted sex with an unwilling partner (Anderson & Sorensen, 1999). Moreover, Matte and Lafontaine (2011) indicated that there is a prevalence of psychological aggression in lesbian couples. Matte and Lafontaine also highlighted the strength of the relationship between psychological aggression and intimate physical partner violence. Females who readily accept the more commonplace traditional female gender role which suggests that they are generally the physically weaker sex and that they do not generally solicit sexual or physical relations as such – in part because they may assume that females are commonly perceived solely as being the conquest of another individual's physical or sexual desire and gratification. As a result, females who tend to be more sexually aggressive in a mentally and/ or physically coercive manner may fail to recognize that their behaviors can also be unwanted, inappropriate, or offensive in a manner that violates an unwilling individual as a result of their attempt to coerce the other party to have unwanted sex.

While sociocultural factors and gender role expectations shape how both men and women feel about and approach sex, with regard to sexual aggression, women share a common response bias with men that is self-enhancing and results in self-reported victimization rates being higher than self-reported perpetration rates (Anderson & Ayami, 1993). Women engage in a full range of strategies that have traditionally been attributed

to males for various reasons including sexual desire, desire to gain something, or as a way to have power over someone (Anderson & Ayami, 1993). As a result, in comparison to their male counterparts, females can also demonstrate distorted thinking which favors their immediate sexual gratification through sexually coercive behaviors, thereby, disregarding the unwillingness of their partner. This in turn results in a disproportionately higher number of self-reported victimization rates being reported in comparison to a lower number of self-reported perpetration rates.

Entitlement

When an individual feels that he or she is free to do anything that he or she wants and deserves to have his or her needs and wishes satisfied without considering another individual's feelings, needs, and/or rights, the individual is expressing an exaggerated or excessive sense of entitlement (Levin, 1970, as cited by Volkan & Aykan, 2004). Solomon and Leven (as cited by Tolmacz, & Mikulincer, 2011) suggested that a sense of entitlement may develop as a result of how an individual identifies with his or her parents, who may have had an inflated sense of entitlement themselves. However, such an unhealthy sense of entitlement may be more of a defense mechanism that individuals develop over time in an effort to protect themselves against psychological pain and frustration they have experienced (Bishop & Lane, 2000; Moses & Moses, 1990; Shabad, 2009) due to feeling of being helpless or powerless (Mayer, 1991). Those individuals who exhibit a sense of exaggerated entitlement may have previously experienced episodes of deprivation or abuse and that during their childhood their parents seemed to be insensitive to their emotional needs when they were a child (Bishop & Lane, 2000;

Mayer, 1991). Although traumatic events may result in feelings of guilt and shame and a later sense of nonentitlement, a strong sense of entitlement can result from feelings of an individual feeling that they were wronged (Bishop & Lane, 2000; Moses & Moses, 1990).

Sexual Coercion

Although the definitions of sexual coercion have evolved over the years, sexual coercion is inclusive of the act of pressuring or forcing kissing, sexual petting, oral sex, caressing, genital touching and any form of sexually-intended act or behavior onto another person (Judson et al., 2013; Shepphard, 2010). This includes the use of pressure to have sexual contact – to include physical, verbal, or nonverbal, implied, emotional or psychological pressure, which can be very intimidating to the victim. Physical pressure includes slapping, hitting, kicking, or holding down another individual; and may continue with any form of sexual act or behavior; whereas verbal pressure involves yelling, name-calling, the use of deceit, annoying the individual until they concede to the physical pressure, and threatening to use physical force against the intended victim (Shepphard, 2010; Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, & Anderson, 2003). The use of implied, emotional, or psychological pressure includes: 1) the threat of ending a relationship for various reasons as a manipulation tactic, 2) convincing the other person that he/she cares much more for them than he/she actually does to ensure they remain in the relationship or will agree to do as the aggressor desires in order to please them; 3) repeatedly using the same tactic to make the victim feel obligated to participate in sexual acts against their will or desire; 4) the use of guilt or peer pressure to make the victim participate; and 5)

the use of the aggressor's position or implying a position of authority over the victim to pressure and/or force emotional submission, according to Shepphard (2010).

While the literature review on sexual coercion included terminology and definitions that encompass a broad range of activities from psychological coercion, forcing an inappropriate touch to the physically violent act of rape; the literature readily used the following four interchangeable terms to broadly define sexual coercion: sexual aggression, sexual manipulation, sexual offense, and sexual perpetration. For the purpose of this study, the term sexual coercion was used as an umbrella term to indicate any physical or verbal sexually aggressive behaviors as well as nonverbal or psychological sexually manipulative behaviors where the use of direct violence by the coercer was not required.

According to the research of McCormick, Brannigan, and LaPlante (1984), with regard to sexual encounters, males are most often seen as the initiator whereas woman are commonly seen as the resistor. More current literature however, disputed this as a rule in sexually coercive situations, as it was revealed that women, like men, utilize various sexual coercion tactics, including physical force, verbal and nonverbal pressure, and manipulation. For example, the research indicated that females often employ more acceptable or more subtle psychological tactics such as nonverbal coercion or emotional pressure, and this could prevent them from fully realizing or accepting the possibility that they manipulated or coerced an unwilling partner (Anderson & Sorensen, 1999). Much of the existing research for both genders focused on sexual coercion tactics taking the form

of less severe predatory dating behaviors that are used significantly more often than physical tactics (Lyndon, White, & Kadlec, 2007).

The literature review showed that the use of tactics that are more physical and use higher levels of force that are potentially harmful are generally classified as sexual aggression; whereas less aggressive forms of sexual coercion to obtain sex are commonly classified as sexual coercion or sexual manipulation. For the purpose of this study, sexual coercion in the form of psychological manipulation includes emotional pressure, unwanted arousal, and verbal pressure used with the intent of achieving sexual activity from an unwilling partner (Kernsmith & Kernsmith, 2009; Struckman-Johnson et al., 2003). Forms of nonverbal sexual coercion included unwanted behaviors can be in the form of massage, seductive undressing, sensual touch, and wearing provocative clothing (Anderson & Savage, 2005; Struckman-Johnson et al., 2003); whereas the more intrusive forms of verbal sexual coercion included: questioning an intimate partner's sexuality, threatening to end a relationship, the use of blackmail and bribery, or lies (Kernsmith & Kernsmith, 2009b; Struckman-Johnson et al., 2003).

The use of male-derived theory to guide work with women has historically resulted in female-specific experiences being overlooked; therefore, hindering the professionals' ability to effectively identify key factors that assist in explaining and distinguishing sexual offending in women from their male counterparts (Gannon, 2014). Primary characteristics of female sexual offenders highlighted in the literature were previous traumatic victimization during childhood and/ or adulthood (Grayston & De Luca, 1999; Johansson-Love & Fremouw, 2006), mental health concerns (Grayston & De

Luca, 1999; Nathan & Ward, 2001 & 2002), and dependency (Gannon et al., 2010). Gannon, et al., (2014) re-examined a theory that was originally constructed to describe the original three pathways (or offending styles) as identified within a sample ($N = 22$) of convicted female sexual offenders from the United Kingdom and described within the Descriptive Model of Female Sexual Offending (DMFSO; Gannon, et al., 2008) in order to determine if the findings were applicable to a small sample ($N = 36$) of North American women convicted of sexual offending (Gannon, et al., 2014). Using the DMFSO, the study suggested that the offense narratives of the sample of North American women convicted of sexual offending were reasonably categorized into one of the three original offense pathways originally described in the DMFSO: Explicit-Approach, Directed-Avoidant, and Implicit-Disorganized (Gannon, et al., 2014). While the DMFSO model highlighted significant similarities and differences between male and female sexual offenders' vulnerability factors and offense styles, the model has proven to be effective in incorporating male co-offender and group co-offender influences and describing how these interact with vulnerability factors to generate female sexual offending (Gannon, et. Al. 2008; 2012; 2014).

While statistics point towards males as being more physically and verbally aggressive than women across data sources and cultures (Archer, 2009; Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Knight, Guthrie, Page & Fabes, 2002), a review of the literature also shows that when female study participants are provoked; or when the experimental paradigm includes a provocation, emotional arousal, or when interacting with a female target, no significant gender differences were noted (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Knight et al.,

2002). The literature on the use of severe examples of sexual coercion (e.g. those which focused on pedophilia and rape) were not deemed relevant to the current study and were excluded as forms of sexual coercion for the purpose of this study. Because minors are not included in the current study, the research findings may not be applicable to them.

Summary

In summary, the literature review suggested that there is an important gap in the study of sexual coercion in its relational dimension. More specifically, the literature review suggested that various factors likely play an important role in predicting, and consequently preventing further sexual coercion. Due to the lack of research that exists with regard to female sexual aggression, this quantitative research study will examine whether or not a high level of female body shame resulting from childhood maltreatment as studied in women can be used as a possible predictors to indicate a female's likelihood of exhibiting sexual coercion for reasons which may include sexual empowerment, generalized power motivation, stress relief, and imposition motivation while addressing the limitations of previous studies. The literature review revealed that in comparison to women who have never been abused, the majority of women who have a history of abuse report significantly poorer adult adjustment (Futa et al., 2003). As such, this research may provide a unique contribution towards predicting the level of sexual coercion used by previously abused women. Consequently, the opinions of women concerning what they believed contributed to their use of sexual coercion has also not been effectively researched with the attempt to determine if self-reports of body shame may have resulted from experiences of childhood maltreatment, and to fully explore if these factors may

have significantly correlated. This scholarly dilemma motivated this author to research this literature void further by attempting to determine if a significant link exists. Chapter 3 includes a description of the research methodology and procedures that were used in the study to include information regarding the sample and population data, data collection procedures, measurement instrumentation, as well as an analysis of the data obtained.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Research Design and Rationale

The purpose of this study was to address the lack of knowledge about sexual coercion exhibited by adult females against other adults and the possible relationship between their prior experience of childhood maltreatment related to the development of sexually coercive behaviors given their intimate status as adults, the nature in which sexual coercion occurs, and better understanding the similarities and differences between female sexual coercion tactics employed in relationships. I examined relationships between measures of sexual aggression in females (with or without a prior history of childhood maltreatment) and the use of sexual coercion.

The intent of the current study was to evaluate if (a) there is a relationship between the use of sexual coercion in women with a prior history of childhood maltreatment and (b) to determine if there is a significant difference in the use of sexual coercion in women who have experienced sexual coercion in their adult sexual experiences. I identified (a) if a history of childhood maltreatment (as identified by the respondent) plays a significant role in the development of sexual coercion proclivity, (b) if there is a significant difference in the development of sexual coercion proclivity based on the subject's adult sexual history (having many casual sexual partners versus a long-term sexual partner history), and (c) if the levels of prevalent aggression noted for each participant group significantly differ. One of the most important aspects of a research project is to ensure that the design is thorough, as this is often even more important than the actual study data collected (Parab & Bhalerao, 2010).

For the current study, a quantitative, nonexperimental design was used in order to determine the level of relationship between sexual coercion proclivity in adult females (with a prior history of childhood maltreatment). Quantitative research allowed the data to be gathered in a numerical fashion for later statistical analysis in order to answer the hypothesis through an empirical investigation of the research questions (McLeod, 2008). In an attempt to answer the research question in the form of a measurement, quantitative research provided answers that can be categorized with regard to how many, what percentage, or which segments of the population are affected by the particular item(s) being researched (McLeod, 2008). The focus was on using precise definitions and operationalizing what particular concepts and variables mean. A nonexperimental methodology was also selected because experimental methods results are more likely to be context-bound and a reflection of the researcher's personal assumptions (McLeod, 2008). As a result, a nonexperimental quantitative research study allowed for little bias of the data. I had more control over how the study data were gathered, and I was more distant from the experiment.

The current study was completed using a cross-sectional survey design and methodology. Study participants completed three survey questionnaires in all: one survey that measured emotional and physical abuse that the participant experienced as a child and two other surveys that measured sexual coercion in the form of psychologically aggressive tactics and physical aggression tactics. Surveys are commonly used in both health and social research because they are optimally suited to descriptive studies, they can be used to explore various situational aspects or to obtain an explanation, or they can

be useful in an attempt to provide data for testing a hypothesis (Kelley, Clark, Brown, & Sitzia, 2003). With regard to the research hypothesis, it is important for psychologists to use advances in quantitative methods that are relevant to their hypotheses in order to improve the likelihood that their research conclusions will be meaningful and accurate (Mills, Abdulla & Cribbie, 2010).

Historically, correlational research has played a significant role in quantitative research and is often conducted as beginning research in an attempt to explore relationships between one or more variables (Lomax & Li, 2013). In correlational studies, the researcher collects the data for research purposes and does not manipulate or control the study participant' s behavior or the data obtained. Three possible results were obtained by following this method: a positive relationship, a negative correlation, and no relationship (Lomax & Li, 2013). Correlational studies can, therefore, show which unrelated variables can be eliminated from further consideration, allowing the researcher to focus on the related study variables (Lomax & Li, 2013). Such studies also play a significant role in the development and testing of theoretical models. Once the nature of bivariate relations has been established through research, this information can be used to develop theoretical models that will better explain the nature of the bivariate relationships (Lomax & Li, 2013).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between an adult female's prior experiences of childhood maltreatment, as measured by the ETISR-SF and the use

of sexual coercion (0 times, 1 time, 2 times, 3-5 times, 6-10 times and 11+ times) as measured by the Modified - SCIRS?

$H_0$1: There is no relationship between a female's prior experiences of childhood maltreatment and the use of sexual coercion during adulthood.

H_A1: There is a relationship between a female's prior experiences of childhood maltreatment and the use of sexual coercion during adulthood.

In order to address Research Question 1, an ordinal logistic regression was conducted to determine what factors influenced the dependent variable, female use of sexual coercion (0 times, 1 time, 2 times, 3-5 times, 6-10 times and 11+ times), based on the independent variable, the responses to prior experiences of child trauma, as measured by the 27-item ETISR-SF. An ordinal logistic regression is the appropriate analysis for testing if there is a difference between two or more groups when the scale of measurement is ordinal. In the analysis, the dependent variable was female use of sexual coercion separated into six groups since becoming sexually active (0 times, 1 time, 2 times, 3-5 times, 6-10 times and 11+ times) and measured by the Modified SCIRS. The independent variable was the responses to prior experiences of past childhood trauma (i.e., physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect) and general trauma as measured by the 27-item ETISR-SF. For situations in which there were more than two groups, the ordinal nature of the data was assessed for significant differences.

Research Question 2: Is there a relationship between the number of casual sexual partners and sexual coercion (as measured by the Demographic Questionnaire and the Modified SCIRS) in adult females?

$H_0$2: The use of sexual coercion in adult females is not related to the number of casual sexual partners.

H_A2: The use of sexual coercion in adult females is positively related to the number of casual sexual partners.

In order to address Research Question 2, a chi-square analysis was conducted. A chi-square is an appropriate analysis when the researcher is interested in the relationship between two nominal/discrete variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). In the analysis, this was a 2 x 3 chi-square analysis, with adult sexual history (having many casual sexual partners versus a long-term sexual partner history), as measured by the Demographics Questionnaire, and female use of sexual coercion separated into six groups since becoming sexually active (0 times, 1 time, 2 times, 3-5 times, 6-10 times and 11+ times) as measured by the Modified SCIRS.

Prior to analysis, the assumptions of chi-square were assessed. For the chi-square to operate properly, data must come from random samples of a multinomial mutually exclusive distribution, and the expected frequencies should not be too small. Traditional caution in examination of a chi-square is that expected frequencies below five should not compose more than 20% of the cells, and no cell should have an expected frequency of less than one (Pagano, 2009). Observations should be independent of one another, and participants can only contribute one observation to the data.

Research Question 3: Does poor body image (as measured by the CSA Victim Checklist) moderate the relation between prior maltreatment (as measured by the ETISR-SF) and the use of sexual coercion (as measured by the Modified SCIRS)?

$H_0$3*:* Poor body image does not moderate the relation between past trauma and use of sexual coercion.

H_A3*:* Poor body image does moderate the relation between past trauma and use of sexual coercion.

For Research Question 3, an ordinal logistic regression was conducted to assess whether a relationship exists between the dependent variable, female use of sexual coercion separated into six groups since becoming sexually active (0 times, 1 time, 2 times, 3-5 times, 6-10 times and 11+ times) and measured by the Modified SCIRS, based on the independent variable, poor body image measured by the CSA Victim Checklist and past childhood trauma (to include emotional, physical, physical forms of abuse) and general trauma, as measured by the ETISR-SF.

Participants

The target population for this study was adult females aged 18 years or older who had access to the Internet. Participants had access to the Internet and were recruited through Qualtrics. The Qualtrics database only allows for the participation of subjects aged 18 and older. Additionally, an anonymous e-mail link was sent to participants through the Qualtrics web page.

Sampling Strategy

A cross-sectional Internet survey design was determined to be the most time and cost efficient method for this research study. An Internet survey design allowed for greater access to a larger geographic area in a shorter amount of time than would be available otherwise; therefore, participants from different and distant locations were

accessed more readily; information was obtained from participants who may have otherwise been difficult to contact or receive responses from; and the added convenience of using automated data collection, which significantly reduced research time and effort (Wright, 2006).

Some of the advantages included questionnaires could be created, modified, distributed, and returned, and the results were obtained much faster and at a reasonable and sometimes lower cost than the traditional paper or telephone methods (Sills & Song, 2002; Watt, 1997), as they required only a modest time commitment from participants when compared to other methods (Scott & Carrington, 2011). Participants from different and distant locations were accessed more readily; information was obtained from participants who may otherwise have been difficult to contact or receive responses from; and the added convenience of using automated data collection significantly reduced research time and effort (Wright, 2006). Respondents also had the ability to forward the research study link to their friends, thereby increasing potential participants in the study. This sampling method is referred to as a snowball strategy, which is commonly used to research sexualities or for populations that otherwise are not easily accessed (Browne, 2005). Another advantage of using this sampling method that should be considered is that participation in the study would likely have been otherwise limited due to the sensitive and intimate nature of the research subject matter, as it could have been difficult to access participants given the nature of the research study. Although the current study involved questions related to the use of sexually coercive tactics, the possibility of sampling a

group of participants where the obtained data are considered to be too homogenous was unlikely, as the intended group was from a diverse population.

Sampling Procedure

In order to participate in this study, all respondents were required to have access to the Internet. The current study sample was limited to a population of Internet users from Qualtrics. Once entering the Qualtrics invitation to participate in the research study, prospective participants received a private message that included details regarding the current study including the purpose of the study, participation guidelines, consent, and a hyperlink to the questionnaires. This message included a request for study participation. The Invitation Letter (Appendix A) that was previously approved by the Internal Review Board (IRB) prior to data collection was the first page of the research study survey and followed by the Informed Consent Form.

All recipients were allowed to employ a chain referral strategy to forward the information onto other females within their contact lists (Note: this was not required of the participant in order to continue as a study participant). Instructions were provided to increase the amount of possible participants located in a variety of geographic areas.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

This study was primarily concerned with the effects (if any) that prior experiences of childhood maltreatment have on female sexual coercion proclivity. A history of childhood maltreatment criteria was identified by asking the following question: "What was the primary form of childhood maltreatment that you experienced (i.e. physical, sexual, or psychological abuse or neglect)?" An answer of "0" (No experience/none) excluded the prospective participant from the study; whereas an answer of one of the following allowed the individual's inclusion in the study: "1" (Very low/few experiences), "2" (A moderate level of experiences), "3" (Somewhat severe) or "4" (Very severe). In order to ensure eligibility, participants were asked to read and complete the Invitation Letter (Appendix A) prior to linking to the survey, which stated that by completing the consent form, the participant agreed that they were 18 years of age or older. The participant's age was also gathered on the demographics questionnaire. If a respondent indicated that he or she was not 18 years of age or older as required to participate in the study or if the participant decided to not participate in the study, a message displayed thanking him or her for his or her time and interest and the survey was discontinued. Because this was a web-based survey, there was no way for the participant's age to be verified; therefore, it was assumed that the reported participant's age was reported accurately. Finally, individuals were included as study participants if they agreed to allow their survey responses to be used for the purposes of the research study. My contact information was provided to all participants in the Introductory Letter, the Informed Consent Form, as well as at the end of the survey.

Participants were invited to contact me in the event that they had any questions or concerns related to their participation in the study. All participant data were obtained in an anonymous fashion via the Qualtrics database; therefore, the participant's personally identifiable information was protected at all times, and there was no way for me or a Walden representative to contact any of the participants independent of their contacting me or the Walden representative. In the rare event that a participant chose to communicate with me or a representative, his or her responses to this inquiry could not be linked. Participants were not compensated for their participation in the study. Once the survey was completed and submitted by the participant, there was no additional follow-up regarding their participation in the study.

The intention of this study was to examine if there is a difference in the self-reported sexual behaviors of women with or without a history of childhood maltreatment; therefore, each participant must have had a prior sexual history. Those individuals without prior sexual history were eliminated from the study sample. As with all aspects of the survey, the anonymous survey assumed that the participants answered all demographic questions in an accurate and honest manner.

Sample Size and Power Analysis

For the purpose of this research study, an adequate amount of participants were needed in order to make the data meaningful. Power analyses were conducted using G*Power 3.1.7 to determine a sufficient sample size for the study given the inferential statistical analyses. For the ordinal logistic regression, a power of .80 was used with an alpha value of .05, and a medium effect size ($w = .25$), the calculated minimum required

sample size was 182 for each group (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). Therefore, at least 182 participants for each group (those with one or more experiences of childhood maltreatment versus those with one or more experiences of childhood maltreatment) was necessary to find significance.

This study remained open for 3 to 6 months with the recruitment goal of acquiring a minimum sample of 182 participants; however, the sampling window remained open until 29 additional participants completed the survey to allow for any potential loss in participants. All participants answered questions to determine their adult sexual history (having many casual sexual partners versus a long-term sexual partner history).

Data Collection and Analysis

Qualtrics, an Internet survey tool, was used to collect data for the current study. As the researcher for this study, I purchased a Qualtrics user license with the intent of maintaining the survey, study results, as well as the protected storage of data. A link to the survey on Qualtrics was embedded to all prospective participants within the Informed Consent Form. Qualtrics is a secure website that protects all survey information in an anonymous manner, the data obtained, as well as the anonymity of the participants (Qualtrics.com). This information is included in the website's privacy policy and the user agreement, with the intent of providing research participants with a greater sense of security when answering the sensitive and intimate questions via the Internet.

All data was entered into SPSS version 23.0 for Windows. Descriptive statistics was conducted to describe the sample demographics as well as any research variables to be used in the analyses. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for any categorical

variables of interest, such as gender or ethnicity. Means and standard deviations were calculated for any continuous variables of interest (Howell, 2010).

Study participants were provided with a direct link to the survey via Qualtrics at the end of the informed consent, where participants had an opportunity to review the introductory letter describing the study, the extent of confidentiality, the researcher, and the role of Walden University.

Each section of the survey was labeled so that the participants could easily monitor their progress in taking the survey. Due to the lack of tracking ability of the initial survey, after the initial data was collected and analyzed, a message was sent to all message recipients - regardless of their actual participation in the study, offering them a summary of methods and results obtained. Upon the completion of the study and at a later time, a summary of the study results is also planned to be made available to the participants through scientific publication.

Upon completion of the survey, participants were directed to a page that thanked them for their participation in the study. Once a sufficient number of surveys were collected, the data was securely transferred to the researcher's password-protected personal laptop computer using IBM SPSS version 23.0. The data was then analyzed using SPSS to perform descriptive statistics. After the completion of the research study, all study records were maintained and will be secured for no more than five years. Thereafter, all records will be destroyed in a secure manner.

Instrumentation and Operationalization

This research study dependent variable was female use of sexual coercion separated into three groups (0 times, 1-5 times, and 6+ times) and measured by the Modified SCIRS. The independent variable was the responses to prior experiences of child maltreatment (Yes/No) and measured by the 27-item ETISR-SF to explore experiences of childhood maltreatment and poor body image (as measured by the CSA Victim Checklist) as well as with sexual coercion proclivity in adult females.

Dependent Variables

Sexual Coercion. The Modified - Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (SCIRS; Goetz & Shackelford, 2010) was used to measure the sexually coercive behaviors of women in relation to sexual initiation. This scale measured sexual activity in six areas using 19 items. *Sexual Arousal* items were intended to identify consenting arousal tactics. *Verbal Pressure* items explored what is said in order to initiate sexual activity. *Hidden Motives* items looked at sexual initiation intended to impact a third person by invoking feelings of jealousy or to terminating their relationship. *Retaliation or Gain* items assessed the times that sexual activity is desired as a form of retribution or to "gain favor." *Exploitation* in the current study pertained to the individual taking advantage of a partner during a time of vulnerability. *Physical Force,* the last area assessed, incorporated two items that are intended to measure the threat or actual use of force in order to achieve sexual activity.

The 34 items on the modified Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale were derived from the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (SCIRS; Shackelford & Goetz, 2004; Goetz & Shackelford, 2010). The SCIRS assessed

psychological and behavioral tactics of sexual coercion to include the use of communicative tactics (e.g. hinting and the use of subtle manipulation), the use of force or threats, withholding of resources, and violence (Shackelford & Goetz, 2004). While the male version of the SCIRS assesses male participant's self-reports of their sexually coercive behaviors, the female version assesses women's reports of their partner's sexually coercive behaviors. However, for the current study, female participants reported their sexually coercive behaviors. The 2004 Shackelford and Goetz study analyzed male participants which produced three components: 1) Resource Manipulation/ Violence (Items 1-15): the use of coercion to withhold or provide gifts and benefits and/ or to threaten or use violence and physical force; 2) Commitment Manipulation (Items 16-25): the use of coercion for manipulating their partners by telling them that the relationship status obligated their partner to provide sex/ sexual acts, and 3) Defection Threat (Items 26-34): the use of coercion to threaten to pursue relationships with other women.

For the current study the scores of all participants was calculated by summing response values (0–5) for each of the 34 items in the scale; therefore, the full scale range is 0 to 170 (34 acts × 5). A principal components analysis (followed by varimax rotation) of the 34 items was conducted. In order to broadly capture items within a domain, a liberal assignment criterion of .30 or greater was used for an item to be included on a specific component.

The Resource Manipulation/Violence component included sexually coercive tactics used in which the participants withheld or gave gifts and benefits (e.g., "I hinted that I would withhold benefits that someone depends on if they did not have sex with

me," "I gave someone gifts or other benefits so that they would feel obligated to have sex with me") and threatened or used violence and/ or force (e.g., "I threatened violence against someone if they did not have sex with me," "I physically forced someone to have sex with me"). The Commitment Manipulation component included sexually coercive tactics used in which he participants manipulated someone by telling them that they were obliged to grant sexual access (e.g., "I told someone that if they loved me they would have sex with me," "I hinted that if the person were truly committed to me they would have sex with me").

The Defection Threat component included sexually coercive tactics in which participants threatened to pursue casual affairs with other people, that is, temporary defections, or threaten to pursue long-term relationships with other people, that is, permanent defections. Temporary defection items included, for example, "I hinted that I would have sex with another person if someone did not have sex with me," and "I told someone that other people were willing to have sex with me, so that the person would have sex with me." Permanent defection items included, for example, "I hinted that other people were interested in a relationship with me, so that the person would have sex with me," and "I hinted that I might pursue a long-term relationship with another person if someone did not have sex with me." Alpha reliabilities were be calculated for each component as well as for the full scale, for participant's self-reports. For the full sample, alpha reliabilities for the three components, Resource Manipulation/Violence, Commitment Manipulation, and Defection Threat. The SCIRS (Shackelford & Goetz, 2004; Goetz & Shackelford, 2010) has been shown to have acceptable reliability in all

areas using either male samples, female samples, or a combination of both sample groups. For example, in the development and initial validation of the SCIRS, the alpha reliabilities for Resource Manipulation/Violence, Commitment Manipulation, and Defection Threat components and the total scale were .92, .91, .95, and .96, respectively (Shackelford & Goetz, 2004).

One might expect a valid measure of sexual coercion to (a) illustrate that an individual who is sexually coerced is less satisfied with their relationships, (b) reflect personality differences between women who sexually coerce compared to those who do not, and to (c) differentiate women who would be more upset when denied sex from their partners in comparison to those who would be less upset by denials of sex (Shackelford & Goetz, 2004). Such predictions have been supported in studying relationships between males using sexual coercion and comparing to their female partner's relationship dissatisfaction (Shackelford & Goetz, 2004); has shown that males, who are lower on conscientiousness, are more likely to sexually coerce their partners (Goetz & Shackelford, 2009); and the more that men report being upset if their partners denied them sexual access, the more sexually coercive these men were (Shackelford & Goetz, 2004).

In order to achieve gender neutrality for the current study, I revised the wording of this questionnaire. When taking the survey, participants answered each question with a nominal variable to indicate how many times a specific event has occurred in their lives recently (0= 0 times, 1= 1-5 times, and 2= 6+ times). The data was then entered in the same nominal format in which the information was gathered (e.g. 0= 0, 1= 1-5, and 2=

6+). Survey subscales were represented as follows: 1-5 Sexual Arousal, 6-8 Verbal Pressure, 9-11 Hidden Motives, 12-14 Retaliation or Gain, 15-17 Exploitation, and 18-19 Physical Force. Participants were considered as being sexually coercive in the event they answered with "1" or "2" on one or more of questions 6 through 19. To obtain an overall score of sexual coercion, participants entered the highest number they recorded. Identification with a particular subscale was then determined by examining the answers provided for each subscale item. The surveys took approximately 15-25 minutes to complete.

Body Image. The Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) Victim Checklist (CSA; Emery & Lilienfeld, 2004), measured the purported characteristics of participants with histories of childhood experiences of maltreatment. While the CSA measure created by Emery and Lilienfeld (2004) obtained the twenty-one prototypical items from the checklists created by Davis (1990), Frederickson (1992), Blume (1990), and Bradshaw (1990) to explore the effects of child sexual abuse (CSA) in particular, the current research explored the effects of childhood maltreatment, as the author felt that it was possible for victims of childhood maltreatment to suffer the same long-term psychological effects. Because the research questions presented in the CSA Victim Checklist still pertain to the effects of childhood maltreatment on body image, the CSA Victim Checklist (Emery & Lilienfeld (2004) was not be modified.

The checklists by Davis (1990), Frederickson (1992), and Blume (1990) are specific to childhood sexual assault and the checklist by Bradshaw (1990) is specific to the presumed effects of severe abuse and neglect – to include the CSA. Each measurable

statement represents a characteristic present in at least two, and often three or all four, of the original checklists. For example, participants in this study were asked to answer questions related to body image, giving too much in relationships, and daydreaming frequently. Participants were asked to respond to all statements, answering the question for each statement: 'To what extent is this statement true of you?' Participants rated each statement on a 4-point scale (1=not true, 4=very true). In Emery and Lilienfeld's (2004) study which measured CSA, the internal consistency of this measure was high (Cronbach's alpha=.82).

Independent Variables

Childhood Maltreatment and Number of Casual Sexual Partners. The Early Trauma Inventory Self Report-Short Form (ETISR-SF; Bremner, Bolus, & Mayer, 2007) is a 27-item questionnaire that is a self-report version of the clinician-administered ETI. The ETISR-SF is valid measure that measures physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and general traumatic experiences that may have occurred before the age 18 in the study participants (Jeon, Lee, Lee, Jeong, Kim, Lee, & Jeon, 2012). Experience of previous childhood maltreatment (physical, sexual, or psychological abuse or neglect) was included, as well as the age of the participant at the time of their first sexual experience (ordinal) was included as variables based on previous research, as these factors have previously been linked to sexual coercion (Anderson & Newton, 2004; DeGue, DiLillo, & Scalora, 2010). The dependent variable, female use of sexual coercion separated into three groups (0 times, 1-5 times, and 6+ times) was measured by the SCIRS to determine if a relationship

with the independent variable, the responses to prior experiences of child maltreatment (Yes/No) existed, as measured by the 27-item ETISR-SF.

At baseline, emotional (e.g., ignore, ridicule) and physical (e.g., spank, kick) abuse of the participant that occurred as a child was assessed using nine items from Bremner, Bolus, and Mayer's (2007) Early Trauma Inventory Self Report-Short Form (ETISR-SF). Participants responded by using 5-point scales with options ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). At baseline, prior experience of a sexually abusive childhood was assessed using seven questions that inquired about various sexual activities (e.g., exposure, sexual touching, sexual intercourse) that occurred before the age of 14 with another individual at least five years older than the victim (Abbey, Parkhill, BeShears, Clinton-Sherrod, & Zawacki, 2006). Responses were provided using 5-point scales with options ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*10 or more times*). Refer to Appendix C for the Early Trauma Inventory Self Report-Short Form (ETISR-SF).

Threats to Validity

As this is a quantitative, associational research study design, any generalizations of the results obtained should be restricted to adult females with prior experiences of childhood maltreatment and should not be generalized to other populations (to include males and/ or females) in other settings necessarily. It is assumed that all study participants provided responses in an accurate, unbiased manner according their own free will. All adult females with experiences of childhood maltreatment had an equal chance of participation in the study. Obtaining an adequate sample size as well as the use of

SPSS version 23.0 statistical software greatly reduced any threat to statistical conclusion validity.

Ethical Procedures

Agreements to recruit participants from Qualtrics were obtained and included in the application for institutional approval through the Walden University Institutional Review Board as indicated in Appendices A and B. Participants were informed that they would not be compensated for their participation in the study, that their information would remain anonymous and confidential, that their participation was completely voluntary and that they were not obligated in any way to the researcher or to Walden University (Appendix A).

As with all research tasks, it was essential to consider the protection and security of the participants at all times. While the current study posed potential risks to the participants due to the sexual nature of the questions asked in the survey, all participant data was obtained in an anonymous fashion. The survey also attempted to focus on the actions of the participants rather than the negative acts that they experienced as children. As a result, the chance for harm or distress suffered by the participants was greatly reduced. Participants were informed that they may experience mild discomfort in answering some portions of the questionnaires, which were disclosed in the introductory letter to all participants. In the event that any concerns were noted by the participants with regard to their emotional distress as a result of completing the survey, a message was provided to the participants to emphasize the importance of contacting their local crisis intervention hotline or national sexual assault trauma facilities. In the event that the

participant chose to discontinue the survey, they could do so at any time without experiencing any adverse consequences. There was no way to save answered study responses for later completion. Data was not be transferred until the survey was completed and the information was submitted by the participant.

The use of Qualtrics provided me with the ability to collect and manage the research data without the requirement for the participant of having to disclose their personally identifiable information. The use of Qualtrics did not require users to log into the website or to create an account, and participants could not be tracked for purposes of identification using Qualtrics, since they were not tracked through the use of cookies on the website. Once Participants submitted their information, their identification remained protected as such. As the researcher, the identity of those who completed or did not complete the survey via Qualtrics will never be disclosed to me. This provides a level of protection for both the participants and for those who declines to participate in the study. As such, participants were provided with confidentiality and security through the use of Qualtrics by protecting their personally identifiable information.

The study data obtained was input into an Excel file and stored on a thumb drive for research purposes and only accessible by the study researcher. The raw data obtained was not disseminated to any other party in raw form and all data will be stored on a password protected laptop for up to five years after the completion of the study, at which time the data will be destroyed. The study results will be published at a later date and will be available to all of the individuals who received the initial study participation

invitation. The study data will likely be used at a later date for future publications by the researcher.

The Walden University Internal Review Board (IRB) also requires that all researchers take precautionary steps to protect the safety of all study participants. The application and approval process that is required prior to any data collection will ensure the protection of participants and any data gathered.

Pre-Analysis Data Screening

Data was screened for accuracy, missing data, and outliers or extreme cases. Descriptive statistics and frequency distributions were conducted to determine that responses were within the possible range of values and data are not distorted by outliers. The presence of univariate outliers was tested by examination of standardized values. Standardized values were created for each scale level research variable and examined for standardized values that fell above 3.29 and those which fell below -3.29, which indicated outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). The presence of multivariate outliers was tested by examination of Mahalanobis distances; any variable with a Mahalanobis distance greater than the critical value was removed as a multivariate outlier. Cases with missing data were also examined for non-random patterns. Participants who did not complete major sections of the survey were excluded.

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha tests of reliability were conducted on the instruments. Also known as the coefficient alpha, the Cronbach's alpha provides the mean relationship between each pair of items and the number of items in a scale (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar,

2006). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were evaluated using the guidelines suggested by George and Mallery (2010) where > .90 Excellent, > .80 Good, > .70 Acceptable, > .60 Questionable, > .50 Poor, and ≤ .50 Unacceptable.

Potential Negative Effects

Participants were informed that they may experience mild discomfort when completing some of the questions, which was disclosed in the introductory letter. Information on how to contact the researcher or the Walden representative was included if further assistance was needed. If the discomfort was too great, participants could choose to withdraw from the survey at any time without any negative consequence. There was no way to save information for later completion. Data was not transferred until the survey was completed and the information was submitted by the participant.

Confidentiality and Informed Consent

No personally identifiable information was collected at any time for the study participants; therefore, the information remained anonymous at all times. The introductory letter addressed potential concerns related to participant confidentiality and the informed consent, to include informing participants that they could discontinue their participation in the survey at any time by closing the survey link without any negative consequence. The respondent's consent to participate in the study was assumed through the completion of the survey. All study participants were 18 years or older to avoid any complications to informed consent procedures that would otherwise be required if allowing the inclusion of minors in the study.

Treatment of Data

The participant data was not transferred or retained until the survey was completed and the information was submitted by the participant. All data collected was transferred to SPSS version 23.0 from Qualtrics.com and will be stored on the researcher's password protected laptop for no more than five years after the completion of the dissertation, at which time the data will be destroyed.

Summary

The intent of this quantitative research study was to test for possible relationships between sexual coercion and learned styles of female aggression with a prior history of childhood maltreatment in a sample derived from a Qualtrics population. The convenience sample was obtained via Qualtrics, which allowed for an opportunity to contact individuals that would have otherwise, been unavailable for a face-to-face survey. The instruments were selected with the intent of measuring both sexual coercion and learned styles of aggression in a manner that would allow the participants the opportunity to complete the questionnaire in a relatively short amount of time via the Internet and at their leisure. The logistic multiple regression analysis provided statistical information regarding noted trends and relationships between the studied variables, allowing the researcher and reviewers the opportunity to examine the current data and plan for future research projects with the intent of building on the limited knowledge base of sexual coercion that currently exists with regard to females.

Chapter 4

The purpose of this quantitative, nonexperimental study was to determine the level of relationship between sexual coercion proclivity in adult females with and without a prior history of childhood maltreatment. In this chapter, I present the findings of the data collection process. Data were screened for completion and outliers. Frequencies and percentages were presented for demographic characteristics. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each of the scales. A reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha measure of internal consistency on the variables. Ordinal logistic regressions and a chi-square test of independence were the primary statistical analyses used to address the research questions. The analyses were evaluated for statistical significance at the widely accepted significance level, $\alpha = .05$.

Preanalysis Data Screen

I entered data into SPSS version 23.0 for Windows. The survey was administered to a total of 211 participants. Among the sample, 182 participants participated via an anonymous Qualtrics participant pool, and 29 participants were recruited by word-of-mouth or online advertisement posted online via Twitter and LinkedIn to the public. Study recruitment occurred over a 7-day period. Responses were examined for completion to ensure that the variables could be measured for each participant. All 211 participants answered the SCIRS and the use of sexual coercion survey item. Univariate outliers were examined by calculation of standardized values, or z-scores. No participants had z-scores falling $\pm$ 3.29 standard deviations away from the mean; thus, no participants were removed for univariate outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Multivariate outliers

were examined by calculation of Mahalanobis Distances. No multivariate outliers were identified in the data set. The final sample size consisted of all 211 participants.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Frequencies and percentages of demographic characteristics. A majority of participants were of White ethnicity (n = 166, 78.7%). Many participants were in a partnered or married relationship (n = 124, 58.8%); however, several participants were single (n = 82, 38.9%). A majority of participants had been in a relationship for 49 or more months (n = 137, 64.9%). A majority of the sample had previous sexual history with only men (n = 174, 82.5%). A marginal percentage of participants had been sexually involved with both genders (n = 27, 12.8%). A total of 145 participants had never used sexual coercion (68.7%); however, a portion of participants had engaged in sexual coercive behaviors one to nine times (n = 27, 12.8%) and 10 or more times (n = 39, 18.5%). A significant portion of the sample (n = 156, 73.9%) did not respond to the survey item regarding number of sexual partners; therefore, the majority left this item blank (perhaps due to their comfort level associated with answering this particular question). Among the participants who did respond to this survey item (n = 55, 26.1%), most had been sexually involved with 11 or more partners (n = 22, 10.4%). Table 1 presents the frequencies and percentages of the sample demographics.

Table 1

Frequencies and Percentages of Sample Demographics

Demographic	*n*	%
Ethnicity		
White, Non-Hispanic	166	78.7
Black	22	10.4
Latina, Hispanic	11	5.2
Asian	7	3.3
Other	5	2.4
Current relationship status		
Single	82	38.9
In a partnered, married relationship	124	58.8
No response	5	2.4
Length of current relationship as an adult		
0-12 months	32	15.2
13-24 months	12	5.7
25-36 months	16	7.6
37-48 months	9	4.3
49-60 months or more	137	64.9
No response	5	2.4
Sexual history with men, women, or both		
Men	174	82.5
Women	6	2.8
Both sexes	27	12.8
No response	4	1.9
Use of sexual coercion		
0 times	145	68.7
1 – 9 times	27	12.8
10 or more times	39	18.5
Since age 18, how many casual sexual partners have you had?		
1 – 5 partners	18	8.5
6 – 10 partners	15	7.1
11 or more partners	22	10.4
No response	156	73.9

Note. All percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding error.

Descriptive statistics of continuous variables. Participants' ages ranged from 18.00 to 78.00, with *M* = 46.29 and *SD* = 13.71. Composite scores were generated by taking an average of corresponding survey items from the Modified -SCIRS and the CSA. The general trauma rating is an original rating in the SCIRS scale that was computed by an average of 11 survey items from the SCIRS (Items 15-23 and Items 26-27). General trauma items asked if the respondents ever experienced or were exposed to a life threatening natural disaster, a serious accident, a serious personal injury or illness, the death or serious illness of a parent or a primary caretaker, the divorce or separation of their parents, the death or serious injury of a sibling or a friend, violence towards others, suffer from mental or psychiatric illness or have a "breakdown", if their parents or primary caretaker had a problem with alcoholism or drug abuse, or if they ever saw someone murdered. General trauma scores ranged from the possible range of 0.00 to 1.00, with *M* = 0.36 and *SD* = 0.22. Physical punishment scores were computed from the SCIRS by averaging five survey items (Items 29-33). Physical punishment items asked the respondents items related to their exposure to various forms of inflicted or imposed punishments of a physical nature. Physical punishment scores ranged from the possible range of 0.00 to 1.00, with *M* = 0.45 and *SD* = 0.31. Emotional abuse was computed by an average of five survey items from the SCIRS (Items 35-39). Emotional abuse items asked the respondents items related to their emotions and/ or their needs. Emotional abuse scores ranged from the possible range of 0.00 to 1.00, with *M* = 0.60 and *SD* = 0.37. Experiences of sexual abuse was computed by an average of eight survey items (Items 41-46 and 48-49). The original SCIRS scale for this measure was revised from

"sexual events" to read "experiences of sexual abuse," as I felt that "experiences of sexual abuse" was a more descriptive label for this measure. Experiences of sexual abuse items asked the respondents items related to any experience of unwanted sexual touching or sexual acts. If respondents answered "Yes" to at least one of the experiences of sexual abuse items, they were asked if they ever experienced emotions of intense fear, horror or helplessness, and if they felt out-of-their-body or as if they were in a dream. Experiences of sexual abuse scores ranged from a possible range of 0.00 to 1.00, with $M = 0.37$ and $SD = 0.36$. Poor body image was computed by an average of 21 survey items (Items 55-75). Poor body image items asked the respondents to rate questions as *not true* (1), *slightly true* (2), *somewhat true* (3) or *very true* as related to their body and/or their mental health. Poor body image scores ranged from 1.00 to 3.76, with $M = 2.18$ and $SD = 0.65$. Means and standard deviations of the continuous variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Continuous Variables

Continuous Variables	*Min.*	*Max.*	*M*	*SD*
Age	18.00	78.00	46.29	13.71
General Trauma	0.00	1.00	0.36	0.22
Physical Punishment	0.00	1.00	0.45	0.31
Emotional Abuse	0.00	1.00	0.60	0.37
Experiences of Sexual Abuse	0.00	1.00	0.37	0.36
Poor Body Image	1.00	3.76	2.18	0.65

Reliability

To evaluate internal consistency for the scales, Kuder-Richardson and Cronbach's alpha tests of reliability were evaluated. Kuder-Richardson tests are the equivalent of

Cronbach's alpha tests of reliability, but are applicable when the survey items for a scale are composed of dichotomous responses (Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2012). The alpha values were assessed by applying the criteria in which, $\alpha \geq .9$ Excellent, $\geq .8$ Good, $\geq .7$ Acceptable, $\geq .6$ Questionable, $\geq .5$ Poor, $< .5$ Unacceptable (George & Mallery, 2016). Physical punishment had an acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .73$). Emotional abuse ($\alpha = .82$) and experiences of sexual abuse ($\alpha = .88$) demonstrated good reliability. General trauma ($\alpha = .66$) demonstrated questionable reliability. Low Kuder-Richardson alpha statistics for scales can typically be attributed to participant misinterpretation of items in each scale (George & Mallery, 2016). Cronbach's alpha test was used for poor body image due to the scale including survey items with Likert-scales. Applying George and Mallery's (2016) guidelines for reliability coefficients, poor body image ($\alpha = .91$) demonstrated excellent reliability. Results of the reliability statistics are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Kuder-Richardson and Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Statistics for Scales

Scales	*No. of Items.*	α
General Trauma	11	.66
Physical Punishment	5	.73
Emotional Abuse	5	.82
Experiences of Sexual Abuse	8	.88
Poor Body Image	21	.91

Detailed Analysis

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between an adult female's prior experiences of childhood maltreatment, as measured by the ETISR-SF and the use of sexual coercion (0 times, 1 time, 2 times, 3-5 times, 6-10 times and 11+ times) as measured by the Modified -SCIRS?

$H_0$1: There is not a significant relationship between a female's prior experiences of childhood maltreatment and the use of sexual coercion during adulthood.

H_A1: There is a significant relationship between a female's prior experiences of childhood maltreatment and the use of sexual coercion during adulthood.

To address Research Question 1, an ordinal logistic regression logistic regression was conducted to examine the relationship. An ordinal logistic regression is appropriate when the dependent variable is measured on an ordinal scale (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The outcome variable corresponded to the use of sexual coercion (0 times, 1-9 times, and 10+ times). The continuous predictor variables in this analysis corresponded to females' prior experiences of childhood maltreatment, as measured by general trauma, physical punishment, emotional abuse, and experiences of sexual abuse.

The results of the overall model for the ordinal logistic regression were significant ($\chi^2(4) = 20.07$, $p < .001$), suggesting that there was a collective relationship between the predictor variables for childhood maltreatment and female use of sexual coercion.

Experiences of sexual abuse (Wald (1) = 7.42, $p = .006$) was a significant predictor of female use of sexual coercion. Higher scores for experiences of sexual abuse were associated with participants using sexual coercion more often. Due to the

significance of the overall regression model, the null hypothesis for Research Question 1 ($H_0$1) was rejected. Table 4 presents the results of the ordinal logistic regression.

Table 4
Ordinal Logistic Regression for Childhood Maltreatment Predicting Female Use of Sexual Coercion

Variable	*B*	*SE*	Wald(1)	*p*
General Trauma	0.90	.79	1.31	.253
Physical Punishment	0.69	.59	1.36	.244
Emotional Abuse	0.12	.53	0.05	.828
Experiences of Sexual Abuse	1.22	.45	7.42	.006

Note. Overall model fit: $\chi^2(4) = 20.07$, $p < .001$

Research Question 2: Is there a relationship between the number of casual sexual partners and the use of sexual coercion (as measured by the Demographic Questionnaire and the Modified SCIRS)?

$H_0$2*:* The use of sexual coercion is not related to the number of casual sexual partners.

H_A2*:* The use of sexual coercion is positively related to the number of casual sexual partners.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between the use of sexual coercion and number of casual sexual partners. Use of sexual coercion was coded into three potential categories: 0 times, 1 – 9 times, 10+ times. Number of casual sexual partners was coded into three potential categories: nonresponses and responders.

Prior to analysis, the assumptions of a chi-square test were checked. Traditional caution is that expected frequencies below five should not compose more than 20% of the

cells. An examination of the cross tabulation showed that 0/12 cells (0%) had expected frequencies less than 5. None of the cells had expected frequencies less than one.

According to the results of the chi-square test, there was a significant relationship between use of sexual coercion and number of casual sexual partners ($\chi^2(2) = 11.11$, $p = .004$). Among the participants who did not provide a response to the survey question regarding number of casual sexual partners, the largest pairing ($n = 116$) was for participants who had used sexual coercion zero times. Among the participants who did provide a response to the corresponding number of casual sexual partners survey question, the largest pairing ($n = 29$) was for participants who had used sexual coercion zero times. Results of the chi-square analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Chi Square Analysis for Number of Casual Sexual Partners and Use of Sexual Coercion

	Use of Sexual Coercion				
Number of Casual Sexual Partners	0 times	1 – 9 times	10 or more times	$\chi^2(2)$	*p*
Non-responses	116 [107.2]	19 [20.0]	21 [28.8]	11.11	.004
Responders	29 [37.8]	8 [7.0]	18 [10.2]		

Note. Bracketed values display expected counts for each cell

Because there was not a high response rate with the question pertaining to the participant's number of casual sexual partners, the number of participants who responded to the survey item related to the number of casual partners was calculated versus those who did not answer this particular question in an attempt to determine if there were any meaningful differences. As a result, a chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between the participant's use of sexual coercion as related to the

number of casual sexual partners. Use of sexual coercion was coded into three potential categories: 0 times, 1 – 9 times, 10+ times. Number of casual sexual partners was coded into the following categories: nonresponses, 1 – 5 partners, 6 – 10 partners, 11 or more partners.

Prior to analysis, the assumptions of a chi-square test were checked. Traditional caution is that expected frequencies below five should not compose more than 20% of the cells. An examination of the cross tabulation showed that 6/12 cells (50%) had expected frequencies less than 5. However, this can be attributed to the majority of the sample (n = 156) not responding to the survey item regarding number of casual sexual partners. None of the cells had expected frequencies less than one.

According to the results of the chi-square test, there was a significant relationship between use of sexual coercion and number of casual sexual partners ($\chi^2(6) = 25.63$, $p <$ .001). Among the participants who did not provide a response to the survey question regarding number of casual sexual partners, the largest pairing (n = 116) was for participants who had used sexual coercion zero times. Among the participants who did provide a response to the corresponding survey question, the largest pairing (n = 13) was between participants who had 1 – 5 casual sexual partners and used sexual coercion zero times. Results of the chi-square analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Chi Square Analysis for Number of Casual Sexual Partners and Use of Sexual Coercion (Non-responses and Responses)

	Use of Sexual Coercion				
Number of Casual Sexual Partners	0 times	1 – 9 times	10 or more times	$\chi^2(6)$	*p*
Non-responses	116 [107.2]	19 [20.0]	21 [28.8]	25.63	<.001
1 – 5 partners	13 [12.4]	4 [2.3]	1 [3.3]		
6 – 10 partners	6 [10.3]	1 [1.9]	8 [2.8]		
11 or more partners	10 [15.1]	3 [2.8]	9 [4.1]		

Note. Bracketed values display expected counts for each cell

Research Question 3: Does poor body image (as measured by the CSA Victim Checklist) moderate the relation between prior maltreatment (as measured by the ETISR-SF) and the use of sexual coercion (as measured by the Modified SCIRS)?

$H_0$3*:* Poor body image does not moderate the relation between past trauma and use of sexual coercion.

H_A3*:* Poor body image does moderate the relation between past trauma and use of sexual coercion.

To address research question three, a series of ordinal logistic regression were conducted to examine the predictive relationship between past trauma and use of sexual coercion, while controlling for poor body image. The outcome variable corresponded to the use of sexual coercion (0 times, 1-9 times, and 10+ times). The continuous predictor variables in this analysis corresponded to females' prior experiences of childhood

maltreatment, as measured by general trauma, physical punishment, emotional abuse, and Experiences of Sexual Abuse. Poor body image was also treated as a continuous predictor variable. Interaction terms were calculated to determine the impact that poor body image has on the relationships.

The results of the overall models for each of the four ordinal logistic regressions were statistically significant, suggesting that there was a collective relationship between the predictor variables for childhood maltreatment, poor body image, and female use of sexual coercion.

In combination, the predictor variables appeared to have an effect on female use of sexual coercion. However, none of the predictor variables were individually significant in the model. Poor body image and the interaction terms were not significant in any of the regressions, the null hypothesis for research question three ($H_0 3$) was not rejected, suggesting that poor body image does not moderate the relationship between childhood maltreatment and female use of sexual coercion. Table 7-10 presents the results of the ordinal logistic regression.

Table 7

Ordinal Logistic Regression for General Trauma and Poor Body Image Predicting Female Use of Sexual Coercion

Variable	*B*	*SE*	Wald(1)	*p*
General Trauma	-2.96	2.60	1.29	.255
Poor Body Image	-0.20	0.48	0.18	.675
General Trauma*Poor Body Image	1.91	1.10	3.04	.081

Note. Overall model fit: $\chi^2(3) = 15.50$, $p = .001$

Table 8

Ordinal Logistic Regression for Physical Punishment and Poor Body Image Predicting Female Use of Sexual Coercion

Variable	*B*	*SE*	Wald(1)	*p*
Physical Punishment	-1.12	1.78	0.40	.529
Poor Body Image	0.05	0.45	0.01	.915
Physical Punishment*Poor Body Image	0.98	0.76	1.68	.195

Note. Overall model fit: $\chi^2(3) = 15.25$, $p = .002$

Table 9

Ordinal Logistic Regression for Emotional Abuse and Poor Body Image Predicting Female Use of Sexual Coercion

Variable	*B*	*SE*	Wald(1)	*p*
Emotional Abuse	-0.21	1.52	0.02	.889
Poor Body Image	0.32	0.52	0.38	.540
Emotional Abuse*Poor Body Image	0.37	0.69	0.29	.588

Note. Overall model fit: $\chi^2(3) = 10.90$, $p = .012$

Table 10

Ordinal Logistic Regression for Experiences of Sexual Abuse and Poor Body Image Predicting Female Use of Sexual Coercion

Variable	*B*	*SE*	Wald(1)	*p*
Experiences of Sexual Abuse	-0.34	1.59	0.05	.832
Poor Body Image	0.07	0.39	0.03	.856
Experiences of Sexual Abuse*Poor Body Image	0.69	0.64	1.16	.282

Note. Overall model fit: $\chi^2(3) = 18.26$, $p < .001$

A combination of Pearson and point-biserial correlations were conducted to examine the two-way associations between the demographic variables and poor body image. A Pearson correlation is appropriate when assessing the strength of association

between a series of continuous variables (Pagano, 2009). A point-biserial correlation is appropriate when assessing the strength of association between two variables, when one variable is a dichotomous measurement (Pagano, 2009). The only significant relationship was identified between casual sex partners and poor body image ($r = .29$, $p < .001$). This suggests that participants who responded to the casual sex partners question tended to have higher poor body image scores. Age and relationship status were not significantly associated with poor body image. Table 11 presents the findings of the correlations.

Table 11
Correlations between Demographics and Poor Body Image

Scale	Poor Body Image	
	r	*p*
Casual Sex Partners (1: Responders and 0: Non-responders)	.29	<.001
Age	-.12	.093
Relationship Status (1: Married or 0: Single)	-.05	.452

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative, non-experimental study was to determine the level of relationship between sexual coercion proclivity in adult females (with a prior history of childhood maltreatment). Demographic data were presented first, followed by descriptive statistics of the continuously measured variables. The internal consistency of the scales was assessed by Cronbach's alpha statistics. Results of the ordinal logistic regression for research question one indicated that there was collectively significant relationship between the general trauma, physical punishment, emotional abuse, and Experiences of Sexual Abuse on female use of sexual coercion. Experiences of Sexual

Abuse was a significant predictor in the model and had a positive relationship on female use of sexual coercion. The null hypothesis for research question one was rejected. Results of the chi-square test of independence for research question two indicated that there was a significant relationship between use of sexual coercion and number of casual sexual partners. The null hypothesis for research question two was rejected. Results of the logistic regressions for research question three indicated that there was collective significant relationship between childhood maltreatment, poor body image, and use of sexual coercion. However, the poor body image predictor and the interaction terms were not significant, suggesting that poor body image was not moderating the relationship. The null hypothesis for research question three was not rejected. An examination of the two-way associations between the demographic variables and poor body image identified a significant relationship between casual sex partners and poor body image, suggesting that participants who responded to the casual sex partners question tended to have higher poor body image scores. Age and relationship status were not significantly associated with poor body image.

In the next chapter, the statistical findings will be discussed further. The findings will be connected back to existing literature and the theoretical framework selected for the study. In addition, limitations, implications, and recommendations for future research will be provided.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

Existing research to determine if there is a relationship between the experience of childhood maltreatment and the development and later use of sexual coercive behaviors in women was limited, indicating that additional efforts were needed to address the etiology for such behavior exhibited by this population. There was also a lack of understanding of the risk and protective factors that may contribute to female sexual coercion as well as the associated negative consequences. Bandura's social learning theory of aggression (Baer & Bandura, 1963; Bandura, 1978), which conceptualizes that an individual's social behavior is acquired from an early age through imitation of his or her adult model and that this form of learning is further facilitated by the child's exposure to the adult model's nurturance and power status (Baer & Bandura, 1963), provided the framework for this study. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between the independent variable of child maltreatment, in the forms of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse/or neglect, and the dependent variable of sexual coercion proclivity. Furthermore, a child's exposure to aggression (as portrayed in real-life or in media) increases the child's aggressive behavior in response to subsequent frustration while also influencing the form that their aggression takes (Baer & Bandura, 1963).

This chapter provides an interpretation of the findings of the quantitative study to to better understand the potential lasting effects and the dynamics associated with childhood maltreatment. Research data were collected from 211 study participants who

disclosed one or more prior experiences of childhood maltreatment. As described in the descriptive statistical data for the study, White American females made up the majority of the study participants, followed by Black or African American. There was a limited number of participants from other races/ethnicities in the dataset, who identified as "Latina, Asian or Other" (in order of ranking on the survey), and the age range of participants who completed the study was 18 to 78. Additionally, there was a collectively significant relationship between general trauma, physical punishment, emotional abuse, and experiences of sexual abuse on female use of sexual coercion. There was also a direct, positive relationship for experiences of sexual abuse being a significant predictor in the model for female use of sexual coercion. In particular, prior experiences of childhood maltreatment were a significant predictor of adult female participants using sexual coercion more often. I also found a significant relationship between use of sexual coercion and the number of reported casual sexual partners. While there was collective significant relationship between childhood maltreatment, poor body image, and use of sexual coercion, poor body image predictor and the interaction terms were not significant, suggesting that poor body image was not moderating the relationship. Recommendations for further research, prevention, and educational programs, as well as implications for positive social change, are also provided.

Although causal inferences cannot be made from the findings, the results suggested the importance of reducing childhood maltreatment in order to positively promote social change towards the reduction of sexual coercion in adult females. The interpretation of these results leads to future research questions and concluding remarks.

In this study, I attempted to broaden the understanding of those adult women who participate in sexually coercive tactics by investigating prior experiences of childhood maltreatment. The purpose of this quantitative research study was to generate a composite profile of the negative effects that childhood maltreatment female survivors have experienced and how females who have experienced childhood maltreatment are likely to develop and later exhibit sexually coercive behaviors. Positive social change from this research may inform a future trauma-focused treatment intervention program with the intent of preventing and increasing social awareness about childhood maltreatment as well as the increased potential negative effects that can result, including sexually coercive behaviors. Such a community-based intervention program would position school educators, health care providers, and mental health providers to effectively increase public awareness and preventive education measures. Those who have previously experienced childhood maltreatment may also feel empowered due to increased public awareness.

Interpretation of Findings

The current study fills an identified a gap in existing research by focusing on self-reported experiences of childhood maltreatment as related to the development of sexual coercion proclivity in women. Three research questions were examined in this study, along with their corresponding hypotheses. For Research Question 1, an ordinal logistic regression was conducted to determine what factors influenced the dependent variable, female use of sexual coercion (0 times, 1 time, 2 times, 3-5 times, 6-10 times and 11+ times), based on the independent variable, the responses to prior experiences of what

factors influenced the dependent variable, female use of sexual coercion was conducted to assess the relationships between the risk factor of child maltreatment (i.e., physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect). A 2 x 3 chi-square analysis was used for Research Question 2 with adult sexual history (having many casual sexual partners versus a long-term sexual partner history) being measured to determine if an higher reports of sexual partner history were positively associated with an increase in the use of sexual coercion. Finally, for Question 3, an ordinal logistic regression analysis was used to examine the predictive relationship between past trauma and use of sexual coercion, while controlling for poor body image.

Interpretation by Research Question

The interpretation of findings follows and is presented as the three research questions.

Research Question 1: Is there a significant relationship between an adult female's prior experiences of childhood maltreatment, as measured by the ETISR-SF and the use of sexual coercion (0 times, 1 time, 2 times, 3-5 times, 6-10 times and 11+ times) as measured by the Modified -SCIRS? For Research Question 1, an ordinal logistic regression was conducted to determine what factors influenced the dependent variable, female use of sexual coercion (0 times, 1 time, 2 times, 3-5 times, 6-10 times and 11+ times), based on the independent variable, the responses to prior experiences of what factors influenced the dependent variable, female use of sexual coercion was conducted to assess the relationships between the risk factor of child maltreatment (i.e., physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect). The results of the overall model for the ordinal

logistic regression were significant ($\chi^2(4) = 20.07$, $p < .001$), suggesting that there was a collective relationship between the predictor variables for childhood maltreatment and female use of sexual coercion. Experiences of sexual abuse (Wald (1) = 7.42, $p = .006$) was a significant predictor of female use of sexual coercion, with higher scores being associated with participants using sexual coercion more often. Due to significance of the overall regression model, the null hypothesis for research question one ($H_0 1$) was rejected. Cutajar et al. (2010) and Dodge Reyome (2010) identified that there may be a relationship between early interpersonal experiences involving childhood maltreatment and subsequent interpersonal difficulties. Furthermore, Mohammadkhani et al. (2009) reported that physical violence is not only linked to sexual coercion, but victims of physical abuse are more likely to be sexually coerced. To build on this finding even further, several researchers have since theorized that women who have previously experienced sexually coercion develop emotionally dysfunctional strategies such as self-harm or risky sexual behaviors in their attempt to successfully cope with the abuse, resulting in further exposing themselves to risky situations involving sexual coercion – either as the victim or as the perpetrator (Griffin & Read, 2012; Messman-Moore, Walsh, & DiLillo, 2010).

Researchers have not adequately explored the development of sexually coercive behaviors in women in an unbiased manner. Instead, the subject of female aggressors within the general public is commonly overlooked, and existing research is limited and confusing. Public perception does not generally see males as experiencing unwanted sexual contact as a significant concern (Judson et al., 2013). Therefore, agency-level

intervention services may be best positioned to respond to the dynamics of childhood maltreatment through ongoing preventive measures and education as well as support services and counseling. Interventions should be developed that are based on strengthening and transforming public awareness over time. Moreover, an increased public education of childhood maltreatment prevention programs will provide community outreach and assist in the promotion of healthy family and adult sexual relationships, as the reduction of sexually coercive behaviors can be reduced through early family education and prevention and intervention programs that address childhood maltreatment.

Research Question 2: Is there a relationship between the number of casual sexual partners and the use of sexual coercion (as measured by the Demographic Questionnaire and the Modified SCIRS)? A difference between this study and previous findings was the emphasis on sexual coercion as exhibited by women rather than males. I also explored whether the number of casual sexual partners is related to the use of sexual coercion. Participants were also asked how many casual sexual partners they had sexual relations with since the age of 18. Griffin and Read (2012) and Messman-Moore et al. (2010) theorized that women who have previously experienced sexually coercion develop emotionally dysfunctional strategies, such as self-harm or risky sexual behaviors, in their attempt to successfully cope with the abuse, resulting in further exposing themselves to risky situations involving sexual coercion. I found a significant relationship between use of sexual coercion and number of casual sexual partners, with the highest incidence of sexual coercion use (n = 9) noted for participants who had 11 or more sexual partners and had used sexual coercion 10 or more times.

As the social learning theory suggests, child maltreatment is a learned behavior, and violence within the family unit is commonly seen as a predicting factor of later violence in the adult victim's family of procreation (Newberger, Newberger, & Hampton, 1983). These negative experiences are important to consider when studying interpersonal relationships, as they play a significant part in how affected individuals define their environment and value themselves through communications with a caregiver about separated from a significant other or from other things, which they may perceive as being threats to their overall sense of security (Bowlby, 1982). These early interactions also provide a model for determining the appropriateness of such behaviors (Bandura, 1973; Feshbach, 1980). Without proper treatment, the ability to form healthy intimate sexual relations may be negatively affected later in adulthood (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). This early form of learning is further facilitated by the child's exposure to the adult model's nurturance and power status (Baer & Bandura, 1963). Therefore, having many casual sexual partners not only mirrors the affected woman's ability to develop healthy intimate relationships later in life, but having many partners is a form of her control and power within the relationship. Based on these findings, I concluded that counseling interventions that include modeling positive, nurturing, one-on-one interactions and relationships as well as healthy intimacy and power within relationships is beneficial for traumatized females who have experienced childhood maltreatment. Such efforts would reduce fear and increase courage in reaching healthy thinking and coping skills, as well as seeking and developing mutually nurturing relationships. In this

manner, the counseling psychologist would facilitate positive changes aligned with the female's treatment goals.

While the results of the chi-square test indicated a significant relationship between use of sexual coercion and number of casual sexual partners, the majority of the sample (n = 156) did not respond to the survey item regarding the number of casual sexual partners. As previously noted, socially desirable responses may be a limitation that may be introduced in the study due to respondents' comfort level with the question(s) asked or the subject matter, self-report errors, response biases, and recall biases. For this particular question, the study respondents may have been hesitant to accurately disclose personal accounts of their casual sexual experiences (which were likely a sensitive subject for many). As a result, an examination of the cross tabulation chi-square test of independence showed that 6/12 cells (50%) had expected frequencies less than five, as none of the cells had expected frequencies less than one. Among the participants who did not provide a response to the survey question regarding number of casual sexual partners, the largest pairing (n = 116) was for participants who had used sexual coercion zero times. Among the participants who did provide a response to the corresponding survey question, the largest pairing (n = 13) was between participants who had one to five casual sexual partners and used sexual coercion zero times.

Research Question 3: *Does poor body image (as measured by the CSA Victim Checklist) moderate the relation between prior maltreatment (as measured by the ETISR-SF) and the use of sexual coercion (as measured by the Modified SCIRS)?* There is a lack of research that currently exists to explore the effects of sociocultural factors on

male and female sexual expression which focus on how, when combined with early experiences of psychological or physical experiences of childhood maltreatment, these factors can result in increased long-term risks for a variety of psychological concerns, to include disorders commonly associated with traumatic experiences as well as psychosis (Asberg & Renk, 2014; Cutajar, et al., 2010; Ippen, et al., 2011). Historically, females have been objectified in male-dominated societies and as a result, they are more vulnerable to having a low body image and are more susceptible to cultural constraints (Carvalho & Nobre, 2010; Choma, Shove, Busseri, Sadava & Hosker, 2009). Such sociocultural factors have traditionally modulated the ways in which individuals sexually express themselves differently (Carvalho & Nobre, 2010). In such cases, intimate experiences have been shown to further impede the female's continued sexual interest, sexual behavior, and response cycle resulting in additional body shame (Adekeye et al., 2012; Choma et al., 2009). Research investigating body dissatisfaction has also shown that body-related images are automatically processed and can unconsciously result in negative psychological outcomes - particularly amongst women who are commonly presented as desirable, sexualized, thin or beautiful (Northup, 2013). As a result, females with a low self-esteem may develop negative psychological concerns related to their poor body image. This author suggests that such experiences of childhood maltreatment have contributed to increased levels of body shame in many women which may contribute to projected sexual coercion against others.

For the current study, participant responses indicated that while there was a significant collective relationship between the participants for childhood maltreatment, poor body

image, female use of sexual coercion as measured by general trauma, physical punishment, emotional abuse, and Experiences of Sexual Abuse, none of these factors were individually significant. This suggests that poor body image does not moderate the relationship between childhood maltreatment and female use of sexual coercion. However, further examination of the two-way associations between the demographic variables and poor body image identified a significant relationship between casual sex partners and poor body image, suggesting that participants who responded to the casual sex partners question tended to have higher poor body image scores. Age and relationship status were not significantly associated with poor body image. Based on these findings, I concluded that prevention and education programs should focus primarily on the short-term and long-term physical and/ or psychological effects of childhood maltreatment as well as providing education on healthy relationships. Counseling psychologists should also attempt to identify women's perceived obstacles to reaching their goal of how to improve their self-confidence and body image.

Limitations

Child maltreatment was considered as a contributing factor in the etiology and pathway to female sexual coercion proclivity. In considering this factor, the effects of having numerous casual sex partners and the development of poor body image were examined. In conducting this study, a number of limitations were identified. The author of this study favored the use of the Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (SCIRS; Goetz & Shackelford, 2010) based on the in-depth questions it provided ; however, the original survey was written with the male perpetrator in mind. As a result,

the original SCIRS survey questions were modified for adult female participant and their non-specific gender partners. However, it is important to point out that the original structure and overall intent of the SCIRS questions were not compromised in any way; therefore, the resulting data was not captured or portrayed in a false or misleading manner.

Self-reported data of child maltreatment experiences (i.e. physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect), sexual coercion experiences and body image (i.e. ETISR, the Modified SCIRS and CSA) were the nature of data collected for this quantitative study. The majority of participants were White, Non-Hispanic American females, followed by Black and a limited number of persons from other races/ethnicities in the dataset, as identified as "Latina, Asian or Other." A larger number of participants living in other areas would need to be explored in-depth to confirm this study's findings, as they might not be applicable to a larger population of participants. Reflecting on the participants for the current study, I used a sampling method which included a purchased panel of 182 participants via an anonymous Qualtrics participant pool from across the United States. Additionally, 29 participants were also recruited in an anonymous manner by word-of-mouth or online advertisement posted online via Twitter and LinkedIn from across the United States. As a result, these efforts may have further limited generalizability of the data, as the survey could be forwarded to a broad range of locations using email rather than just by word-of-mouth. This can further be confirmed through the latitude and longitude grid coordinates that were provided in the answered

surveys for each respondent according to their location at the time they answered the survey.

Conducting research via the Internet allowed a greater number of diverse respondents to participate in the study. While studies that are of a sensitive and/ or intimate nature can greatly benefit from the use of the Internet and social networks to access individuals that are otherwise considered to be hard to reach and/ or sensitive populations (Bergeron & Senn, 1998; Eland-Goossensen, Van de Goor, Vollemans, Hendricks, & Garetsen, 1997; Valentine, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c), there are some disadvantages of employing online survey research. Although the study participants were intended to be a random sample of adult women Internet users, there is no guarantee that other adult women would have had the same results.

While current survey authoring software packages and online survey applications made the online survey research and data collection much easier and faster in comparison to face-to-face interviews and written surveys; there are some possible disadvantages associated with conducting survey research online that were considered in advance in creating the online anonymous survey. Although the current study exceeded the original study expectations of 182 participants, some of the participants did not answer the survey item related to the number of casual sexual partners since the age of 18, as they likely considered this question too personal or sensitive in nature. Those that refused to answer this item may have feared suffering harm or public humiliation as a result of revealing any information related to their sexual behaviors that some may consider as being inappropriate. Moreover, sexual concerns, particularly those involving women being seen

in a negative light, are commonly seen as a private matter that is outside of the public research realm (Browne, 2005). Other potential concerns are that some potential participants may have been reluctant to use computers while others may have not trusted or feared answering such questions that are of a personal or sensitive nature via an online survey. Since the data was derived from online surveys and not in-person, I could not ensure that all survey questions were adequately understood by the respondents or that only female participants (and not male subjects) answered the survey questions.

Further, socially desirable responses may be another limitation that were likely introduced due to respondents' comfort level with the subject matter, self-report errors, response biases and recall biases. For example, the study respondents may have exaggerated personal experiences, been hesitant to accurately disclose personal accounts of their experiences which are likely a sensitive subject for many, or they may not have reported completely accurate or timely accounts of their personal behaviors related to sexual coercion. Precautions were taken to determine if participants were answering survey questions in a timely and accurate manner by inputting strategically placed questions throughout the survey. As a result, it could be determined if the participant was accurately reading or paying attention to the survey questions they answered. It is possible that participants did not answer a limited number of questions or that they provided answers which they believed were more socially acceptable than a more truthful disclosure of their personal experiences with childhood maltreatment, as not all participants felt comfortable answering the survey item pertaining to the number of casual sexual partners. In sum, the results of this study are important to understanding

how future quantitative research can assist in providing a greater awareness and understanding of a previously maltreated individual's strengths and the potential resulting concerns as related to sexual coercion proclivity.

Recommendations

While there are specific motivations and different tactics involved when considering males and females independently, changing the traditional thought processes and research practices in the study of evolutionary biology as well as more traditional social science disciplines is essential in order to effect positive changes (Anderson & Aymami, 1993; Anderson & Savage, 2005; Anderson & Sorensen, 1999; Judson, et al., 2013; Smallbone & Dadds, 2000). Therefore, changing from a more traditional research mindset requires a more balanced scientific approach that equally considers both male and female sexual coercion tactics in research than what has been the historical norm. As a result, a recommendation for further research regarding female sexual coercion is to continue to examine the relationship between childhood maltreatment and female sexual coercion in an equal manner. Although a significant amount of research has been conducted and is suggestive of a relationship between childhood maltreatment and negative outcomes in males, including delinquent behavior, unbiased research and discussions of the sexual coercion practices of females is still lacking. Additional research can educate in an unbiased manner while better informing the public - to include practitioners, educators, parents and caregivers, and program leaders of the potential short-term and long-term effects that a maltreated child may encounter and on which additional attention and resources should be focused. Such efforts will greatly contribute

to breaking down some of the more traditional social stigmas in order to allow society to recognize and respond to victimization and sexual coercion as perpetrated by women. Preventive measures that focus attention and resources on the development of healthy families and relationships, as well as intervention measures that focus on a maltreated child will also likely decrease the likelihood of possible risky behaviors and problematic long-term psychological effects.

Anderson and Bushman (2002) indicated that social learning theory is very useful for understanding how aggressive behaviors are acquired and in explaining instrumental aggression, particularly key concepts regarding the development and change of expectations and how individuals construe their social world. The research of Newberger et al. (1983) suggests that child maltreatment is a learned behavior, and that violence within the family unit is commonly seen as a predicting factor of later violence in the adult victim's family of procreation. As a result, early negative experiences frequently play a significant part in how affected individuals define their environment and value themselves, which they may perceive as being threats to their overall sense of security (Bowlby, 1982). From an early age, any physical or mental aggression that the child is exposed to provides a model for determining the appropriateness of such behaviors (Bandura, 1973; Feshbach, 1980); and without proper treatment, aggressive behavior may affect intimate sexual relations later in adulthood (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Learned aggressive behavior is likely to be the result of observing or experiencing aggression first-hand within the family as a participant without having a conscious choice (Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980), and then imitating those behaviors (Feshbach, 1980) later

through adulthood. Bandura's social learning theory of aggression indicates that this form of learning is further facilitated by the child's exposure to the adult model's nurturance and power status (Baer & Bandura, 1963). Furthermore, research has shown that a child's exposure to aggression (as portrayed in real-life or in media), increases the child's aggressive behavior in response to subsequent frustration while also influencing the form that their aggression takes (Baer & Bandura, 1963).

The research of Smallbone and Dadds (2000; 2001) showed that parental absence (more specifically maternal unavailability), family violence, and poor relationships with parents can result in being at an increased risk for intimacy and adult attachment style difficulties – which are significantly linked to coercive sexual behaviors (2000, 2001). Early exposure to aggressive or violent behaviors is not only a traumatic experience, but more importantly, it can negatively affect the child's ability to develop healthy, trusting relationships (Bandura, 1973). Efficacy-related beliefs are of particular importance, as individuals who believe that they can successfully carry out specific aggressive acts that will result in the desired outcomes are more likely to select aggressive behaviors than those who are not as confident that their aggressiveness will be effective (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). This is an important statement to consider with regard to sexual relationships.

Lending to the social learning theory, researchers, practitioners, parents and caregivers, as well as educators may potentially benefit from knowing how the multiple layers of a child's environment; to include their possible experiences with child maltreatment contributes to their overall development and well-being. Since childhood

maltreatment served as a predictor for sexual coercion (as measured by the ETISR and Modified SCIRS) and the number of casual sexual partners (as measured by the Demographics Questionnaire and the Modified SCIRS) in the present study, education programs that focus on prevention measures such as the development of strategies for conflict resolution, healthy coping mechanisms, appropriate sexual behaviors, healthy relationship development, and anger management counseling may potentially equip troubled practitioners, parents and caregivers, as well as educators with appropriate tools for successfully dealing with issues such as maltreatment. Childhood maltreatment as well as the development of female sexual coercion are undoubtedly public health concerns that require unbiased attention in order to better understand the pathways to potentially negative behaviors in order to develop prevention and intervention programs that are unbiased, as well as policies, and outreach services to circumvent them.

Implications for Social Change

The effects of childhood maltreatment can result in both short-term and long-term emotional, social, physical, and economic repercussions for those who experience it. The development of unbiased public programs that are focused on the prevention and intervention of childhood maltreatment will provide a better understanding of the possible effects of one or more experiences of childhood maltreatment it in its various forms, to include the etiology and possible pathways to female sexual coercion. Such programs would improve the public's awareness by providing unbiased prevention and intervention methods and programs that equally consider males and females.

This research identified a significant relationship between casual sex partners and poor body image, suggesting that the participants who responded to the casual sex partners question tended to have higher poor body image scores. The research also identified a significant relationship between the use of sexual coercion and number of casual sexual partners. While these are important findings, it must be emphasized that an increase in the number of casual sex partners, a history of childhood maltreatment and/or that having a poor body image will not result in sexual coercion later in life, as sexual coercion is the result of a collection of variables which may include the aforementioned risk factors. The manner in which an individual responds is also related to their development of healthy coping mechanisms, their upbringing, current environment and healthy support systems. The significant findings from this study are important to note only for identifying as potential risk factors that should be gauged as a whole with other potential risk factors.

In this study there was a positive relationship between child maltreatment and female sexual coercion. These findings have important clinical implications. The associations between childhood maltreatment and adult female sexual coercion proclivity indicated in the current study suggest that early prevention of aggressive behavior may be especially important for children who experienced maltreatment and that knowing the individuals' history of childhood maltreatment may facilitate treatment of aggressive behaviors that may result. Furthermore, the moderating effects of childhood maltreatment on sexual coercion proclivity highlight the importance of developing effective prevention and intervention programs that are specifically focused on emotional

processes, for individuals who experienced childhood maltreatment to help them develop more appropriate responses to social and emotional stimuli and within intimate relationships. As a result, individuals who do not receive effective intervention and counseling after experiencing childhood maltreatment may develop long-term psychological concerns and/ or externalizing and potentially harmful behaviors to include aggression, substance use and violence. Developing unbiased education programs may increase the identification of multiple experiences of maltreatment or risk factors that could potentially lead to crime, re-victimization, or other negative experiences or potentially harmful behaviors to include the use of sexual coercion during adulthood. In the event that sexual coercion is the mechanism that females use in their attempt to cope with their emotions and to express their feelings, then educational programs that provide alternative coping strategies would be helpful in alleviating violent reactive behaviors. For those who have a history of multiple casual sexual partners, educational programs designed to discuss the associated health risks and the development of healthy, committed sexual relationships would be helpful. The development of age appropriate educational programs and services that are made available to children, adolescent and adult females can address multiple layers of their environment and provide a safe haven for females, their families or caregivers, practitioners, educators and academicians to receive resources that could be protective factors such as information, counseling, and additional resources to prevent or intervene on situations of childhood maltreatment. Implications for social change that are exuded from this research include providing more understanding about the multifaceted association between child maltreatment and female

sexual coercion and the development of readily available public programs and services geared towards preventing child maltreatment.

Although there is no sole treatment model that fits the needs of all individuals who have experienced one or more forms of childhood maltreatment, involving the personal accounts of those negatively affected by childhood maltreatment may also improve the relevance of trauma-focused interventions as well as public education programs and overall societal beliefs. This would also likely increase the continued scholarly and public interest in this topic as well as the application of quantitative research in the future. Therefore, this research study also offers specific recommendations to apply the aforementioned knowledge in a meaningful way to trauma-focused interventions and to future quantitative research efforts.

Conclusion

While I conducted this research study in an attempt to identify if there is a relationship between prior experiences of childhood maltreatment and sexual coercion proclivity in females, more importantly, I wanted to provide this information in an unbiased manner that differed from the limited amount of information that is currently available on this subject matter with regard to sexual coercion proclivity in females. This study differs from the majority of similar research studies in that it serves as an empirical investigation of sexual coercion perpetrated by adult females from the general population (rather than being focused on incarcerated males or females in particular). As such, it is not comprised of a highly selective sample of participants. In particular, I wanted to determine if one or more childhood maltreatment experiences increased the likelihood of

females developing and later exhibiting sexually coercive behaviors in adult sexual relationships by determining if such a relationship existed using a quantitative research design. Findings from this study may be used to reduce childhood maltreatment survivors' development of sexually coercive behaviors, promote healthy intimate relationships and improve components of trauma-focused interventions. The social change implications of this research have the potential to affect the study participants, the field of psychology and community-based trauma-focused preventative and intervention services for the public sector as well as childhood maltreatment survivors.

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Appendix A: Invitation Letter

Dear Participant,

This study involves a web-based research study designed to understand the background of adult females and the experience of childhood maltreatment (i.e. physical, sexual, or psychological abuse or neglect) and any experience of persuasion used to engage in a sexual experience. As such, this research will include data from adult women who have **experienced childhood maltreatment and any experience of persuasion used to engage in a sexual experience.** The study is being conducted by Christina Dean of Walden University, and will become a part of a written dissertation that satisfies the requirements for my doctoral training and may result in publications or presentations concerning said research. The study has been approved by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. No deception is involved, and the study involves no more than minimal risk to participants. Existing research studies indicate a need for further research in this area.

Participation in the study is **voluntary**. Participants will not receive thank you gift(s), compensation, or reimbursement (for travel costs, etc.) as a result of their participation in the study. The study participation typically takes approximately 10 - 20 minutes and is strictly **anonymous**. Participants will answer a series of questions about their life and sexual experiences. All responses are treated as **confidential**, and in no way can responses from individual participants be identified. All data will be pooled and published in aggregate form only. Participation is voluntary, refusal to take part in the study involves no penalty, and participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

Once the completed survey is submitted, however, the data cannot be withdrawn from the study since it is **anonymous**. Participants should keep/print a copy of the consent form for their records.

Thank you for your time, consideration and honesty in responding to these surveys.

Sincerely,

Christina Dean
Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Student
Walden University

Appendix B: Demographics Questionnaire

Please respond to the following questions by selecting the appropriate response

1. Age: _____

2. Sex: Male _____

   Female _____

   2a. Are you:

   Transgender (Female to Male) _____

   Transgender (Male to Female) _____

3. What is your race/ethnicity?

   - o White, Non-Hispanic
   - o Black
   - o Latina/Hispanic
   - o Asian
   - o Other: _____

4. What was the primary form of childhood maltreatment that you experienced (i.e. physical, sexual, or psychological abuse or neglect)? Please rate each item as follows:

   0 – No experience/none
   1 – Very low/few experiences
   2 – A moderate level of experiences
   3 – Somewhat severe
   4 – Very severe

Physical: _____ Sexual: _____ Psychological: _____ Neglect: _____

5. Current Relationship Status (Circle One):
    - o Single
    - o In a Partnered/ Married Relationship
6. How long have you been in your current relationship status as an adult (since the age of 18)?

0-12 months 13-24 months 25-36 months 37-48 months 49-60 months or more

7. How old were you when you had your first sexual intercourse experience? _____
8. Has your sexual history been with men, women, or both?
    - o Men
    - o Women
    - o Both Sexes
9. Do you or have you ever (since the age of 18) engage(d) in sexually coercive behaviors? An answer of "Yes" continues to next question. An answer of "No" skips to the end of demographic questions and to the beginning of the Early Trauma Inventory Self Report-Short Form (ETISR-SF)
    - o Yes
    - o No
10. Approximately how many times (since the age of 18) have you engaged in sex when your partner (past or present) **stated** or behaved in a manner to indicate that he/she did not want to?

1-5 times 6-10 times 11-15 times 16-20 times 20+ times

11. Since the age of 18, approximately how many casual sexual partners have you had?

1-5 partners 6-10 partners 11-15 partners 16-20 partners 20+ more

Appendix C: Early Trauma Inventory Self Report-Short Form (ETISR-SF)

Early Trauma Inventory Self Report-Short Form (ETISR-SF)

J. Douglas Bremner, Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta GA

Participant Name or ID:_____ DOB:_____ Age:____ Assessment Date:_____

Part 1. General Traumas. Before the age of 18

1. Were you ever exposed to a life-threatening natural disaster?	YES	NO
2. Were you involved in a serious accident?	YES	NO
3. Did you ever suffer a serious personal injury or illness?	YES	NO
4. Did you ever experience the death or serious illness of a parent or a primary caretaker?	YES	NO
5. Did you experience the divorce or separation of your parents?	YES	NO
6. Did you experience the death or serious injury of a sibling?	YES	NO
7. Did you ever experience the death or serious injury of a friend?	YES	NO
8. Did you ever witness violence towards others, including family members?	YES	NO
9. Did anyone in your family ever suffer from mental or psychiatric illness or have a a "breakdown"?	YES	NO
10. Did your parents or primary caretaker have a problem with alcoholism or drug abuse?	YES	NO
11. Did you ever see someone murdered?	YES	NO

Part 2. Physical Punishment. Before the age of 18

1. Were you ever slapped in the face with an open hand?	YES	NO
2. Were you ever burned with hot water, a cigarette or something else?	YES	NO
3. Were you ever punched or kicked?	YES	NO
4. Were you ever hit with an object that was thrown at you?	YES	NO
5. Were you ever pushed or shoved?	YES	NO

Part 3. Emotional Abuse. Before the age of 18

1. Were you often put down or ridiculed?	YES	NO
2. Were you often ignored or made to feel that you didn't count?	YES	NO
3. Were you often told you were no good?	YES	NO
4. Most of the time were you treated in a cold, uncaring way or made to feel like you were not loved?	YES	NO
5. Did your parents or caretakers often fail to understand you or your needs?	YES	NO

Part 4. Sexual Events. Before the age of 18

1. Were you ever touched in an intimate or private part of your body (e.g. breast, thighs, genitals) in a way that surprised you or made you feel uncomfortable?	YES	NO
2. Did you ever experience someone rubbing their genitals against you?	YES	NO
3. Were you ever forced or coerced to touch another person in an intimate or private part of their body?	YES	NO
4. Did anyone ever have genital sex with you against your will?	YES	NO
5. Were you ever forced or coerced to perform oral sex on someone against your will?.	YES	NO
6. Were you ever forced or coerced to kiss someone in a sexual rather than an affectionate way?	YES	NO

If you responded "YES" for any of the above events, answer the following for the one that has had the greatest impact on your life. In answering consider how you felt at the time of the event.

1. Did you experience emotions of intense fear, horror or helplessness?	YES	NO
2. Did you feel out-of-your-body or as if you were in a dream?	YES	NO

Revised on 3/09

Appendix D: Modified - Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale (SCIRS)

Instructions: 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 since becoming sexually active 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.

0 = Act *did NOT* occur since becoming sexually active
1 = Act occurred *1 time* since becoming sexually active
2 = Act occurred *2 times* since becoming sexually active
3 = Act occurred *3 to 5 times* since becoming sexually active
4 = Act occurred *6 to 10 times* since becoming sexually active
5 = Act occurred *11 OR MORE times* since becoming sexually active

Resource Manipulation/Violence

1.____I threatened violence against someone if they did not have sex with me.

2.____I threatened to physically force someone to have sex with me.

3.____I physically forced someone to have sex with me.

4.____I **hinted** that he/she was cheating on me, in an effort to get them to have sex with me.

5.____I gave someone gifts or other benefits so that they would feel obligated to have sex with me.

6.____I reminded him/her of gifts or other benefits I gave them so that they would feel obligated to have sex with me.

7.____I threatened to pursue a long-term relationship with another person if they did not have sex with me.

8.____I accused someone of cheating on me, in an effort to get them to have sex with me.

9.____I initiated sex with someone when they were unaware (for example, they were asleep, drunk, or on medication) and I continued against their will.

10.____I threatened to withhold benefits that the person depends on if they not have sex with me.

11.____I told someone that it was their obligation or duty to have sex with me.

12.____I **hinted** that I would give someone gifts or other benefits if they had sex with me.

13.____I withheld benefits that the person depends on to get them to have sex with me.

14.____I **hinted** that I would withhold benefits that the person depends on if I they not have sex with me.

15.____I threatened violence against someone or something the person cared about if they did not have sex with me.

Commitment Manipulation

16.____I persisted in asking someone to have sex with me, even though I knew that they did not want to.

17.____I **hinted** that if the person loved me they would have sex with me.

18.____I told someone that if they loved me they would have sex with me.

19.____I **hinted** that if the person was truly committed to me they would have sex with me.

20.____I told someone that if they were truly committed to me they would have sex with me.

21.____I pressured someone to have sex with me against their will.

22.____I told someone that other couples have sex more than we do, to make them feel like they should have sex with me.

23.____I made someone feel obligated to have sex with me.

24.____I had sex with someone, even though they did not want to.

25.____I **hinted** that it was the person's obligation or duty to have sex with me.

Defection Threat

26.____I **hinted** that other people were interested in a relationship with me, so that they would have sex with me.

27.____I told someone that other people were interested in a relationship with me, so that they would have sex with me.

28.____I **hinted** that other people were willing to have sex with me, so that they would have sex with me.

29.____I told someone that other people were willing to have sex with me, so that they would have sex with me.

30.____I **hinted** that other people were interested in having sex with me, so that they would have sex with me.

31.____I told someone that other people were interested in having sex with me, so that they would have sex with me.

32.____I **hinted** that I would have sex with another person if a person did not have sex with me.

33.____I **hinted** that I might pursue a long-term relationship with another person if someone did not have sex with me.

34.____I threatened to have sex with another person if someone did not have sex with me.

Appendix E: Childhood Sexual Abuse (CSA) Victim Checklist

Directions: Please read all statements first. Then for each statement respond to the following question: To what extent is this statement true of you?

1. I am afraid of being alone.

Not true	slightly true	somewhat true	very true
1	2	3	4

2. I have a poor body image.

Not true	slightly true	somewhat true	very true
1	2	3	4

3. I am not at home in my own body.

Not true	slightly true	somewhat true	very true
1	2	3	4

4. I have suffered from an eating disorder in the past or currently suffer from an eating disorder.

Not true	slightly true	somewhat true	very true
1	2	3	4

5. I have suffered from a period of depression in the past or am current suffering from depression and/or I have considered suicide at some point in my life.

Not true	slightly true	somewhat true	very true
1	2	3	4

6. I have had a period of sexual promiscuity in my life.

Not true	slightly true	somewhat true	very true
1	2	3	4

7. I do not take good care of my body.

Not true	slightly true	somewhat true	very true
1	2	3	4

8. Trusting is sometimes very difficult for me.

Not true	slightly true	somewhat true	very true
1	2	3	4

9. I have suffered from a drug or alcohol dependency in the past or am currently suffering from a drug or alcohol dependency.

Not true	slightly true	somewhat true	very true
1	2	3	4

10. I have an aversion to being touched.

Not true	slightly true	somewhat true	very true
1	2	3	4

11. I do not feel that I have the right to set limits and boundaries on other people's behavior towards me.

Not true	slightly true	somewhat true	very true
1	2	3	4

12. In my relationships, I am constantly afraid of being abandoned.

Not true	slightly true	somewhat true	very true

1 2 3 4

13. I give too much in relationships.

Not true slightly true somewhat true very true

1 2 3 4

14. I am constantly doing what others expect of me.

Not true slightly true somewhat true very true

1 2 3 4

15. I cannot articulate my values and opinions.

Not true slightly true somewhat true very true

1 2 3 4

16. I often criticize myself and others.

Not true slightly true somewhat true very true

1 2 3 4

17. I space out or daydream frequently.

Not true slightly true somewhat true very true

1 2 3 4

18. I sometimes wake up feeling as if I am choking, gagging or being suffocated.

Not true slightly true somewhat true very true

1 2 3 4

19. I do some things to excess and I don't know when to quit.

Not true slightly true somewhat true very true

1 2 3 4

20. I identify with abuse victims in the media, and often stories of abuse make me want to cry.

Not true	slightly true	somewhat true	very true
1	2	3	4

21. I startle easily.

Not true	slightly true	somewhat true	very true
1	2	3	4