

The Relationship Between Heteronormative Beliefs and Verbal Sexual Coercion in College Students

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Abstract Heteronormative standards for sex and romance situate men and women in a hierarchical relationship that characterizes masculinity as active and persistent and femininity as passive and responsive to male sexuality. Individuals who endorse heteronormative beliefs, such as the belief that men should dominate women sexually or that men are always ready for sex, may therefore be more approving of and experienced with behaviors that involve one partner exerting sexual pressure on the other. In the present study, we investigated the relationship between the endorsement of heteronormative beliefs and men's and women's approval of and experience with verbal sexual coercion (both as a perpetrator and as a victim). We first established a gender-neutral higher-order construct representing heteronormative beliefs consisting of multiple measures of gender norms for sexuality and relationships in a sample of 555 heterosexual college students (292 women, 263 men) primarily of Hispanic origin. We next found that endorsement of heteronormative beliefs was positively correlated with personal acceptance of verbal sexual coercion strategies and personal experience as the victim and perpetrator of verbal sexual coercion for both men and women. While men reported more overall support for heteronormative beliefs and more experience as a victim and perpetrator of verbal sexual coercion, there were minimal gender differences in how heteronormative beliefs related to verbal sexual coercion variables. The positive association found between heteronormative beliefs and sexual coercion in young men's and women's relationships represents an important step towards better understanding the antecedents and consequences of intimate partner violence.

Keywords Heteronormativity · Gender roles · Verbal sexual coercion · Sexual double standards · Intimate partner violence

Introduction

In the U.S., gender roles and heterosexuality are deeply intertwined. A substantial part of what it means to be masculine in our society is to be heterosexually active while femininity is conversely defined as being sexually attractive to men and serving as sexual "gatekeepers" in relationships (Bateman, 1991; Jackson, 2005). The cultural belief that men and women possess naturally complimentary drives, needs, and roles is commonly known as heteronormativity. Heteronormativity also refers to the privileged position that heterosexual relationships have in the range of human desires (Martin, 2009).

Heteronormative standards for "normal" sexual relationships situate men and women in a hierarchical relationship that characterizes masculinity as active, powerful, and persistent, and femininity as passive but sympathetic to male sexuality (Hird, 2002; Jackson, 2006). Thus, like other gender stereotypes, heteronormativity creates a set of oppositional relations between femininity and masculinity that support men's greater power and status (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Mahoney & Knudson-Martin, 2009; Sprecher & McKinney, 1993; Winstead, Derlega, & Rose, 1997). For example, men are expected to be the more active partner on first dates, where they are responsible for initiating and controlling date activities (Eaton & Rose, 2012; Rose & Frieze, 1989, 1993). Men are also portrayed as the more aggressive partner during sexual activity, where they are expected to orchestrate and control sex (Muehlenhard & Felts, 1998; Snell, Belk, & Hawkins, 1986).

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An abundance of research has shown that adherence to traditional gender roles in romantic relationships reduces sexual satisfaction and autonomy for women and promotes submissive sexual behavior for women and dominant sexual behavior for men (for a review, see Sanchez, Fetterolf, & Rudman, 2012). Some theorists have posited that another way heterosexist norms and gender roles negatively affect romantic relationships is through male sexual coercion of girls and women (Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004; Byers, 1996; Hird, 2002; Katz & Wigderson, 2012; Richardson, 1996). Sexual coercion, broadly defined, is the use of psychological and/or physical pressure or force to compel a partner to engage in unwanted sexual activity (Muehlenhard, Goggins, Jones, & Satterfield, 1991).

Heteronormativity and Sexual Coercion

There is some research supporting the notion that the traditional sexual script sustains and promotes male sexual coercion. A narrative analysis of dating among heterosexual adolescents in New Zealand and England found that adolescents viewed the use of sexual coercion by males as a normal part of masculinity and heterosexual relations (Hird & Jackson, 2001). Other qualitative work has shown that women use the romantic narrative to justify and understand abuse in their relationships, defining themselves in light of the heteronormative model of femininity in which their job is to provide love and care to abusers with the hope of helping them (Jackson, 2001; Wood, 2001).

Quantitative research has found that men and women with conservative gender role attitudes are more permissive of the use of physical coercion by men to obtain sexual activity from women (Haworth-Hoepfner, 1998). Men with conservative gender role attitudes are also more likely to have personally obtained intercourse by using various coercive tactics, including lying, arguing, getting their female partner intoxicated, and through forceful rape (Muehlenhard & Falcon, 1990). Still others have found that the perpetration of sexual coercion varies with psychological masculinity for heterosexual and homosexual men and women (McConaghy & Zamir, 1995; VanderLaan & Vasey, 2009). VanderLaan and Vasey, for example, found that heterosexual men's greater use of verbal sexual coercion compared to non-heterosexual men was explained by differences in masculinity between these two groups, and suggested that future research examine whether performing non-physical coercion can be attributed to adherence to scripts for masculine sexuality.

Verbal Sexual Coercion

Of the various types of sexual coercion, verbal sexual coercion is considered a more socially acceptable and less obvious form of relationship violence (Katz, Moore, & Tkachuk,

2007; Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2004; Oswald & Russell, 2006). Verbal sexual coercion is defined as using verbal tactics to get one's partner to engage in more sexual activity than he or she wants and can include the use of lies, guilt, promises, begging, negotiating, continual arguments, or threats (Basile, 1999; DeGue & DiLillo, 2004; Livingston, Buddie, Testa, & VanZile-Tamsen, 2004). Verbal sexual coercion is an extremely common type of sexual aggression, being reported in 20-25 % of women's current romantic relationships (Hines, 2007; Katz, Kuffel, & Brown, 2006; Katz & Myhr, 2008; Muñoz-Rivas, Graña, O'Leary, & González, 2009) and occurring at a higher rate than physical coercion or coercion through intoxication (Abbey, BeShears, Clinton-Sherrod, & McAuslan, 2004; Humphrey & White, 2000; Spitzberg, 1998).

Rates of verbal sexual coercion are even higher among college students than among high-school students or older adults (Katz, Tirone, & Schukrafft, 2012). Some research has found that as many as 70 % of college women have experienced "emotional manipulation" by a male partner in an effort to gain sexual contact (Struckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, & Anderson, 2003). Research has also found that men can be the victims of verbal sexual coercion (Seal, O'Sullivan, & Ehrhardt, 2007; Stephens & Eaton, 2014), perhaps just as often as women in samples of young adults (Hines, 2007; Kaestle, 2009). The relatively high level of verbal sexual coercion in college relationships may be due to the frequently short-term nature of young adult relationships and their lack of sexual negotiation skills (DePadilla, Windle, Wingood, Cooper, & DiClemente, 2011; Rickert, Wienmann, Vaughan, & White, 2004; Teitelman, Tennille, Bohinski, Jemmott, & Jemmott, 2011).

Although verbal sexual coercion is a subtle form of relationship aggression, it appears to be quite deleterious, being associated with poor academic performance, relationship satisfaction, and sexual functioning, and increased depression, anger, social anxiety, and substance abuse (Chamberlain & Levenson, 2012; Coker et al., 2002; Edelson, Hokoda, & Ramos-Lira, 2007; Katz & Myhr, 2008; Zweig, Crockett, Sayer, & Vicary, 1999). Further, verbal sexual coercion is often the first stage in conflicts that escalate into physical sexual abuse (Katz, Carino, & Hilton, 2002; Murphy & Blumenthal, 2000; O'Leary, 1999; Salari & Baldwin, 2002; Schumacher & Leonard, 2005). Despite its prevalence among young adults and its apparent destructiveness, relatively little research has examined the possible causes of verbal sexual coercion perpetration and victimization (DeGue, DiLillo, & Scalora, 2010).

Heteronormativity and Verbal Sexual Coercion

In the current research, we proposed that one potential antecedent of verbal sexual coercion among young adults is the endorsement of heteronormative beliefs. Specifically, we examined the relationship between support for norms that

portray men and women as having complimentary needs and behaviors (especially sexual needs and behaviors) and college students' acceptance of and experience with verbal sexual coercion. Our specific hypotheses were:

H1 The endorsement of heteronormative beliefs will be positively related to men's and women's approval of the use of verbal sexual coercion strategies in romantic relationships.

H2 The endorsement of heteronormative beliefs will be positively related to men's reports of verbal sexual coercion perpetration in their most recent relationship.

H3 The endorsement of heteronormative beliefs will be positively related to women's reports of verbal sexual coercion victimization in their most recent relationship.

As noted earlier, male-to-female sexual coercion can be justified in light of heteronormative depictions of women as passive and coy and men as active and innately oversexed (e.g., Byers, 1996). Verbal sexual coercion, compared to physical coercion, should be especially easy to accept and perpetrate on the basis of heteronormative beliefs because it is not seen as a deviant behavior associated with mental illness, criminality, and sadism (Feild, 1978; Herman, 1990; Lev-Wiesel, 2004; Scully, 1990). Instead, verbal coercion can be understood by those high in heteronormative beliefs as a typical man's natural and relatively harmless response to his powerful sex drive when confronted with a typical (i.e., sexually reluctant) woman. The endorsement of heteronormative beliefs should therefore be associated with men's and women's acceptance of the use of verbal sexual coercion in romantic relationships, with men's perpetration of this coercion, and with women's engagement in relationships where this kind of perpetration is common (i.e., victimization).

While it is fairly straightforward to expect a positive relationship between heteronormative beliefs and male perpetration/female victimization of verbal sexual coercion, the relationship between heteronormative beliefs and female perpetration/male victimization of verbal sexual coercion is less immediately obvious. One might expect that greater endorsement of heteronormative beliefs would be negatively related to reports of experience with female-to-male coercion, as female sexual agency and sexual desire are incongruent with traditional gender roles. In this case, women who strongly endorse heteronormative beliefs would be less likely to have verbally sexually coerced their partner and men who endorse these beliefs would be less likely to be in relationships with coercive female partners.

On the other hand, heteronormative beliefs also posit an adversarial relationship between the sexes (e.g., Burt, 1980; Glick & Fiske, 1996). The belief that heterosexual relationships are characterized by power struggles between complementary rivals may legitimize coercive acts performed by either sex upon the other. Indeed, adversarial sexual beliefs have been

associated with greater levels of verbal and forced sexual coercion by women against men as well as by men against women (Anderson, 1996; Hines, 2007) and with men's and women's attitudes towards sexual harassment (Murrell & Dietz-Uhler, 1993). We therefore leave open the possibility that heteronormative beliefs may either be positively or negatively related to female perpetration/male victimization of verbal sexual coercion.

Heteronormative Beliefs as a Latent Construct

In this article, we examined and operationalized heteronormative beliefs as a higher-order construct that can be indicated by measures of sexist beliefs about male and female relationships and sexuality. To our knowledge, no comprehensive, single measure of heteronormative beliefs currently exists to capture views about gender role complementarity and male dominance/female submissiveness.¹ Indeed, the scope and diversity of heteronormative beliefs is sufficiently large that it may be impossible to capture in a single measure. For this reason, we argue that heteronormative beliefs should be understood and represented as an underlying concept that motivates most, if not all, measures of heterosexual sexuality and gender relations.

The measures we used in an effort to capture general endorsement of heteronormativity each assessed norms that portrayed men and women as different and complimentary and men as dominant. These measures include: the belief that men should dominate women sexually (Muehlenhard & Felts, 1998), that men are always ready for sex (Snell et al., 1986), that men's sexual activity is more acceptable than women's (Muehlenhard & Quackenbush, 1998), and hostile and benevolent sexist beliefs (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Some of these beliefs have already been individually correlated with acceptance and use of verbal influence tactics in relationships. For example, men who agree with stereotypes about male sexuality (such as the idea that men are always ready for sex) have been found to use unilateral power strategies in their intimate relationships while women who endorse these stereotypes use unilateral avoidance strategies and compliance tactics with intimate partners (Snell, Hawkins, & Belk, 1988). This suggests that conventional beliefs about male sexuality are associated with one-sided, selfish influence strategies (vs. bilateral, interactive strategies) in both men and women.

Men's hostile sexism scores also predict their use of assertive strategies in courting women (including the use of verbally coercive strategies such as teasing) and women's hostile and benevolent sexism scores predict women's acceptance of these

¹ A measure of heteronormativity as referring to privileging and presuming heterosexuality does exist (Tolley & Ranzijn, 2006), but this is not the aspect of heteronormativity we investigated and the reliability of that scale was low.

strategies (Hall & Canterbury, 2011). Cross-cultural research on sexual coercion has also found that hostility towards the other gender (as measured by the Personal and Relationships Profile) (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) positively predicts forced and verbal sexual coercion for both men and women (Hines, 2007).

Method

Participants

Participants were undergraduate students recruited through the psychology subject pool at a large urban Hispanic-serving university. Only participants who were between the ages of 18 and 25 years were eligible in order to assure that our sample represented typical young adult students. As mentioned earlier, the frequency of dating relationships in this population and their particular vulnerability to verbal sexual coercion made this population fertile for study. All participants in our study were also required to have prior or current dating experience. The study was described to potential participants as an effort to “examine students’ experiences and attitudes, especially regarding romance, sexuality, and dating.” Participants did not know we were examining the relationship between beliefs about heterosexual sexuality and verbal sexual coercion outcomes.

A total of 555 heterosexual undergraduates participated (292 women, 263 men) with a mean age of 20.78 years ($SD = 2.06$). Seventy percent of our sample self-identified as Hispanic or Latino, with 11 % identifying as Black, 9 % as Caucasian, 4 % as multi-racial, 4 % as Asian, and 2 % identifying as “other.” On average, participants reported having had 7.24 lifetime relationships ($SD = 8.88$), including boyfriends/girlfriends, hookups, friends with benefits, etc., and 5.73 lifetime sexual partners ($SD = 6.84$). Men reported having had significantly more lifetime relationships than women, $M_s = 9.09$ and 5.57, $t(547) = 4.72$, $p < .001$, and significantly more sexual partners than women, $M_s = 6.96$ and 4.62, $t(549) = 4.07$, $p < .001$, a common finding in literature on sexuality and intimate relationships in the U.S. (CDC, 2013). Seventy seven percent of women and 62 % of men in our sample reported currently seeing someone romantically, $\chi^2(1) = 15.00$, $p < .001$, and 68 % of women and 48 % of men reported being currently involved in a “committed romantic relationship,” $\chi^2(1) = 23.46$, $p < .001$.

Procedure

Participants completed the study online in exchange for course credit. In the study survey, participants were asked to complete measures assessing their endorsement of a variety of heteronormative beliefs about gender and sexuality, their

acceptance of verbal sexual coercion tactics, and their recent experience, if any, with verbal sexual coercion both as a victim and as a perpetrator in their most recent intimate relationship.

Measures

Predictor Variables

Four measures were used to indicate participants’ endorsement of heteronormative beliefs. These measures were expected to form a single latent predictor variable representing “heteronormative beliefs.” These measures included the Men Should Dominate subscale of the Sexual Beliefs Scale (SBS) (Muehlenhard & Felts, 1998), the Always Ready for Sex subscale of the Stereotypes about Male Sexuality Scale (SAMSS) (Snell et al., 1986), the full Sexual Double Standards Scale (SDSS) (Muehlenhard & Quackenbush, 1998), and the full Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Importantly, none of these measures contained items that directly assessed participants’ experience with or attitudes about sexual coercion, abuse, or assault.

The Men Should Dominate subscale of the SBS includes nine items assessing the extent to which men should exercise authority and control in sexual situations, such as “During sex, guys should be in control,” assessed on a bipolar fully-labeled scale from 1 (“Disagree strongly”) to 4 (“Agree strongly”). Responses to the Men Should Dominate subscale cohered at $\alpha = .93$, so a composite index was used.

The Always Ready for Sex subscale of the SAMSS consists of six questions, each of which asks participants about the extent to which they agree that men have strong and constant sexual needs (e.g., “Men usually never get enough sex”) assessed on a bipolar fully-labeled scale from 2 (“Agree”) to –2 (“Disagree”). Responses to the Always Ready for Sex subscale cohered at $\alpha = .88$, so a composite index was used.

The SOSS contains 26 items that assess individuals’ attitudes towards men’s and women’s sexual behavior on a bipolar fully-labeled scale from 0 (“Disagree strongly”) to 3 (“Agree strongly”). Six of these items compared men and women directly within a single question, such as the item “It’s worse for a woman to sleep around than it is for a man.” The remaining 20 items compared men and women in parallel questions, such as the items “I kind of feel sorry for a 21-year-old woman who is still a virgin” and “I kind of feel sorry for a 21-year-old guy who is still a virgin.” Responses to the SDSS cohered at $\alpha = .94$, so a composite index was used.

The ASI includes 22 items, 11 of which assess sexist antipathy towards women, also known as “Hostile Sexism,” and 11 of which assess sexist benevolence and paternalism towards women, also known as “Benevolent Sexism.” An example item from the Hostile Sexism subscale of the ASI is “Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being

sexist” while an example item from the Benevolent Sexism subscale is “Women should be protected and cherished by men.” Hostile and benevolent items were all measured on a bipolar fully-labeled scale from 0 (“Disagree strongly”) to 5 (“Agree strongly”).

The Hostile and Benevolent Subscales of the ASI tend to be positively correlated (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1996) though women typically report less hostile sexism than men across various cultures and socioeconomic groups (Glick et al., 2000; Kilianski & Rudman, 1998; Overall, Sibley, & Tan, 2011). In the current study, the benevolent and hostile subscales were computed separately for independent analyses ($\alpha = .75$ and $\alpha = .78$).

Criterion Variable Measures

To assess participants’ personal acceptance of the use of verbal sexual coercion strategies in romantic relationships, we first conducted pretesting on a group of 54 students (37 women, 17 men) to determine what verbal sexual influence tactics were being used in our population of college students. Pretest participants were asked to “give three examples of things you have heard people say or do—not including the use of physical force—to try to get someone to engage in more sexual contact than they may have wanted.” Responses were compiled and the 14 most common verbal strategies were extracted for use in this study. These strategies included items such as: “Say that everyone is doing it,” “Threaten to break up with him/her,” “Say this will make us feel more connected or take our relationship to the next level,” and “Threaten to tell others that you did engage in that activity anyway” (see the Appendix for a list of the 14 items). Participants in the current study were asked to report the extent to which each of these 14 tactics was acceptable as a way to get a partner to engage in more sexual activity than he/she wants. Responses were reported using a unipolar fully-labeled scale from 1 (“Not at all acceptable”) to 6 (“Extremely acceptable”). Scores on these 14 items cohered at $\alpha = .92$, and were combined to form an index of overall acceptance of verbal sexual coercion.

Experience with verbal sexual coercion as a perpetrator and victim were each measured using a modified version of the Influence Tactics Scale (ITS) (Howard, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1986). The ITS contains 21 items that assess the use of various types of influence strategies in interpersonal relationships. We modified the prompt for the ITS to ask participants to report how often they were subject to or users of each of the 21 strategies in the context of engaging in unwanted sexual activity. For example, the prompt used to measure participants’ recent victimization was: “The following activities are behaviors which sometimes occur in intimate relationships. The activities include ways in which your most recent partner might attempt/have attempted to get you to engage in

more sexual activity than you want/wanted. When your most recent partner wants/wanted more sexual activity than you, how often does/did he/she do each of the following?” All items were measured on a fully-labeled unipolar scale from 1 (“Never”) to 7 (“Always”).

The majority of the influence strategies in the ITS (15/21) are verbal strategies, such as “dropping hints,” “pleading,” and “insulting.” We used these 15 verbal strategies to assess experience with verbal sexual coercion as a perpetrator and victim (see Table 2 for all items in the ITS, including the 15 items used to measure verbal sexual influence strategies in this study). Reports of perpetration of the 15 verbal sexual coercion tactics cohered at $\alpha = .88$, and reports of victimization of the 15 verbal sexual coercion tactics cohered at $\alpha = .87$. On this basis of these reliabilities, composite scores were created for each variable by summing individuals’ scores across items.²

Results

Gender Differences and Correlations Among Variables

First, mean level differences in men’s and women’s responses to the predictor and criterion variables were examined. Although gender differences in average scores on predictor or criterion variables were not a part of our hypotheses, we did find that men scored higher than women on the Sexual Double Standards measure, the Hostile subscale of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, acceptance of coercion, overall experience as a perpetrator of verbal sexual coercion, and overall experience as a victim of verbal sexual coercion (see Table 1).

Because the finding that men reported higher levels of victimization than women was somewhat unusual based on past research (e.g., Struckman-Johnson et al., 2003; VanderLaan & Vasey, 2009), we further examined men’s and women’s use of and subjection to each verbal coercion item separately. We found that men reported greater or similar levels of both perpetration and victimization than women on every single item (see Table 2).

Correlations among the predictor and criterion variables were also evaluated separately by participant gender. For both women and men, each predictor variable was correlated with one another (see Table 3).

² While the ITS has six different tactic categories, each indicated by 3–4 items, we were interested only in verbal tactics. This reduction resulted in some categories containing only 1 item (with an average of 2.5 items per category). This was not enough to obtain the reliability required for an examination of individual tactic categories.

Table 1 Gender differences in predictor and criterion variables

	Men <i>M (SD)</i>	Women <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
1. Men should dominate ^a	22.74 (6.02)	16.50 (5.78)	12.36*	546	1.06
2. Always ready for sex ^b	4.64 (5.41)	4.17 (5.69)	<1	545	0.08
3. Sexual double standards ^c	14.81 (7.26)	9.29 (5.09)	10.31*	538	0.88
4. Hostile sexism ^d	32.12 (7.65)	26.18 (9.21)	8.03*	531	0.70
5. Benevolent sexism ^d	35.14 (7.66)	34.12 (9.30)	1.37	534	0.12
6. Acceptance of verbal sexual coercion tactics composite ^e	27.80 (13.05)	20.62 (8.52)	7.70*	546	0.65
7. Perpetration of verbal sexual coercion composite ^f	51.92 (17.60)	43.05 (13.74)	6.60*	545	0.56
8. Victimization of verbal sexual coercion composite ^f	54.29 (17.86)	46.97 (13.66)	5.39*	542	0.46

Cohen's $d = M_1 - M_2/S_{\text{pooled}}$

^a Absolute range, 9–36

^b Absolute range, –12–12

^c Absolute range, –30–48

^d Absolute range, 0–55

^e Absolute range, 14–84

^f Absolute range, 15–105

* $p < .001$

Heteronormative Beliefs Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model

In order to be able to estimate the relationship between heteronormative beliefs and verbal sexual coercion measures, it was first necessary to establish a gender-neutral latent construct of “heteronormative beliefs.” Structural equation modeling analyses were performed to examine gender differences in the measurement structure of each of the five measures of heteronormative beliefs in relation to a higher-order “heteronormative beliefs” construct. Analyses comparing a model with no equality constraints across groups to a measurement invariance model across groups suggested the existence of gender differences in the latent variable “heteronormative beliefs.” More specifically, the model which allowed the factor loadings for the five heteronormative belief indicators to vary for males and females displayed a better fit when compared to a model with constrained factor loadings across gender, $\chi^2 \text{ diff } (4) = 36.45, p < .001$.

More focused tests of fit revealed that the only significant group difference existed for the Benevolent Sexism subscale, $\chi^2 \text{ diff } (1) = 32.90, p < .001$, suggesting that males and females varied in terms of how they viewed the relationship between the benevolent sexism and the higher order construct of heteronormative beliefs. Consequently, the revised single-factor heteronormativity model used for subsequent analyses excluded the Benevolent Sexism subscale and included Men Should Dominate, Sexual Double Standards, Always Ready for Sex, and Hostile Sexism scores loading onto the latent variable of heteronormative beliefs. These scores were treated as measured constructs rather than latent constructs with individual

questions being the measured variables because they were all derived from pre-validated scales.

Next, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis on the revised gender-neutral measure of heteronormative beliefs to determine the reliability and validity of the latent exogenous construct of “heteronormative beliefs” and to evaluate the fit between observed and estimated covariance matrices. This step was performed in accordance with Kline's (2011) recommendation to test the measurement model underlying structural equation models first, and if the fit was found acceptable, then to proceed with testing the full structural model (i.e., path model). The fit of the model was evaluated with AMOS 20.0 using a maximum likelihood algorithm. Due to missing data (less than 5%), Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) estimation algorithm was used to impute missing values. The model is statistically over-identified.

A variety of global and focused fit indices were evaluated following the recommendations of Bollen and Long (1993), Kline (2011), and Schumacker and Lomax (2010).³ The overall chi square test of model fit was statistically significant, $\chi^2 (2) = 6.66, p = .04$. It is possible that the large sample size

³ These fit statistics represent different ways of testing “...whether the covariance matrix implied by the researcher's model is close enough to the sample covariance matrix that the differences might reasonably be considered as being due to sampling error” (Kline, 2011, p. 193). The values used to indicate good model fit (i.e., when the model is consistent with the covariance data) are as follows: a non-significant χ^2 value, a RMSEA value between .05 and .08, a non-significant p value for the test of close fit, a CFI value greater than or equal to .90, and a TLI value greater than or equal to .90 (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010).

Table 2 Gender differences in individual items assessing experience with verbal sexual coercion from the ITS

	Men <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Women <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Frequency of perpetration ^a					
Drop hints	5.48 (1.52)	5.04 (1.58)	3.31***	551	0.28
Threaten	1.34 (0.10)	1.19 (0.79)	1.94*	548	0.27
Flatter	4.91 (1.83)	4.29 (1.86)	3.93***	550	0.34
Plead	2.48 (1.70)	1.71 (1.23)	6.07***	548	0.52
Offer a "tradeoff"	2.90 (1.90)	2.05 (1.51)	5.08***	550	0.50
Reason	3.24 (1.94)	2.28 (1.70)	6.16***	548	0.53
Insist	3.48 (2.03)	2.24 (1.63)	7.99***	550	0.67
Claim greater knowledge	2.42 (1.88)	1.49 (1.12)	7.13***	550	0.60
Offer to compromise	2.86 (1.88)	2.21 (1.65)	4.31***	550	0.37
Sulk	1.79 (1.38)	1.51 (1.08)	2.65**	550	0.23
Try to make him/her feel guilty	1.98 (1.53)	1.72 (1.34)	2.17*	550	0.18
Assert authority	2.96 (2.04)	1.94 (1.57)	6.61***	550	0.56
Insult	1.30 (0.93)	1.13 (0.58)	2.48*	550	0.22
Ridicule	1.31 (0.92)	1.17 (0.65)	2.15*	550	0.18
Remind of past favors	2.56 (1.88)	1.87 (1.43)	4.89***	551	0.41
Become violent ^b	1.18 (0.71)	1.06 (0.39)	2.57**	549	0.21
Cry ^b	1.16 (.77)	1.18 (0.70)	<1	550	0.03
Behave seductively ^b	4.64 (1.96)	5.06 (1.80)	2.61**	551	0.22
Leave the scene ^b	1.51 (1.11)	1.37 (0.87)	1.69	550	0.14
Act ill ^b	1.25 (0.80)	1.12 (0.54)	2.20*	550	0.19
Act helpless ^b	1.36 (0.91)	1.40 (1.07)	<1	551	0.04
Frequency of victimization ^a					
Drop hints	5.01 (1.49)	5.09 (1.53)	<1	550	0.05
Threaten	1.48 (0.98)	1.15 (0.63)	4.78***	550	0.40
Flatter	4.66 (1.47)	4.78 (1.60)	<1	550	0.15
Plead	2.62 (1.61)	2.53 (1.60)	<1	551	0.06
Offer a "tradeoff"	2.78 (1.85)	2.16 (1.48)	4.35***	550	0.37
Reason	2.99 (1.72)	2.87 (1.69)	1.43	550	0.07
Insist	3.81 (1.87)	2.81 (1.83)	6.38***	551	0.54
Claim greater knowledge	2.30 (1.66)	1.92 (1.45)	2.90**	550	0.24
Offer to compromise	2.82 (1.84)	2.60 (1.76)	1.44	551	0.12
Sulk	2.27 (1.58)	2.13 (1.59)	1.06	550	0.09
Try to make him/her feel guilty	2.20 (1.55)	2.09 (1.50)	<1	549	0.07
Assert authority	2.65 (1.65)	2.05 (1.55)	4.36***	550	0.38
Insult	1.49 (1.04)	1.17 (0.64)	4.30***	550	0.37
Ridicule	1.46 (0.99)	1.20 (0.70)	3.42***	550	0.30
Remind of past favors	2.60 (1.79)	1.81 (1.33)	5.94***	550	0.50

Table 2 continued

	Men <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Women <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Become violent ^b	1.48 (1.07)	1.04 (0.29)	6.74***	549	0.56
Cry ^b	1.44 (0.97)	1.10 (0.47)	5.32***	550	0.45
Behave seductively ^b	5.22 (1.58)	4.47 (1.75)	5.24***	551	0.45
Leave the scene ^b	1.73 (1.30)	1.35 (0.87)	4.04***	550	0.34
Act ill ^b	1.43 (0.91)	1.15 (0.56)	4.35***	547	0.37
Act helpless ^b	2.05 (1.51)	1.43 (0.10)	5.74***	550	0.58

Cohen's $d = M_1 - M_2 / S_{\text{pooled}}$ ^a Absolute range, 1–7^b Excluded from the indices of verbal sexual coercion for not being an exclusively verbal influence tactic* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

($n = 555$) impacted the significance of the chi square test, as chi squared is strongly affected by sample size (e.g., Tanaka, 1993); therefore, additional fit indices were assessed. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was .07. The p value for the test of close fit was .25. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was .99 and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) was .93. The indices indicated a good model fit. The residuals for each of the observed measures were generally low, suggesting that the measures represent reasonable indicators of the higher-order construct in question.

Heteronormative Beliefs Multi-group Models

Next, we sought to confirm that the revised higher-order construct of "heteronormative beliefs" fit equally well for men and women participants to establish a common model form across participant gender. The first model we tested had no equality constraints across the two groups. We refer to this model as the equal form model. This model yielded a good fit to the data. The overall chi square test of model fit was statistically non-significant, $\chi^2(4) = 6.44$. The RMSEA was .03. The p -value for the test of close fit was .67. The CFI was .99 and the TLI was .95. All fit indices supported a good model fit.

The second model tested for measurement invariance across participant gender for the latent variable heteronormative beliefs. This model was equivalent to the equal form model but with the constraint that the factor loadings for the indicators of latent variable for men had to be equal to the value in the corresponding factor loading for women. We refer to this model as the measurement invariance model. Model indices indicated slightly less favorable model fit as compared to the equal form model. The overall chi square test of model fit was statistically non-significant, $\chi^2(7) = 12.59$, $p = .083$. The RMSEA was .04. The p -value for the test of close fit was .68. The CFI was .98 and the TLI was .93. Importantly, the nested chi square test comparing this model

Table 3 Correlations among predictor and criterion variables for men and women

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Men should dominate	–	.19**	.26***	.27***	.29***	.26***	.30***	.23***
2. Always ready for sex	.27***	–	.26***	.21**	.39***	–.02	.14*	.16**
3. Sexual double standards	.44***	.43***	–	.27***	.46***	.07	–.04	–.02
4. Hostile sexism	.35***	.36***	.35***	–	.27***	.13*	.13*	.09
5. Benevolent sexism	.23***	.27***	.23***	.23***	–	.01	.02	–.02
6. Acceptance of verbal sexual coercion tactics	.32***	.07	.21**	.15*	–.04	–	.37***	.33***
7. Perpetration of verbal sexual coercion	.33***	.15*	.26***	.20**	.04	.39***	–	.67***
8. Victimization of verbal sexual coercion	.24***	.04	.09	.15*	.00	.23***	.74***	–

Correlations for women are reported above the diagonal, correlations for men are reported below the diagonal

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .005$, *** $p < .001$

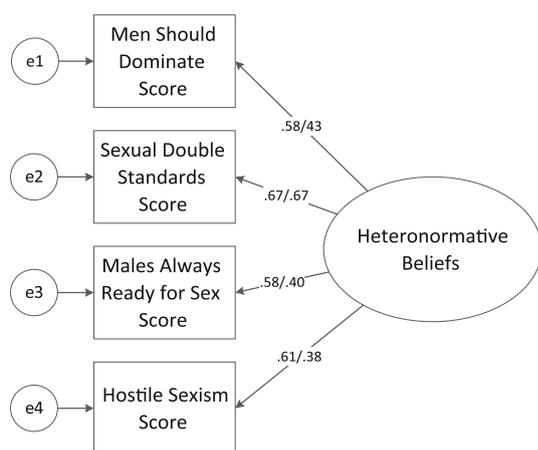


Fig. 1 The factor loadings for men and women for the latent variable of heteronormative beliefs (women are after the slash). Standardized regression weights are shown

to the equal form model yielded a statistically non-significant chi square difference, χ^2 diff (3) = 6.16, $p = .10$, a result that is consistent with measure invariance across groups. Figure 1 presents the standardized parameter estimates for males and females for the measure invariance model.

Heteronormative Beliefs Path Analysis Multi-group Models

Knowing that the latent variable of “heteronormative beliefs” had good model fit and was invariant for men and women participants, we moved to examine the relationship of this construct to our three endogenous variables: acceptance of verbal sexual coercion, perpetration of verbal sexual coercion, and victimization by verbal sexual coercion, and to see if these relationships varied by participant gender. An initial model was tested with no equality constraints across the two groups. The purpose of this analysis was to establish a common model form across gender. In other words, we sought to determine if the variables included in the higher-order

construct of heteronormativity had the same interrelationships for men as they did for women. We refer to this model as the equal form model. The overall chi square test of model fit was statistically significant, $\chi^2(25) = 76.89$, $p < .001$. The RMSEA was .06. The p -value for the test of close fit was .11. The CFI was .93 and the TLI was .84. Fit indices pointed towards a good model fit.

The next model tested the measurement invariance model but with an additional across group equality constraint on the path coefficient from the latent heteronormative beliefs variable to the endogenous variables: acceptance, perpetration, and victimization. Specifically, the path coefficients to endogenous variables were constrained to be equal for men and women. We refer to this model as the path equivalence model. The path equivalence model yielded an overall chi square test that was statistically significant, $\chi^2(28) = 80.38$, $p < .001$. The RMSEA was .06. The p -value for the test of close fit was .17. The CFI was .93 and the TLI was .86. Indices pointed to similar fit as the equal form model. Additionally, we performed a nested chi square difference between this model and the measurement invariance model, χ^2 diff (3) = 3.49, $p = .32$. The chi square difference was statistically non-significant. This result led us to retain the null hypothesis of equal path coefficients for men and women, indicating that heteronormative beliefs were similarly positively associated with both women’s and men’s attitudes towards verbal sexual coercion and their personal experiences of victimization and perpetration.

Figure 2 presents relevant coefficients for men and women for the measurement invariance model. Standardized coefficients for factor loadings for the measurement model varied, even though the unstandardized coefficients were held constant across groups. All estimated unstandardized parameters were statistically significant ($p < .001$). Estimates indicated small to moderate positive relationships between the latent variable heteronormative beliefs and acceptance of verbal sexual coercion (men = .28, women = .29), perpetration of verbal sexual coercion (men = .37, women = .33), and victimization by verbal sexual coercion (men = .22, women = .19). Thus, H1 was

Fig. 2 The effect of heteronormative beliefs on the three endogenous variables is shown for both men and women (women are after the slash). Standardized regression weights are shown

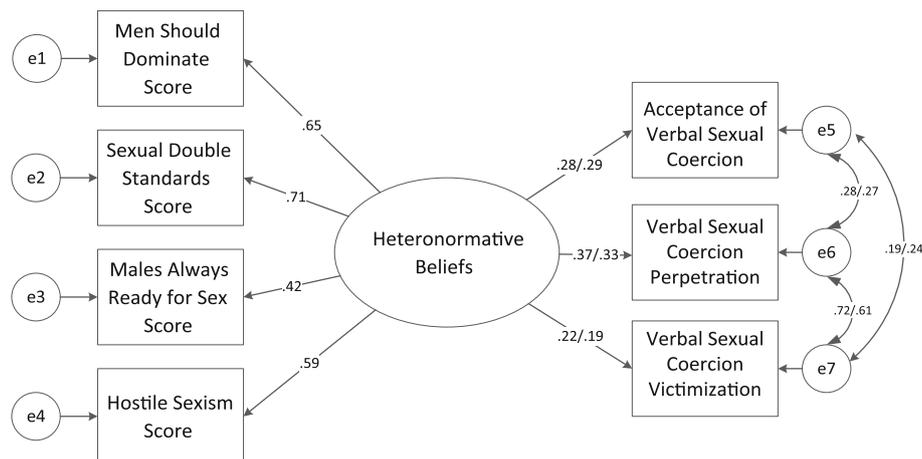


Table 4 Tests of measurement invariance of heteronormative beliefs to verbal sexual coercion outcomes

	χ^2	<i>df</i>	χ^2 diff	Δdf	RMSEA (90 % CI)	CFit	CFI	TLI
Heteronormative beliefs								
Equal form	6.44	4			.03 (<.001–.078)	.67	.99	.95
Measurement invariance	12.59	7	6.16	3	.04 (<.001–.071)	.68	.98	.93
Heteronormative beliefs to sexual coercion outcomes								
Equal form	76.89***	25			.06 (.046–.077)	.11	.93	.84
Path equivalence	80.38***	28	3.49	3	.06 (.044–.073)	.17	.93	.86

N = 555

χ^2 diff nest χ^2 difference; *RMSEA* root mean square error of approximation, 90 % confidence interval for *RMSEA*; *CFit* test of close fit (probability *RMSEA* \leq .05); *CFI* Comparative Fit Index; *TLI* Tucker-Lewis Index

*** *p* < .001

supported, with men and women high in heteronormative beliefs showing more support for the use of verbal sexual coercion in intimate relationships. H2 and H3 were also supported, with heteronormative beliefs being positively associated with men's perpetration of verbal sexual coercion and with women's victimization by verbal sexual coercion. Further, heteronormative beliefs also predicted increased use of verbal sexual coercion by women participants and increased victimization by men participants.

Table 4 shows a summary of fit indices from all tests of measure invariance for both the factor loadings of heteronormative beliefs (i.e., measurement invariance model) and the path estimates from the latent exogenous construct of "heteronormative beliefs" to the endogenous verbal sexual coercion variables (i.e., path equivalence model).

Discussion

Our findings supported the idea that endorsing heteronormative beliefs about men and women may encourage the use of sexually coercive practices in intimate relationships. First, we found the belief that men should dominate women sexually,

that men are always ready for sex, that men's sexual activity is more acceptable than women's, and hostile sexist beliefs form a coherent gender-neutral higher-order construct representing general endorsement of heteronormativity in heterosexual relationships. Second, we found that this construct was associated with increased acceptance of verbal sexual coercion in intimate relationships for both men and women participants (H1), with men's reports of perpetrating verbal sexual coercion (H2), and with women's reports of verbal sexual coercion victimization (H3). Third, consistent with research on adversarial sexual beliefs (e.g., Anderson, 1996; Hines, 2007), we found that heteronormative belief endorsement was positively associated with reports of female-to-male verbal sexual coercion.

Additional findings included that men in our sample scored higher than women on the Sexual Double Standards measure, the Hostile and Benevolent subscales of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, the measure of acceptance of verbal sexual coercion, and personal experience as a perpetrator and victim of verbal sexual coercion in their most recent relationship (Table 1). These findings were consistent with previous reports of gender differences in the endorsement of sexual double standards (e.g., Peterson & Hyde, 2010), ambivalent

sexism (e.g., Glick et al., 2000; Overall et al., 2011), and acceptance of sexual coercion (e.g., Haworth-Hoepfner, 1998; Rosenthal, 1997).

Predicting Female-to-Male Coercion

Some research supports the idea that the coercive behavior of men and women is predicted by different variables, with sexual dominance and sociosexuality predicting sexual coercive and aggressive behaviors in men, and sexual compulsivity predicting coercive behaviors in women (e.g., Schatzel-Murphy, Harris, Knight, & Millburn, 2009; Yost & Zurbriggen, 2006). Our research, however, demonstrated that there was at least one predictor of verbal sexual coercion that was shared by men and women: endorsement of heteronormative beliefs. The reason heteronormative beliefs are positively related to female-to-male verbal sexual coercion may be because these beliefs promote an adversarial relationship between the sexes (e.g., Burt, 1980; Glick & Fiske, 1996) that justifies the use of manipulative techniques by men or by women in an effort to gain power and control. In addition, because verbal coercion is not seen as a prototypical form of aggression (Katz et al., 2007; Muehlenhard, & Peterson, 2004; Oswald & Russell, 2006), it may be viewed by those high in heteronormative beliefs as an especially appropriate influence strategy for women to use to gain control over men.

The fact that benevolent sexism did not cohere with the other heterosexist beliefs in our higher-order construct, but hostile sexism did, supports the possibility that our construct reflected norms for competition between the sexes as well as stereotypes about men's dominance and women's passivity in relationships. Hostile sexism explicitly assesses an adversarial view of gender relations in which women are stereotyped as seeking control over men whereas benevolent sexism is a patronizing but generally positive attitude towards women (Glick & Fiske, 2001). While both hostile and benevolent sexism serve to justify and maintain gender differences in power and status, previous research has found that hostile and benevolent sexist beliefs predict different outcomes, with hostile beliefs being a stronger predictor of the use of aggressive and assertive strategies in romantic relationships (e.g., Hall & Canterbury, 2011; Hines, 2007), though the effect of hostile beliefs on aggressive strategy use in these studies was small ($\beta = .25$ and odds ratios < 1.50 , respectively).

Men's Greater Victimization

The fact that men in our sample reported more experience as a victim of verbal sexual coercion conflicted with some prior findings (e.g., Struckman-Johnson et al., 2003; VanderLaan & Vasey, 2009), but not all. Some research has found that young men report similar levels of non-violent sexual coercion as women (22 vs. 24.5 % in a multinational study of

college students by Hines, 2007, and 6.6 vs. 7.7 % in a national study of adolescents by Kaestle, 2009) or even higher levels of victimization than their female counterparts (21.9 vs. 10.4 % in a study of high-school students by Enosh, 2007). The inconsistency in gender differences in non-violent victimization may be because women experience higher rates of physical sexual coercion than men (Struckman-Johnson, 1988; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1998) and not all studies differentiate between the two types.

In addition, men are generally less likely than women to report incidences of IPV or sexual coercion or to seek psychological support for related emotional problems because victimization is role-incongruent for men (e.g., Hamby, 2005; Sable, Denis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006). In an effort to get unbiased reports, we did not characterize our study or the verbal coercion questions as being about "coercion" or "aggression" nor did we use the words "perpetrator" or "victim." We merely asked participants to report the extent to which they or their partner used various tactics to obtain sexual activity. By using this gender-neutral phrasing, we may have opened the door for men to acknowledge and report more victimization than they normally would have.

Finally, the fact that men reported higher mean levels of both perpetration and victimization than women was curious because cross-gender accounts of victimization and perpetration drawn from the same sample were two sides of the same coin and should be more or less equivalent. That is, men's reports of perpetration should roughly match women's reports of victimization and women's reports of perpetration should roughly match men's reports of victimization. However, the finding that men reported higher levels of both perpetration and victimization suggests that men were overestimating their experiences as victims and/or perpetrators, that women were underestimating their experiences as victims and/or perpetrators, or both.

Gender Conformity in the Use of Verbal Coercion

There was, however, one item from the ITS that women reported using more than men, although this item was not a measure of exclusively verbal coercion: "behaving seductively." Women reported using seductive behavior as a coercive tactic more often than men ($M_s = 5.22$ and 4.47), $t(551) = 2.61, p < .01$, and men correspondingly reported being victimized by this tactic more often than women ($M_s = 5.06$ and 4.64), $t(551) = 5.27, p < .001$. This coheres with recent research in a Hispanic male college population showing that seduction techniques (including both verbal and physical tactics) are seen as one of the most common ways women try to sexually coerce their male partners (Stephens & Eaton, 2014), as well as with research by Waldner-Haugrud and Magruder (1995) suggesting that "...while female-initiated sexual coercion is a norm violation (men initiate, women set limits), when

women break this norm, they conform to other gender norms regarding how women seduce (coerce) men” (p. 213).

Indeed, the finding that heteronormative belief endorsement was positively associated with female-to-male coercion suggests that women may be using verbal coercion in a heteronormative fashion consistent with the stereotype for women to be coy and enticing. Verbally coercive tactics, compared to physical tactics, may, in fact, have the unique potential to be executed in masculine or feminine ways. A sexually coercive verbal tactic such as making promises, for example, can be executed in a gender-congruent way by men (e.g., by promising fidelity, increased relationship commitment, or sexual confidentiality) or by women (e.g., by promising a pleasurable experience or a feeling of accomplishment). The same flexibility holds for tactics like pleading (e.g., by appealing to the stereotypic male need for orgasmic climax vs. the stereotypic female need for demonstrations of love), insisting, ridiculing, negotiating, etc. However, the present study did not examine the dynamic, contextualized, and specific ways in which tactics like threats, pleading, and reasoning were applied by men and women. Moving forward, qualitative research should further investigate the tones, words, and styles used when men are the victims of verbal sexual coercion by women.

Coercion and Intimate Partner Violence in Hispanic Populations

It is important to acknowledge that the young adults in this study were primarily Hispanic, as race and ethnicity are risk factors for intimate partner violence (IPV) and coercion (Welland & Ribner, 2010; Zweig et al., 1999). Specifically, dating violence is higher among Black (12.2 %) and Hispanic (11.4 %) students compared to White students (7.6 %) in the U.S. (CDC, 2012). While the reasons for this discrepancy are still being unraveled, the current research suggests that culture-specific beliefs and meanings about gender may be a contributing factor. Hispanic cultures have been found to have strong traditional prescriptions for men’s and women’s sexual and relationship behavior, prescriptions typically known as “machismo” for men (e.g., Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008) and “marianismo” for women (e.g., Ginorio, Gutierrez, Cauce, & Acosta, 1995). These gender role beliefs socialize women to display modesty and passivity and socialize men to act as sexual and relationship initiators (e.g., DeSouza & Hutz, 1996; Ford, Vieira, & Villela, 2003; Raffaelli and Ontai, 2004). The higher levels of dating violence in Hispanic compared to White populations may thus be due to a stronger endorsement of heteronormative beliefs in Hispanic culture compared to Anglo-American culture. The basic positive relationship between heteronormative beliefs and verbal sexual coercion outcomes in the present study should, however, apply equally well across Hispanic and non-Hispanic samples

to the extent that the items in each measure have the same meanings for each sample.

Conclusion

Research reviews have suggested that traditional gender roles and sexual scripts may support and promote male sexual coercion of women (Byers, 1996; Katz & Wigderson, 2012). The current research represented an important step towards testing this prediction, finding that heteronormative beliefs about men and women were positively associated with acceptance of and experience with verbal sexual coercion for both young men and women in a large and diverse sample in the U.S. Moreover, the present study contributed to the literature on gender role beliefs and attitudes in the U.S. more broadly by showing that there were minimal differences between the structure of men and women participants’ heteronormative beliefs and minimal differences in terms of how those beliefs related to verbal sexual coercion variables for men and women. This study serves as a foundation to begin exploring the shared meanings and values young men and women give to heteronormativity and the consequences of those heteronormative beliefs.

With this in mind, social scientists and practitioners can begin to conceptualize paradigms that more accurately predict and modify the problematic relationship experiences of diverse college populations in the U.S. The current study suggests that relationship violence interventions for at-risk youth might focus on modifying participants’ general attitudes towards gender roles rather than, or in addition to, the typical focus on teaching knowledge about IPV and IPV prevention strategies (e.g., Belknap, Haglund, Felzer, Pruszynski, & Schneider, 2013; Hickman, Jaycox, & Aronof, 2004; Jaycox et al., 2006). However, meaningfully modifying heteronormative beliefs about men and women is likely to require a great deal of time and effort, as these beliefs are transmitted and adopted at very young ages (e.g., DePalma & Atkinson, 2010; Martin, 2009; Myers & Raymond, 2010) and fundamentally organize our understandings of men’s and women’s interactions (e.g., Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2005).

Several additional questions remain. First, the present study used a correlational design, which prohibits drawing cause-and-effect conclusions. More research is needed to identify whether endorsing heteronormative beliefs actually leads to increases in verbal sexual coercion outcomes or whether experience with coercion causes an increased endorsement of heteronormative beliefs (perhaps as a result of efforts to reduce cognitive dissonance or justify the status quo). There may also be third variables, such as conservatism, that cause young men and women to both endorse heteronormative beliefs and to experience coercion in their intimate relationships. A follow-up study is needed in which heteronormative beliefs are manipulated, for example, and verbal

sexual coercion outcomes are measured, in order to know which way the causal arrows flow in this model.

Second, we acknowledge that the set of beliefs we used to represent heteronormative beliefs was not comprehensive. The measures we chose were used because they all assessed the extent to which participants believed men and women have distinct and complementary roles in life and in intimate relationships. These measures were also selected because none of them assessed participants' experience with or attitudes about sexual coercion, assault, or abuse. In this way, we ensured that any potential relationships between the higher-order heteronormative belief construct and the measures of verbal sexual coercion were not due to redundancy of concepts between the two. Other measures that assess attitudes towards gender complementarity, gender role adherence, and/or male dominance, such as the Hypergender Ideology Scale (HGIS) (Hamburger, Hogben, McGowan, & Dawson, 1998), do include items directly related to sexual coercion, such as "Using alcohol or drugs to convince someone to have sex is wrong." However, there are likely other scales assessing aspects of heteronormative beliefs that would also cohere with the measures we used here, and that would also help predict verbal sexual coercion.

Third, the questions asking about experience with verbal sexual coercion in this study did not offer participants the option to report never having experienced a disjunction in sexual desire (i.e., that they and their most recent partner had always wanted exactly the same amount of sexual contact). Participants were only able to provide the extent to which they had experienced various coercive tactics when there was a disparity in wanting, from 1 ("Never") to 7 ("Always"). Therefore, those participants who never experienced a disparity likely selected the "Never" option for all tactics and were analyzed like individuals who did experience disparities but who nonetheless did not ever perpetrate coercion or become the victim of coercion. The confounding of these two groups would be a problem for our conclusions about the relationship between heteronormativity and verbal sexual coercion if there were many individuals who had never experienced a disjunction and if those individuals were also typically low in heteronormative beliefs. However, previous research finds that discrepancies in the desire for sexual activity are extremely common (for a review, see O'Sullivan & Byers, 1996). Indeed, only 10 participants in our sample (2%; 6 men, 4 women) reported never having used any of the original 21 ITS tactics to sexually coerce their most recent partner, and only seven (1%; 5 men, 2 women) reported that their most recent partner never used any of these tactics on them. Perhaps more importantly, we have no reason to expect that individuals who never experienced disjunctions are also low in heteronormative belief endorsement.

Finally, we leave to future research the possibility that heteronormative beliefs predict or promote other kinds of sexual or relationship coercion or aggression. Because verbal sexual

coercion may be a precursor for physical sexual abuse (e.g., Katz et al., 2002; Salari & Baldwin, 2002; Schumacher & Leonard, 2005), some of the same mechanisms that predict or produce verbal coercion may also predict or produce other types of relationship violence. Ultimately, understanding the causes and correlates of all types of relationship violence will enable the creation of practices designed to improve sexual health outcomes for men and women alike.

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Appendix

Fourteen items describing specific instances of verbal sexual coercion from pretesting

1. Threaten to blackmail him/her by exposing private information
2. Threaten to break up with him/her
3. Tell him/her that you will find someone else to do this activity if he/she won't
4. Threaten to tell others that you did engage in that activity anyway
5. Say "this will make us feel more connected" or "take our relationship to the next level"
6. Remind the partner that you bought him/her dinner or other things
7. Beg him/her
8. Say that it's unfair to leave you horny and without sexual satisfaction
9. Say that your ex would have done it
10. Say that if your partner loved you he/she would do this
11. Tell your partner that if he/she did this you will love him/her forever
12. Say that everyone is doing it
13. Sweet talk your partner; say how attractive they are
14. Tell your partner to stop "playing hard to get"

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