

## Social Dominance and Forceful Submission Fantasies: Feminine Pathology or Power?

Patricia H. Hawley and William A. Hensley, IV

Department of Psychology, University of Kansas

*This study addresses forceful submission fantasies in men and women. Although many approaches implicitly or explicitly cast women's force fantasies in a pathological light, this study seeks to explore the associations of such fantasy to female power. By adopting an evolutionary meta-theoretical perspective (and a resource control theory perspective), it was hypothesized that highly agentic, dominant women prefer forceful submission fantasies (more than subordinate women) as a means to connect them to agentic, dominant men. In addition, it is suggested that dominant women would ascribe a meaning to the object of the fantasy different from that assigned by subordinate women (i.e., "warrior lover" vs. "white knight"). Two studies were conducted with nearly 900 college students (men and women) from a large Midwestern university. Hypotheses were largely supported. Analysis of meaning supports theoretical perspectives proposing that forceful submission reflects desires for sexual power on behalf of the fantasist. Implications for evolutionary approaches to human mate preferences are discussed.*

Jenise slowly unlocked his manacled wrists. Perhaps she had made a mistake. [Gian] was much more imposing standing before her, unchained! . . . He expertly cornered her. His large hands reaching under her hood, tossing it back. . . . "Turn and face the wall." . . . A deep growling sound of hunger issued from the male throat behind her. . . . She had made a mistake. A grievous mistake! . . . Frantic, she tried to turn . . . but he held her immobile. . . . A sound of despair flowed from her mouth. . . . A snarl escaped his lips, a cross between anger and satisfaction. . . . Decisively, he thrust forward. . . . (Joy, 1998, pp. 49–57)

This quote was drawn from a best seller of the award-winning fantasy writer, Dara Joy (1998). As the story goes, Jenise puts herself in a position to be deflowered by Gian to escape the advances of another man. However, as evidenced earlier, she has second thoughts. After unchaining him, the decision is no longer hers, and she is forcefully taken.

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We thank the students of the Peer Relationships and Social Competence Lab including Libby Huber, Spencer Lazorow, Justin Lynn, Matt Hall, Bethany Blackmon, Paige Feinstein, Jennifer Sloan, Jackie Ratliff, John Geldhof, Waylon Howard, and Sarah Johnson. Special thanks go to Tara Hamilton, Cara Tickle-Kelly, Jamie Lowder, and Paul Alderman for their enthusiastic and tireless pursuit of the romantic vignette.

Correspondence should be addressed to Patricia H. Hawley, Department of Psychology, University of Kansas, 1415 Jayhawk Blvd., Lawrence, KS 66045. E-mail: phawley@ku.edu

Erotic literature for women (e.g., romance novels) exceeded \$1.3 billion in sales in 2006 and enjoyed a 26.4% market share of all books sold (Romance Writers of America, 2007). Market forces reveal much about human motivation, and looking at the "romance" literature should inform about female sexuality. What does it mean that a prevailing theme involves explicit submission to a powerful man (more than one half of historical romance novels sampled; Thurston, 1987)?

Historically, women's sexual fantasies were rarely described in positive terms. Early approaches portrayed women as naturally masochistic, submissive, engulfed with inhibitions, and pressured to suppress dominance feelings, all evidenced in their fantasies (especially those of forceful submission: e.g., Deutsch, 1944; Freud, 1908/1962; Horney, 1967; Maslow, 1942). Often observed as a footnote, however, is the fact that men enjoy submission fantasy themes as well (e.g., Critelli & Bivona, 2008). Notably, the meaning of men's submission fantasies has seldom been the cause for concern as it has been for women.

This study seeks to explore forceful submission fantasies in both men and women. By adopting an evolutionary meta-theoretical perspective (and a resource control theory [RCT] perspective; Hawley, 1999), we pose unique questions about the experience of forceful submission fantasies, the meaning of such fantasies to the fantasist, and the implications for women's sexual autonomy and power.

### Contemporary Approaches to Sexual Fantasy

Although modern approaches to fantasy consider fantasies to be indicators of sexual health rather than sexual deficiency, women's fantasies are still pathologized, especially in the case of submission fantasies (but see Pelletier & Herold, 1988; Strassberg & Lockerd, 1998). Submission themes characterized by aggressive sexual pursuit of the fantasist (cf. masochism) repeatedly emerge as being favored by both men and women (e.g., Davidson, 1985; Hunt, 1974; Leitenberg & Henning, 1995). Even so, analysis of their significance and underlying meaning occurs almost exclusively for women, and not without some hand-wringing.<sup>1</sup> For example, many studies documenting the highest incidence of "force fantasies" use only women as participants (e.g., Bond & Mosher, 1986; Hariton & Singer, 1974; Moreault & Follingstad, 1978; Pelletier & Herold, 1988; Shulman & Horne, 2006; Strassberg & Lockerd, 1998), making meaningful comparisons to men impossible.

#### A Source of Controversy: The Significance of Submission Fantasy

Disagreements about the significance of "rape fantasies" in women and the weighty implications thereof have led some authors to conclude that researchers have carefully side-stepped the topic altogether (Critelli & Bivona, 2008). Prevailing interpretations may well have their roots in Freud's (1908/1962) original view of conflict and pathology. For example, women are thought by some to relieve anxiety concerning sex by imagining themselves being taken by a man they cannot refuse (e.g., Knafo & Jaffe, 1984; Moreault & Follingstad, 1978). In doing so, she has minimized her feelings of personal responsibility for societally censured sexual acts (e.g., Jenise). Relatedly, women implicitly associate sex with submission and, it has been argued (Sanchez, Kiefer, & Ybarra, 2006), submission signals lack of agency and autonomy (a fundamental human need) that ultimately undermines female arousal (cf. Hariton, 1973; MacKinnon, 1987). Brownmiller (1975) went so far as to argue that force fantasies originate from men and have been purposefully woven into the fabric of society; women obligingly see themselves as weak and submissive as a response to men who wish to see themselves as agentic and dominant (see also Carne, Briere, & Esses, 1992; Jackman, 1994). An additional view has women conditioned to associate sex with submission

to a powerful other through sexual abuse (e.g., Gold, Balzano, & Stamey, 1991).

Each of these views is supported by some evidence. The guilt reduction hypothesis (Knafo & Jaffe, 1984), for example, has enjoyed some support (Bond & Mosher, 1986; Moreault & Follingstad, 1978), and women with a history of sexual abuse appear to draw on such fantasy themes (e.g., Shulman & Horne, 2006). At the same time, these perspectives are curiously confronted by work demonstrating that feminist beliefs and liberal attitudes toward sex in women are positively associated with force fantasies involving pain, humiliation, and suffering (mediated by lower sex guilt; Pelletier & Herold, 1988; Shulman & Horne, 2006; Strassberg & Lockerd, 1998). More importantly, none of these theoretical perspectives attempt to address forceful submission fantasies in men.

In stark contrast to the prior submission as pathology views, Hariton (1973) famously argued that force fantasies should not be considered masochistic (or pathological) because they do not tend to involve rejection or abuse. Rather, such fantasies highlight the erotic allure of the fantasist in that she (or he) is irresistible to the seducer. In the book referenced earlier (Joy, 1998), for example, we read that Jenise is uncommonly beautiful, and Gian's defenses are overwhelmed. Moreover, some have observed such fantasies to be more common among dominant and independent women (Hariton, 1973; Maslow, 1942). Thus, from this perspective, forceful submission fantasies by women may invoke feminine power rather than weakness because the man in the scenario is, in her mind, provoked uncontrollably by her allure.

This study entertains the possibility that forceful submission characterizes the fantasy content of men and women alike, and that such material holds little particular "significance" for women. At the same time, we will build up to an intra-gender variability perspective much in line with Hariton's (1973) minority view aligning sexual submission with personal power rather than pathology. This perspective requires a careful consideration of the meaning of the forceful submission fantasy to the fantasist.

#### The Meaning of Forceful Submission

Heretofore, assessments of the meaning of forceful submission have been made rather indirectly. The first content-focused method involves "checklists" that typically itemize explicit behaviors stripped of romantic imagery (e.g., "performing X on another," "having X performed on me"; e.g., Meuwissen & Over, 1991). Alternatively, participants are provided with behavior inventories and asked to rate the frequency in which the act appears in their fantasies (Arndt, Foehl, & Good, 1985; Crepault, Abraham, Porto, & Couture, 1977; Meuwissen & Over, 1991; Wilson & Lang, 1981). Factor analyses of these types of data taken together suggest several common themes entertained by men

<sup>1</sup>The concern about men's fantasies focuses not on submission but on dominance and aggression (e.g., Dean & Malamuth, 1997; Malamuth & Brown, 1994; Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzney, 2002; Mussweiler & Förster, 2000; Zurbriggen, 2000; Zurbriggen & Yost, 2004).

and women, including power–irresistibility (seduction, multiple partners) and submission–dominance themes (power or force; for a review, see Leitenberg & Henning, 1995). Narratives and diaries constrain participants less than checklists or rating scales (Yost & Zurbriggen, 2006; Zurbriggen & Yost, 2004), and researchers employing them are free to focus on detailed themes of theoretical importance such as power as interpreted by the researcher (not the participants themselves).<sup>2</sup>

This study breaks from these methodologies; we present standardized elaborated fantasy material to the participants, query them about appeal, and ask them *directly* what the presented fantasy means to them when they entertain it. In this respect, we believe this study contributes a novel methodological innovation to sexual fantasy study that ultimately will provide additional insight for our theoretical approach.

### Theoretical Explanation: Sociocultural and Evolutionary Approaches to Forceful Submission

Although forceful submission themes are favored by both men and women,<sup>3</sup> theoretical explanations focusing on meaning and occurrence concentrate nearly exclusively on women. Sociocultural explanations (e.g., Eagly, 1987; Ridgeway, 2001) emphasize the life-long learning of socially constructed gender norms that urge women to associate sex with submission and subordination to men (Sanchez et al., 2006; Shulman & Horne, 2006; Zurbriggen, 2000). In contrast, men learn to eroticize dominance. For example, women implicitly associate sexuality with submission (Sanchez et al., 2006), and these implicit associations predict sexually submissive behavior. In addition, women's (but not men's) implicit romantic fantasies about chivalry and heroism were inversely related to personal educational goals and interest in high status jobs (Rudman & Heppen, 2003; “the glass slipper effect”). For men, a power motive predicts sexual aggression (Zurbriggen, 2000). The connections between sex and power are presumably accentuated in those who have suffered from sexual aggression (Briere, Smiljanich, & Henschel, 1994; Shulman & Horne, 2006).

Evolutionary approaches similarly assume a “gendered view,” but invoke very different causal mechanisms centering on evolved differences in men's and women's mating strategies (e.g., Salmon & Symons, 2003). In general, evolutionary scientists maintain that

gender-typed behavior evolved out of the differential parental investments and reproductive rates of the two genders (i.e., sexual selection; Trivers, 1972). In contrast to males, mammal and primate females have been evolutionarily selected to guard their fertility, scrutinize males according to “quality” (e.g., loyalty, resource-holding potential), and to protect and provision offspring (Pellegrini, 2004). These forces have presumably made women more averse to risk of bodily harm and less prone to physical aggression than men (Campbell, 1999; Taylor et al., 2000). The lower parental investment of men leaves them free to compete with other men for additional mates (at great personal risk, but clear reproductive advantage). This male–male competition has selected men to be physically larger and stronger than women and to assume more aggressive behaviors, motivations, and social roles (Clutton-Brock, 1983). Presumably, these fundamental gender differences deriving from differential mating strategies have left indelible gendered imprints on men's and women's psychosexual orientations (Buss, 1989, 1998; Sadalla, Kenrick, & Vershure, 1987). Sociocultural approaches that argue that men have historically eroticized dominance over women and women have eroticized submission to men at first glance seem consistent with evolutionary views.

### Remaining Questions

Both sociocultural and evolutionary theoretical orientations lead one to expect strong gender differences in the incidence of submissive fantasy themes. Perhaps as a consequence to this convergence, together with the power of conventional wisdom, the potency of gender difference expectations occludes gender similarities when they arise; that is, when gender similarities are documented, they tend to be downplayed or ignored. Moreover, although both categories of explanation address well men's sexual aggression toward women, they fail to address men's predilection for submissive fantasies documented by sex fantasy scholars. Furthermore, neither approach addresses within gender variability: What kinds of women entertain such fantasies? Evolutionary approaches by and large do not give rise to hypotheses about individual differences. An exception is RCT (Hawley, 1999).

### An Alternate Evolutionary Model: RCT and Social Dominance

RCT diverges sharply from traditional sexual selection views in its attention to gender *similarities*. Although evolutionary perspectives generally propose and support distinct cultures and psychologies of men and women (e.g., Buss, 1989; Sadalla et al., 1987), RCT assumes that women's behavior is no less self-interested, competitive, or dominance-striving than men's (e.g., Hrdy, 1981/1999). Women's strategies for

<sup>2</sup>More recently, attitudes about sexuality have been addressed via implicit association test studies (Rudman & Heppen, 2003; Sanchez et al., 2006) and have shown, for example, that romantic fantasies (of a chivalrous hero) reflect women's implicit disinterest in personal power (Rudman & Heppen, 2003).

<sup>3</sup>In the extreme case of masochistic fantasies (pain and humiliation), men express a higher preference than women (Baumeister, 1988, 1989). For the most part, masochism lies outside the scope of this study.

doing so may be less apparent, but they are no less impactful. Female primates, for example, inhibit each others' reproductive cycles, sexually manipulate males, and kill each others' infants. Furthermore, Hrdy argued that female dominance influences primate social organization more profoundly than male dominance in that the effect of female dominance may last *several generations* (cf. Campbell, 1999).

Studies conducted within a RCT framework have shown dominant women to be equal in number to dominant men and also quite similar in terms of motivation, behavior, and social reception (e.g., Hawley, Little, & Card, 2008). This work has stimulated interest in dominant women merely by shifting attention from the *form* of behavior to its presumed *function*.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to other theories of social dominance (e.g., Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), RCT unambiguously links social dominance to resource control first (the function), and only secondarily to the form of behavior (e.g., aggression). From this view, resource control is the *raison d'être* of social dominance status (Hawley, 1999; cf. Campbell, 1999).

The consequences of this re-coupling of resources and dominance are significant. First, RCT posits two primary means (i.e., forms) by which dominance (i.e., resource control) is achieved: prosocial and coercive. Coercive strategies gain access to resources directly and agonistically such as by taking, threatening, or assaulting others and, as such, are aligned with traditional form-focused approaches to social dominance (e.g., Strayer & Strayer, 1976). Prosocial strategies, however, gain access to resources indirectly via positive behaviors, such as reciprocity and cooperation. Rather than having their roots in the social dominance literature, prosocial strategies have their theoretical roots in the literature on the evolution of cooperation (e.g., Charlesworth, 1996). Notably, prosocial strategies give women a measurable and long-overlooked route to social dominance.

Because the strategies can be used alone or in combination, we can now entertain individual differences and *types* of resource controllers, depending on the relative employment of the two strategies: Whereas prosocial controllers and coercive controllers employ one strategy over the other, bi-strategic controllers employ both, non-controllers employ neither, and typical controllers are more or less average on both. We have generally found bi-strategic controllers—like prosocial controllers—to possess attributes associated with traditional measures reflecting skills (e.g., extroversion, social perceptiveness, moral awareness; Hawley, 2002, 2003a). Like coercive controllers, however, both male and female bi-strategic controllers are highly

aggressive (both physically and socially; Hawley et al., 2008). Non-controllers of both genders tend to lack agency and be socially peripheral.

In addition, RCT affords new purchase from which to interpret the sexual psychology of women. Evolutionary psychologists address women's submission fantasies by invoking the desire for powerful, resource-holding men (e.g., "warrior lovers"; Salmon & Symons, 2003).<sup>5</sup> RCT, in contrast, makes more nuanced predictions regarding intra-gender variability. Not all women entertain fantasies about forceful sex. Traditional approaches appear to predict that submissive or guilt-ridden women would entertain such fantasies more than would agentic women. We, however, predict that women who themselves are dominant and aggressive should entertain forceful submission fantasies more than subordinate women because they are *especially* drawn to dominant men and, moreover, are competitive enough to win their attention—that is, whatever psychological substrates underlie the behavior of the successfully competitive, dominant woman, these substrates should also underlie her preference for dominant men. This attraction to dominant men would correspond with a lack of fear of such a man and thus underlie the willingness to entertain private thoughts of being taken by him.

This new orientation makes sense only if coupled with an exploration of the *meaning* of forceful submission fantasies. If such fantasies reflect a masochistic desire for pain and humiliation perpetrated by a misogynistic and brutal aggressor (e.g., Baumeister, 1989), then the dominant woman should not entertain these fantasies because doing so would strip her of her power. If these fantasies instead reflect a passionate exchange with a powerful, resource-holding, and attentive suitor, then through them the dominant woman could reinforce her high standing in the group and her favorable opinion of herself.

### This Research

This study breaks from the previously described methodologies in that fantasy vignettes are provided to the participants, and they are asked to rate their preference for them. We drew our material from familiar and popular women's erotic literature (e.g., Dara Joy, 1998). As such, we present a rather tame version of the force fantasy (cf. Baumeister, 1988; Meuwissen & Over, 1991; Shulman & Horne, 2006) and portray a situation that is short of violent rape, similar to the scenarios

<sup>4</sup>Full discussions of form versus function in evolutionary work as it pertains to social dominance can be found in Hawley (1999, 2003a, 2003b, 2006, 2007).

<sup>5</sup>The same psychologists presumably would argue that women's preferences for forceful submission fantasies are higher than men's preferences for the same fantasies (an empirical question that they do not pursue, to our knowledge).

found in women's erotic literature.<sup>6</sup> For comparison and completeness, we additionally presented parallel stimulus items that portrayed the protagonist participant as the aggressive suitor (i.e., domination) to provide contrast with preference for submission (Study 1).

As mentioned, the meaning of such fantasies has been often explored indirectly; we know of no study that explicitly queries participants about the personal meaning of a target fantasy. To this end, we compiled a list of potential interpretations of the presented fantasy inspired by both the erotic and scientific literatures (e.g., "I am irresistible," "His/her pleasure is more important than my pain"). In addition, again inspired by women's erotic literature, we compiled a list of possible characteristics of the forceful suitor that are not explicitly stated in our provided fantasy (e.g., "He/she is a good provider," "He/she is aggressive to other men/women"). By exploring personal meaning and characteristics projected onto the forceful suitor, we hope to derive aspects of meaning of submission fantasies to explore rival hypotheses presented from the various theoretical perspectives. Because measures of sexual experience, sex guilt and anxiety (Knafo & Jaffe, 1984), rape myth acceptance (Zurbriggen & Yost, 2004), erotophilia (Shulman & Horne, 2006), and the degree to which one entertains a variety of fantasies (Hariton, 1973) are potential determinants addressed by these alternate theoretical perspectives, we measured them as well to explore their potential effects on preference outcomes. Finally, we adopt a RCT perspective that compels us not only to explore gender differences, but also intra-gender variability (in women especially) as it is associated with social dominance status.

### Study 1

As a first step, we sought to explore whether gender differences would emerge when the same fantasy

<sup>6</sup>The variability in force fantasies in the literature is startling. It ranges from "I imagine that I am being overpowered or forced to surrender" (Hariton & Singer, 1974) to "You are being raped by a man," and "A partner humiliates you" (Meuwissen & Over, 1991; Shulman & Horne, 2006). Content analyses score for power assertion themes in the respondents' own terms and presumably encompass both extremes (e.g., Zurbriggen & Yost, 2004). Bond and Mosher (1986) distinguished "erotic fantasies of rape" from the "violent reality of rape"; the former involves a sexually desirable, passionate man who finds her irresistible, to whom she offers token resistance versus a sexually violent, callous man who degrades her by overcoming her earnest resistance. For Bond and Mosher, erotic imagery of sexual domination and token resistance led to significant subjective arousal, whereas the realistic rape scenario did not. Failure to make this distinction, the authors argued, fuels the "willing victim myth." This study avoids the ambiguous and politically charged term *rape* altogether in favor of the more neutral term of *submission fantasy*, and avoids realistic rape scenarios by depicting interactions characterized by token resistance rather than strenuous or violent resistance.

material was presented to men and women, and whether there was differential appeal of the material according to the dominance of the participant. The vignettes were presented as part of a larger study investigating social relationships, well-being, and health in college students. Only the material relevant to this study is presented here, such as fantasy preference, neuroticism (as an index of anxiety), and constructs related to social dominance (e.g., resource control, prosocial strategies, and coercive strategies).

Specifically, we believe that dominant bi-strategic women will be drawn to dominant (resource holding) men. Accordingly, we believe that their sexual fantasies will betray this draw, and they will prefer forceful submission fantasies more so than non-bi-strategic women. In contrast, we believe that the group of women (i.e., non-controllers) traditionally scoring highest on traits associated with subordinate status (such as neuroticism) will find force fantasies less preferable. These predictions appear to confront those stemming from a pathology view that might predict non-controllers to enjoy force fantasies (to overcome their social anxiety) and bi-strategic controllers to avoid force fantasies because they are low on submissiveness.

### Method

*Participants.* Participants included 231 college women and 239 college men (mean age = 19.7,  $SD = 1.81$ ) self-identifying as predominately heterosexual. These men and women were recruited through the Department of Psychology's subject pool and six group-living residence halls ( $N = 219$ ).

### Measures

*Sexual fantasy vignettes.* Participants were presented a number of vignettes reflecting both submission and domination scenes (see Appendix A for full stimulus items). All attempts were made to keep the fantasy material identical except for who was carrying out the action. Female participants were asked to read two similar vignettes: one in which she submits to a forceful male suitor and one in which she is the aggressive suitor. Male participants were asked to read two parallel vignettes reflecting the same scenes as the women's vignettes: one in which he submits to a forceful female suitor and one in which he is the aggressor. All vignettes are characterized by (a) being "sized up" (or sizing up), (b) being followed (or following), (c) attempts to draw away, (d) "vice-like gripping," (e) pinning and forceful kissing, and (f) fading resistance. After reading each vignette, the participants rated the material on appeal on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (*very unappealing*) to 7 (*very appealing*), with high scores indicating high appeal.

*Social dominance and resource control.* Each participant completed a social dominance scale designed from a RCT perspective assessing prosocial strategy employment (six items; “I access resources (material, social, informational) by promising something in return”;  $\alpha = .75$ ) and coercive strategy employment (six items; “I access resources (material, social, informational) by dominating others”;  $\alpha = .81$ ). Participants were assigned to a resource control group based on their responses to these items that were normed to a very large college sample ( $N > 2,000$ ). Men and women were categorized into type by the same population-level criteria; that is, distributions were *not* separately derived for men and women.

*Creating the resource control subtypes.* Because social dominance and strategy use is, by definition, a relative differential (Hawley & Little, 1999), the resource control types were defined by dividing the distributions of participant-reported descriptions of both the prosocial and coercive strategy-use constructs into thirds (rather than using absolute cutoffs or criteria). By cutting the distributions into equal thirds, the five groups were formed as follows: (a) *bi-strategic controllers* score in the top 66th percentile on both dimensions (27 women, 36 men), (b) *prosocial controllers* score in the top 66th percentile on prosocial control but average or low on coercive control (24 women, 24 men), (c) *coercive controllers* score in the top 66th percentile on coercive control but average or low on prosocial control (37 women, 62 men), (d) *non-controllers* scored in the lower 33rd percentile on both dimensions (93 women, 77 men), and (e) *typical controllers* scored less than the 66th percentile and below the 33rd percentile on neither or one of the control strategies (50 women, 40 men). The gender distribution for resource control significantly differed from chance expectations, largely due to more men and fewer women than expected by chance in the coercive controller group,  $\chi^2(4, N = 470) = 10.08, p < .05$ .

*Neuroticism.* As a proxy measure for anxiety, we administered the neuroticism facet of John’s “Big 5” Inventory (see John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991), with each item being rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) (eight items;  $\alpha = .85$ ; “I see myself as someone who can be tense,” and “I see myself as someone who worries a lot”).

## Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the mean preference score by gender for each of the vignette types. Men preferred the female domination scenario (men’s submission fantasy) significantly more than the women preferred the female domination scenario— $F(1, 452) = 14.87, p < .0001$ —reflecting women’s relatively low interest in playing the aggressive role in sexual exchanges (Mednick, 1977;

**Table 1.** Means by Gender for Appeal of Vignette Type

Participants	Dominant Male Vignette		Dominant Female Vignette	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Female	4.16	1.9	2.47	1.9
Male	3.48	2.0	5.15	1.6

Wilson & Lang, 1981). Women preferred the male domination scene (women’s submission fantasy) significantly more than the men preferred the male domination scene— $F(1, 455) = 264.42, p < .0001$ —suggesting that women’s predilection for forceful submission is greater than men’s preference to fantasize about forceful domination (cf. Yost & Zurbriggen, 2006; Zurbriggen, 2000). In addition, men’s preference for the scenario depicting him being dominated by an aggressive woman was greater than women’s preference for the scenario depicting her being dominated by an aggressive man,  $F(1, 451) = 36.01, p < .0001$ . In other words, men had a higher preference for submissive fantasies than did women. Moreover, both men and women preferred the submissive fantasies over the fantasies in which they themselves were portrayed as dominant: men,  $F(1, 228.5) = 50.61, p < .0001$ ; women,  $F(1, 225) = 44.21, p < .0001$ —that is, both genders preferred being the target of aggressive advances over being the perpetrator (cf. Yost & Zurbriggen, 2006).

Neuroticism and submission preference (i.e., preference for the dominant male vignette for female participants and preference for the dominant female vignette for male participants) were not correlated for female participants ( $r = .03, p > .05$ ), but they were for male participants ( $r = .17, p < .01$ )—that is, the higher the men scored on neuroticism, the higher the preference expressed for the aggressive female suitor. Neuroticism was not associated with dominance preference for either gender.

Table 2 shows that there was a significant effect of resource control type on fantasy appeal among female participants. Bi-strategic women had the highest preference score for male domination scenarios (submission themes) compared to all other groups of women. Fisher’s least significant difference test, however, indicated that this difference reached significance only compared to typical controllers and non-controllers, the latter group having the lowest preference scores. Although there were no significant resource control group differences for female domination scenarios in the women, the means in Table 2 show bi-strategic women to have among the lowest preference for domination scenarios. Thus, in terms of difference scores (submission preference minus dominance preference), bi-strategic women show the greatest divergence in these preferences compared to all other groups—that is, they prefer to be dominated more than they prefer to dominate.

**Table 2.** Means for Submission and Dominance Preference by Resource Control Type

Variable	Bi-Strategic Controllers	Prosocial Controllers	Coercive Controllers	Typical Controllers	Non-Controllers
Women					
Submission ( $p = .007$ )	5.07 <sub>d,e</sub>	4.26	4.65 <sub>e</sub>	4.00 <sub>a</sub>	3.56 <sub>a,c</sub>
Domination ( $p = .22$ )	2.33	2.83	3.06	2.28	2.65
Sub-domination difference ( $p = .04$ )	2.74 <sub>b,c,d,e</sub>	1.48 <sub>a</sub>	1.68 <sub>a</sub>	1.72 <sub>a</sub>	1.38 <sub>a</sub>
Men					
Submission ( $p = .28$ )	5.5	4.57	5.15	5.25	5.03
Domination ( $p = .03$ )	4.41 <sub>c,d,e</sub>	3.83	3.15 <sub>a</sub>	3.33 <sub>a</sub>	3.11 <sub>a</sub>
Sub-domination difference ( $p = .03$ )	1.09 <sub>c</sub>	0.74 <sub>c,d,e</sub>	2.02 <sub>a,b</sub>	1.91 <sub>b</sub>	1.92 <sub>b</sub>

Note. The subscripts indicate significant differences using Fisher's least significant difference test,  $p < .05$ . Bi-strategic controllers are denoted by "a," prosocial controllers by "b," coercive controllers by "c," typical controllers by "d," and non-controllers by "e."

For the men, there were no resource control group differences in preference for submission themes. In contrast, the differences across groups were significant for domination themes, with bi-strategic men having the highest preference for sexual aggression in fantasy. This finding matches well with predictions suggesting that aggressive (Mussweiler & Förster, 2000; Zurbriggen, 2000) and dominant (e.g., Salmon & Symons, 2003) men would entertain dominance fantasies. As a group, prosocially controlling men had the smallest difference in preference.

### Summary

Men preferred the submissive themes more so than did women. Yet, the findings for women have historically been the target of theorizing. Indeed it was submission in men, not women, that was positively associated with neuroticism. Not surprisingly, women do not favor dominating a man in fantasy (not even dominant women). This finding has been repeatedly anticipated by learning theorists and evolutionists alike. Bi-strategic women, historically the most aggressive group of females (childhood through adolescence), preferred forceful submission to domination—that is, her private thoughts entertain themes consistent with the behavior of dominant men (e.g., "warrior lovers").

We started our vignette with "you don't know him well," and these five words may have mitigated female preference because women are more likely to entertain fantasies about someone they know (Hicks & Leitenberg, 2001). Moreover, we stripped the fantasy of romantic elements entertained by women more than men (e.g., location, mood, etc.; Leitenberg & Henning, 1995). These potential limitations are addressed in Study 2.

### Study 2

For Study 2, we leave the "he" (and "she") in the vignette completely open to interpretation for the

participant rather than implying level of acquaintance. Checklists (and the stimulus material in Study 1) may artificially deflate women's self assessments of fantasy frequency or appeal because the material is generally stripped of the romantic imagery that women tend to prefer (Leitenberg & Henning, 1995). For this reason, we presented our fantasy material well-laden with romantic imagery (as inspired by women's romance literature). As a consequence, however, we recognize that we may deflate men's ratings because of their preference for more explicit imagery.

In addition, we broadened our exploration considerably by including measures of sexual experience, sex guilt, erotophilia, varied fantasy content, beliefs about women's sexuality, and traditional gender views to explore the role these may play in the predilection for submission fantasy.

Study 2 was designed first to explore whether there are gender differences in preferences for forceful submission fantasies and meanings ascribed to such fantasies. Do they enhance the power of the fantasist or diminish it? For this reason, together with our fantasy vignette, we co-developed a scale designed to assess potential meanings to the participants. If men and women both entertain the submission fantasy for essentially the same reasons, it becomes more difficult to frame women's predilection for such fantasies in terms of gendered pathology.

Second, what predicts personal predilection for the forceful submission fantasy? Is it social dominance, sexual experience, a bent toward erotic material in general (e.g., erotophilia), the endorsement of societal stereotypes (e.g., beliefs about women's sexuality pertaining to rape myth) or traditional views of women? How do these predictors vary for men and women, both of whom evidently entertain this fantasy to a relatively high degree?

Finally, do dominant women entertain or experience these fantasies differently than subordinate women? We hypothesize that dominant women would entertain these fantasies more often than subordinate women, and ascribe meaning to them in a way that affirms their power.

## Method

**Participants.** Participants included 147 women and 142 men (mean age = 19.7,  $SD = 1.81$ ) approached through the Department of Psychology's subject pool. All self-identified as being attracted to members of the opposite gender. Participants filled out our extensive battery through a web interface to maximize their privacy and ensure their anonymity.

## Measures

**Sexual experience.** To explore the possible effect of sexual experience on our variables of interest, we asked participants (a) whether they have had penetrative sex, (b) the number of sexual partners they have had in the last month, (c) the frequency of intercourse they have had in the last month, and (d) how many partners they have had over the course of their life. Because these items were highly intercorrelated, they were standardized and averaged ( $\alpha = .82$ ). Higher scores indicate more sexual experience.

**Sexual fantasy vignettes.** Participants were presented via a web interface a single elaborate vignette reflecting a submission scene derived from Dara Joy's (1998), *Mine to Take*. The only distinctions between the vignettes read by men and women were the gender of the aggressor and all references to gendered material such as clothing and body parts (see Appendix B for full vignettes). This vignette ended unambiguously with intercourse preceded by mild (non-violent) resistance to the aggressor.

After reading the vignette, the participants rated (a) the percentage (from 0%–100% on a seven-point scale) of their fantasies (i.e., a relative frequency) that follow the theme in the vignette (i.e., sexual domination by a member of the opposite gender; Percent My Fantasy), (b) the percentage of such fantasies where the aggressor is someone other than their present partner—seven-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*)—(Percent Not My Partner), (c) the participants' estimation of the percentage of women who entertain such fantasies—seven-point scale ranging from 1 (0% of women) to 7 (100% of women), with 50% being the midpoint (Percent Women Have), and (d) the participants' estimation of the percentage of men who entertain such fantasies—seven-point scale ranging from 1 (0% of men) to 7 (100% of men), with 50% being the midpoint (Percent Men Have).

Participants who denied fantasizing on the submission theme ( $n = 20$ ) were dropped from further analysis. Our final sample includes 131 women and 138 men.

**Social dominance and resource control.** The procedure for assessing social dominance subtype and

resource control was replicated exactly from Study 1. The sample sizes for the five groups were as follows: (a) bi-strategic controllers (17 women, 36 men), (b) pro-social controllers (20 women, 21 men), (c) coercive controllers (29 women, 38 men), (d) non-controllers (22 women, 12 men), and (e) typical controllers (43 women, 31 men). The gender distribution for resource control for this subset of participants in this sample significantly differed from chance expectations— $\chi^2(4, N = 269) = 12.76, p < .05$ —due in part to fewer women than expected by chance in the bi-strategic group (but this cell alone did not reach  $p < .05$ ).

**Assessing vignette meaning.** Inspired by the literature—romantic (e.g., Joy, 1998) and scientific (Baumeister, 1988; Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, & Larsen, 2001; Buunk, Dijkstra, Fetchenhauer, & Kenrick, 2002; Leitenberg & Henning, 1995)—we derived seven constructs (comprising 25 items) to assess fantasy meaning. The constructs were as follows: *prestige* (four items;  $\alpha = .79$ ; e.g., “She/he will make me the envy of other men/women,” and “Others will come to look up to me by associating with her/him”), *conform to expectations* (four items;  $\alpha = .78$ ; e.g., “This is how sexual relationships are supposed to be,” and “I’m doing what men/women are supposed to do”), *assuage doubt* (three items;  $\alpha = .62$ ; e.g., “It is clear she/he likes me so I needn’t have doubts,” and “She/he overcomes my shyness”), *irresistibility–personal power* (four items;  $\alpha = .69$ ; e.g., “I am irresistibly hot and she/he cannot help her/himself,” and “I am as strong as she/he is and she/he must overcome me to have me”), *masochism* (four items;  $\alpha = .71$ ; e.g., “I find pleasure in humiliation and pain,” and “I enjoy trading my pain for her/his pleasure”), *emotional distance* (three items;  $\alpha = .78$ ; e.g., “I can have sex with her/him with no strings attached,” and “She/he will not make any emotional demands of me”), and *submit self* (three items;  $\alpha = .75$ ; e.g., “I don’t have to make any decisions,” and “I like to give up control completely”). Table 3 shows the means of these constructs by gender.

To additionally assess meaning, we presented items reflecting characteristics that the participants may project onto the sexual aggressor that are unstated in the vignette (but are often made explicit in the romance literature; Hazen, 1983). These characteristics included the following: *in command* (three items;  $\alpha = .64$ ; e.g., “She/he is in command of those around her/him,” and “S/he is aggressive with other women/men”), *sexual–reproductive potency* (three items;  $\alpha = .77$ ; e.g., “She/he is sexually skilled,” and “She/he will mother/father many children”), *success* (three items;  $\alpha = .81$ ; e.g., “She/he is more successful than other women/men,” and “She/he is a woman/man of wealth and status”), *attractive* (five items;  $\alpha = .81$ ; e.g., “She/he is good looking,” and “S/he is funny and amusing”), *loving* (five items;  $\alpha = .94$ ; e.g., “She/he is sympathetic

**Table 3.** Raw Means and Standard Deviations by Gender for Variables and Factors

Variable	Raw Metric				p
	Women		Men		
	M	SD	M	SD	
Fantasy preference					
Percent My Fantasy	3.74	1.66	4.08	1.45	.07
Percent Not My Partner	2.97	1.70	4.26	1.70	<.0001
Percent Women Have	4.36	1.22	4.04	1.25	.03
Percent Men Have	4.95	1.58	4.94	1.41	.95
Meaning factors					
Romance	5.56	1.27	4.84	1.05	<.0001
Powerful partner	4.90	0.98	4.86	0.84	.76
Self-enhance	2.93	0.88	3.53	0.76	<.0001
Ally-provider	5.03	1.46	3.72	1.21	<.0001
Meaning variables					
Prestige	2.77	1.32	3.48	1.18	<.0001
Conform to expectations	2.48	1.32	2.96	1.04	.001
Assuage doubt	3.41	1.47	3.98	1.14	.0004
Irresistibility-personal power	4.08	1.19	4.09	0.95	.92
Masochism	2.05	0.99	2.59	1.05	<.0001
Emotional distance	2.42	1.28	3.69	1.26	<.0001
Submit self	3.12	1.46	3.89	1.26	.0006
In command	4.25	1.21	4.35	1.17	.50
Sexual-reproductive potency	5.41	1.25	5.87	1.08	.0004
Success	5.03	1.32	4.36	1.16	<.0001
Attractive	5.66	1.12	4.99	1.04	<.0001
Loving	5.33	1.72	4.23	1.52	<.0001
Unattractive	2.32	1.28	2.69	1.16	.01
Ally	5.40	1.42	3.94	1.27	<.0001
Provider	4.67	1.65	3.49	1.36	<.0001

Note. Percent My Fantasy represents participants' estimations of the percentage of their own fantasies that match target type. Percent Not My Partner is their estimation of the percentage of those fantasies involving an object that is not a current romantic partner. Percent Women/Men Have are participants' estimations of the frequency that other women and men entertain the target fantasy.

and caring," and "S/he will be monogamous and loyal to me"), *unattractive* (five items;  $\alpha = .85$ ; e.g., "She/he is cruel," and "She/he is cold and aloof"), *ally* (three items;  $\alpha = .66$ ; e.g., "She/he will be a good ally," and "She/he will protect me"), and *provider* (five items;  $\alpha = .87$ ; e.g., "She/he will be a good provider," and "She/he is or will be caring toward children"). Table 3 shows the means of these constructs by gender.

**Factor analysis.** We conducted an exploratory factor analysis with an oblique rotation (i.e., Harris-Kaiser) on the aforementioned 15 constructs by gender to reduce the number of dimensions for analysis. Rotated factor patterns (standardized regression coefficients) were remarkably similar for men and women, except for the placement of ally and provider. Because those two variables correlate highly and occupied different positions in the factor patterns (but always together), we pulled them out and aggregated them to form ally-provider ( $\alpha = .89$ ). The remaining variables were structured similarly for both men and women and composed three constructs we refer to as *romance* (attractive, loving, reverse of unattractive;  $\alpha = .87$ ), *powerful partner* (in command, sexual-reproductive potency, and success;  $\alpha = .65$ ), and

*self-enhance* (prestige, conform to expectations, assuage doubt, irresistibility-personal power, masochism, emotional distance, submit self;  $\alpha = .82$ ). Table 3 shows the means of these constructs by gender.

**Varied fantasy content.** The Sexual Fantasy Questionnaire (Wilson, 1988) was used to assess the scope and incidence of sexual fantasies. Participants were asked to rate on a six-point scale ranging from 0 (*never*), 1 (*seldom*), 2 (*occasionally*), 3 (*sometimes*), 4 (*often*), to 5 (*regularly*) how often they fantasize on the material presented. A mean for the entire scale was used reflecting average incidence of exploratory, impersonal, intimate, and sadomasochistic fantasy content. Because high scores reflect the tendency to more frequently entertain a variety of fantasy themes, we refer to this construct as *varied fantasy content*.

**Sex guilt.** Sex guilt was measured using 22 items from the sex guilt subscale of the Revised Mosher Guilt Inventory (Mosher, 1966;  $\alpha = .89$ ). Instead of presenting the original forced choice format, we constructed statements from the original stems and sentence completions and presented them for rating on a seven-point scale

ranging from 1 (*not at all true for me*) to 7 (*extremely true for me*). Higher scores indicate more sex guilt.

*Erotophilia–erotophobia.* The Fisher Sexual Opinion Survey was used as a means of ascertaining levels of the erotophilia (or its converse, erotophobia)—proclivity of an individual to respond positively (or negatively) to erotic stimuli (Fisher, Byrne, White, & Kelley, 1988). The scale used consisted of 21 items ( $\alpha = .83$ ) rated on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale.

*Traditional views of women.* The Traditional Views of Gender Roles Questionnaire was used to gain information on participants' attitudes toward societal gender roles (Larsen & Long 1988). The scale consisted of 20 items ( $\alpha = .90$ ) rated on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale, with high scores indicating endorsement of traditional views of women.

*Beliefs about women's sexuality.* Five items from the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999) were presented, representing beliefs that women's sexuality includes a predilection to force in sexual interactions (five item;  $\alpha = .82$ ; e.g., "Many women secretly desire to be raped," and "Many women find being forced to have sex very arousing"). Participants responded on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), with high scores indicating endorsement of rape myth consistent values. We refer to this subscale as *beliefs about women's sexuality*.

## Results

### Gender Differences in Experience and Meaning

*Response patterns.* Only 6.64% of the entire sample denied ever having the fantasy (and thus were dropped from our analysis of meaning). A full 66.2% of men and 57.52% of women reported that 50% to 100% of their fantasies were on the theme represented in the vignette.

*Means by gender.* Table 3 shows the raw means by gender and significance tests exploring gender differences. Men reported entertaining forceful submission fantasies at a marginally higher rate than women (Percent My Fantasy), and were more likely to think about someone outside their current partnership (Percent Not My Partner). When estimating the frequency that women in general entertain this fantasy, female participants estimate higher rates than male participants (Percent Women Have).

In terms of the four factors representing meaning (i.e., romance, powerful partner, self-enhance, ally-provider),

female participants, as one would expect, invoked the romance theme more than male participants (see Table 3). In fact, this was the highest rated category by women. Similarly, women invoked ally-provider more than men. Although men and women equally endorsed powerful partner (success, in command, sexually potent), men invoked self-enhance more than women.

Looking at the composite variables of these factors is instructive because some meanings were clearly favored over others. For example, irresistibility–personal power was the favored theme of the self-enhance factor as evidenced by its relatively high mean endorsement for women and men (i.e., 4.08 for women and 4.09 for men). As such, irresistibility–personal power outweighed the preference for masochism with means among the lowest. Among all meaning variables, sexual–reproductive potency was among the most favored by men and women. For women, being attractive in physical and psychological characteristics, loving, and an ally and protector also were particularly important.

### Predicting Preference for Submission Fantasies

*Correlations.* By inspecting inter-variable correlations (see Table 4), one can see that social dominance (i.e., resource control) is positively and significantly associated with the predilection for our submission fantasy in men (above the diagonal) and women (below the diagonal), as is varied fantasy content and beliefs about women's sexuality for our female participants. In addition, for women, positive and significant correlations emerged among beliefs about women's sexuality, erotophilia, and varied fantasy content. For both genders, varied fantasy content and erotophilia were positively correlated (both reflect a partiality for erotic thoughts), and both varied fantasy content and erotophilia were negatively correlated with sex guilt (for both genders).

*Percent my fantasy.* The following regression analyses address the question, What predicts individuals' penchant for forceful submission fantasies (i.e., percentage of fantasies in which they entertain a forceful submission theme)? Table 5 shows the standardized beta weights and *p* values of the introduced variables (social dominance, sex guilt, erotophilia, varied fantasy content, beliefs about women's sexuality, traditional views, and sexual experience) predicting Percent My Fantasy for both female and male participants. For women, preference for the forceful submission theme was predicted by varied fantasy content and, to a lesser degree, beliefs about women's sexuality indicating that, in general, women's preference is a function of the content of her overall fantasy life and the degree to which she believes women enjoy being roughed up. Social dominance, sex guilt, erotophilia, traditional views, and sexual experience played no significant role

**Table 4.** *Intervariable Correlations by Gender for Participants Who Report Being Attracted to the Opposite Gender*

Variable	Percent My Fantasy	Social Dominance	Sex Guilt	Erotophilia	Sex Fantasy Content	Beliefs About Women's Sexuality	Traditional Views
Percent My Fantasy	—	.23*	.14	-.22*	.11	.19	.02
Social dominance	.21*	—	-.07	.04	.06	-.02	.14
Sex guilt	-.09	-.04	—	-.60**	-.23*	.12	.14
Erotophilia	.08	-.02	-.22*	—	.25*	.02	-.11
Sex fantasy content	.43**	.26*	-.34**	.22*	—	.31*	.25*
Beliefs about women's sexuality	.36**	.17	-.14	.33*	.41**	—	.34**
Traditional views	.14	.08	.17	.08	.04	.28**	—

Note. Women are below the diagonal, and men are above the diagonal.  
\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\* $p \leq .001$ .

predicting Percent My Fantasy independent of the other predictors. For men, the primary predictors were social dominance, erotophilia, and beliefs about women's sexuality.

*Other women's fantasies.* For female participants, when predicting participants' estimates of the proportion of women who entertain the presented fantasy theme (i.e., Percent Women Have), the only variable of statistical significance was Percent My Fantasy (see Table 5). The other variables one might expect to relate to such a prediction (e.g., sex guilt, erotophilia, varied fantasy content, beliefs about women's sexuality, and traditional views of women) carried little weight. Thus, when women estimate for other women, they look solely to their own preferences. For men, the combination of predictors did not reach significance.

**Submission Fantasy by Social Dominance (Resource Control Subtype)**

A key and original aim of this study was to explore within gender variability across resource control groups. General gender differences have been well documented in terms of predilection for fantasy themes, and this study added to this literature by zeroing in on meaning ascribed to the forceful submission fantasy. In addition, however, we sought to expand our understanding of the dominance themed fantasy by exploring it within a theoretical framework of social dominance.

As can be seen in Table 6, contrary to our expectations, there were no differences across the resource control groups on the variable Percent My Fantasy. On the other hand, the women differed by type on the meaning ascribed to the fantasy including romance, powerful partner, self-enhance, and ally-provider. First,

**Table 5.** *Regressions for Women and Men Predicting Percent My Fantasy and Percent Women Have*

Variable	Women		Men	
	Standardized $\beta$	$p$	Standardized $\beta$	$p$
Percent My Fantasy <sup>a</sup>				
Social dominance	.05	.55	.28	<.001
Sex guilt	.04	.62	.002	.98
Erotophilia	-.06	.43	-.28	.006
Sex fantasy content	.33	<.001	.13	.13
Beliefs about women's sexuality	.21	.02	.21	.02
Traditional views	.09	.27	-.17	.05
Sexual experience	.09	.23	-.06	.48
Percent Women Have <sup>b</sup>				
Percent My Fantasy	.51	<.0001	.12	.20
Social dominance	.03	.72	.02	.85
Sex guilt	-.06	.48	.04	.74
Erotophilia	-.02	.76	.05	.64
Sex fantasy content	.02	.85	-.07	.49
Beliefs about women's sexuality	.06	.52	.20	.04
Traditional views	-.03	.69	-.05	.62
Sexual experience	-.02	.83	-.06	.53

<sup>a</sup>For women,  $F(7, 137) = 6.20, p < .0001 (R^2 = .24)$ ; for men,  $F(7, 134) = 4.24, p < .0003 (R^2 = .14)$ .

<sup>b</sup>For women,  $F(8, 136) = 7.66, p < .0001 (R^2 = .27)$ ; for men,  $F(8, 133) = 1.38, p = .21 (R^2 = .02)$ .

**Table 6.** *Least Squares Means by Gender and Resource Control Group*

Variable	Bi-Strategic Controllers	Prosocial Controllers	Coercive Controllers	Typical Controllers	Non-Controllers	F
Women						
Percent My Fantasy	3.68	3.90	3.97	3.50	3.81	$F(4, 136) = 0.99, p = .42$
Romance	5.66	5.89 <sub>d</sub>	5.62	5.05 <sub>b,c</sub>	6.12 <sub>d</sub>	$F(4, 136) = 3.4, p = .01$
Powerful partner	5.50 <sub>c,d,e</sub>	5.10	4.87 <sub>a</sub>	4.63 <sub>a</sub>	4.79 <sub>a</sub>	$F(4, 136) = 2.9, p = .02$
Self-enhance	3.55 <sub>b,d,e</sub>	2.83 <sub>a</sub>	3.21 <sub>d, e</sub>	2.78 <sub>a,c</sub>	2.47 <sub>a,c</sub>	$F(4, 136) = 5.4, p < .001$
Ally-provider	5.53 <sub>d</sub>	5.28 <sub>d</sub>	5.12	4.45 <sub>a,b,e</sub>	5.45 <sub>d</sub>	$F(4, 136) = 3.0, p = .02$
Men						
Percent My Fantasy	4.43	4.19	3.95	3.79	4.0	$F(1, 133) = 0.93, p = .45$
Romance	4.83	4.82	4.88	4.82	4.84	$F(1, 133) = 0.02, p = .99$
Powerful partner	5.11 <sub>d,e</sub>	5.16 <sub>d,e</sub>	4.80	4.57 <sub>a,b</sub>	4.55 <sub>a,b</sub>	$F(1, 133) = 2.98, p = .02$
Self-enhance	3.80 <sub>d,e</sub>	3.86 <sub>d,e</sub>	3.60 <sub>d,e</sub>	3.17 <sub>a,b,c</sub>	2.99 <sub>a,b,c</sub>	$F(1, 133) = 5.7, p < .001$
Ally-provider	4.02 <sub>e</sub>	3.89	3.65	3.55	3.15 <sub>a</sub>	$F(1, 133) = 1.52, p = .20$

*Note.* The subscripts indicate significant differences using Fisher's least significant difference test,  $p < .05$ . Bi-strategic controllers are denoted by "a," prosocial controllers by "b," coercive controllers by "c," typical controllers by "d," and non-controllers by "e."

romance (attractive, loving) evinced a significant effect across groups; inspection of the group means in Table 6 reveals that non-controllers had the highest preference among the female participants for the romance theme and, with the lowest mean, typical controllers rated this meaning factor significantly lower than did non-controllers. For powerful partner (in command, sexual potency, success), bi-strategic women had the highest preference for this theme (although this preference was not significantly higher than that of the prosocial controllers). For self-enhance (i.e., prestige, submission, irresistibility), bi-strategic women again had the highest preference (and significantly higher than most groups), whereas non-controllers had the lowest preference. Although the preferences of bi-strategic and non-controlling women diverge markedly for the preferences for romance, powerful partner, and self-enhance, they converge on their preference for an ally-provider. For the bi-strategic women, the profile taken together suggests the preference for a "warrior lover" (Salmon & Symons, 2003), and for the non-controllers, a romantic ally such as a "white knight" (Rudman & Heppen, 2003). Thus, it appears as though socially assertive women (i.e., bi-strategic controllers) seek out characteristics similar to their own in their idealized fantasy mates. Conversely, less socially prevailing women idealize their fantasy lovers *à la* the "white knight"—a gentle character who will rescue them while assuring his love and devotion (Rudman & Heppen 2003).

The patterns of means for men were similar to those of women, except no differences by type emerged for romance. Both bi-strategic and prosocially controlling men had a predilection for powerful partner (with non-controllers having the lowest preference for this factor), as well as the highest means for self-enhance. Again, non-controlling men had the lowest preference for this meaning factor. Bi-strategic men (like bi-strategic women) viewed this powerful sexual aggressor as an

ally more so than did other men (although not significantly so for the most part).

## Discussion

This study addressed three primary aims. First, we sought to explore the implicit if not explicit claims that women's predilections for forceful submissive fantasies surpass men's preferences for the same fantasies, and second, whether they are suggestive of psychosexual ill-being. Third, we attempted to understand the meaning of forceful submission fantasies by querying respondents directly about the views they hold about the significance of the forceful act and the characteristics of the sexual aggressor involved.

### Are Forceful Submission Fantasies Unique to Women?

First, we found no evidence that women entertain forceful submission fantasies more than men. On the contrary, whether the forceful encounter was layered in romantic imagery or whether we specified that the aggressor was unknown to the fantasist, men reported higher preference for and a greater predilection to entertain such fantasies of submission. To our way of thinking, because the fantasy is highly prevalent in both men and women (i.e., >50% of the fantasy themes entertained by both genders), no special pathology-based theories (e.g., guilt reduction) need be invoked to "explain" women's preferences over men's.

### Are Forceful Submission Fantasies Linked to Pathology?

Although the prevalence of this theme may reduce the probability that forceful submission themes are an indicator of some pathology or history of abuse, it does not reduce it to zero. For this reason, we explored the

relation of the fantasy theme to neuroticism, sex guilt, and socialized attitudes such as beliefs about women's sexuality and traditional views of women. In Study 1, ratings of appeal of the forceful submission theme were not (as might be expected) related to neuroticism in women, but rather related to neuroticism in men. Although men are not the primary focus of this article, it is interesting to reflect on this positive (but modest) correlation; the forceful submission scenario probably well represents a "sure thing" or a "come on" from a woman conveying clear consent.

For Study 2, we elaborated our battery of measures and altered our stimulus material to be more appealing to women. For women, predilection for the forceful submission theme was related not to sex guilt or erotophobia, but rather the varied fantasy content entertained by the women. To us, this reinforces patterns found by other researchers (e.g., Gold et al., 1991; Hariton, 1973; Shulman & Horne, 2006); namely, that such fantasies are entertained by women with zesty fantasy lives and who are unencumbered by high levels of sex guilt. We suspect the association with beliefs about women's sexuality is related to this pattern—a suspicion we detail in the following section.

### What Do Forceful Submission Fantasies Mean to the Fantasist?

This lack of support for pathology was further elaborated by our exploration of meaning. By querying our participants about the specifics regarding the personal subtext of the theme, we broke from traditional sexual fantasy analysis methodology. In many romance novels, the heroine is typically unspeakably beguiling and erotically powerful (irresistibility–personal power). In addition, she often gains status through her association with her seducer (hence, prestige), and she never doubts his undivided attraction to her (assuage doubt). Moreover, the hero often has qualities consistent with evolutionary expectations; he is stereotypically masculine (virile, sexually potent, in command of those around him) yet, at the same time, devoted to her and tender in his feelings (loving), and has potential for a good deal of paternal investment (e.g., is a wealthy and generous man with a penchant for offspring; for an excellent summary, see Buss, 2007). Much more rarely, she values pleasing him more than her physical comfort (i.e., masochism). Indeed, our opening novel example (Joy, 1998) makes clear that Gian puts Jenise's pleasure well above his own, and we come to understand that only she has the power to transform him and bind him endlessly in love. As "Guardian of the Mist," Gian holds high status among "his people"; consequently, he and Jenise in the end reside in an opulent palace where they bear their children. Moreover, because he is not entirely human, he possesses sexual skills and physical attributes that mere mortals do not.

Perhaps unexpected from other perspectives that anticipate stark gender differences, the factor patterns that emerged for men and women were nearly indistinguishable. These similar patterns were not especially surprising when viewed with RCT lenses because it is a theory that expects a good deal of gender similarity (e.g., Hawley et al., 2008; Hawley, Little, & Card, 2007). At the same time, means across the factors (see Table 6) revealed and confirmed expectations that women, more so than men, emphasize the romantic theme of attractiveness and love (romance), and care giving and protection (e.g., ally-provider). It is interesting to note, however, that men endorsed self-enhancement as a whole more so than women, largely due to their relatively greater predilection for (a) prestige enhancement, (b) assuaging their doubts concerning acceptance and rejection in the episode, (c) preferring a bit more emotional distance, and (d) preferring to surrender to the will of another. Participating men and women did *not* differ in their coveting irresistibility and personal power, and men and women endorsed these items to the highest degree of all facets of the self-enhancement factor. Although masochism played a role in this factor through its intercorrelations with the other variables, the means on masochism barely rose above two on a scale from one to seven (cf. Baumeister, 1988). Moreover, both genders appear to have the same predilection for social dominance in their partner, as men and women equally wish her or him to be physically well-endowed, sexually vigorous, ambitious and successful, and to wield power over others.

### Social Dominance and Forceful Fantasy Themes

Attempts to associate the multidimensionality of fantasy themes and content to personality variables have met with limited success (e.g., Hariton & Singer, 1974; but see Arndt et al., 1985; Brown & Hart 1977). This research uniquely associates aspects of human social dominance to forceful fantasy themes—namely, we anticipated that aggressively socially dominant women (i.e., bi-strategic controllers) would especially enjoy attention from a dominant man *if* such attention was associated with fantasy meaning that confirms rather than undermines her power. Our predictions were borne out in Study 1; bi-strategic women had the highest preference scores for the submissive fantasy theme coupled with the lowest preference for the domination theme. This difference leaves bi-strategic women with the greatest differential in preference for these themes (especially relative to the subordinate non-controllers).

We did not find, however, resource control subtype differences in the degree to which women report entertaining elaborated fantasies like the one we presented in Study 2. The differences between the two vignettes or protocols are not clear. Perhaps we undermined our goals by mirroring too closely a scene in an actual

romance novel, replete with engaging imagery and emotion, and a rather explicit description of a sexual interlude. It could be that our scene was more arousing than we had intended to all resource control subtypes, thus confounding estimates of rate of personal employment of the forceful submission theme.

On the other hand, we uncovered important resource control type differences in the factors revealing meaning—namely, socially dominant, bi-strategic women appear to invoke powerful partner, self-enhancement, and ally-provider; that is, when she entertains this fantasy theme, she is seduced by a virile and successful man who wields power over others and is driven by uncontrollable urges consequent to her allure. Moreover, he is an ally, protective of her, and capable and willing of paternal investment. In contrast, subordinate non-controllers deemphasize power and self-enhancement in favor of softer romantic attributes, as well as characteristics associated with alliance, protection, and paternal investment. In this way then, we seem to have zeroed in on Salmon's and Symons's (2003) "warrior lovers," and tied them more closely to aggressively dominant women than to other groups. Perhaps the fantasies of subordinate women could be better characterized as the "chivalrous knight" (e.g., Rudman & Heppen, 2003).

### What About Men?

Overall, men preferred the forceful submission fantasy more than women, and there were no differences between resource control subtypes (none were explicitly expected). Aggressive, dominant men (i.e., bi-strategic controllers) showed a greater predilection for the domination fantasy of Study 1. This finding is quite in line with the literature on this theme (e.g., Yost & Zurbriggen, 2006; Zurbriggen, 2000), but is beyond the primary scope of this article.

Why might men enjoy the fantasy of forceful submission more so than women? We suspect that part of the answer lies in the positive (although modest) correlation between neuroticism and fantasy predilection revealed in Study 1, and the relatively higher mean levels in Study 2 for prestige enhancement, assuaging doubts about rejection in the episode, and preferring to surrender to the will of another. Multiple perspectives agree that men's sexuality is qualitatively and quantitatively different from women's, and that men's optimal desired sexual activity is constrained by female consent (e.g., Baumeister & Vohs, 2004; Buss, 1998, 2007; Leitenberg & Henning, 1995; Oliver & Hyde, 1993). Consequently, men experience sexual restraint and sexual rejection more so than women. Forceful submission fantasy may be an effective way to cope with and adapt to "modulated struggles, failures, and disappointments" (Weille, 2002) and to escape from one's mundane identity (Baumeister, 1989). It makes a good deal of

sense that an alternate fantasy self would be the target of aggressive womanly pursuit free from rejection and restrictions.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, from a RCT perspective, we are not surprised to find that men are attracted to indicators of social dominance in women (e.g., sexual aggression) as dominant females fare better in terms of reproductive success (Hrdy, 1981/1999).

### Beliefs About Women's Sexuality

We do not believe that our results should in any way be taken to mean that "women approve of rape" or that "dominant women want to be raped," and so forth (cf. Maslow, 1942). More important, women who entertain submission fantasies clearly indicate no wish to be raped (Kanin, 1982), and when guided through imagery of a realistic rape, women express disgust and fear (Bond & Mosher, 1986).<sup>8</sup> In submission fantasies (of both women and men), in contrast to the reality of rape, the fantasist is in complete control and ascribes his or her own meaning to the exchange.

Although it was not our initial intention, we feel that in the end we gained some insight about the relation between one small aspect of the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Payne et al., 1999) and forceful submission fantasies. The correlations presented in Table 4 suggest that preference for our forceful submission vignette is positively correlated with varied fantasy content (the tendency to entertain multiple fantasy themes) and beliefs about the sexuality of women (e.g., "Many women actually enjoy sex after the guy uses a little force"). Moreover, beliefs about women's sexuality were moderately highly correlated with both erotophilia and varied fantasy content. These correlations suggest to us that this aspect of "rape myth" about women by women is possibly, at least in part, due to some women's own adventurous fantasy lives.

In evaluating these correlations, it is important to bear in mind that women in general used the low end of the beliefs about the sexuality of women subscale ( $M = 2.73$ ; as did men,  $M = 2.68$ ).<sup>9</sup> Although we sympathize with our colleagues who hold such beliefs about women's sexuality to be "stereotypical and false" (e.g., Zurbriggen & Yost, 2004), some of their own participants reported that their partners asked them to

<sup>7</sup>Because we presume that men's mainstream erotic literature caters to male sexual preferences, we perused two recent volumes of *Penthouse Letters*. We found that 43% of the stories described exchanges that were instigated by a sexually assertive female, 28% were instigated by an assertive male with a willing female, and only 6% even hinted at female indifference or resistance (the remainder were ambiguous). This pattern suggests to us that female sexual assertion and ardent female consent represent a generous portion of male fantasy life.

<sup>8</sup>Although we know of no similar study with men, we presume that men who entertain such fantasies also foster no such wish to be raped.

<sup>9</sup>For perhaps the most controversial item, "Many women secretly desire to be raped," the means were even lower (for men, 1.69; for women, 1.72).

be rough. Presumably, these energetic exchanges were also far from the “reality of rape.” However, what do they suggest about the complexity of human sexuality? The landscape is further complicated by the association between romantic fantasies and rape myth acceptance (Zurbriggen & Yost, 2004) and claims that women’s arousal is undermined by submission (Sanchez et al., 2006). Sexual arousal and enhancement is the *raison d’être* of private fantasy life. What does it mean when a good deal of this fantasizing is about forceful submission?

### Limitations

This study raises nearly as many questions as it answers. For example, would our results differ if we portrayed a scenario characterized by real danger by, for example, portraying the suitor as having made a threat? (Although, some participants indeed may see real danger in having been led into a room with the door closed behind them.) In addition, it is possible that the force aspect carried different weight for men and women due to anatomical differences with different implications across gender. Furthermore, it is not entirely clear what aspect of the fantasy is driving preference, or whether these aspects affect preference differentially. Explicit sex, force, passion, romance, and mild masochism are all represented in our elaborated vignettes. Future studies should isolate these features experimentally. Finally, self-report of preference and meaning do not tap into potentially unconscious constructs that may contribute to pleasure. For these reasons, we cannot draw conclusions about clinical implications with absolute certainty. Clearly sexual history should be considered, as well as how forceful or violent and compulsive or unchanging the fantasy is for the individual. Personal meaning should be assessed as well. Moreover, it is possible that forceful submission fantasies carry more clinical implications for subordinate women than they do for dominant women. The same may also be true of men.

### Conclusion

From the tone of the literature, one might get the impression that women have force fantasies because they are submissive and guilt ridden. The prevailing notion that “women are bombarded with images of...sexual submission and subservience to male partners...” (Sanchez et al., 2006, p. 512) and norms that “dictate powerlessness” (p. 513) minimize the very real possibility that women may in fact be complicit in exposing themselves to such images by, for example, investing significant sums in erotic literature that incorporates these themes. These findings add to current

discussions of human sexuality and raise additional questions about the meaning of force fantasies to men and women.

There is no question that important gender differences exist in private erotic life (Barclay, 1973; Jones & Barlow 1990; Zurbriggen & Yost, 2004). Yet, by overly focusing on inter-gender differences, we may overlook important intra-gender variability. Although men generally epitomize the highly dominant socially central individual, we may in fact find “alpha females” to rival alpha men in terms of behaviors and motivations (e.g., Hawley et al., 2008). RCT suggests (and shows) socially dominant individuals of both genders to be socially attractive and agentic in their interface with the material and social worlds. Their psychosexual orientations presumably reflect this basic reality of human social organization.

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## Appendix A

### Study 1: Stimulus Material

#### Stimulus material for female participants.

*High-powered male (submission fantasy).* There is a guy in your class. You don't know him well, but you have locked eyes before. How can you not notice him? He has sized you up on more than one occasion. . . . On

this night he catches your eye at a party. You could feel him staring at you from across the room. Slightly aroused, you decide now is a good time to step out for some air. . . . You were unaware that he followed you, until you felt his hand on your waist. He murmurs lustily, "You're so hot tonight. You make me want you." Your breathing quickens as you attempt to draw away, but he grasps your arm like a vice and it sends a shudder through your body. He pins you against the wall and presses his mouth firmly against yours. As your resistance fades, it becomes clear to you that this is only going one way. . . .

*High-powered female (domination fantasy).* There is a guy in your class. He doesn't know you well, but you have locked eyes before. How can he not notice you? You have sized him up on more than one occasion. . . . On this night you catch his eye at a party. He could feel you staring at him from across the room. Slightly aroused, he decides now is a good time to step out for some air. . . . He was unaware that you followed him, until he felt your hand on his waist. You murmur lustily, "You're so hot tonight. You make me want you." His breathing quickens as he attempts to draw away, but you grasp his arm like a vice and it sends a shudder through his body. You pin him against the wall and press your mouth firmly against his. As his resistance fades, it becomes clear to you that this is only going one way. . . .

## Appendix B (Derived from Joy, 1998)

### Study 2: Stimulus Material

He held her hand and led her into the bedroom. She strolled in surveying it as she went, and tried not to betray her curiosity. With the sound of the door's closing, her eyes met his. She cautiously asked what he wanted, though she suspected. His only answer was to slink across the room towards her. He captured her in his hypnotic gaze, his eyes sensual and disarming. . . .

"I haven't been able to take my eyes off of you all night," he murmured lustily. Her heart started to pound uncontrollably. Could he hear it? Her breathing quickened as she attempted to draw away, but he grasped her arm like a vice. She tried to pull back, but it was too late. He would consume her. His mouth advanced firmly to claim hers.

She stammered in protest at his wantonness, but he pushed her onto the bed. . . .

For female participants: *She stared up at him as his hand moved slowly to his zipper.*

For male participants: *He stared up at her as she let her dress drop to the floor.*

Before she could say anything, he loomed over her. He captured her with his animalistic passion. She writhed under him. “W-what are you doing?” she stammered. “What am I doing?” he whispered huskily. “I’m taking what I’ve wanted all night . . .” Smiling, he towered over her, his hands pinning hers to the bed. He held her fast.

“Please,” she whispered, but could find no other words.

He gave her one final chance. “Tell me to stop,” he growled, “and I will.” As much as she thought she wanted him to stop, she found her resolve weakening. She froze in anticipation and couldn’t answer.

For female participants: *With knowing hands he lifted her skirt, felt her warmth, and purred triumphantly. In one swift movement, he took her with a powerful stroke.*

For male participants: *With knowing hands she unzipped his trousers and purred triumphantly. In one swift movement she thrust forward and impaled herself on him with a powerful stroke.*

She gulped air, trying to find her breath. She felt his full weight upon her as he, too, fought for his breath and control. In and out, in and out, their breaths were the only things moving between them, like waves flowing together. His chest rose and fell against hers. She started to relax. A murmur of approval rolled from his lips. His strong, skilled hands dropped to her sides and brushed over her hipbones and thighs. Simultaneously, the edges of his teeth grazed her neck.

With her hair tightly clenched in his hand, he continued to hold her fast. She shivered, but not from fear. He had merely piqued her interest in what was to come . . .