Endorsement of Values and Cost-Inflicting Behaviors in Brazilian and American Romantic Relationships

Abstract. Previous research has documented that the performance of cost-inflicting behaviors in romantic relationships—such as sexual coercion and partner-directed insults—are associated with several psychological individual differences. However, no previous research has investigated the associations between endorsement of values and these cost-inflicting behaviors in romantic relationships. In the current research, I investigated the associations between endorsement of values—here, social and personal values—and cost-inflicting behaviors in Brazilian and American romantic relationships. Specifically, I formulated a series of hypotheses stating that the endorsement of personal and social values would be positively and negatively associated, respectively, with these cost-inflicting behaviors in a romantic context, in both Brazil and in the United States. The Brazilian sample included 181 participants, aged between 18 and 49 years (M = 23.5; SD = 5.1), mostly female (60.8%). The American sample included 508 participants, aged between 19 and 70 years (M = 34.7; SD = 9.7), mostly male (52.6%). Participants were in a heterosexual, romantic relationship for at least three months. Participants completed a survey containing the following parts: (a) Basic Value Survey - BVS, an 18-item measure assessing how important each value item is as a guiding principle in the participant’s life, (b) Sexual Coercion in Intimate Relationships Scale - SCIRS, a 34-item measure assessing how often participants experienced each sexually coercive behavior in their current romantic relationship, (c) Partner-Directed Insults Scale - PDIS, a 47-item measure that assesses the frequency with which men direct insults against their partner, (d) Reasons for Pretending Orgasm Inventory - RPOI, a 63-item measure assessing how frequently in the past month each reason applied to female participant’s sexual experiences, (e) Mate Retention Inventory-Short Form - MRI-SF, a 38-item measure assessing how often participants performed each mate retention act, and (f) several demographic questions and items regarding relationship satisfaction. First, I psychometrically validated and adapted the SCIRS, the PDIS, the MRI-SF, and the RPOI to the Brazilian context. Overall, the results yielded shorter versions of each measure (e.g., the resulting 20-item EIDP represented well the 47-item PDIS in the Brazilian context). Next, I used structural equation modelling to investigate whether and how endorsements of values are associated with these cost-inflicting behaviors in the Brazilian context and American context, separately. The results accorded with hypotheses: the endorsements of personal and social values were positively and negatively associated with these cost-inflicting behaviors, respectively, in both Brazil and the United States. I recommend the adapted measures for use in Brazil. I discuss cultural and individual differences in light of evolutionary hypotheses of partner-directed cost-inflicting behaviors. I highlight limitations of the current research and identify directions for future research. The current research investigates cross-cultural differences in value endorsement and intimate partner violence, which is central to accumulating evidence that might strengthen hypotheses regarding partner-directed cost-inflicting behaviors.