“He seemed so normal”: Single tactic perpetrators of sexual violence are similar to non-violent men using the DSM-5’s hybrid personality disorder model

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ABSTRACT

The corpus of sexual violence literature contains numerous studies comparing perpetrators to non-perpetrators, but less is known about differences between those using different tactics (i.e., physical/aggressive, non-physical/coercive, or both/polytactic). Similarly, specific personality traits are often measured in sexual violence research, but personality disorder studies are less common. This research addresses these gaps by investigating potential personality disorder diagnoses in aggressive, coercive, and polytactic perpetrators using the DSM-5’s hybrid model of personality disorders. A nationwide sample of adult men (N = 672) completed a survey measuring personality traits and sexually violent experiences. Men reporting sexual violence were expected to generate higher levels of maladaptive personality trait scores, leading to higher prevalence rates of Antisocial and Narcissistic Personality Disorders, than non-violent men. Aggressive and coercive men's personality trait scores were statistically similar to those of non-violent men. Polytactic men were significantly more maladaptive than study counterparts, and were at greater risk of being classified as personality disordered. These findings have implications for models predicting sexual violence and for intervention and prevention efforts.

1. Sexual violence

Sexual violence (SV) involves a range of strategies generally described in two primary categories. The first is sexual coercion, which consists of nonphysical methods of obtaining sexual contact from an unwilling partner (e.g., guilt, lies; DeGue, DeLillo, & Scalora, 2010). Sexual coercion is the most common form of SV in college students (Fedina, Holmes, & Backes, 2016), and it is highly prevalent in non-student populations, as well (e.g., 20%; Russell & King, 2016). The second SV category is sexual aggression, which encompasses physical means of gaining sexual contact from an unwilling individual (e.g., force, drug/alcohol-induced incapacitation, unwanted touching/kissing). Sexual aggression is the most severe type of SV, and accused perpetrators often face legal and social consequences related to the act (DeGue et al., 2010). Approximately 19% of university women are victims of sexual aggression (Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2008), and 22% of community men perpetrate these acts (Russell & King, 2016).

There has been extensive empirical investigation of SV, but much of the available research compares non-perpetrators to perpetrators. Little is known about individual differences between aggressive offenders, coercive offenders, and those who utilize both means of SV (i.e., polytactic perpetrators). Researchers generally find repeat offenders of SV have greater levels of maladaptive and aggressive traits (e.g., Abbey & McAuslan, 2004), but most of these studies do not distinguish between tactics. Making this distinction could improve prevention efforts, as well as support the development of effective clinical interventions.

Integrating constructs used in clinical practice could similarly improve the body of literature. Maladaptive factors like rape myth acceptance and hostility towards women reliably predict SV in numerous studies (e.g., Abbey, Jacques-Tiura, & LeBreton, 2011; Malamuth, 1986; Russell & King, 2016, 2017), and these findings contributed to the development of well-validated SV models, such as Malamuth (1986)’s Confluence Mediational Model (Malamuth & Hald, 2017). Theoretical models often include personality traits, but the use of specific personality disorder (PD) diagnostic criteria is relatively uncommon. To bridge a gap between theory and practice, it would be helpful to establish clinically relevant personality profiles so evidence-based clinicians have reason to add SV predictors like rape myth acceptance to their test batteries.
2. Personality and sexual violence

Sexual violence is often examined through a clinical lens, with the behavioral health conditions of Narcissistic PD (NPD) and Antisocial PD (ASPD) being extensively linked to SV. Individuals with these disorders share several core features, including behavioral impulsivity, manipulation and exploitation of others, empathic deficits, and reactive aggression (e.g., Paulhus, 2014). Individuals with NPD are characterized by exaggerated self-importance and entitlement, and they may be insensitive and disdainful toward the needs of others (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Narcissistic traits relate to increased SV perpetration (Mouilso & Calhoun, 2012; Zeigler-Hill, Enjaian, & Essa, 2013) and sexual harassment (Zeigler-Hill, Besser, Morag, & Campbell, 2016), as well as greater acceptance of rape myths, rape-conducive beliefs, and sexual coercion (Bushman, Bonacci, Van Dijk, & Baumeister, 2003). ASPD tends to manifest as callousness, deceitfulness, and manipulativeness (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Psychopathy is a construct overlapping ASPD due to shared disinhibition, hostility, and antagonism (e.g., Beck, Freeman, & Davis, 2015; Strickland, Drislane, Lucy, Krueger, & Patrick, 2013; Walsh & Wu, 2008), and it relates to increased sexual harassment (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2016), sexual coercion (Harris, Rice, Hilton, Lalumiere, & Quinsey, 2007; Jones & Olderbak, 2014), sexual aggression (Kosson, Kelly, & White, 1997; Malamuth, 2003), and positive attitudes regarding predatory behavior (O’Connell & Marcus, 2016).

As personality research progresses, the value of assessing PDs as dimensional symptom clusters has become apparent; however, categorical diagnostic classifications remain important for clinicians in everyday practice. With this in mind, a DSM-5 workgroup proposed a new hybrid model with dimensional traits and categorical diagnoses (Krueger & Markon, 2014). They also provided an open-source instrument called the Personality Inventory for the DSM-5 (PID-5; Krueger, Derringer, Markon, Watson, & Skodal, 2012) to promote empirical investigation of the hybrid model (Krueger & Markon, 2014). The model’s new diagnostic criteria require disorder-specific PID-5 facet elevations (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), and the workgroup proffered facets for each PD diagnosis. Subsequent investigation revealed these configurations had limited specificity (e.g., Few et al., 2013), but stepwise regression techniques identified additional facets to supplement the workgroup’s suggestions (e.g., Yam & Simms, 2014).

3. Study goals and hypotheses

The goal of the present study was to establish prevalence rates of PD diagnoses among men classified into SV tactics groups (non-violent, aggressive, coercive, and polytactic). Men reporting any SV were expected to have greater mean t-scores on the PID-5 facets and domains, as well as more NPD and ASPD diagnoses than the non-violent sample. Because sexual aggression is the more serious SV, individuals using only aggression were predicted to have greater PID-5 scores, NPD diagnoses, and ASPD diagnoses than coercers. Polytactic men were expected to have greater PID-5 scores, NPD diagnoses, and ASPD diagnoses than both aggressors and coercers.

4. Methods

4.1. Participants

Participants (N = 672; M_age = 32.06, SD_age = 11.62) were United States residents. The sample was 84.1% Caucasian, 4.3% African American, 4.8% Hispanic, 3.0% Asian, and 3.8% Other. The PID-5 was screened for consistency (Keeley, Webb, Peterson, Roussin, & Flanagan, 2016), and 29 participants were excluded for random responding. The final sample had < 3% missing data.

4.2. Materials

4.2.1. Personality inventory for DSM-5 (PID-5)

The 220-item PID-5 (Krueger et al., 2012) assessed 5 personality domains comprised of 25 personality facets. Items were rated on 4-point Likert-type scales (1 = Very False or Often False; 4 = Very True or Often True). Facet scores were not calculated if participants left > 25% of the contributing items blank. Domain scores were only calculated if all facets scores comprising the domain were available. Internal consistency was within acceptable limits (α range = .79–.93), and domains were moderately intercorrelated (r range = .44–.63).

4.2.2. Revised Sexual Experiences Survey-Short Form Perpetration (SES)

The 10-item SES (Koss et al., 2007) assessed sexual aggression and coercion perpetration. Men indicated the frequency of sexually aggressive and coercive behavior since age 14 (0,1,2, or 3 + times). Internal consistency was acceptable (α = .78).

4.3. Procedure

Participants were recruited through Amazon’s MTurk. They completed the survey on Qualtrics after giving informed consent. Participants were administered additional assessments for inclusion in other research. The study took < 30 min to complete.

4.4. Data analyses

Participants were first classified into the Non-Violent (n = 509) or Violent (n = 163) group based on self-reported sexual aggression and/or coercion (> 1 SV act = Violent). To determine whether the PID-5 was invariant between the Violent and Non-Violent groups, a multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) was conducted. Configural, metric, and scalar invariance were tested across groups. Configural invariance requires the model to fit each group’s data (RMSEA ≤ .08 and CFI ≥ .90). Metric invariance is supported when goodness-of-fit indices (GFIs) between unconstrained and metric models are similar, and scalar invariance requires similarity between the metric and scalar models. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) were the GFIs employed in this research. Because the samples were uneven, critical differences between GFIs were operationalized as ΔCFI ≤ .005 and ΔRMSEA ≤ .01 (Chen, 2007).

After invariance testing, PID-5 t-scores were converted to t-scores using norms from Krueger et al. (2012)’s nationally representative sample. Table 1 presents means and SDs of normed PID-5 domains. Participants were then classified into mutually exclusive groups based on self-reported SV. Participants were classified as Non-Violent (n = 509) if they reported no SV, Coercive (n = 57) if they had > 1 act of non-physical SV (e.g., verbal pressure, threats), and Aggressive (n = 52) if they reported > 1 instance of physical SV (e.g., unwanted touching/kissing, physical force). Participants were classified as Polytactic (n = 54) if they reported > 1 act of non-physical and > 1 act of physical SV. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze the effects of SV perpetration on mean PID-5 t-scores, which

| Table 1 |
| PID-5 domain descriptive statistics. |
| | M | SD |
| Negative affectivity | 51.92 | 10.40 |
| Detachment | 54.73 | 11.09 |
| Antagonism | 44.48 | 15.53 |
| Disinhibition | 52.51 | 10.07 |
| Psychoticism | 46.77 | 12.54 |

Means are t-scores normed with Krueger et al. (2012)’s sample.
illustrated the specific PID-5 facets and domains associated with subsequent PD diagnostic group assignments.

After the MANOVA, the four types of SV (i.e., attempted and completed coercion and aggression) by offender classification were analyzed to determine group differences in mean rates of SV. PD facet clusters from Yam and Simms (2014)'s stepwise regression were then used to assign participants to dichotomous (present/absent) PD diagnostic groups. The half method was employed for the category assignments. To qualify for PD diagnoses in the half method, half of the PD facets (or half + 1 if there are an odd number of facets) must be elevated. This polythetic threshold has produced similar PD prevalence rates as those found in the DSM-IV-TR (Samuel, Hopwood, Krueger, Thomas, & Ruggero, 2013). Samuel et al. (2013)'s empirical method was used to determine facet elevations. Clinically significant elevations were operationalized as a t-score ≥ 65 (Samuel et al., 2013). Qualification for a PD diagnosis in the DSM-5’s hybrid model also includes clinically significant impairment in self and interpersonal functioning (Criterion A), which was not assessed in this study. Therefore, the current diagnostic frequencies are likely greater than would be found in the general population (Samuel et al., 2013).

5. Results

5.1. PID-5 domain and facet group differences

To test the PID-5’s invariance, participants were classified as Non-Violent (n = 509) or Violent (n = 163). The configurural invariance hypothesis was retained, as the model fit the data well in the Non-Violent (χ²(135) = 293.08, p < .001, CFI = .982, RMSEA = .048) and Violent groups (χ²(135) = 186.15, p = .002, CFI = .984, RMSEA = .048). There was also support for metric invariance (ACFI = .001; ΔRMSEA = .000), and scalar invariance (ACFI = .005; ΔRMSEA = .002). The results of the MGCFA are presented in Table 2, and they suggest the PID-5 measured the same constructs across groups. After the MGCFA, PID-5 scores were converted to t-scores. A MANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of SV offender status on the five PID-5 domains (Detachment, Antagonism, Disinhibition, Psychoticism, and Negative Affectivity). There was a significant effect of SV status, V = .091, F(15,1998) = 4.16, p < .001, d = .35. Follow-up ANOVAs with a Bonferroni correction (p < .01) were used to analyze the effect of offender status on PID-5 domain t-scores (Table 3). Post-hocs were Bonferroni corrected (p < .01). Notably, Coercers were similar to Non-Violent individuals on Detachment, Antagonism, and Psychoticism. Coercers and Aggressors were similar to each other on all five PID-5 domains. Aggressors were similar to Non-Violent participants on all domains except Detachment. Polytactic perpetrators had greater scores than Coercers on Antagonism, and greater scores than Aggressors on Antagonism and Psychoticism. Polytactics had greater scores than Non-Violent participants on every facet with a significant main effect (19/25). They also had greater mean scores than Coercers on 9/25 facets and greater scores than Aggressors on 11/25 facets.

5.2. Sexual violence group differences

Mean SV perpetration by offender type was analyzed to learn differences between single and polytactic perpetrators. Polytactic individuals had significantly greater mean perpetration rates in all SV categories except attempted coercion (Table 4). Of note, Polytactic participants reported more than twice as much attempted and completed sexual aggression than did the single tactic Aggressors group.

5.3. Personality disorder diagnostic group differences and relative risk

SV perpetrator groups were retained for PD diagnostic analyses. Participants with a t-score ≥ 65 on a PID-5 facet were classified as “elevated” on the respective facet. The total elevations for each PD were then aggregated. Individuals with elevations on half of the facets associated with a PD (or half + 1 if the total number of facets was odd) were classified into the diagnostic PD category (Table 5).

The results of the PD diagnostic analyses demonstrated Coercive and Aggressive perpetrators had diagnostic rates statistically similar to Non-Violent individuals in all categories. Coercers and Aggressors had Obsessive-Compulsive PD diagnostic rates similar to Polytactic participants, as well. Participants classified as Polytactic offenders had rates similar to all other groups in the Avoidant, Borderline, and Schizotypal PD categories. However, they had higher rates of Antisocial and Narcissistic PDs than did all other SV perpetrator groups, and nearly 39% of the Polytactic offenders were classified as Narcissistic.

In light of the differences in Polytactic perpetrators relative to all others, as well as Coercers and Aggressors similarity to Non-Violent participants, the relative risk of a PD diagnosis for Polytactic offenders was calculated (Table 5). Polytactic offenders were 4.2 times more likely to receive an Antisocial PD diagnosis than were individuals in the other categories. They were also 3.39 times more likely to be diagnosed with Narcissistic PD, and 2.57 times more likely to be diagnosed with Obsessive-Compulsive PD. Notably, Polytactic perpetrators were > 3 times as likely to receive a Cluster B (Antisocial, Narcissism, Borderline) PD diagnosis.

6. Discussion

There has been extensive empirical focus on individual differences between sexually violent perpetrators relative to non-violent peers. Previous research demonstrated perpetrators often have high levels of maladaptive traits, such as impulsivity and callousness, as well as aggressive traits like rape myth acceptance and hostility towards women (e.g., Malamuth, 1986; Russell & King, 2016, 2017). While this information aided the understanding of SV and contributed to theoretical model building, it is rare to evaluate many of these factors in clinical settings. Thus, the goal of this study was to bridge the gap between research and practice by assessing PDs and comparing prevalence rate differences between non-violent individuals, those using only non-physical (coercive) or physical (aggressive) tactics, and men who are polytactic (both coercive and aggressive). The DSM-5’s hybrid PD model was used to accomplish this goal.

Several hypotheses were generated for this study. Men endorsing any SV were expected to have greater scores on PID-5 domains and facets, as well as more ASPD and NPD diagnoses, relative to non-violent counterparts. Aggressive men were projected to have greater scores and diagnoses than coercive men, and polytactic men were expected to have the greatest scores and diagnoses of all participants. There was mixed support for these hypotheses. Coercive men had greater scores than non-violent men on Disinhibition and Negative Affectivity, and
aggressive men had greater scores than non-violent men on Detachment. However, on the majority of domains and facets, aggressive and coercive men were statistically similar to non-violent men. The PD diagnoses stemming from these PID-5 scores followed the same pattern, as coercive and aggressive men’s diagnostic rates were statistically similar to non-violent men in all PD categories. Aggressors and coercers were also statistically similar to each other on all PID-5 traits and diagnostic categories. There was considerable support for polytactic men being fundamentally different from non-violent individuals. These tactically diverse offenders had greater scores than non-violent men on PID-5 domains, and they were > 3 times as likely to be classified with NPD and ASPD relative to other participants. There were striking differences between Poly tactic and single tactic perpetrators’ mean rates of SV, as well. Poly tactic men averaged more than twice as many acts of aggression relative to men using aggression only, a figure that does not include the coercion required for inclusion in the polytactic category. The temporal order of the SV acts cannot be inferred from these data, so it remains unknown if most polytactic men progress from coercion to aggression or vice versa. However, acts constituting sexual aggression are illegal in most states (e.g., DeGue et al., 2010), and their seriousness implies understanding why some

Table 3 MANOVA results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PID-5 Domains</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>d</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Detachment</td>
<td>7.35</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>50.98</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>52.68</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>55.18</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>56.80</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antagonism</td>
<td>14.28</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>53.47</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>56.87</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>56.05</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>63.18</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disinhibition</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>42.73</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>49.31</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>46.86</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>53.57</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychoticism</td>
<td>9.87</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>51.53</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>54.49</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>53.47</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>58.79</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neg. affectivity</td>
<td>6.03</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>45.64</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>50.39</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>49.46</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>51.08</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Mean rates of sexual violence by offender status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Coercive</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
<th>Poly tactic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attempted coercion</td>
<td>0.30 (0.93)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.26 (0.73)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed coercion</td>
<td>2.63 (2.01)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.20 (2.12)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted aggression</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.13 (0.44)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0.41 (0.84)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed aggression</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.71 (1.23)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.67 (2.61)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Personality disorder classification and relative risk by offender status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-violent</th>
<th>Coercive</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
<th>Poly tactic</th>
<th>Poly tactic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 509)</td>
<td>(n = 57)</td>
<td>(n = 52)</td>
<td>(n = 54)</td>
<td>(n = 54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial</td>
<td>23 (4.5%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3 (5.3%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4 (7.7%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>11 (11.4%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant</td>
<td>10 (2.0%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1 (1.8%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3 (5.8%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3 (5.6%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borderline</td>
<td>11 (2.2%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2 (3.5%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2 (3.9%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>4 (7.4%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narcissistic</td>
<td>52 (10.2%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>8 (14.9%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>11 (21.2%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>21 (38.9%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obsessive-compulsive</td>
<td>35 (6.9%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>7 (12.3%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>7 (13.5%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>11 (11.4%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schizotypal</td>
<td>31 (6.1%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>6 (10.5%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>7 (13.5%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>8 (14.8%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Group percentage in parentheses; Poly tactic Relative Risk is Poly tactic perpetrators relative to all other groups; Bold = p < .01; italic = p < .05; Values in the same row not sharing the same superscript are significantly different (p < .01).
individuals cross the threshold from coercion to aggression is a crucial and worthwhile endeavor.

These results add to the mounting evidence demonstrating the insidiousness of NPD and ASPD in the perpetration of SV with a degree of specificity. Single tactic perpetrators in this study were similar to non-violent men, but those who crossed the polytactic threshold had clear antisocial and narcissistic traits and diagnoses. Given that nearly 40% of polytactic men were classified into the NPD category, an NPD diagnosis seems especially pernicious, likely due to narcissistic entitlement and insecurity (e.g., Bushman et al., 2003). These types of traits can feed a sexually violent male’s desire to take whatever he wants and respond with ‘justifiable’ hostility or aggression when denied sexual access.

Finding aggressors and coercers similar to non-violent participants was unexpected, as were the numerous similarities between aggressors and coercers. Aggressive tactics appear to require enhanced levels of violence and aggression, but in this sample, the enhancement only manifested in polytactic men. There are several potential explanations for these findings. First, it is possible our use of the PID-5 explains these results. The PID-5 is relatively new in SV research, although preliminary studies in sexually violent men (Russell & King, 2017) and women (Russell, Doan, & King, 2017) seem promising for the instrument’s utility. Most SV studies also involve college student samples. These groups are generally younger and location-specific, whereas our study involved an older, nationwide sample of men. Personality traits tend to normalize as individuals age, and they are particularly maladjusted in college-aged individuals (Soto, John, Gosling, & Potter, 2011). Thus, the factors in SV models may be specific to university populations and less generalizable to older men. It is also relatively uncommon to separate participants into this study’s SV categories, so it is unknown if our national sample is an anomaly or the norm. Future projects should attempt to replicate these findings in both university and national samples. It would also be worthwhile to test these SV classifications with other factors from well-validated SV models, such as rape myth acceptance, hostility towards women, and unrestricted sociosexuality from Malamuth (1986). Confluence Mediation Model. This work offers some initial evidence of polytactic perpetrators being the group influencing high factor scores in SV studies. If that is the case, popular perpetration models may be most applicable to polytactic men. While unlikely well-tested models like the Confluence Mediation Model do apply for single tactic men, our data suggest factors contributing to that model, and others like it, should be scrutinized for this possibility.

This research has implications for SV intervention and prevention efforts, as well as risk assessment. Given limited intervention and prevention resources, knowing how sexually violent offenders differ is important in making informed decisions regarding treatment. It is possible less intensive intervention efforts can be successful in men who are only aggressive or coercive. Conversely, individuals with a diverse repertoire of SV tactics appear to have more severe pathology, suggesting a need for more rigorous intervention. In terms of risk assessment, self-serving and antisocial orientations are linked to increased risk of recidivism (Abbey & McAsualn, 2004; Hanson & Morton-Bourg, 2005). Since polytactic men had significantly higher rates of NPD and ASPD than did other offenders, it seems reasonable to suspect their risk for reoffending is also higher. This possibility should be considered in future projects. Our findings also demonstrate the need for further examination of the interplay between offender tactics and personality functioning. There is clearly a host of shared traits and features between different offenders, which suggests sexually violent men may share a common etiology and set of risk factors; however, what is left to be uncovered is the mechanism by which these men go down different offending trajectories. Future research should focus on establishing a critical period for the development of polytactic traits and behaviors, as well as identifying protective factors for polytactic development in at risk populations. Women can be sexually violent, as well (e.g., Russell et al., 2017) and a similar examination of personality traits in women would likely shed light on the unique risk factors within this population.

7. Limitations

There are several limitations to this research. Data were collected online, with limited experimenter oversight, through participant self-report. This data collection procedure can raise questions regarding data validity. Additionally, there is evidence suggesting socially desirable responding can occur in surveys similar to the current research (Meston, Heiman, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 1998). PD diagnoses also require impairments in self and/or interpersonal functioning, which was not assessed in this study. Therefore, the prevalence rates found here are likely inflated and should be viewed as such.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, PID-5 scores and PD diagnoses were statistically similar across the majority of facet and domains for Non-Violent, Aggressive, and Coercive men. This finding was surprising given the plethora of evidence suggesting SV men generally display greater personality maladaptation relative to non-violent counterparts. Polytactic men generated significantly greater scores on all PID-5 domains, were over three times as likely to meet criteria for NPD or ASPD, and perpetrated more than twice as many sexually violent acts compared to other participants. These findings suggest polytactic men are fundamentally different from single tactic sexual offenders and non-violent peers, which is valuable information in prevention and treatment protocol development.

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Harris, G. T., Rice, M. E., Hilton, N. Z., Lalumiere, M. L., & Quinsey, V. L. (2007). Coercive aggression seems especially pernicious, likely due to narcissistic entitlement and insecurity (e.g., Bushman et al., 2003). These types of traits can feed a sexually violent male’s desire to take whatever he wants and respond with ‘justifiable’ hostility or aggression when denied sexual access.


