Is Inconsistency between Implicit and Explicit Perceptions of Women Associated with Likelihood to Rape?

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INTRODUCTION

• Theorists believe that sexual coercion, at least partly, is the result of the negative attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes about women (Burt, 1980; Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991).

• Past studies have shown that sexual coercion is associated with negative beliefs about women (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Carr & VanDeusen, 2004; Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002; Osland, Fitch, &Willis, 1996).

• Most of the studies published to date used self-report measures to access explicit perceptions of women by males. Measuring implicit attitudes and beliefs can reveal information that people are not able or not willing to report (Nosek, Greenwald, & Banaji, 2007).

Purpose: To examine the relationship between implicit and explicit perceptions of women by males and likelihood to rape.

METHODS

Participants

• 103 male undergraduate Carleton University students

• median age = 19 to 21 (88.3% were 25 years old or less)

Explicit Measures

• **Hostility toward Women (HTW**; Check, Malamuth, Elias & Barton, 1985)
     - Higher scores indicate greater hostility toward women

• **Attitudes toward Women scale (AWS)**
     - Higher score reflects more egalitarian attitudes

• **Rape Myth Acceptance scale (RMAS)**
     - Higher scores indicate less belief in rape myths

• **Adversarial Sexual Beliefs scale (ASB)**
     Higher scores indicate less adversarial sexual beliefs

• **Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence scale (AIV)**
     Higher scores indicate less acceptance of interpersonal violence

Implicit Measures:

• **Implicit Association Test (IAT**; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) is a relative measure of association strengths, in which the strength of associations between concepts is inferred from reaction times on several categorization tasks

- **Gender Evaluation IAT (GE-IAT)** assessed implicit evaluation of women
     - **MAN:** MALE, MAN, BOY, BROTHER, HE; **WOMAN:** FEMALE, WOMAN, GIRL, SISTER, SHE; **Good:** rainbow, happy, smile, warmth, sunshine; **Bad:** death, poison, grief, sickness, vomit
     - Positive scores reflect more negative evaluation of women than men

-**Gender Power IAT (GP-IAT)** assessed implicit power stereotypes about women
     - **MAN:** MALE, MAN, BOY, BROTHER, HE; **WOMAN:** FEMALE, WOMAN, GIRL, SISTER, SHE; **Dominant:** destroy, fight, loud, powerful, confident; **Submissive:** weak, scrawny, quiet, delicate, gentle
     - Positive scores reflect perception of women as less powerful than men

Self-reported Likelihood to Rape:

 Likelihood to Rape Question (Malamuth, 1981)
"What is the likelihood that you would rape someone if you could be assured of not being caught and punished?"
     - Higher scores reflect greater likelihood to rape

RESULTS

• Based on responses to the Likelihood to Rape question, participants were classified as *not at all likely to rape* (n =91) or *somewhat or more likely to rape* (n = 12)

Table 1. *Means and Standard Deviations on Dependent Measures*

	Likelihood to Rape			
	None (*n* = 91)		Some (*n* = 12)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
GE-IAT	0.02	0.41	-0.02	0.38
GP-IAT	0.55	0.43	0.45	0.31
HTW	8.10	4.84	12.25	4.33
AWS	32.43	7.10	27.83	7.50
RMAS	60.26	12.65	50.25	13.70
ASB	44.12	10.43	35.17	11.26
AIV	34.14	6.91	27.17	7.50

Logistic Regression:

• A series of logistic regression analyses were performed to examine the association between self-reported likelihood to rape and the interaction between implicit and explicit measures

• No significant interactions between GP-IAT and any of the explicit measures

• Interactions between GE-IAT and explicit measures (HTW, AWS, RMAS, and AIV) significantly predicted likelihood to rape

Table 2. *Sequential Logistic Regression Predicting Likelihood to Rape*

| | | 95% CI | |
Scale	Odds ratio	LL	UL
Block 1			
GE-IAT	0.58	0.13	2.64
HTW	1.21*	1.05	1.40
Block 2			
GE-IAT x HTW	0.36*	0.18	0.72

Note. χ^2(2, *N* = 103) = 8.308 for Block 1 (*p* = .016). χ^2(1, *N* = 103) = 12.801 for Block 2 (*p* = .0001).
CI = Confidence Interval.   * *p* < .05.

• To examine these significant interactions, HTW, AWS, RMAS, and AIV were dichotomized based on a median split

• As shown in Figure 1, among participants who reported no likelihood to rape (No LR), those with high explicit hostility towards women (High HTW) had significantly more negative implicit attitudes towards women (GE-IAT) than those with low explicit hostility towards women (Low HTW). However, among participants who reported some likelihood to rape (Some LR), those with high explicit hostility towards women (High HTW) had significantly less negative implicit attitudes towards women (GE-IAT) than those with low explicit hostility towards women (Low HTW).

• Among participants with high explicit hostility towards women (High HTW), those who reported no likelihood to rape (No LR) had significantly more negative implicit attitudes towards women (GE-IAT) than those who reported some likelihood to rape (Some LR). However, among participants with low explicit hostility towards women Low HTW), those who reported no likelihood to rape (No LR) had significantly less negative implicit attitudes towards women (GE-IAT) than those who reported some likelihood to rape (Some LR)

• As shown in Figures 2, 3, and 4, the same pattern was evident in the interactions of the GE-IAT and AWS, RMAS, and AIV suggesting that inconsistency between implicit evaluation of women and explicit beliefs about women may be associated with higher likelihood to rape; however, none of the simple comparisons reached statistical significance
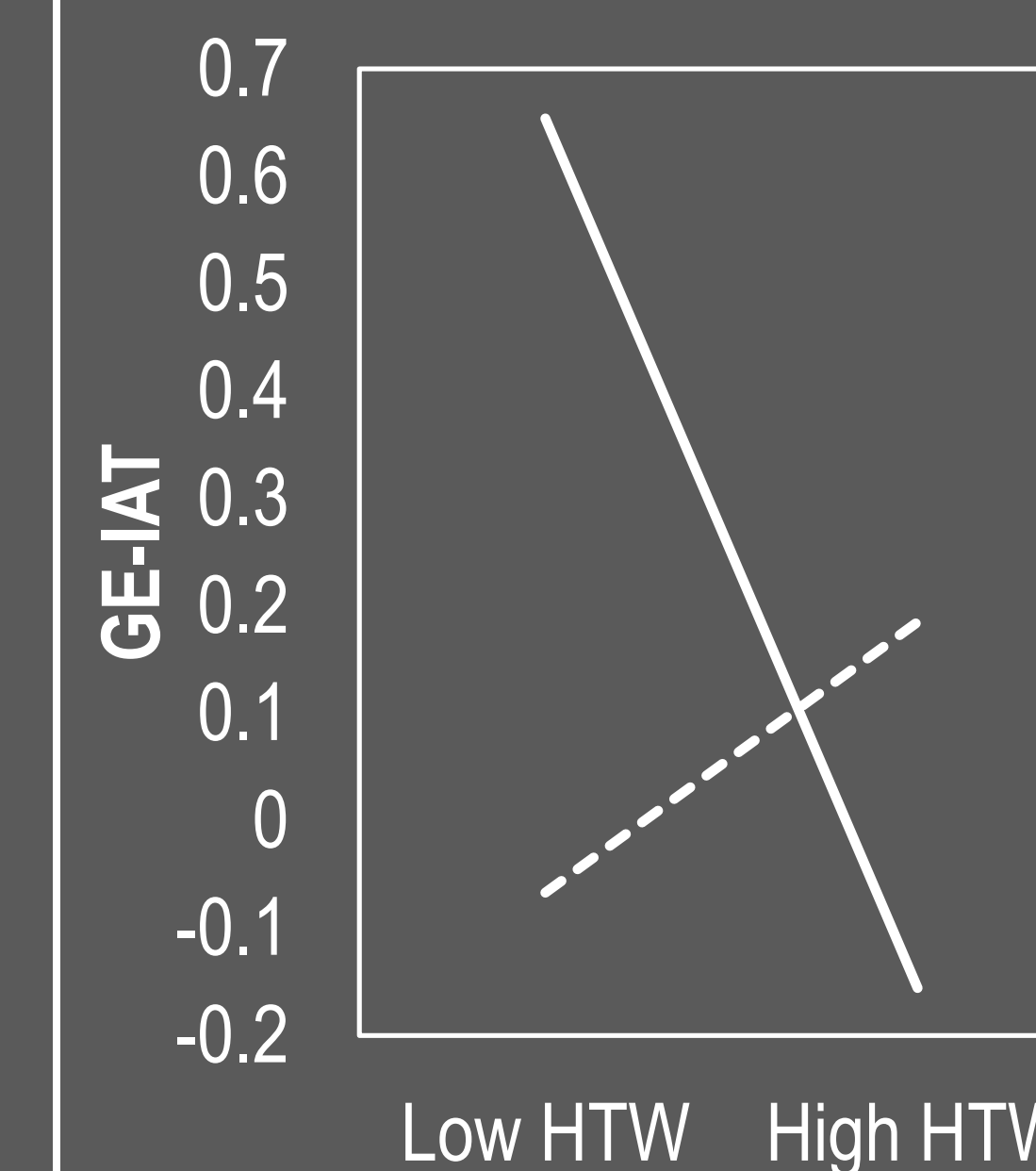

Figure 1. *Implicit Attitude Towards Women (GE-IAT) as a Function of Hostility Towards Women (HTW) and Likelihood to Rape (LR)*
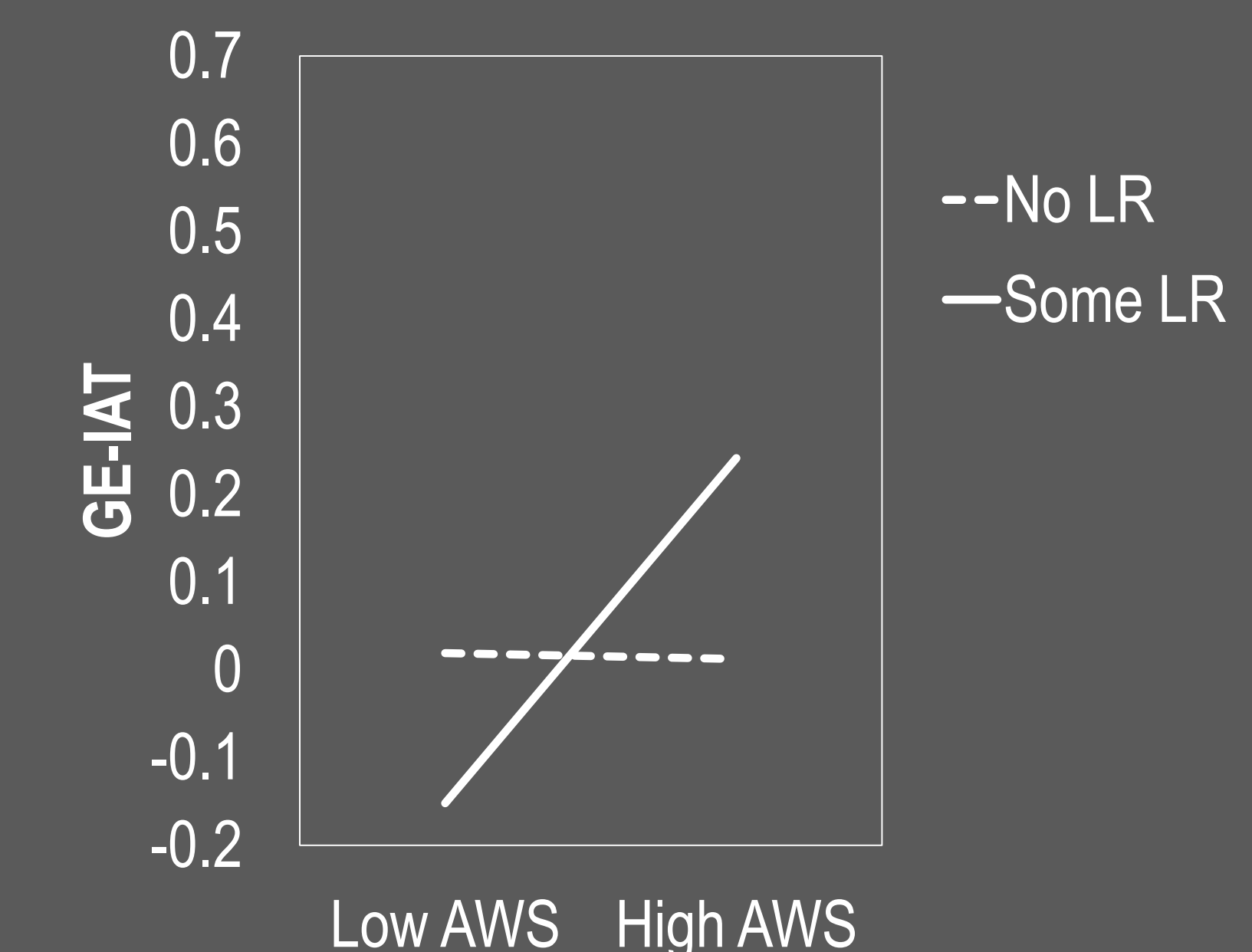
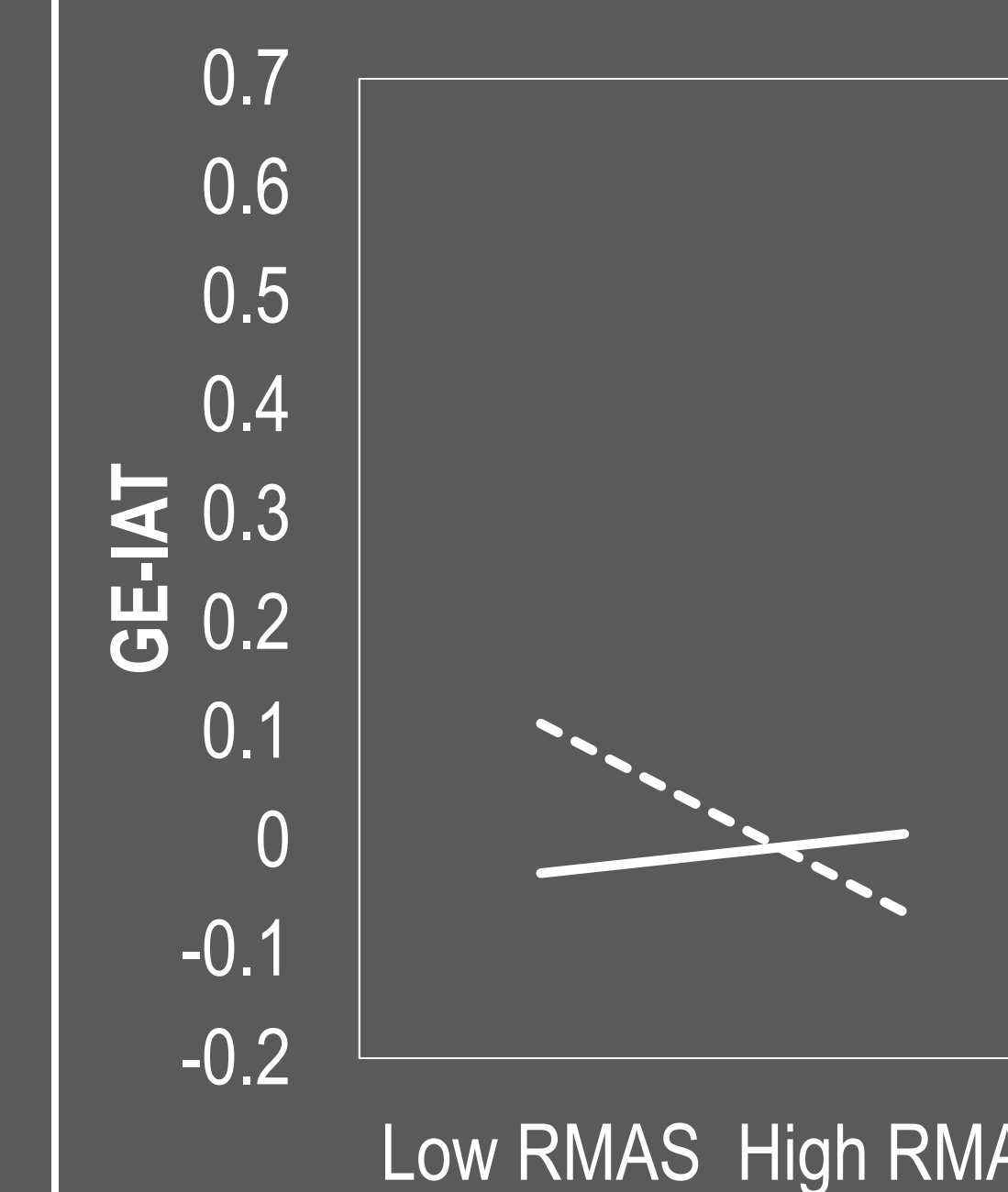Figure 2. *GE-IAT as a Function of Attitudes Toward Women (AWS) and Likelihood to Rape (LR)*

Figure 3. *GE-IAT as a Function of Rape Myth Acceptance scale (RMAS) and Likelihood to Rape (LR)*
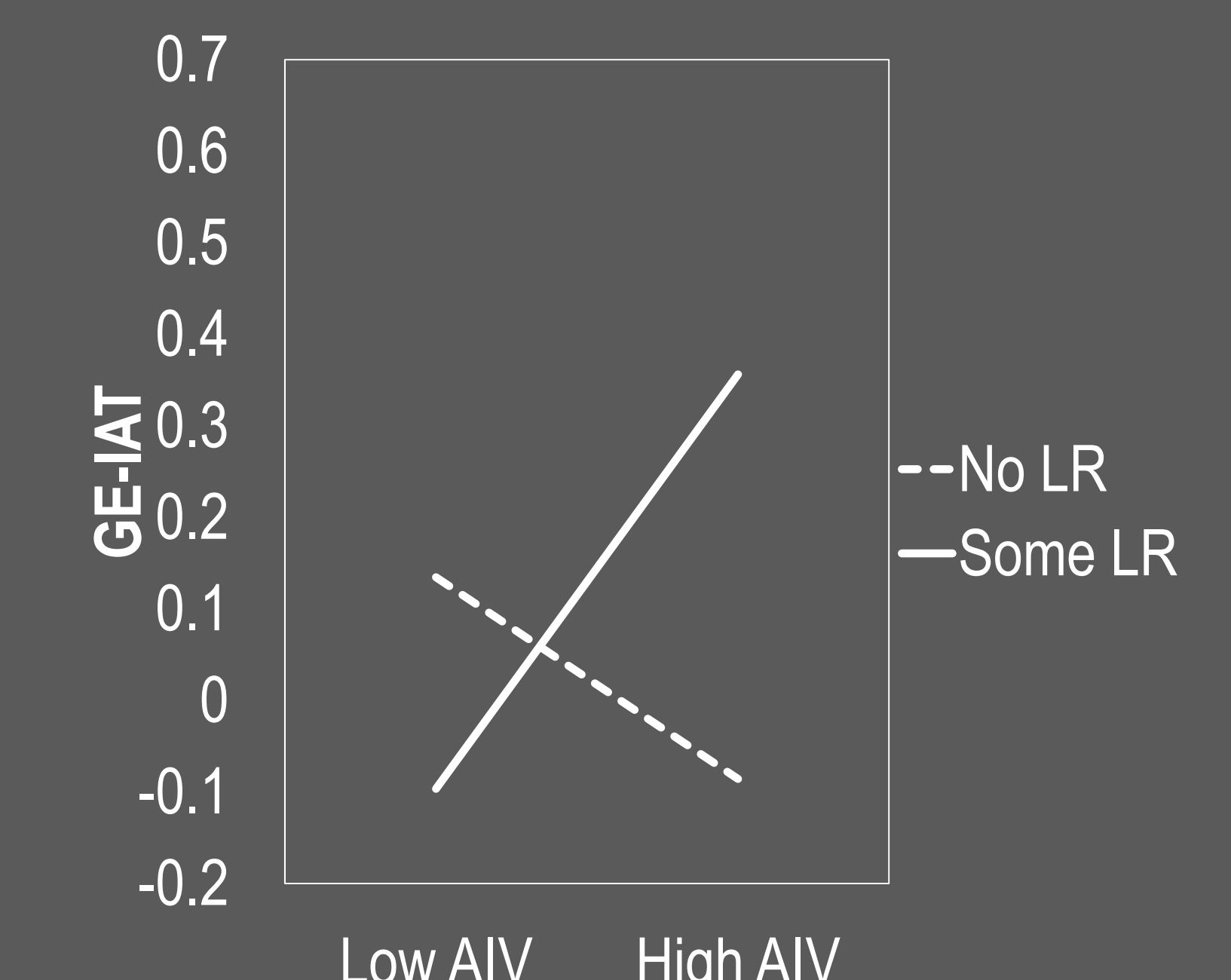
Figure 4. *GE-IAT as a Function of Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence (AIV) and Likelihood to Rape (LR)*

DISCUSSION

• Participants who reported some likelihood to rape had more discrepant implicit attitudes towards women and explicit beliefs about women and rape

• Discrepancy between implicit and explicit cognition may play a role in sexual aggression

• Perhaps this discrepancy reflects insecure and hostile masculinity (Malamuth, 2003)

Limitations:

• Small sample size and low baserate of likelihood to rape limits generalizability of findings (only 2 participants in some cells)

Future directions:

• Replication with larger and varied samples (e.g., convicted rapists)