

## Introduction

### Background

Drug courts are specialized court docket programs that aim to provide treatment and non-adversarial case processing for people in the legal system with alcohol or other drug dependency problems (Mitchell, 2011). Although drug courts are voluntary programs designed to help people address the root cause of addiction in favor of traditional criminal punishment, there is some concern that participants may feel pressured to participate for legal or other reasons (Longshore et al., 2004). Prior research on substance abuse treatment programs and mental health courts have found that perceived coercion is a problem among justice-involved participants (Prendergast et al., 2009; Wales et al., 2010; Young & Belenko, 2002). To date, few studies of drug courts have examined the presence of perceived coercion or whether this phenomenon varies according to participant gender.

### Research Aims

- (1) To examine the average level of perceived coercion.
- (2) To examine gender differences in average perceived coercion among drug court participants.

## Method

### Participants

N = 147 drug court participants in a Midwestern drug court 59% men, 95.2% white and non-Hispanic, mean age = 34 (SD = 9.12)

### Measures/Procedures

- Voluntary 1.5 hour structured interviews originally administered as part of a federal grant awarded to the drug court treatment program

### Perceived Coercion and Procedural Justice Scale

All items used 5-point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)

Scale Item	Adapted from
I felt free to do what I wanted about going to treatment	Swartz et al. (2002)
I chose to go to treatment	Swartz et al. (2002)
It was my idea to go to treatment	Swartz et al. (2002)
I had a lot of control over whether I went to treatment	Swartz et al. (2002)
I had more influence than anyone else on whether I went to treatment	Swartz et al. (2002)
I had enough of a chance to say whether I wanted to go to treatment	Wales et al. (2010)
I got to say what I wanted about going to treatment	Wales et al. (2010)
My opinion about going to treatment didn't matter (reverse-coded)	Wales et al. (2010)

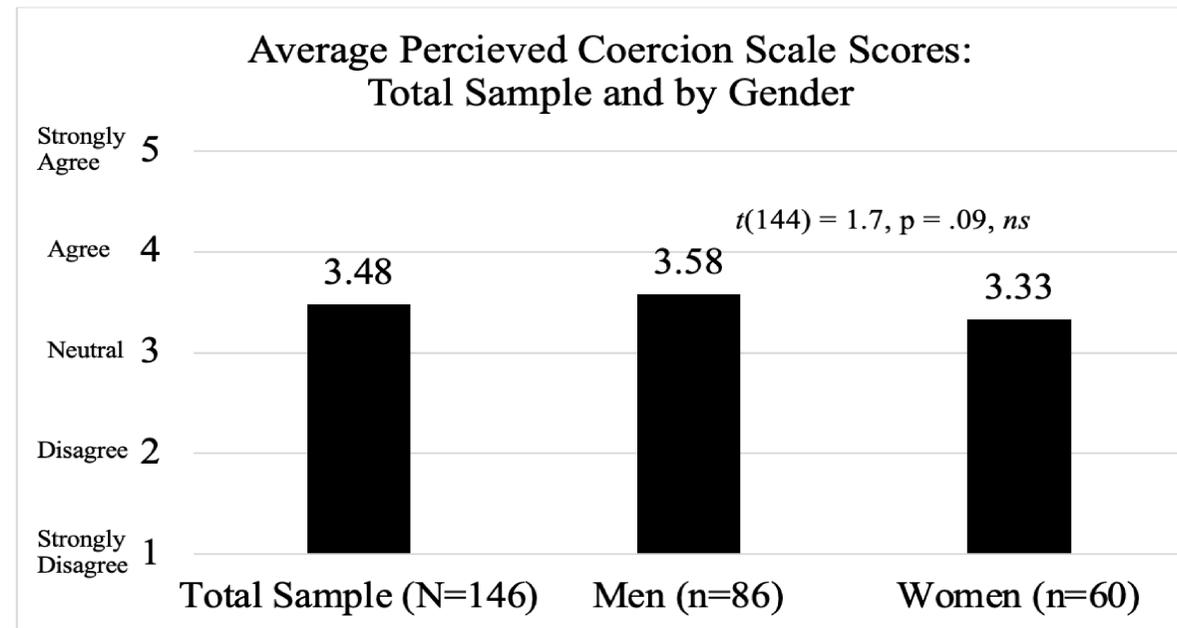
# Perceived Coercion in Drug Courts: Are There Gender Differences?

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## Results



## Results Summary

- On average, participants in this study fell somewhere between “neutral” and “agree” that they had experienced perceived coercion to participate in drug court. This finding was generally true for both men and women in the sample, with no statistically significant difference detected in average scores between gender groups.

## Conclusions & Implications

- Although participants in this sample did not generally express strong agreement in experiencing perceived coercion in drug court, they did not express any level of disagreement, on average. Drug court staff and administration should consider court policies, processes, and actions that may contribute to perceived coercion among potential drug court participants of all gender subgroups.
- Although the current bivariate analysis did not support a gender difference in perceived coercion, gender may nevertheless influence perceived coercion after accounting for relevant covariates. Future research should further explore the role of gender and other demographic variables using multiple regression analyses with larger and representative samples of drug court participants.

## Limitations

- This study used a small, non-random, non-representative sample of participants from one drug court in one U.S. state. This limited sampling frame may not reflect the larger population of men and women in drug courts.
- Although multiple measures of perceived coercion exist, this study adapted one measure that (to the authors' knowledge) had not previously been used with a drug court participant sample. It is possible that alternate measures with different and/or additional questions may have yielded greater insight and produced different results.

## References

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