The Desire to Be Authentic: The Development of the Sexual Authenticity Scale

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Abstract

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Authenticity has been demonstrated as an important factor in relationships and sexual health (Impett et al., 2006; Impett, Breines, & Strachman, 2010). Although authentic behaviour is generally beneficial, sharing our true thoughts, feelings, and desires may be especially difficult in sexual contexts. Existing research has demonstrated that individuals find sexual communication awkward, uncomfortable, and embarrassing and may avoid such discussions overall (Shumlich & Fisher, 2020). Despite the evidence that behaving authentically in sexual contexts is uniquely challenging, research has yet to explore sexual authenticity. A primary objective of this study was to develop a measure to assess individuals' level of sexual authenticity. Study 1 involved performing several exploratory factor analyses on the 23 proposed items, which yielded a 15-item scale that loaded onto three factors: 1) Honest Sexual Communication, 2) Sexual Placating, and 3) Sexual Self-Doubt. These subscales were statistically associated with related constructs such as relationship authenticity, honesty, and sexual deception. In Study 2, confirmatory factor analyses were conducted on two independent samples which provided additional support for the model and evidence for generalizability for the scale. The resulting Sexual Authenticity Scale was then leveraged to examine the relationships between sexual authenticity and its proposed benefits. Overall, sexual authenticity was found to be associated with enhanced sexual communication, sexual consent behaviours, and higher sexual and relationship satisfaction.

Keywords: authenticity, sexual authenticity, sexual communication, sexual consent, sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction

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The Desire to Be Authentic: The Development of the Sexual Authenticity Scale

We have all heard the common dating advice to "just be yourself". There seems to be a general understanding that being true to oneself, or being authentic, is important for both our relationships with others as well as for our psychological well-being and relationships with ourselves. However, being an authentic, unadulterated version of oneself can be difficult especially in sexual situations given the taboo nature of sex in Western culture. Existing research has shown that relationship authenticity is related to a variety of positive outcomes such as: greater enjoyment of sex, ability to refuse unwanted sex, firmness about using contraception (Impett et al., 2006), and increased condom negotiation (Impett, Breines, & Strachman, 2010). Although relationship authenticity has been demonstrated to improve sexual outcomes, this type of authenticity is specific to a particular relationship and focuses on more global behaviours such as expressing feelings or opinions to a romantic partner. The purpose of the current study was to develop a measure of sexual authenticity that would focus exclusively on authenticity within sexual contexts since these scenarios challenge our willingness to advocate for our innermost wants, desires, needs, and boundaries. Sexual authenticity is an integral factor contributing to individuals' ability to engage in sexual communication and take charge of their sex lives. The purpose of this project was twofold. First, I sought to create and provide initial validity and reliability for a measure of sexual authenticity. Second, I explored whether individuals' sexual authenticity levels were associated with positive outcomes such as improved sexual consent behaviours, sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and enhanced sexual communication.

Authenticity

In its most general form, authenticity can be defined as the level of congruence between what one thinks and feels and their external actions, behaviours, and communications (Impett et al., 2008). In other words, authenticity is a person's ability to be true to themselves (Nartova-Bochaver, Reznichenko, & Maltby, 2020). Wood and colleagues (2008) have described authenticity as being composed of three components: a sense of identity that is consistent with core beliefs, engaging in behaviours that are aligned with this identity, and an ability to resist external pressures when they are not reflective of personal beliefs.

Authenticity has been studied as both a state and a trait (Nartova-Bochaver, 2021; Wood et al., 2008), but the concept still remains vague. However, as Nartova-Bochaver (2021) suggested, there are a number of different manifestations of authenticity, but there is likely a level of trait authenticity underlying each of them. For example, existing research has examined authenticity in romantic relationships (Le & Impett, 2013), close friendships (Tou et al., 2015), adolescents' authenticity with their peers (Tolman et al., 2000), and individual trait authenticity (Brunell et al., 2010), but there is likely a level of trait authenticity that underlies each of these manifestations. In other words, individuals may have a trait level bandwidth of authenticity that is influenced by the context. Highly authentic individuals are likely to be authentic in most settings, but perhaps they are particularly strong in one area over another. Although the current study will be focusing on sexual authenticity, it is important to discuss related manifestations of authenticity since sexual authenticity research is limited.

Relationship Authenticity

Existing research has largely focused on relationship authenticity or relationship orientation, which is the ability to authentically communicate one's true wishes and desires

within the context of close relationships, such as romantic partnerships (Impett et al., 2008). For example, relationship authenticity could include sexual discussions within the context of romantic relationships or communicating about a point of conflict within the relationship. Individuals with high relationship authenticity are motivated to portray their true selves to their romantic partners even when doing so may result in discomfort or conflict (Lopez & Rice, 2006). Research on relationship authenticity has demonstrated that it is associated with a wide range of positive outcomes that will be described in more detail below.

Sexual Authenticity

There is limited research on authenticity specific to sexual contexts. Exploring the concept of sexual authenticity allows for the exploration of individuals' general propensity towards being sexually authentic regardless of their relationship status. Sex happens in a variety of contexts outside of monogamous romantic relationships (e.g., one-night stands, friends with benefits, polyamorous couples) and existing measures of relationship authenticity largely ignore this propensity for sex and sexuality to exist outside of the constructs of a monogamous romantic partnership. In addition, relationship authenticity encapsulates a wide variety of behaviours in relationships. For example, an individual's level of relationship authenticity could be exhibited through openly sharing thoughts, feelings, or concerns with a partner about a wide range of topics, whereas sexual authenticity focuses exclusively on sexual contexts.

Individuals in romantic relationships may generally be authentic about their thoughts and feelings with their relationship partners overall, but authentically communicating one's sexual thoughts and feelings may be particularly difficult. For example, someone may be very authentic about their day-to-day thoughts and feelings but may be more inclined to hide or conceal their sexual thoughts, desires, or fantasies since these topics tend to be more awkward and

complicated to discuss. Even in long-term relationships individuals do not often authentically communicate about their sexual preferences. Byers (2011) found that participants reported understanding on average 62% of their partners sexual wants and understanding only 26% of what their partners found displeasing. These results point to a clear lack of sexual communication. This lack of sexual communication resulted in poor partner understanding, which creates a dynamic where neither partner adequately understands what is pleasurable for the other and results in more displeasing sexual activities and lower sexual satisfaction overall. Behaving authentically can feel vulnerable and there is evidence that individuals engage in inauthentic behaviour to avoid these feelings of discomfort. Research by Jordan and colleagues (2022) found that women had anxiety about sexual communication with their partners and this anxiety was associated with less honest sexual communication and more faking behaviours. Unsurprisingly, this lack of sexual honesty was associated with lower sexual satisfaction.

Sexual authenticity is particularly hard to achieve compared to other types of authenticity because sex and sexuality are generally seen as taboo in Western culture. One example of this cultural avoidance is the repressive standards in sex education. Askew (2007) asked university students about their prior sexual education and found that the messages they had received were largely negative and fear-based. Participants reported learning about abstinence until marriage, guilt and fear associated with sex, suppression of desire, and overall felt that there was a lack of practical information. Askew reported that these young women felt conflicted and confused about their bodies and sexual desires. If individuals are confused about their internal sexual wants/desires, it comes as no surprise that they struggle to advocate for these in partnered interactions. Another example of this cultural discomfort with sex is the consistent lack of clear sexual communication between individuals. Byers (2011) discussed how sex is rarely effectively

communicated between individuals. Byers explained that parents generally do not engage in thorough conversations about sex with their children, romantic partners struggle with communicating their sexual wants, and many healthcare practitioners do not provide important sexual health information to their patients. This avoidance of sexual discussion is not a coincidence and points to a larger cultural phenomenon whereby individuals are sexually repressed. Unlike other forms of authenticity, sexual authenticity is challenged by cultural norms and expectations that teach individuals to repress and control their sexual selves.

Similar to the distinction between relationship and sexual satisfaction, relationship authenticity focuses on the authentic behaviours towards a specific individual such as a romantic partner, whereas sexual authenticity focuses on the authenticity of sexual behaviours at the individual level. Research has found that relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction are positively related to one another such that high relationship satisfaction is often associated with high sexual satisfaction (McNulty et al., 2014; Ziaee et al., 2014). However, research has demonstrated that these two types of satisfaction are distinct from one another. Characteristics such as attachment style (Butzer & Campbell, 2008) and gender (Fallis et al., 2016; Sprecher, 2002) influence the relationship between sexual and relationship satisfaction. If the two variables were measuring the same type of satisfaction these characteristics (e.g., gender and attachment style) would not change the association between them. Research has also demonstrated that it is possible to have individuals who are high in one type of satisfaction but low in the other (i.e., high in relationship satisfaction but low in sexual satisfaction or vice versa). This research demonstrates that the two are in fact distinct types of satisfaction that require separate measures. The fact there are individual measures for both relationship and sexual satisfaction provides support for why nuanced measures of authenticity should also exist. Therefore, sexual

authenticity would likely be influenced by the individual's relationship with their sexual partner, but there would be an individual level of sexual authenticity that is consistent despite the relational context.

Some individuals are likely to behave authentically regardless of whether their sexual partner is a long-term relationship or a one-night stand. For instance, authentic individuals would be less likely to engage in faking behaviours or pretending to enjoy sexual activity than less authentic individuals. Instead, they would only express pleasure and satisfaction in situations where it was genuine. It is likely that there is a significant overlap between sexual authenticity and relationship authenticity, but exploring sexual authenticity is important given the unique taboo nature of sexual discussions. In other words, it was expected that individuals would have similar, but unique levels of sexual authenticity and relationship authenticity.

In this study, sexual authenticity can be defined as the congruence between an individuals' actions or behaviours and their thoughts, feelings, desires, and needs in sexual contexts. Individuals who are high in sexual authenticity would be expected to communicate their sexual desires with their partners even if these desires are uncommon (e.g., sharing a sexual fantasy), whereas sexually inauthentic individuals may mask their true feelings by engaging in a variety of behaviours such as faking orgasms. Inauthentic individuals may also be more prone to pleasing their partners at the expense of their own internal desires or lack thereof (e.g., engaging in unwanted sex). In the current study, sexual authenticity was measured by asking participants about a variety of behaviours that focused on the alignment (or misalignment) between internal thoughts/feelings and external behaviours in sexual settings. Examples of these behaviours included: feigning desire, engaging sexual behaviours that are uncomfortable, and talking honestly about sex.

Self Determination Theory

      Humans can be motivated by both internal and external motivations. Intrinsic or self-motivated actions are based on personal values or interests, whereas external actions are influenced by external pressures or rewards. Self Determination Theory (SDT) largely focuses on self-motivated actions and posits that humans have innate growth tendencies to find purpose and meaning in their lives (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) found that humans have psychological needs that need to be fulfilled in order to enhance self-motivation: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. SDT posits that when these psychological needs are satisfied, intrinsic motivation will be enhanced. In other words, we strive to be the best version of ourselves and are motivated to engage in behaviours that are constructive to our personal growth.

      Existing research has highlighted the experience of autonomy, which is a requirement for authenticity, as one of the three essential psychological needs indicated by Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Authenticity requires autonomy, congruence, and genuineness (Ryan & Ryan, 2019). In other words, individuals must feel that their actions or communications are self-governed and that their behaviours are consistent with their feelings, experiences, and beliefs. This experience of being one's own person and being intrinsically motivated to behave in a way that is consistent with oneself is a component of both authenticity and SDT. Authenticity and autonomy are mutually dependent on each other. One cannot be authentic without being autonomous and vice versa. This psychological need for autonomy and self-authorship should motivate individuals to behave in ways that are authentic in general, but also in sexual contexts since sexual behaviours are often quite intimate acts with personal values attached. In sum, Self-Determination Theory posits that individuals have an innate desire to be their authentic selves, and to have others understand and accept their true selves. "Sexually identifying in ways which

are our ownmost and giving accounts of them to others better positions us to flourish as sexual selves than do less authentic sexual identities" (Harbin, 2012, p. 88).

Sexual authenticity is a social process that involves both the understanding of oneself and conveying that information to others. It is a process that can be challenging, uncomfortable, and ongoing. It requires a high degree of self-awareness and skills to effectively communicate about internal thoughts and feelings. Authenticity is something that individuals struggle with and can have negative social costs. Behaving authentically is vulnerable and requires individuals to share information about their true self. It may be complicated for an individual to behave authentically in an environment that is perceived to be unsupportive or judgemental (Ryan & Ryan, 2019). For example, an individual who identifies as lesbian may find it especially difficult to be open about their sexual orientation in environments that are perceived to be unaccepting and discriminatory. For instance, McLean (2008) studied bisexual individuals and found that many of them kept their sexual identity hidden from the queer and straight communities out of fear of being ostracized. This led to a reluctance to participate in the LGBTQ+ community and feeling like they would never be fully accepted. They felt portraying their authentic self would result in negative consequences. In many instances, individuals will refrain from authentically sharing their sexual orientation in order to protect themselves from judgement, inequity, physical harm, or other negative social costs (Feinstein & et al., 2020). Feinstein and colleagues (2020) described that individuals carefully consider whether to share their orientation since both concealment and disclosure could have negative consequences. Therefore, there must be a motivational factor behind why individuals have a desire to be authentic. Cox and colleagues (2010) examined coming out behaviours of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals and found that individuals who had perceived social support and strong ties with the LGBTQ+ community often experienced

personal growth from coming out. Other research by Rubinsky and Hosek (2019) studied LGBTQ participants and found that higher levels of sexual self-disclosure were associated with higher sexual, relationship satisfaction, and participants reported higher satisfaction with their sexual communication.

Previous research has also pointed out that motivation can be enhanced or thwarted by variations of these psychological needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In other words, authenticity is not a fixed state of being, it can change within an individual depending on external factors. Existing research has found that authenticity varies within individuals and that these variations are predictive of wellbeing (Ryan & Ryan, 2019; Sedikides et al., 2017).

Existing Measures of Authenticity

There is a virtual absence of research on sexual authenticity. The research that does exist is grounded in gender studies and philosophy that focuses on the importance of owning one's sexual identity and sharing it with others (Harbin, 2011). This literature does not offer a quantitative measurement of the construct. Despite the lack of a sexual authenticity measure, there are other relevant measures of authenticity as both a personality trait and as a feature of romantic relationships.

There is theoretical ambiguity within the field as to whether authenticity should be considered an individual-difference variable (trait) or a more dynamic variable (state) that can change in a variety of circumstances such as relational context (Lopez & Rice, 2006). Overall, there seems to be a general agreement that individuals have an underlying trait level of authenticity but that authenticity may also be influenced by situational factors such as intimate relationships where mutual trust and self-disclosure is a part of building a strong relationship

between partners (Kernis, 2003; Lopez & Rice, 2006; Nartova-Bochaver, Reznichenko, & Maltby, 2020).

　　As mentioned above, authenticity is sometimes conceptualized as a personality trait that is relatively stable over time and context. Researchers have successfully developed measures for this individual-difference level of authenticity. For example, Goldman and Kernis (2006) developed a number of questions that were designed to measure dispositional authenticity called the Kernis-Goldman Authenticity Inventory. Bond and colleagues (2018) later reduced the items from 45 to 20 and proposed a short form of this measure. Likewise, Wood and colleagues (2008) successfully developed a measure of dispositional authenticity called the Authenticity Scale. The 12-item scale displayed a three factor structure composed of: self-alienation, accepting external influence, and authentic living. Example items of this measure included "I feel as if I don't know myself very well" and "I am true to myself in most situations". All of the aforementioned scales demonstrated robust measures of authenticity as a personality trait. However, the nature of these scales is intentionally quite broad, and focus on very general indicators of authenticity like knowing oneself and being honest about personal beliefs. Thus, there is room for more specificity.

　　Existing research has also resulted in the development of measures of relationship authenticity. These measures typically require that individuals respond based on their relationship with a specific other (usually a romantic partner). For instance, Lopez and Rice (2006) developed a measure of relationship authenticity called the Authenticity in Relationships Scale (AIRS), which Wickman et al. (2015) later proposed a short version of. This measure is designed to assess individuals' relationship authenticity with their romantic partners. Both the full scale (Lopez & Rice, 2006) and the short form (Wickman et al., 2015) have demonstrated

reliability and validity. Tolman and Porche (2000) developed the Adolescent Femininity Ideology Scale, which included a subscale called the Inauthentic Self in Relationships (ISR) subscale, which originally was designed to measure inauthenticity in adolescent girls' peer relationships. However, the subscale has been adjusted in order to examine relationship inauthenticity (Impett, Breines, & Strachman, 2010). These scales have been used to explore sexual health outcomes, but there remains a gap in that none of these items focus on the sexual aspects of relationships.

Sexual authenticity is positioned in the current research to be a specific type of authenticity which is likely related to, but distinct from other types of authenticity. The existing authenticity measures lack the nuance required to capture the sexual aspect of authenticity. Since there is a lack of a quantitative measure for sexual authenticity, a central objective of the current research was to develop a measure that could be used to assess individual levels of sexual authenticity. Developing a measurement of sexual authenticity will result in practical and theoretical benefits. As mentioned previously, sexual authenticity is a unique type of authenticity which likely has a significant impact on a variety of personal, relational, and sexual outcomes. Therefore, the development of the scale will offer a tool to examine another unique manifestation of authenticity. Research could then compare and contrast relationship and sexual authenticity and how they differentially impact different outcome variables.

Honesty

The construct of honesty encompasses values such as truthfulness, genuineness, and sincerity, which are quite similar to the values of authenticity (Ashton et al., 2014). Given this similarity in constructs, it was expected that authenticity would be related to the personality trait of honesty. However, previous research is limited and inconclusive about the relationship

between the two. For instance, Maltby and colleagues (2012) found that the honesty-humility subscale and measures of dispositional authenticity shared many of the same features. In fact, the researchers suggested that authenticity is positioned within the six main personality dimensions. Other research has positioned authenticity as a related, but unique trait. Specifically, Wood and colleagues (2008) examined six personality traits and their relationship with authenticity and found that these traits accounted for a significant percentage of the variance in authenticity. However, this portion of variance was small (<13%) and the authors concluded that authenticity was a unique construct that could not be reduced to a linear combination of the HEXACO personality traits.

In the current study, honesty is positioned as an important feature of authenticity. Because engaging in authentic behaviour, by definition, requires honest communication. However, authenticity is unique in that it requires a level of self-authorship rather than just portrayal of genuine information that may be unrelated to the self.

Sexual Deception

Sexual authenticity as a construct should also be negatively related to constructs such as lying, deceitfulness, and falseness since these are antonyms of authenticity (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, as cited in Wood et al., 2008). Existing measures of sexual deception include factors such as blatant lying and avoiding confrontation (Marelich et al., 2008). Marelich and colleagues examined the motivations behind sexual deception and found that one of the common motivations was to avoid conflict. They found that individuals often reported faking orgasms, engaging in sexual activity that they did not want, or acting sexually satisfied when they were not. These conflict avoidance motivations behind the sexual deception construct are examples of sexual inauthenticity. In other words, sexual authenticity involves a lack of sexually deceptive

behaviours. Since authentic individuals should value genuine portrayals of their wants and needs, it would be expected that these individuals would engage in less sexually deceptive behaviours.

The Benefits of Authenticity

Research consistently shows that authenticity is associated with a wide variety of positive outcomes. Existing research has found that higher levels of authenticity are associated with increased self-esteem, lower depression (Tolman et al., 2006; Wenzel, Lucas-Thompson, 2012), and greater mental health and wellbeing (Impett et al., 2008; Le & Impett, 2012). There is also evidence that authenticity has a positive impact on relationship and sexual health with outcomes such as: greater enjoyment of sex, ability to refuse unwanted sex, enhanced sexual health behaviours (Impett et al., 2006).

More specifically, Impett and colleagues (2010) conducted a study on women's condom negotiation behaviours and found that women who were lower in authenticity were less likely to use condoms. These women were more likely to be negatively impacted by negative events such as disagreements or arguments than authentic women and that this reduced condom use even further. In other words, women who scored low in authenticity were less likely to use condoms on days where the security of the relationship had been threatened, whereas authentic women's condom use was not affected by these negative events.

Research supports the notion that individuals' authenticity can be improved over time and these improvements yield a variety of positive outcomes. For example, Impett and colleagues (2008) conducted a study on adolescent girls and not only was relational authenticity associated with increases in self-esteem, but as girls increased in authenticity over time so did their self-esteem. Research on relationship authenticity resulted in similar conclusions. One study manipulated authenticity by randomly assigning participants to recall either a situation in which

they felt authentic, or a situation in which they felt inauthentic (Kifer et al., 2013). The researchers found that individuals in the high authenticity group reported higher levels of subjective well-being than individuals in the low authenticity group. Wickham (2013) conducted a study in which manipulated perceptions of romantic partners' authenticity. Participants were randomly assigned to either the moderate authenticity group or the high authenticity group. Essentially, participants were told that they were viewing their partners' authenticity scores and were presented with a fictitious report that showed either moderate or high levels of authenticity. The results demonstrated that participants who believed their partner had high authenticity reported their relationship quality significantly higher than those who thought their partner had moderate authenticity. Specifically, the perception of higher authenticity led to increased levels of trust, commitment, and satisfaction. In conclusion, authenticity can be manipulated to some extent and these manipulations have adaptive benefits for both one's self and one's relationship.

Given the benefits of authenticity and its ability to be improved over time, it is essential to understand sexual authenticity and its impact on sexual and relational outcomes. This knowledge not only improves the theoretical understanding of authenticity, but also provides potential avenues for practical applications. This research could be used to identify individuals who are low in sexual authenticity and who may benefit from intervention. Additionally, this research could be used to identify the outcomes that sexual authenticity promotes and to develop programs to enhance sexual authenticity. In fact, some authors have suggested that authenticity measures could be leveraged to improve individuals' psychological wellbeing and alleviate clinical symptoms (Sedikides et al., 2017). The current study not only developed a measure for sexual authenticity, but also explored the potential relationships between sexual authenticity and

a variety of sexual outcomes: sexual consent, sexual communication, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction.

Sexual Satisfaction and Relationship Satisfaction

Authenticity appears to be beneficial for both personal and relationship satisfaction. When individuals choose to express their authentic sexual selves with others, this can create a supportive environment for shared intimacy and a place to be oneself. Being truly authentic about one's desires, wants, and fantasies allows for support and makes the performance of these desires possible. Given that authenticity exemplifies concepts like honesty, openness, and genuineness (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), it is unsurprisingly that authentic individuals feel more romantically and sexually fulfilled.

There are a number of studies that have established the positive impacts that authenticity has on relationship satisfaction. For example, Brunell and colleagues (2010) examined the relationship between dispositional authenticity and relationship outcomes in a sample of heterosexual couples. The authors found that authenticity was associated with engaging in a variety of healthy relationship behaviours that were associated with positive relationship outcomes such as higher satisfaction, commitment, and trust. Participants with higher levels of dispositional authenticity also reported that they behaved in more intimate and constructive ways in the relationship. Similarly, Lopez and Rice (2006) conducted a study on a sample of university students in romantic relationships and found that relationship authenticity significantly predicted relationship satisfaction even after controlling for gender, self-esteem, commitment level, and attachment style.

Research has also shown that feeling authentic is important for relationship satisfaction. Le and Impett (2013) conducted a daily-experience study with individuals in romantic

relationships and found that when individuals made sacrifices for approach goals, they felt more authentic, and this feeling of authenticity contributed to greater personal and relationship wellbeing. Additionally, Impett and colleagues (2012) conducted a study on dating couples, which examined emotion suppression and authenticity. Participants completed a daily questionnaire that asked about any sacrifices they made for their partners, their emotional suppression, and their feelings of authenticity. The researchers concluded that when participants made sacrifices and suppressed their emotions, they felt less authentic because they were unable to share their genuine feelings. This feeling of inauthenticity lead to increased conflict within the relationship and lower relationship satisfaction.

There is also evidence that higher levels of authenticity also appear to result in greater sexual self-efficacy and enjoyment of sex (Impett et al., 2006). Because relationship authenticity appears to benefit relationship satisfaction and sexual enjoyment, it is likely that authenticity will be positively associated with sexual satisfaction. The current study will examine the impact that sexual authenticity has on relationship and sexual satisfaction.

Sexual Communication

Sexual communication can be defined as communication, either verbal or nonverbal, that is expressed in order to convey sexual wants and desires to a partner. These behaviours can range from asking a partner for sex to giving a partner a suggestive look. There is a wide range of behaviours under this umbrella, and they vary greatly in terms of their ambiguity. In order to behave authenticity, internal thoughts and feelings need to be outwardly expressed. Therefore, behaving authentically should logically lead to improved sexual communication. Authenticity focuses on the accurate portrayal of these internal wants and desires, so direct unambiguous communication strategies should be emphasized.

Humans are sexual agents and sexual communication is associated with a variety of positive sexual health outcomes. A meta-analysis of 48 studies examining sexual communication found that sexual communication was associated with many indicators of sexual health such as sexual function including: desire, arousal, orgasm, lubrication, and erection (Mallory et al., 2019). However, Western culture does not have readily available scripts for explicit, direct, and practical sexual communication. Instead, individuals rely on nonverbal behaviours or veiled communication to reduce feelings of embarrassment or awkwardness (Shumlich & Fisher, 2018). Harbin (2011) explained that while individuals may value sexual authenticity, social norms create barriers to sexual communication. Authentically communicating our innermost desires is deeply intimate and can feel risky and uncomfortable.

There are obvious problems with the lack of clear communication. For instance, these misunderstandings could lead to negative outcomes ranging from decreased sexual satisfaction to non-consensual sexual activity. Additionally, the ambiguity created from this lack of sexual communication prevents individuals from sharing their sexual wants and desires with their partner. This leads to barriers in sexual fulfillment and sexual satisfaction. Therefore, it is important for research to examine potential factors that might positively influence sexual communication behaviours.

Existing research has demonstrated that authenticity is associated with improved sexual communication. Importantly, authentic women find it easier to understand and articulate their sexual needs and desires to others (Amaro, Raj, & Reed, 2001). For example, Impett and colleagues (2010) examined the role of relationship authenticity on women's daily condom use and found that women's authenticity levels were associated with higher levels of condom usage.

The researchers concluded that authentic women were more sexually efficacious and better able to advocate for and communicate their sexual needs to their partners.

Furthermore, Jack (1991) found that inauthenticity can be problematic because it can lead to silencing of one's needs and desires in order to please others and avoid conflict (as cited in Impett et al., 2010). Research by Widman and colleagues (2006) found that individuals who silenced their authentic thoughts reported less open sexual communication. For example, an individual may not voice their hesitation or discomfort about a specific sexual behaviour in order to avoid upsetting the partner. Impett and colleagues (2010) found that this was especially true during periods of conflict within the relationship. Specifically, Impett found that on days where there were negative relationship events, women who were low in authenticity were especially unlikely to use condoms, which may be the result of conflict avoidance on days where they are feeling insecure in their relationships with their partners. Authentic women's condom usage however was not impacted by negative relationship events. Therefore, individuals who are high in authenticity appear to prioritize being authentic even in scenarios where there may be costs associated with behaving authentically, whereas individuals who are low in authenticity may lack the confidence and skills required to engage in this type of communication. It is also possible that less authentic individuals prioritize conflict avoidance over advocating for their own wants and needs.

Authentic individuals may find it easier to express their sexual likes and dislikes and they may be able to establish clearer boundaries with their intimate partners. This research will examine the relationship between sexual authenticity and sexual communication behaviours. This tendency for authentic individuals to engage in sexual communication likely improves not only sexual communication itself, but also sexual consent behaviours.

Sexual Consent Behaviours

Sexual consent is defined as the clear and unambiguous communication of voluntary willingness to engage in the sexual activity in question. In addition, Canadian law advocates for consent to be unambiguous, explicit, and communicated verbally, but research has shown that there are barriers to even the most basic forms of sexual communication (Shumlich & Fisher, 2018). In other words, individuals may know that they should engage in sexual consent behaviours but lack the appropriate skills for how to communicate their sexual wants, needs, and desires. Like other forms of sexual communication, sexual consent behaviours can be verbal or nonverbal and vary in terms of clarity. While verbal consent behaviours may be clear and direct, such as stating "I would like to have sex with you", nonverbal behaviours may be indirect and confusing. Current research indicates that most individuals rely on these indirect nonverbal cues, which are vague and can easily be misinterpreted by others (Beres, Herold, & Maitland, 2004; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999). For instance, Humphreys (2007) found that 61% participants preferring to assume consent rather than to ask for it before engaging in sexual activity. This lack of explicit discussion creates ambiguity and requires sexual partners to make assumptions about what they perceive their partners' cues to mean.

Existing research has found that strategies for indicating sexual consent vary between individuals and that individuals use different strategies for communicating sexual consent (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2014). The ambiguity of many of the commonly used consent cues prevents mutual understanding and discussion of sexual wants and desires. For example, a smile may indicate that someone is consenting to the sexual activity in question, but it could also be an indicator that he/she is anxious or uncomfortable. In fact, Koukounas and Letch (2001) found that men interpreted women's nonverbal cues as more sexual than the women meant for them to

be. To avoid such misinterpretations, individuals need to clearly verbally communicate consent, which does not happen during the majority of sexual encounters.

Sexual assault continues to be an enormous concern. Sexual assault can be defined as non-consensual sexual activity (Koss et al., 2007). For example, Muehlenhard and colleagues (2017) found that 20% of women are sexually assaulted while in college. The heightened awareness of sexual assault has led to a variety of awareness and promotion campaigns aimed at improving sexual consent. For example, many university programs focus on educating students about sexual violence and emphasize the importance of giving and obtaining sexual consent (Daigle, Fisher, & Stewart, 2009).

Despite this widespread advocacy for improved sexual consent and sexual communication, there has been limited research on what factors promote unambiguous sexual communication. Without an understanding of what factors promote healthy sexual communication, consent promotion programs are not able to effectively target and improve these qualities. The current study positions sexual authenticity as one such factor that may improve consent behaviours. If individuals are sincerely authentic and wish to genuinely communicate their true wants and desires, they should be more likely to use the least ambiguous behaviours to do so (e.g., saying "I want to have sex with you") as opposed to relying solely on non-verbal and or indirect consent behaviours which are more likely to be misinterpreted (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Shumlich & Fisher, 2018). Authentic individuals should prioritize their desires and feel more confident communicating them to a partner.

Overview of the Current Research

I conducted two studies to (1) develop and validate a measure of sexual authenticity, and (2) to examine the influence of sexual authenticity on sexual consent behaviours, sexual communication, and levels of sexual and relationship satisfaction. Study 1 was a cross-sectional study in which participants responded to a variety of validated measures pertaining to relationship authenticity, personality characteristics, sexually deceptive behaviours, sexual communication, as well as a sexual authenticity measure that was designed by the author of this paper in conjunction with other experts in the field. This study was designed to provide initial reliability and validity for the newly developed measure of sexual authenticity.

Study 2 was also a cross-sectional study that asked participants about their sexual communication, sexual consent behaviours, relationship authenticity, sexual authenticity, and measures of both relationship and sexual satisfaction. The goal of this study was to provide additional reliability and validity for the measure and provide evidence of generalizability of the scale using a student and community sample. The relationship between sexual authenticity and a variety of sexual health and relationship outcomes were also examined in Study 2.

Study 1

The objective of the first study was to develop a measure of sexual authenticity and provide initial reliability and validity for this measure. The items of this study were written/edited in such a way to focus exclusively on sexual behaviours that would be relevant to sexual authenticity. Some of the items were based on items from the Inauthentic Self in Relationships (ISR) subscale of The Adolescent Femininity Ideology Scale (Tolman & Porche, 2000), an existing measure of relationship authenticity. Nine items from the ISR scale were modified to focus specifically on sexual contexts. For example, the item "I tell my partner what I

honestly think even when it is an unpopular idea" was modified to "I tell my sexual partner my sexual wants/desires even when they might be unusual" or the item "Often, I look happy outwardly in order to please my partner, even if I don't feel happy on the inside" was modified to "Often, I express sexual arousal outwardly in order to please my partner, even if I don't feel aroused". The principal investigator developed an additional 12 items in conjunction with the supervisor for this project, who is an expert in sexual communication research. Items were based on our conceptualization of what behaviours would be indicative of sexual authenticity/sexual inauthenticity. These items covered themes such as: engaging in unwanted sexual behaviours, faking behaviours, feigning sexual desire, expressing sexual wants, and honest communication about sex.

All of the items were reviewed for face validity by experts in the field. Experts for this project included 3 university professors and 2 upper-year PhD students who all conduct research in the field of human sexuality. In general, the experts felt that the items could remain quite similar to the initially proposed items, but that the items needed to clearly focus on sexual contexts. This involved some minor changes to the verbiage of the items for clarity. For example, the words "sexual" and "sexually" were added to some of the items to reduce ambiguity. The experts also felt that it was important to include items that focused on sexual experience and sexual fantasy, so two additional items were included to focus on these topics. The initial scale had 23 items that were intended to provide an overall measure of individuals' sexual authenticity. All of the items can be found in Appendix D.

It was predicted that the proposed measure would be associated with an existing measure of relationship authenticity, such that individuals who scored higher in relationship authenticity would also score higher on the sexual authenticity measure. It was also predicted that sexual

authenticity would be associated with measures of honesty, such that sexually authentic individuals would score higher in honesty as honesty is a fundamental component of authenticity. Finally, I hypothesized that there would be a negative relationship between sexual authenticity and sexual deception. In other words, I predicted that individuals who scored high on measures of authenticity would be less likely to engage in sexually deceptive behaviours.

Methods

Participants

There were two groups of participants, university students and community members. The university students were recruited through both Trent University's SONA participant pool. Trent students were able to participate in the study if they were enrolled in qualifying classes and registered with the Psychology Department's online research management system (SONA). Qualifying classes included first-year introductory psychology courses and second-year psychology research methods courses. Students registered with the SONA system were assigned a randomly generated research ID number that was used to identify them within the system but their personal anonymity is maintained. The system kept their names and Trent ID numbers anonymous and separate from their data. Students are able to preview available research studies through the SONA platform. This study was listed along with a brief description of the study and a link to the online study, which was hosted on Qualtrics, an online survey platform. Students were granted 0.5 course credits for their completion of the study.

Participants from the community sample were recruited through MTurk. MTurk is a crowdsourcing marketplace in which interested individuals can participate in a variety of Human Intelligence Tasks (HITs) and receive payment for completing tasks. This study was listed among a number of other HITs from which qualified individuals could choose. A short

description of the study was included and interested participants were directed to the Qualtrics survey. Participants qualified for the study if they lived in Canada or the United States, had not previously completed the study, had an approval rating of 95% or higher, and had completed more than 5000 HITs. Participants who completed at least half of the study were compensated $0.10. In order to provide compensation, MTurk IDs were collected. Similar to the SONA IDs, MTurk IDs had no identifying information associated with them.

I chose to recruit participants using MTurk for a number of reasons. MTurk allows for the collection of large samples of high-quality data in a limited amount of time (Buhrmester et al., 2011) and MTurk includes a more diverse sample than the university sample (Behrend et al., 2011), which is expected to be limited in terms of age. A greater diversity of participants is important when creating psychological measures because it improves the generalizability of the measure. In fact, Morgado (2017) described sample characteristic limitations as one of the biggest limitations in scale development.

The inclusion criteria for this study were that participants must be over the age of 18, speak English fluently, and must have had at least one sexual partner in their lifetime. A sexual partner could include oral, manual, vaginal, or anal sex partners. This inclusion criterion was in place because the study's focus was on individuals' sexual authenticity. Although individuals who have not had sexual partners may experience sexual authenticity, this study focused on individuals' behaviours with sexual partners. Future research may wish to explore sexual authenticity in individuals prior to engagement in sexual behaviour.

The final recruited sample consisted of 929 participants. This included the student sample recruited via SONA (n = 525; 57%) and a community sample recruited using Amazon's MTurk

(n = 404; 43%). Information regarding demographic variables can be found in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1

Continuous Variable Demographic Information of the Student and Community Samples

Item (Range)	M (SD)			Test Statistic	p
	Total	Student	MTurk		
Age (18-76)	29.69 (12.91)	21.05 (5.13)	40.74 (11.34)	*Welsh F =* 1039.08	< 0.001
Number of Sexual Partners (1-350)	9.51 (20.18)	5.72 (8.13)	14.68 (28.74)	*Welsh F =* 34.59	<0.001
Length of relationship years (0-56)	4.93 (8.13)	1.60 (3.42)	9.29 (10.26)	*Welsh F =* 208.91	< 0.001

Note. N = 929. This table displays the demographic characteristics of each sample (community and student). Standard deviations (SD) are presented in parentheses.

Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 76 with a mean age of 29.69 years (SD = 12.91). Participants identified as women (70%), men (28%), and some identified as another gender (2%). Participants' ethnicity were: Caucasian (74%), Asian (9%), Black (7%), mixed ethnicity (5%), Hispanic (3%), Indigenous (1%), or another ethnicity (1%). Most participants in the study were in a relationship (62%), whereas others were single (38%). Participants reported relationship lengths ranging from 0 to 56 years.

Analyses were conducted in order to determine whether the community (MTurk) and student (SONA) samples statistically differed with respect to age, and relationship length, and number of sexual partners. ANOVAs were used to investigate any significant differences between these groups. Welsh tests were used because the assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated in these analyses. Compared to the student sample, the community sample was

older, had longer relationships, and had more lifetime sexual partners. All of these differences were expected given the nature of the two samples.

Table 2
Demographic Information of the Student and Community Samples Continued

Item	n (%)			Test Statistic	p
	Total	Student	MTurk		
Gender				$\chi^2 = 143.08$	$< .001$
Women	647 (70.10)	446 (85.44)	201 (50.12)		
Men	260 (28.17)	66 (12.64)	194 (48.38)		
Other	16 (1.73)	10 (1.92)	6 (1.50)		
Sexual Orientation				$\chi^2 = 0.52$	$= .47$
Heterosexual	734 (79.61)	412 (78.78)	322 (80.70)		
Gay/Lesbian	31 (3.36)	13 (2.49)	18 (4.51)		
Bisexual	118 (12.80)	72 (13.77)	46 (11.52)		
Other	39 (4.23)	26 (4.97)	13 (3.26)		
Relationship Status				$\chi^2 = 67.73$	$< .001$
Single	347 (37.68)	257 (49.14)	90 (22.61)		
Relationship	574 (62.32)	266 (50.86)	308 (77.39)		
Ethnicity					
Caucasian	680 (73.67)	377 (72.22)	303 (75.56)		
Asian	82 (8.88)	48 (9.20)	34 (8.48)		
Black	64 (6.93)	33 (6.32)	31 (7.73)		
Indigenous	7 (.76)	4 (0.77)	3 (0.75)		
Mixed Ethnicity	50 (5.42)	41 (7.85)	9 (2.24)		
Hispanic	28 (3.03)	8 (1.53)	20 (4.99)		

| Other | 12 (1.30) | 11 (2.10) | 1 (0.25) |

Note. N = 929. This table displays the demographic characteristics of each sample (community and student). Percentages are presented in parentheses.

Three 2x2 chi square analyses were run to determine if there was a significant difference between groups in terms of gender (women and men), sexual orientation (heterosexual and LGBTQ+), and relationship status (single and in relationship). For ease of interpretation, only men and women were examined in the gender analysis, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other categories were collapsed into an "LGBTQ+" group for the sexual orientation analysis. For all of the chi square analyses, the assumptions of independence and expected frequencies were met. In other words, each participant could only be included in one cell for each of the examined variables, and less than 20% of the expected values were below five. The chi square comparing the gender in each sample group was significant $\chi^2(1, 907) = 143.08$, $p < .001$. There were proportionately more women in the student sample than in the community sample. The chi square comparing relationship status between the samples was also significant $\chi^2 (1, 921) = 67.73$, $p < .001$. The results revealed that the student sample had more single individuals than the community sample, which was anticipated given that the community sample was a more mature sample. However, there was no significant difference between samples in terms of sexual orientation $\chi^2 (1, 922) = .52$, $p = .47$.

The student and community samples were collapsed for subsequent factor analyses, since the community sample is conceptualized to be an extension of the student sample in the present study in terms of age range and experience. There were some differences between the two samples, but these differences would be anticipated given the older age of the community sample. The community sample had longer relationships and more sexual partners than the student sample. There were some other slight demographic differences between the two samples,

but these differences were not anticipated to differentially influence the outcome of the variables of interest. Existing research has compared MTurk and student samples and found that sample groups generally did not differ significantly in terms of the investigated effects (Klein et al., 2014).

Measures

Demographics. Participants were asked about their country of residence, gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, current relationship status, relationship length (if applicable), number of sexual partners, and sexual orientation. Participants were asked whether they had ever had a sexual partner. The question indicated that a sexual partner could include partners with whom they had engaged in oral, manual, vaginal, or anal sex. Individuals who indicated they had never had a sexual partner were redirected to the debriefing as they did not meet the study's inclusion criteria. Participants who had at least one sexual partner continued the survey.

Personality. The HEXACO Personality Inventory Revised (HEXACO-PI-R; Lee & Ashton, 2009) was used to measure individual personality variables. This self-report questionnaire assesses personality traits by asking participants to read various statements about themselves and rate their agreement for each statement. The 60-item scale was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). The scale includes six factors: honesty-humility, emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Lee and Ashton (2009) demonstrated good internal consistency of the HEXACO-PI-R in both college (ranging from .77 to .80), and community samples (ranging from .73 to .80). In the current study, reliabilities ranged from .72 to .80. Given the nature of authenticity, the construct of honesty should be related to measures of authenticity. Thus, the honesty subscale

was of particular interest for this study. An example item was "I wouldn't use flattery to get a raise or promotion at work, even if I thought it would succeed".

Honesty.

Participants were asked at the beginning of the questionnaire how honestly they planned to answer the questions from 0 to 10 (completely honest). Higher scores were indicative of higher honesty scores. This was included so that comparisons could be made between how honestly participants intended to answer the questions versus how honestly they felt they answered the questionnaire after completion. The vast majority of participants (97.5%) reported that they planned to answer the questionnaire honestly by responding 8/10 on the honesty question or higher ($M = 9.76$, $SD = 0.85$). The most prevalent response was an honesty score of 10/10 (87.3%). When participants were asked at the end of the questionnaire how honest they were, their responses remained similar with 97.4% of participants responding 8/10 or higher ($M = 9.69$, $SD = 0.76$). Again, the most common response was complete 10/10 honesty (79.8%). There was a significant difference between participants reported honesty between the beginning and end of the questionnaire $t(910) = 2.42$, $p = .01$, $d = .08$, which indicates that participants planned to answer honestly, but felt that they had actually responded slightly less honestly than they had originally intended.

Sexual Deception. The Sexual Deception Scale (SDS; Marelich et al., 2008) was included to measure individuals' levels of sexually deceptive behaviour. The scale is composed of three subscales: blatant lying, self-serving, and avoiding confrontation. There are 15 forced-choice items that require participants to respond "yes" or "no" to whether or not they have engaged in a variety of behaviours. For example, one question asked participants whether they had "faked who they are" in order to have sex with someone. Research by Marelich and

colleagues (2008) provided support for the use of a total Sexual Deception score. For the current study, the overall sexual deception score was calculated by summing the scores and dividing by the total number of items. In the current study, the SDS had high internal consistency ($\alpha = .86$).

Relationship Inauthenticity. The Inauthentic Self in Relationships (ISR) subscale of the Adolescent Femininity Ideology Scale (AFIS; Tolman & Porche, 2000) was used to measure individuals' level of relationship inauthenticity. The scale was originally designed to measure inauthenticity in adolescent girls' peer relationships. However, the subscale has been adjusted in order to examine relationship inauthenticity in romantic relationships (Impett, Breines, & Strachman, 2010). This 10-item scale was modified to ask participants about their romantic relationship, or most recent romantic relationship. The scale included 10 items that were ranked on a 7-point Likert scale. Participants were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a variety of statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). High scores on this measure indicated low levels of relationship authenticity. An example item included "I wish I could say what I feel more often than I do". Tolman and Porche (2000) demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ranging from .67 to .81 with the oldest sample (college students) having the highest internal consistency. The study also provided evidence of construct, concurrent, and discriminant validity for the ISR subscale. Additionally, Impett and colleagues found good internal consistency for this subscale when used in a sample of adult women ($\alpha = .74$) to study authenticity in romantic relationships. In the current study, the ISR demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .74$).

Sexual Authenticity. In order to measure individuals' levels of sexual authenticity, a variety of questions were developed together with a faculty advisor and other experts in the field. Some of these items were based on the items from the Inauthentic Self in Relationships subscale

of the Adolescent Femininity Ideology Scale (AFIS; Tolman & Porche, 2000), and were

modified to focus on sexual authenticity rather than relationship authenticity as described above.

This involved the modification of items to be focused on sexual contexts. The scale included 23

items in total. Items included "I communicate my sexual fantasies honestly with my sexual

partner(s)" and "I usually tell my partner what I want sexually". Like the IRS subscale,

participants were asked to respond on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7

(strongly agree) to a variety of statements pertaining to sexual authenticity. Higher scores were

indicative of higher levels of sexual authenticity. High internal consistency was demonstrated in

the current study (α = .88).

Orgasm. The questionnaire included two items which asked participants about their

orgasms. The first item asked participants how often they had orgasms during partnered sexual

activity. The second item asked participants how often they faked orgasms with their sexual

partner(s). Responses for each item were: "every time", "most of the time", "sometimes", "not

regularly", and "never".

Procedure

The methods and procedures of this study were reviewed and approved by the Trent

University Research Ethics Board (protocol #26165). Participants from both the SONA and

MTurk platforms were presented with a brief description of the study (see Appendix A), and if

they were interested in participating, they were instructed to click a link that forwarded them to

the online questionnaire, which was hosted through Qualtrics. The online administration of the

study allowed for anonymity and privacy while they completed the survey. The online

administration also provided flexibility in that participants could complete the survey at a time

and place of their choosing. First, participants were presented with a consent form (see Appendix

B) that described the study and what participation would entail. If individuals did not consent, the questionnaire would terminate. The questionnaire would also terminate if individuals did not meet the eligibility criteria (e.g., participants were less than 18 years old or had never had a sexual partner). If individuals chose to participate, they were presented with the online questionnaire on Qualtrics. After completion, participants were presented with the debriefing form (see Appendix C), which explained the purpose of the research and provided the contact information for the investigators of the study and counselling resources in Canada and the United States. Completing the survey took 42 minutes to complete on average (*Mdn* = 17 minutes). The entire questionnaire is provided in Appendix D.

Participants were compensated for their time differently depending on whether they were recruited through MTurk or SONA. Trent University students who were recruited through the SONA participant pool were granted 0.5 credits for completing the questionnaire. Participants who were recruited via MTurk were granted $0.10 for their participation. Participants had to complete at least 50% of the survey in order to receive compensation. After data collection was completed, the data were downloaded from Qualtrics and stored in encrypted files on a password-protected computer. No personally identifiable information was collected in this study.

Data Management

In total, 1457 participants consented to participating in Study 1. The data cleaning process follows. Initially, there were 23 participants who completed the study, but did not meet eligibility criteria to participate. Participants who completed less than 75% of the survey were examined and omitted from the analyses since they did not complete all of the major study scales. This resulted in 363 respondents being removed. Many of these participants completed a very small portion of the study. Response IDs were also examined for duplicate responses in

both the community and student samples. This data was examined for other indicators of data quality, and when possible, one of the duplicates was maintained in the final sample. This led to 6 duplicate responses being removed.

The quality of the data was ensured by examining several factors. For example, there were two attention check items included in the study to ensure that participants were paying attention while completing the questionnaire. The responses were also examined for straight line responding. Participant responses were removed for mismatching demographic responses such as reporting being in a monogamous relationship and also reporting being single or providing open-ended responses that did not make sense. These quality checks resulted in the removal of 84 responses. Participants whose completion time was in the bottom 10th percentile (150 seconds) were examined and removed since completing all the measures in this time would be impractical, which was reflected in the quality of data for these responses. This led to the removal of an additional 52 responses.

The final sample consisted of 929 participants. During the data cleaning process, more responses were removed from the MTurk sample than the SONA sample (See Figure 1). This was expected since MTurk data does have some unique data quality issues, such as bots that automatically complete MTurk HITs and "farmers", which are individuals who complete studies using server farms to bypass country restrictions on studies (Chmielewski & Kucker, 2020). See Figure 1 for data cleaning process.

Figure 1

Flow chart depicting the data cleaning process for Study 1 with percentages based on sample group.
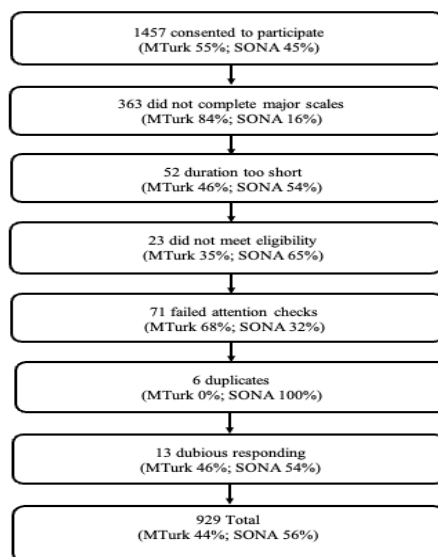
Overall, the remaining sample had less than 1% of the data missing. Little's Missing

Complete at Random (MCAR) test was run in order to determine whether the missing scale data

was missing at random. Little's MCAR was not significant χ^2 (31664)= 30651.66, $p = 1.00$.

Multiple imputation was utilized for all scale items with missing data. The multiple imputation

generated 5 imputed datasets using the Mersenne Twister random number generator engine, and

where possible, pooled estimates were used in the analyses. For demographic variables, pairwise

deletion was used.

Statistical Analysis

In order to determine the underlying factor structure of sexual authenticity, an

exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the proposed 23 items. The items were

examined for normality, multicollinearity, and singularity before factor analyses were conducted.

The data was also examined to determine whether it was suitable for EFA using Bartlett's Test of

Sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) tests to ensure that factor analysis was appropriate.

Once the underlying factor structure had been established, correlations between the resulting Sexual Authenticity Scale and related constructs were conducted in order to establish construct validity. These constructs were: relationship authenticity, honesty, sexual deception, and faking orgasms. Participants' total authenticity scores as well as their scores on each factor were correlated with each of these constructs to determine whether the scale had construct validity.

Study 1: Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The objective of Study 1 was to determine the factor structure that would illustrate the construct of sexual authenticity. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted in order to determine underlying structure and reliability of the proposed measure of sexual authenticity.

First, the scale items were examined for normality. Curran and colleagues (1996) suggested that variables can be considered normally distributed if the skewness values fall between -2 and +2 and the kurtosis values fall between -7 and +7. All of the variables to be entered into the EFA were found to be approximately normally distributed, and thus no adjustments for normality were required.

The multiple squared correlation matrix of the items was examined for issues of multicollinearity and singularity. In order to conduct an EFA, the variables must be related to others, but perfect alignment between variables would indicate redundancy. The matrix revealed an acceptable range of correlations ($r = .16$ to $r = .73$) in which many of the variables were correlated to some degree, which indicates that there may be multiple components underlying sexual authenticity. Multicollinearity is a scenario in which two variables are closely linearly related. Singularity occurs in instances where the SMC is equal to 1.0 between variables, this

would indicate that the variables are perfectly related. According to Tabachnik and Fidell (2007), the SMCs should not exceed 0.9 to avoid issues of multicollinearity. In the current data, the highest SMC was 0.73, thus none of the correlations were high enough to indicate issues with multicollinearity or singularity.

Next, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) tests were evaluated. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity tests the null hypothesis that the variables are orthogonal. For factor analysis, it is important that the variables are somewhat correlated and can be reduced into a smaller number of factors. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi 2$ (253) = 10779.96, $p < 0.01$), which indicates an overall significance of the correlations in the correlation matrix. Therefore, it is appropriate to use the factor analysis on this set of data. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is a measure of sampling adequacy, which also provides evidence that the data is suitable for factor analysis. Kaiser and Rice (1974) have recommended a KMO value of at least 0.6 to be suitable. The KMO result indicated that the strength of the relationships among variables in the current study was well above the minimum criterion (KMO = .92), thus it was acceptable to proceed with the analysis.

A scree plot was examined to determine the potential number of factors within the sexual authenticity construct. Initially, 4 factors with eigenvalues greater than one were revealed. Several factor analyses were performed with the 23 suggested scale items. An oblique rotation was used since the factors were expected to be correlated with one another. Items were removed if they did not have a primary factor loading above .45, or if they had cross-loadings of .3 or higher on multiple factors. The first factor analysis resulted in the elimination of 7 items. The eliminated items were: 3, 4, 5, 12, 18, 21, and 22. A second factor analysis eliminated 1 additional item. The eliminated item was item 1. This series of factor analyses indicated that a

three-factor solution was the most interpretable solution. The obtained factor loadings of the final

15 items are presented in Table 3. The Cronbach's alpha for the entire scale revealed very good

internal consistency (α = .88). The Cronbach's alphas were calculated for each subscale to

determine the reliability of each subscale. The first two subscales showed excellent internal

consistency: Factor 1 (α = .91), Factor 2 (α = .90), and Factor 3 (α = .62) showed acceptable

internal consistency.

Table 3

Factor Loadings for Factor Analysis With Promax Rotation of Sexual Authenticity Items (N = 929).

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Communalities
I tell my sexual partner my wants/desires even when they might be unusual. (6)	**.82**	-.05	-.06	.63
I usually tell my sexual partner when they have upset me. (15)	**.69**	-.01	.10	.50
I usually tell my partner what I want sexually. (16)	**.88**	-.02	.03	.77
I usually tell my sexual partner what I want emotionally. (17)	**.72**	.01	.07	.54
I often express my sexual wants to my partner. (19)	**.89**	.00	-.03	.78
Even if it might be awkward, I talk honestly about sex with my partner. (20)	**.82**	.08	-.03	.71
I communicate my sexual fantasies honestly with my sexual partner. (23)	**.82**	.00	-.08	.67
Often, I express sexual arousal outwardly in order to please my partner, even if I don't feel aroused. (7)	-.07	**.82**	.04	.69

Often, I express sexual desire towards my partner, even if I don't feel desire towards them. (8)	.02	**.76**	.09	.67
I often pretend to enjoy myself sexually in order to please my partner. (9)	.04	**.91**	-.05	.82
I often fake orgasms to please my partner. (10)	-.02	**.86**	-.08	.67
I often tell my partner that I am sexually satisfied even when I am not. (11)	.05	**.81**	.06	.74
I express my sexual preferences only if I can think of a nice way of doing it. (2)	-.09	.14	**.49**	.32
I feel like it is my fault when my partner and I have sexual disagreements. (13)	.07	-.06	**.85**	.70
When my partner ignores my sexual feelings, I think that my feelings weren't very important. (14)	-.01	.01	**.84**	.71
% of Variance	38%	21%	7%	
Eigenvalue	5.75	3.12	1.04	
Cronbach's Alpha (α)	.91	.90	.62	

Note. The items in Factor 2 and Factor 3 are reversed-scored. % of Variance = Percent variance accounted for by each factor.

The final solution contained three underlying factors of sexual authenticity, which explained 66% of the variance. The first factor had an eigenvalue of 5.75 and accounted for 38% of the variance. The second factor had an eigenvalue of 3.12 and accounted for an additional 21% of the variance. The final factor had an eigenvalue of 1.04 and accounted for 7% of the total variance. Cronbach's Alphas were computed for each of the three subscales. The first factor is composed of 7 items, which were related to honest, clear, verbal sexual communication to a partner. This factor was labeled "Honest Sexual Communication". The second factor had 5 items

and consisted of items that reflected "faking" behaviours, such as faking orgasms or pretending to enjoy sexual activities. This factor was labeled "Sexual Placating". These are active behavioural choices that individuals use to make it appear as though they are aroused or enjoying sexual activity. This factor was reverse-scored so that higher levels were indicative of higher sexual authenticity. The final factor contained 3 items relating to a deprioritization of one's own sexual feelings. These behaviours seem to be related to avoiding conflict and not feeling that sexual feelings are worth expressing. Overall, they seem to indicate a lack of sexual self-efficacy and confidence. These items were also reverse-scored and were labeled "Sexual Self-Doubt". For correlations between the three factors and the dependent variables of interest see Table 4.

Table 4
Summary of Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Sexual Authenticity Subscales, Honesty, Sexual Deception, Relationship Inauthenticity, and Faking Orgasms Variables.

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	M	SD
1. Factor 1								5.02	1.31
2. Factor 2	.31**							4.48	1.60
3. Factor 3	.16**	.54**						4.25	1.35
4. Honesty	.06	.29**	.19**					3.36	0.65
5. Sexual Deception	-.04	-.40**	-.32**	-.34**				3.63	3.47
6. Faking Orgasms	-.18**	-.65**	-.32**	-.18**	.31**			2.13	1.16
7. ISR	-.39**	-57**	-.68**	-.22**	.34**	.33**		3.58	0.95
8. SAS	.77**	.81**	.62**	.23**	-.31**	-51**	-.68**	4.68	1.06

Note. Factor 1 = Honest Sexual Communication; Factor 2 = Sexual Placating; Factor 3 = Sexual Self-Doubt; Honesty = Honesty Subscale of HEXACO-P-I-R; Sexual Deception = Sexual Deception Scale (SDS); ISR = Inauthentic Self in Relationships; SAS = Sexual Authenticity Scale; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

The overall scale and subscales were examined for normality. Visual inspection of the histograms for each revealed that individuals' overall sexual authenticity scores appeared to be approximately normally distributed. The Honest Sexual Communication and Sexual Placating subscales appeared to be slightly right skewed. However, examination of the skew and kurtosis values for each revealed that none of the variables were outside the skew and kurtosis values outlined by Curran and colleagues (1996). Overall, individuals reported somewhat high levels of authenticity with the average overall score being 4.68 on a 7-point scale (see Table 4 for means and standard deviations for all subscales).

Relation to Other Scales

In order to provide construct validity for the proposed measure, sexual authenticity scores were computed for each participant. Individual scores for each factor were calculated by summing the relevant scores for each factor and dividing by the number of items for each factor. Each participant's overall sexual authenticity score was calculated by summing the score for all of the items and dividing by the total number of items.

Relationship Authenticity

The development of this scale was based on an existing scale of relationship authenticity. As discussed above, I expect sexual authenticity to be related to relationship authenticity. In order to establish concurrent validity, a correlation between the proposed scale and an existing relationship inauthenticity scale was conducted. Since the established relationship scale measures inauthenticity, a negative relationship between the two variables would provide evidence of construct validity. There was a strong negative correlation between the proposed measure and the established inauthenticity scale $r(928) = -.68$, $p < .001$. As expected, all three of the authenticity

factors were significantly negatively correlated with relationship inauthenticity scores (see Table 4).

Honesty

Individuals who score high on measures of authenticity should also have high levels of honesty. As discussed above, behaving authentically requires individuals to be honest in their communication and behaviour. In an attempt to provide construct validity to the proposed measure, a Pearson's correlation was conducted between participants scores on the Honesty subscale of the HEXACO scale ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.65$) and participants scores on the proposed measure of sexual authenticity ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.08$). As expected, there was a significant positive correlation between individuals' levels of sexual authenticity and their level of honesty $r(928)= .23$, $p <.001$. However, the strength of the correlation was small and only two of the three subscales were significantly correlated with the honesty measure (see Table 4).

Sexual Deception

Sexual deception inherently relies on dishonest and deceptive practices to obtain sexual intimacy, whereas sexual authenticity mandates honest and transparent communication between partners. In order to further validate the measure, a correlation between individuals' sexual authenticity levels and their level of reported sexual deception was conducted. As anticipated, there was a significant moderate negative correlation between individuals' overall sexual authenticity and sexual deception scores $r(928) = -.31$, $p < .001$. In other words, higher levels of authenticity were more likely to be associated with lower levels of sexually deceptive behaviour. When examining the individual authenticity factors, Sexual Placating ($r = -.40$) and Sexual Self-Doubt ($r = -.32$) were significantly associated with sexual deception scores, whereas Honest Sexual Communication scores were not significantly correlated (see Table 4).

Faking Orgasms

Participants were also asked about their partnered orgasms. 93% of participants had reported that they had experienced orgasms from partnered sexual activity, with most participants indicating that they had orgasms most of the time. Although most participants did not endorse faking orgasms often, 60% of participants reported that they fake orgasms with their sexual partners at least occasionally. Since authenticity requires the honest expression of one's thoughts and feelings, it should follow that authenticity should be negatively related to faking orgasms. There was a strong negative correlation between individuals' reported faking orgasms and their authenticity scores $r(928) = -.51, p < .001$, such that highly authentic individuals were less likely to engage in these behaviours. As expected, all three of the authenticity factors were significantly negatively associated with faking behaviours (see Table 4).

<div align="center">

Study 2

Methods

</div>

Participants

For Study 2, the recruitment followed the same procedure as Study 1. Participants were recruited online from both student (SONA) and community (MTurk) samples. The inclusion criteria for this study were identical to Study 1. Participants were required to be over the age of 18, speak English fluently, and had to have had at least one sexual partner in their lifetime.

The final sample for Study 2 consisted of 1254 participants. Of these participants, 42% were from the student sample and 58% were from the community sample. Information regarding demographic variables can be found in Table 5 and Table 6.

Table 5

Demographic Information of the Student and Community Samples

Item (Range)	M (SD)			Test Statistic	p
	Total	Student	MTurk		
Age (18-79)	31.76 (12.91)	21.18 (5.27)	39.54 (11.22)	*Welsh F =* 1486.12	< 0.001
Number of Sexual Partners (1-505)	10.27 (25.64)	6.76 (23.69)	12.96 (26.74)	*Welsh F =* 17.99	<0.001
Length of relationship years (0-34)	5.33 (7.88)	1.53 (3.55)	8.13 (8.95)	*Welsh F =* 322.96	< 0.001

Note. N = 1254. This table displays the demographic characteristics of each sample (community and student). Standard deviations (SD) are presented in parentheses.

Overall, the demographics from Study 2 were very similar to the participant demographics of Study 1. In this study, participants' ages ranged from 18 to 79 with a mean age of 31.76 years (*SD* = 12.91). The majority of participants were women (67%), while there were some men (31%), and a few individuals who identified as another gender (2%). Most participants in the sample were Caucasian (75%), but there was representation of other ethnicities as well. There were more individuals in relationships (67%) than those who were single (33%), and the average relationship length was 5.33 years.

ANOVAs were used to investigate any significant differences between the student and community groups in terms of age, number of sexual partners, and relationship length. Welsh tests were used because the assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated in each of the ANOVA analyses. In congruence with the results from Study 1, the community sample was older, had longer relationships, and had more lifetime sexual partners than the student sample.

Table 6

Demographic Information of the Student and Community Samples

Item	n (%)		
	Total	Student	MTurk
Gender			
Women	838 (67.15)	456 (85.88)	382 (53.28)
Men	389 (31.17)	64 (12.05)	325 (45.33)
Other	21 (1.68)	11 (2.07)	10 (1.39)
Sexual Orientation			
Heterosexual	966 (80.23)	390 (76.62)	576 (82.88)
Gay/Lesbian	47 (3.90)	20 (3.93)	27 (3.88)
Bisexual	153 (12.71)	78 (15.32)	75 (10.79)
Other	38 (3.16)	21 (4.13)	17 (2.45)
Relationship Status			
Single	412 (33.01)	271 (50.04)	141 (19.67)
Relationship	836 (66.99)	260 (48.96)	576 (80.33)
Ethnicity			
Caucasian	937 (75.02)	387 (72.88)	550 (76.60)
Asian	103 (8.25)	44 (8.29)	59 (8.22)
Black	89 (7.13)	32 (6.02)	57 (7.94)
Indigenous	5 (.40)	4 (0.75)	1 (0.14)
Mixed Ethnicity	45 (3.60)	32 (6.02)	13 (1.81)
Hispanic	42 (3.36)	8 (1.51)	34 (4.74)
Other	28 (2.24)	24 (4.52)	4 (0.56)

Note. N = 1254. This table displays the demographic characteristics of each sample (community and student). Percentages are presented in parentheses.

Three 2x2 chi square analyses were run to determine if there was a significant difference between the groups in terms of gender (women and men), sexual orientation (heterosexual and LGBTQ+), and relationship status (single and in a relationship). The assumptions of independence and expected frequencies were met by all analyses. The results of the first chi square revealed that the student sample included proportionally more women than the community sample $\chi^2(1, 1227) = 156.80$, $p < .001$. A chi square was conducted to determine whether the proportion of individuals in a relationship was different between groups. The analysis revealed that the community sample had more individuals who were in relationships than the student sample $\chi^2(1, 1248) = 135.76$, $p < .001$. The final chi square revealed there were more LGBTQ+ individuals in the student sample than the community sample $\chi^2(1, 1248) = 7.25$, $p = .01$.

Materials

Demographics. As outlined in Study 1, participants were asked about their country of residence, gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, current relationship status, relationship length, number of lifetime sexual partners, and sexual orientation. Other demographic questions included whether they had ever had a sexual partner.

Sexual Authenticity. Participants' sexual authenticity levels were measured using the scale that was developed in Study 1. As described above, the scale consisted of 23 items. Some of these items were based on the items from the Inauthentic Self in Relationships subscale of the Adolescent Femininity Ideology Scale (AFIS; Tolman & Porche, 2000), and were modified to focus on sexual authenticity. Individuals responded to a variety of statements on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). An example item was "I usually tell my sexual partner what I want sexually". Scores were calculated by summing the items and dividing

by the total number of items. High internal consistency was demonstrated in the current study (α = .85).

Relationship Inauthenticity. In congruence with Study 1, The Inauthentic Self in Relationships (ISR) subscale of the Adolescent Femininity Ideology Scale (AFIS; Tolman & Porche, 2000) was used to measure relationship inauthenticity. As described in Study 1, the items were modified to focus specifically on romantic relationships, whereas the original scale focused on peer relationships in general. The scale contained 10 Likert scale items in which participants would respond by indicating how much they agreed or disagreed with a variety of statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). An example statement was "I tell my partner what I honestly think even if it is an unpopular idea". High scores on this measure indicated high levels of inauthenticity. In the current study, the ISR demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (α = .62).

Sexual Consent. Two measures were included to measure different aspects of sexual consent behaviour: the Sexual Consent Scale, Revised (SCS-R; Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010) and the External Consent Scale (ECS; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2014). The SCS-R examines attitudes and behaviours related to sexual consent. The scale contains five subscales that focus on different attitudinal/behavioural features of sexual consent negotiation: Positive Attitude Towards Establishing Consent, Lack of Perceived Behavioural Control, Sexual Consent Norms, Indirect Consent Behaviours, and Awareness of Consent. In total, the scale has 39 items that participants respond to on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Scores for each subscale are obtained by summing all subscale items and dividing by the number of items in the subscale. The Lack of Perceived Behavioural Control subscale was of particular interest in the current study. Example items include "I would have difficulty asking for

consent because it would spoil the mood", and "I think verbally asking for consent is awkward". Humphreys and Brousseau (2010) provided validity for this scale and demonstrated reliabilities ranging from .67 to .86. The current study demonstrated internal consistency ranging from .76 to .93.

The External Consent Scale (ECS; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2014) was included to measure verbal and behavioural tactics individuals use while negotiating sexual consent. The scale contains 19 items, and participants are asked to indicate which behaviours they use to indicate their consent to sexual activity. The scale contains four subscales: Nonverbal Behaviours, Passive Behaviours, Communicator/Initiator behaviours, and Borderline Pressure. Since authenticity was expected to improve sexual communication through clear and direct communication, the Communicator/Initiator subscale was of particular interest for the current study. Scores are calculated by summing the number of items participants selected in each subscale. Higher scores indicate more consent cues being utilized. Examples of cues are "I initiated sexual behaviour and checked to see if it was reciprocated" and "I indirectly communicated/implied my interest in sex". Previous studies have found internal consistencies ranging from .67 to .81. In the current study, internal consistency ranged from .50 to .90.

Sexual Satisfaction. The New Sexual Satisfaction Scale (NSSS; Štulhofer et al., 2010) was used to measure participants' sexual satisfaction. There are two subscales in this measure: Ego-Centred and Partner and Activity-Centred. However, in the current study, the total score for sexual satisfaction was used. The scale consists of 20 items that ask about their level of satisfaction on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all satisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied). Higher scores are reflective of higher levels of satisfaction. Participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction different aspects such as: "the quality of my orgasms", "the pleasure I

provide my partner", and "the frequency of my sexual activity". Štulhofer et al. found high

internal consistency for the full scale ranging from .94 to .96 in bicultural student and

community samples. The current study demonstrated high internal consistency for the full scale

($\alpha = .96$).

      Relationship Satisfaction. In order to measure relationship satisfaction, participants

completed the 7-item Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988). Participants were

asked a variety of questions about their level of satisfaction in their relationships (or most recent

relationship) on a 5-point Likert scale. An example item is "How well does your partner meet

your needs?". Relationship satisfaction score is obtained by calculating the average score of the 7

items. Hendrick (1988) found high internal consistency for the scale ($\alpha = .86$). In the current

study, the internal consistency was .89.

      Sexual Communication. Sexual communication was measured using the Verbal and

Nonverbal Sexual Communication Questionnaire (VNSCQ; Santos-Iglesias & Byers, 2020).

This 28-item questionnaire assesses the frequency of both verbal and nonverbal sexual

communication. Participants were asked to think about their sexual partner(s) and to check the

number that best describes how often they use a variety of communication methods from never

(1) to always (7). Example items included "when I want to, I ask my partner for sex" and "I start

to kiss my partner when I want to have sex". The scale has three subscales that focused on

different types of communication: Verbal Sexual Communication, Nonverbal Sexual Initiation

and Pleasure, and Nonverbal Sexual Refusal. The scores from the items in each of the subscales

are summed to obtain scores for each subscale. Higher scores are indicative of higher frequency

of sexual communication. High internal consistency was demonstrated for each subscale in the

current study ranging from $\alpha = .81$ to $\alpha = .92$.

Procedure

Study 2 followed the same procedure as Study 1 described above. The methods and

procedures for this study were reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board at Trent

University (protocol #26166). For both the student sample and community sample, there was a

brief description of the study available (Appendix E), and if they chose to participate they were

redirected to Qualtrics. Once participants reached Qualtrics, they were provided with the consent

form (Appendix F), and if they chose to participate they would be presented with the survey

questions (Appendix G). Like Study 1, if individuals did not consent, or if individuals did not

meet the eligibility criteria, the questionnaire would terminate. The debriefing form (Appendix

H) was provided once the participant had completed the measures. Completing the survey took

an average of 102 minutes to complete (*Mdn* = 21 minutes). Questionnaires were completed

entirely online and no personally identifying information was collected.

Compensation was slightly different for Study 2, since there was a higher time

investment associated with participating. For completing at least half of the questionnaire,

students were granted 0.5 credit and MTurk workers were granted $0.25. Participants were

informed that they must complete at least half of the questionnaire in order to receive

compensation. All study data was downloaded from Qualtrics and stored in encrypted files on a

password-protected computer.

Data Management

The data cleaning process for Study 2 was consistent with the process used for Study 1.

Overall, 2413 participants consented to participating in Study 2. A total of 25 participants were

removed due to not meeting the eligibility criteria of the study. A large portion of responses were

removed due to completing less than 75% of the study (n = 775). The majority of these

participants were from the MTurk sample (85%), and most of them did not complete the main study measures. After examining response IDs for duplicate responses, 15 responses were removed.

The remaining data was assessed for quality by examining attention check items, demographic responses, and completion time. There were three attention check items included in this study, and 171 responses were removed due to failing the attention checks. Mismatching demographic characteristics were also examined for data quality. This resulted in an additional 22 cases being removed. Participants whose completion time was less than 150 seconds were examined and removed since accurately completing all the measures in this time would not be possible. While examining these cases, most could not be maintained due to other indicators of poor data quality, such as straightlining responses. This led to the removal of an additional 151 responses.

The final sample consisted of 1254 participants. Like the previous study, a greater number of responses were removed from the MTurk sample than the SONA sample. The data cleaning process for each sample can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Flow chart depicting the data cleaning process with percentages based on sample group.
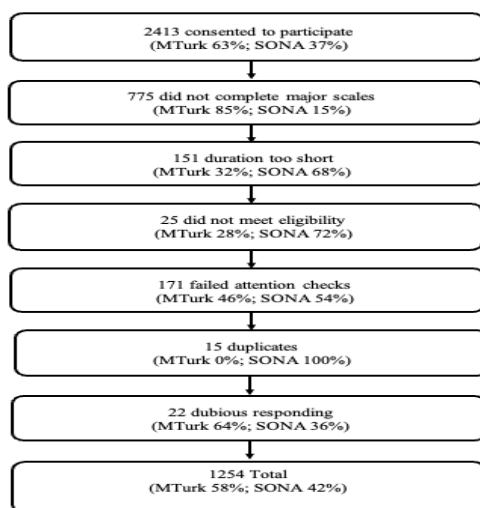
Overall, less than 1% of the data was missing from the entire sample. In order to assess whether the missing scale data was missing at random, Little's Missing Complete at Random (MCAR) test was run. Little's MCAR was not significant χ^2 (24053)= 24353.82, $p = .09$ indicating that the data was missing at random. Therefore, multiple imputation was utilized to replace missing data from scale items. The multiple imputation generated 5 imputed datasets using the Mersenne Twister random number generator engine. Pooled estimates were used in the analyses when feasible. Pairwise deletion was used for demographic variables.

Statistical Analysis

Confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were performed independently on both the student and community samples in order to provide evidence of reliability and generalizability for the proposed scale in Study 1. The data was examined for normality, multicollinearity, and singularity before conducting the CFAs. First, a CFA was conducted on the student sample. Multiple indicators of fit were examined before deciding to add parameters to the model to improve the overall fit. The community sample was then examined using the modified model in a separate CFA.

A secondary objective of this study was to examine the relationships between sexual authenticity and a number of outcome variables. The variables of interest were: sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, sexual consent (external sexual consent and perceived behavioural control), and sexual communication (verbal sexual communication, nonverbal initiation of sexual behaviour, and nonverbal refusal of sexual behaviour). Preliminary hierarchical regressions were conducted in order to determine if any of the demographic variables should be controlled for in subsequent analyses. The regressions resulted in age, relationship length, relationship status, and sample group being controlled for when examining

the outcome variables of interest. Overall, 7 hierarchical regression models were conducted to examine the outcome variables described above.

Results Study 2

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Study 1 provided initial validity for the sexual authenticity scale. CFAs were conducted on the data of two new random samples which were independently gathered from Study 1 participants in order to provide reliability for the Sexual Authenticity Scale discussed in Study 1. Two confirmatory factor analyses were performed using Maximum-Likelihood estimation in AMOS. The analyses for the student and community samples were conducted separately in order to provide evidence that this scale would be reliable for both types of samples. Additionally, exploring multiple samples would provide evidence that the scale would be generalizable across different types of samples. I wanted to determine if the sample could be used in a broader range of populations instead of simply basing the scale on a student sample.

The data was first examined for normality. None of the scale items had significant skew or kurtosis, and thus no adjustments were made to the measurement variables. The items were also examined for indicators of multicollinearity and singularity. The largest SMC was .79 indicating that there were no issues with multicollinearity.

The hypothesized model from Study 1 (see Figure 3), was examined for multiple indications of goodness of fit for both the student and community samples. Because of the large sample sizes, the Chi Square statistic was significant, indicating a lack of fit. However, in samples of this size, the Chi Square is almost always significant and therefore multiple indices of fit were used to determine whether or not the model adequately fit the observed data.

First, a CFA was conducted on the student sample. The proposed model converged in 10 iterations. The results of a Chi Squared Goodness of Fit test indicated that the model is not an exact fit χ2(87, N = 532) = 2290.72, *p* < .001. The comparative fit index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) are both incremental measures of model fit, where values above .90 are indicative of an acceptable fitting model (Whittaker, 2016). The CFI indicated an acceptable fit of the model (CFI = .90). However, the TLI also suggested a lack of fit (TLI = .88). The Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is considered another index of model fit, where 0 is the best fit. Values of less than 0.05 are typically indicative of good fit. In the current model, the RMSEA also displayed a lack of fit for the model (*RMSEA* = .089, *CI* = .086-.092).

Figure 3

Diagram of Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model 1.
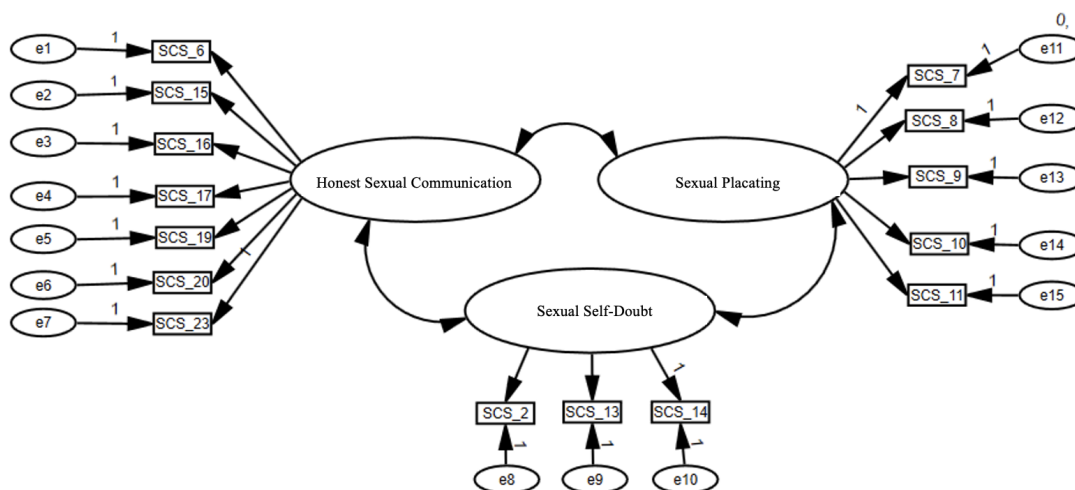
The modification indices were used as guidance for adding parameters to the model in order to improve the overall fit. This resulted in nine error term correlations being added to the model. These correlations were added in instances where there was evidence of model improvement from the modification indices, and where the correlations of these items made theoretical sense. For example, the items "I tell my partner my sexual wants/desires even when they might be unusual" and "I communicate my sexual fantasies honestly with my partner" both relate to being vulnerable and the sharing intimate desires with a partner. This sharing of one's internal wants and desires is an essential ingredient of behaving in a sexually authentic way. Re-examination of the model after these adjustments yielded a better overall fit of the model $\chi 2(78, N = 532) = 852.59, p < .001$, CFI = .97, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .055 (CI = .052-.059). A chi squared difference test further validated that the second model was a better fit for the Study 2 data than the first model $\chi 2\text{diff}(9) = 1438.13, p < .001$.

Figure 4

Diagram of Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model 2
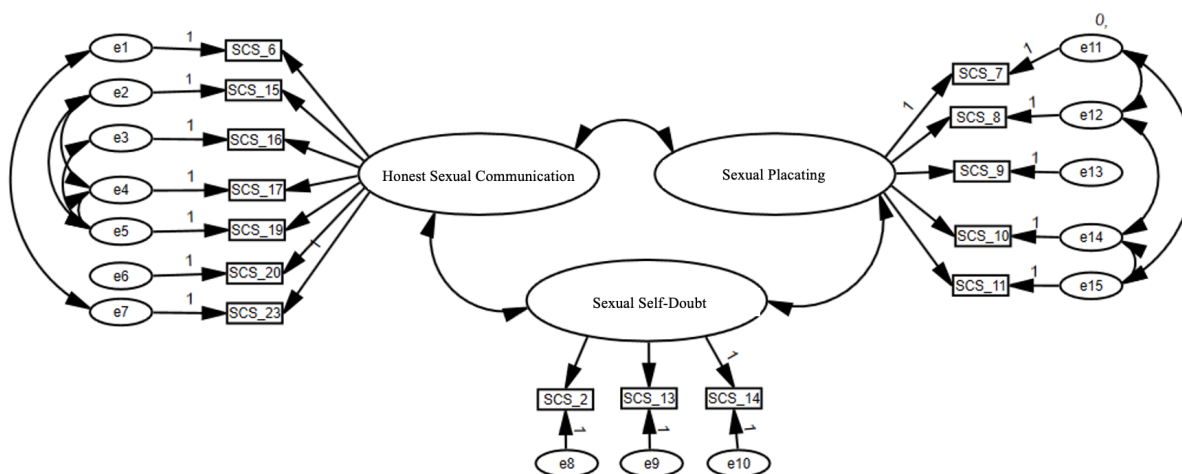
In order to establish reliability for the scale between different populations, a CFA was conducted using the Study 2 community sample data. Similar to the previous CFA, I proposed a three-factor model (see Figure 4). The data was examined for normality and issues with multicollinearity, and there were no significant issues with any of the scale items.

As discussed above, the chi square test is likely to be significant with large sample sizes. The chi square for the community sample was also significant indicating a lack of fit $\chi 2(78, N = 720) = 1559.18$, $p < .001$. However, the other indices of fit indicated excellent fit of the model CFI = .95, TLI = .93, and the RMSEA indicated a reasonable fit of the data (RMSEA = .066, CI = .064-.069).

Benefits of Authenticity

A central part of the current study was to determine whether sexual authenticity was related to a number of relationship and sexual outcomes for individuals. Because both samples had good fits on the proposed sexual authenticity model, the samples were combined for future analyses. There was a strong significant correlation between the sexual and relationship satisfaction measures. There was a weak, but significant, correlation between the two sexual consent measures. The correlations between the three authenticity variables ranged from weak to moderate correlations, but they were all statistically significant. All three of the sexual authenticity factors were significantly correlated with both of the sexual consent measures, verbal sexual communication, nonverbal initiation behaviours, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction. The correlations, means, and standard deviations for these variables are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7

Summary of Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Verbal Sexual Communication, Nonverbal Initiation, Nonverbal Refusal, External Consent Scale, Perceived Behavioural Control, Sexual Satisfaction, and Relationship Satisfaction variables.

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	M	SD
1. Verbal Comm.											68.03	14.68
2. Nonverbal Comm.	.70**										43.81	8.92
3. Nonverbal Refusal	-.01	.10**									26.64	8.76
4. External Consent	.35**	.45**	-.10**								8.55	4.55
5. Perceived Behav.	-.34**	-.19**	.31	-.28**							2.78	1.39
6. Sex. Satisfaction	.63**	.53**	.02	.20**	-.22**						3.60	0.87
7. Relat. Satisfaction	.55**	.53**	-.11**	.32**	-.33**	.68**					3.57	0.59
8. Honest Comm.	.69**	.42**	.01	.16**	-.23**	.52**	.41**				4.99	1.21
9. Placating	.25**	.14**	-.27**	.17**	-.33**	.25**	.33**	.19**			4.43	1.54
10. Self-Doubt	.19**	.11**	-.20**	.11**	-.30**	.21**	.22**	.15**	.46**		3.99	1.21
11. SAS	.58**	.34**	-.20**	.22**	-.41**	.48**	.24**	.68**	.76**	.61**	4.51	0.84

Note. Verbal Comm. = Verbal Sexual Communication; Nonverbal Comm. = Nonverbal Initiation; External Consent = External Consent Scale; Perceived Behav. = Lack of Perceived Behavioural Control; Sex Satisfaction = New Sexual Satisfaction Scale (NSSS); Rel Satisfaction = Global Measure of Relationship Satisfaction (GMREL); Honest Comm. = Honest Sexual Communication; Placating = Sexual Placating; Self-Doubt = Sexual Self-Doubt; SAS = Sexual Authenticity Scale; * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01.

Regression Analyses

A secondary goal of Study 2 was to explore the relationship between sexual authenticity and various sexual wellbeing outcomes, namely sexual consent, sexual and relationship satisfaction, and sexual communication. Overall, it was expected that higher levels of sexual authenticity would be associated with improved sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual/relationship satisfaction.

A multiple regression was conducted to determine if variables such as participant age, relationship status, relationship length, gender, and number of sexual partners would need to be controlled for in subsequent analyses. The model significantly predicted sexual authenticity scores $F(5, 1100) = 7.32$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.032$. Participants' gender and number of sexual partners did not significantly predict sexual authenticity score, whereas relationship length, age, and relationship status (single, in relationship) were significantly predictive of authenticity score. Therefore, subsequent models included age, relationship status, and relationship length in block one to control for their effects. In order to examine whether sample group, student or community sample, significantly influenced sexual authenticity scores beyond these control variables, a hierarchical regression was run with the control variables in block one and sample group added in block two. Sample group was found to be a significant predictor of sexual authenticity and accounted for an additional 3% percent of the variance $F(4, 1155) = 19.41$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.063$. Therefore, the sample group was added along with the other control variables in block one in subsequent analyses.

Table 8

Hierarchical Regression Results for Control Variables

Predictor	β	SE	F	ΔR²	ΔF	Total R²
Step 1			11.40**	.03	11.40	.03
Age	-.01**	.00				
Rel. Length	-.01**	.00				
Rel. Status	-.22**	.06				
Step 2			19.41**	.03	42.22	.06
Sample	-.46**	.07				

Note. Rel. Length = Relationship Length (Years); Rel. Status = Relationship Status (In Relationship or Single); Sample = Sample Group (Community or Student Sample); β represents unstandardized regression weights; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Sexual Satisfaction and Relationship Satisfaction

It was hypothesized that participants who had higher levels sexual authenticity would also benefit from increased relationship and sexual satisfaction. Two hierarchical regressions were conducted in order to examine these relationships. The first regression examined the relationship between the sexual authenticity factors and relationship satisfaction. In the first block of the model, the control variables (i.e., relationship length, relationship status, participant age, and sample group) were entered. Sexual satisfaction was also entered as a control variable given the high correlation between these two types of satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction was the outcome variable. When the sexual authenticity variables were entered, the accounted variance rose from 50% to 52%. The results indicated that Honest Sexual Communication (β = .04) and Sexual Placating (β = .09) were significant predictors of relationship satisfaction (See Table 9). However, Sexual Self-Doubt was not a significant predictor and the overall variance accounted for by the authenticity variables was very small. Therefore, the initial hypothesis was

partially supported in that higher levels of authenticity are associated with higher levels of

relationship satisfaction.

Table 9

Hierarchical Simultaneous Regression Analyses Predicting Relationship Satisfaction from Sexual Authenticity Factors

Predictor	β	SE	F	ΔR²	ΔF	Total R²
Step 1			191.21**	.50	191.21	.50
Age	-.01*	.00				
Rel. Length	.01**	.00				
Rel. Status	-.27**	.05				
Sample	-.17**	.06				
Sexual Sat.	.68**	.02				
Step 2			130.08**	.02	14.64	.52
Honest Comm	.04*	.02				
Placating	.09**	.02				
Self-Doubt	.00	.02				

Note. Rel. Length = Relationship Length (Years); Rel. Status = Relationship Status (In Relationship or Single); Sample = Sample Group (Community or Student Sample); Sexual Sat. = Sexual Satisfaction; Honest Comm. = Honest Sexual Communication; Placating = Sexual Placating; Self-Doubt = Sexual Self-Doubt; *β* represents unstandardized regression weights; * *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01.

It was hypothesized that participants who had higher levels sexual authenticity would

also benefit from increased sexual satisfaction. In order to examine the impact that sexual

authenticity has on sexual satisfaction, a hierarchical regression was conducted with the the

control variables in the first block (i.e., relationship length, relationship status, participant age,

and sample group). Relationship satisfaction was also added as a control variable given the

strong relationship between sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. The three

authenticity variables were added in step two, and the outcome variable was sexual satisfaction.

The results indicated that levels of sexual authenticity were predictive of sexual satisfaction scores and accounted for 7% of the total variance in sexual satisfaction scores beyond the control variables. Honest Sexual Communication (β = .20) and Sexual Self-Doubt (β = .05) were significant predictors of relationship satisfaction, whereas Sexual Placating was not (See Table 10). Therefore, the hypothesis that higher levels of sexual authenticity would be related to higher levels of sexual satisfaction was partially supported.

Table 10

Hierarchical Simultaneous Regression Analyses Predicting Sexual Satisfaction from Sexual Authenticity Factors

Predictor	β	SE	F	ΔR^2	ΔF	Total R^2
Step 1			170.44**	.47	170.44	.47
Age	.00	.00				
Rel. Length	-.02**	.00				
Rel. Status	-.01	.05				
Sample	-.01	.06				
Relation. Sat.	.66**	.02				
Step 2			139.95**	.07	47.73	.54
Honest Comm	.20**	.02				
Placating	.00	.01				
Self-Doubt	.05*	.02				

Note. Rel. Length = Relationship Length (Years); Rel. Status = Relationship Status (In Relationship or Single); Sample = Sample Group (Community or Student Sample); Relation Sat. = Relationship Satisfaction; Honest Comm. = Honest Sexual Communication; Placating = Sexual Placating; Self-Doubt = Sexual Self-Doubt; β represents unstandardized regression weights; * p < .05, ** p < .01.

Verbal and Nonverbal Sexual Communication

It was hypothesized that higher levels authenticity would be predictive of stronger verbal and nonverbal communication between sexual partners. I tested this hypothesis by examining the

relationship between sexual authenticity and three measures of sexual communication: verbal sexual communication, nonverbal initiation of sexual behaviour, and nonverbal refusal of sexual behaviour.

First, it was hypothesized that sexual authenticity scores, especially the Honest Sexual Communication variable, would be predictive of higher levels of verbal sexual communication since this factor focuses on direct sexual communication to a partner. In order to test this hypothesis, a hierarchical regression was run with the necessary control variables in block one and the three sexual authenticity variables in block two, and verbal sexual communication as the outcome variable. The results indicated that levels of sexual authenticity were predictive of verbal communication between partners $F(7,1106) = 166.50$, $p < .001$, and accounted for 43 percent of the variance in verbal communication scores. Honest Sexual Communication ($\beta = 7.83$), Sexual Placating ($\beta = .69$), and Sexual Self-Doubt ($\beta = .69$) were all significant predictors of verbal sexual communication. The hypothesis that higher levels of sexual authenticity would be associated with higher frequency of verbal sexual communication was supported.

Table 11
Hierarchical Simultaneous Regression Analyses Predicting Verbal Sexual Communication From Sexual Authenticity Factors

Predictor	β	SE	F	ΔR^2	ΔF	Total R^2
Step 1			24.60**	.08	24.60	.08
Age	.05	.05				
Rel. Length	-.15*	.07				
Rel. Status	-5.09**	1.01				
Sample	-8.71**	1.22				
Step 2			166.50**	.43	326.78	.51
Honest Comm	7.83**	.27				
Placating	.69**	.23				

Predictor	β	SE				
Self-Doubt	.69*	.29				

Note. Rel Length = Relationship Length (Years); Rel. Status = Relationship Status (In Relationship or Single); Sample = Sample Group (Community or Student Sample); Honest Comm. = Honest Sexual Communication; Placating = Sexual Placating; Self-Doubt = Sexual Self-Doubt; β represents unstandardized regression weights; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Nonverbal Initiation of Sexual Behaviour

Similarly, it was hypothesized that individuals with higher levels of sexual authenticity would be more likely to engage in nonverbal behaviours to initiate sex with their partners. This prediction was made because authentic individuals might be more comfortable expressing their desires to a partner, whereas less authentic individuals may wait for their partner to initiate sex. To test this hypothesis control variables were entered in block one, the authenticity variables were entered in block 2, and nonverbal initiation behaviours were entered as the outcome variable. The model was significant $F(7, 1136) = 43.20$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.21$, and accounted for 14 percent of the variance beyond the control variables. Honest Sexual Communication was the only significant predictor ($β = 2.76$). Therefore, the hypothesis that individual's sexual authenticity scores were predictive of their likelihood to engage in nonverbal initiation of sexual behaviour was partially supported.

Table 12
Hierarchical Simultaneous Regression Analyses Predicting Nonverbal Sexual Initiation From Sexual Authenticity Factors

Predictor	β	SE	F	ΔR^2	ΔF	Total R^2
Step 1			21.51**	.07	21.51	.07
Age	.05	.03				
Rel. Length	-.05	.04				
Rel. Status	-3.01**	.62				
Sample	-5.50**	.74				
Step 2			43.20**	.14	67.12	.21

Honest Comm	2.76**	.20
Placating	.11	.17
Self-Doubt	.28	.22

Note. Rel. Length = Relationship Length (Years); Rel. Status = Relationship Status (In Relationship or Single); Sample = Sample Group (Community or Student Sample); Honest Comm = Honest Sexual Communication; Placating = Sexual Placating; Self-Doubt = Sexual Self-Doubt; β represents unstandardized regression weights; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Nonverbal Refusal of Sexual Behaviour

It was hypothesized that individuals who scored higher in authenticity measures would be less likely to engage in nonverbal refusal behaviours, since these behaviours could be easily misinterpreted by a partner. Individuals who score high in authenticity should prefer direct, unambiguous methods of communication instead. In order to test this hypothesis, a hierarchical regression was run with the demographic control variables in block 1, the authenticity factors in block 2, and the nonverbal refusal variable as the outcome. All three authenticity factors significantly predicted nonverbal sexual refusal behaviours. However, the direction of the prediction was different between the authenticity variables. The Sexual Placating and Sexual Self-Doubt variables supported the hypothesis that individuals with high levels of authenticity were less likely to engage in nonverbal refusals than individuals with lower levels of authenticity. However, the results from the Honest Sexual Communication variable indicated that increased levels of this authenticity variable lead to increased nonverbal refusals. Therefore, the hypothesis that sexual authenticity would reduce the likelihood of engaging in nonverbal refusal behaviours was partially supported by this model. See Table 13 below for results of the hierarchical regression model.

Table 13

Hierarchical Simultaneous Regression Analyses Predicting Nonverbal Sexual Refusal From Sexual Authenticity Factors

Predictor	β	SE	F	ΔR^2	ΔF	Total R^2
Step 1			5.59**	0.02	5.59	.02
Age	-.07*	.03				
Rel. Length	-.01	.04				
Rel. Status	.45	.62				
Sample	3.44**	.74				
Step 2			16.73**	.07	31.00	.09
Honest Comm	.58**	.21				
Placating	-1.25**	.18				
Self-Doubt	-.68**	.23				

Note. Rel. Length = Relationship Length (Years); Rel. Status = Relationship Status (In Relationship or Single); Sample = Sample Group (Community or Student Sample); Honest Comm = Honest Sexual Communication; Placating = Sexual Placating; Self-Doubt = Sexual Self-Doubt; β represents unstandardized regression weights; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Sexual Consent Behaviours

The final analyses examined the relationship between sexual authenticity and sexual consent behaviours. This study examined impact that sexual authenticity has on two measures of sexual consent, external sexual consent and perceived behavioural control of consent behaviours. External sexual consent predominantly focuses on the outward behaviours that individuals use to communicate their sexual consent to their partners, whereas perceived behavioural control is an internal feeling of whether or not the individual believes they have the skillset to communicate their consent. Overall, it was hypothesized that higher levels of authenticity would lead to better outcomes for both sexual consent measures.

First of all, I hypothesized that sexual authenticity would be positively related to external consent behaviours. Specifically, I was interested in the Communication/Initiator behaviour, which included behaviours like using verbal cues to communicate interest in sex. Authentic individuals should be motivated to reduce ambiguity, which should lead to increased external consent behaviours. After controlling for participants' age, relationship length, sample group, and relationship status, the model was significant $F(7, 1161) = 32.84$, $p < .001$. The overall model accounted for 17% of the variance in external consent scores. The Honest Sexual Communication ($\beta = .11$, $p < .001$) and Sexual Placating ($\beta = .10$, $p < .001$) authenticity variables significantly predicted external consent behaviours, but the Sexual Self-Doubt variable ($\beta = -.04$, $p = .11$) did not. Overall, the model provided support for the hypothesis that higher levels of sexual authenticity are associated with more external consent behaviours. However, this result should be taken with caution since the authenticity variables only accounted for an additional 4% of the variance beyond the control variables.

Table 14

Hierarchical Simultaneous Regression Analyses Predicting External Consent Behaviours From Sexual Authenticity Factors

Predictor	β	SE	F	ΔR^2	ΔF	Total R^2
Step 1			43.65**	.13	43.65	.13
Age	-.00	.00				
Rel. Length	.00	.01				
Rel. Status	-.03	.07				
Sample	-.73**	.09				
Step 2			32.84**	.04	16.16	.17
Honest Comm	.12**	.03				
Placating	.10**	.02				
Self-Doubt	-.04	.03				

Note. Rel. Length = Relationship Length (Years); Rel. Status = Relationship Status (In Relationship or Single); Sample = Sample Group (Community or Student Sample); Honest Comm. = Honest Sexual Communication; Placating = Sexual Placating; Self-Doubt = Sexual Self-Doubt; β represents unstandardized regression weights; $* p < .05, ** p < .01$.

Lastly, it was hypothesized that the authenticity factors would be predictive of an individuals' level of perceived behavioural control. To test this hypothesis, the control variables were entered in block one, the sexual authenticity variables were entered in block two, and individuals' scores for lack of perceived behavioural control were entered as the outcome variable. The model was significant indicating that sexual authenticity scores were predictive of individuals' perceived behavioural control $F(7, 1131) = 55.02, p < .001$. The authenticity variables accounted for 13 percent of the variance in perceived behavioural control. All three authenticity variables were significant predictors (Honest Sexual Communication = -.17, Sexual Placating = -.19, Sexual Self-Doubt = -.16). In other words, the hypothesis that individuals with higher levels of authenticity would be more likely to perceive that they have the ability and skillset to negotiate sexual consent with their partner(s) was supported.

Table 15

Hierarchical Simultaneous Regression Analyses Predicting Lack of Perceived Behavioural Control From Sexual Authenticity Factors

Predictor	β	SE	F	ΔR^2	ΔF	Total R^2
Step 1			41.66**	.13	41.66	.13
Age	-.00	.01				
Rel. Length	-.01	.01				
Rel. Status	-.07	.09				
Sample	1.01**	.11				
Step 2			55.02**	.13	63.62	.25
Honest Comm	-.17**	.03				
Placating	-.19**	.03				

Self-Doubt	-.16**	.03

Note. Rel. Length = Relationship Length (Years); Rel. Status = Relationship Status (In Relationship or Single); Sample = Sample Group (Community or Student Sample); Honest Comm = Honest Sexual Communication; Placating = Sexual Placating; Self-Doubt = Sexual Self-Doubt; β represents unstandardized regression weights; $* p < .05$, $** p < .01$.

Discussion

Existing research on the impact of authenticity on sexual health and relationship outcomes focuses predominantly on individuals who are in long-term, committed relationships, and focuses almost exclusively on the level of authenticity that partners share in a general sense (e.g., expressing opinions, feelings, and sharing of one's "true self"). These studies largely ignore discussions of sex and sexuality (e.g., sexual feelings, desires, and wants). While sexual and relationship authenticity may be similar, there are differences between the two. Therefore, the main objectives of this project were to develop a measure of sexual authenticity, provide reliability and validity for this measure, and to examine the impact that sexual authenticity has on various relationship and sexual outcomes.

The objective of Study 1 was to develop a scale that measures sexual authenticity using modified items from an existing relationship authenticity scale (AFIS; Tolman & Porche, 2000) in combination with newly proposed sexual authenticity items. After conducting multiple factor analyses, the 26 items were reduced to a total of 15 items that could be broken down into 3 factors. The three components of this measure were: Honest Sexual Communication, Sexual Placating, and Sexual Self-Doubt. The first factor, Honest Sexual Communication, was composed of behaviours that involved clear, honest, and direct communication about sexual wants and desires to a partner. The second factor, Sexual Placating, focused on behaviours that placate or appease a sexual partner. These behaviours involved individuals faking orgasms or acting aroused/satisfied when they are not. Essentially, these behaviours aim to please the partner

while minimizing or ignoring one's own feelings. The final factor, Sexual Self-Doubt involved behaviours that deprioritized sexual feelings and was characterised by a lack of sexual confidence and sexual self-efficacy. As described earlier, the final two factors were reverse-scored so that high scores represented greater levels of authenticity. The full scale as well as each of the subscales displayed excellent internal consistency, and evidence of validity was demonstrated through significant associations with related constructs. As expected, overall authenticity scores were associated with higher levels of honesty, relationship authenticity, reduced sexually deceptive behaviours, and less faking orgasms.

The primary goal of Study 2 was to provide further evidence for the Sexual Authenticity Scale through confirmatory factor analysis. The three-factor model suggested in Study 1 was confirmed through CFA. The initial model was modified with the addition of error term covariances which improved the model fit significantly. The adjusted model was found to appropriately fit the data with fit indices ranging from acceptable to excellent in both a student and community sample.

A secondary goal of Study 2 was to examine the relationship between sexual authenticity and a variety of relationship and sexual outcomes. Overall, the hypotheses were supported in that higher levels of sexual authenticity were associated with higher relationship and sexual satisfaction, improved sexual communication, and enhanced sexual consent behaviours. Specifically, individuals with higher levels of sexual authenticity reported higher relationship and sexual satisfaction, more frequent verbal sexual communication, more non-verbal initiation of sexual behaviour, more external consent behaviours, and higher perceived behavioural control in terms of navigating sexual consent.

Authenticity Framework

As described above, the three-factor model suggested in Study 1 was further validated through confirmatory factor analysis. The three factors were: Honest Sexual Communication, Sexual Placating, and Sexual Self-Doubt. While previous measures of authenticity were also composed of multiple factors (Bond et al., 2018; Goldman & Kernis, 2006; Lopez & Rice, 2006; Wood et al., 2008), the factors that were uncovered in the current study appear to be unique to sexual authenticity. As discussed above, sexual authenticity was expected to be a unique construct from both dispositional authenticity and relationship authenticity, so these unique factors were unsurprising. The nature of these existing scales, especially in the case of dispositional authenticity, is much more broad and focuses on a much wider range of behaviours than sexual authenticity.

The items loading high on the Honest Sexual Communication factor suggest that clear, verbal, sexual communication is a central feature of authenticity. The definition of authenticity focuses on the accurate communication of internal thoughts and feelings (Impett et al., 2008), so this factor neatly fits within existing definitions of the construct. Another key feature of this factor is that despite potential awkwardness or unusualness, these desires are still shared with the other. Regardless of the risks of judgement and uncomfortableness that may be associated with this type of communication, highly authentic individuals are willing to discuss their sexual desires with their partners despite the vulnerability it exposes them to. This factor may also be associated with a general comfort level with discussing sex. Despite sexual communication being difficult, there are particular individuals who are comfortable discussing even the most taboo aspects of sex.

The second factor, Sexual Placating, seems to be related to an unacceptability of faking behaviours and placating the partner. The items in this factor were focused primarily on pretending to be sexually aroused. Since these would be examples of inauthentic behaviour, items in this subscale were reverse-scored. Interestingly, this factor appears to be somewhat related to one of the factors identified by Lopez and Rice (2006). One of the identified factors in the Authenticity in Relationships Scale was Unacceptability of Deception (UOD), which focused on an unwillingness to engage in behaviours that gave inaccurate depictions of oneself or their partner. These factors are somewhat related to one another since they both focus on only engaging in genuine behaviours. However, the UOD behaviours seem to be motivated by personal gain, whereas the Sexual Placating factor appears to be focused on pleasing a sexual partner or protecting their feelings.

The final factor, Sexual Self-Doubt, was also reverse-scored so that scores would be reflective of higher authenticity. The behaviours included in this factor generally pertain to how individuals value their sexual feeling and their confidence about expressing sexual feelings. Individuals who are high in this dimension are not ashamed of their sexual feelings and believe that they should express them to sexual partners. Again, this construct is neatly tied to definitions of authenticity which focus on the importance of expressing one's true thoughts and feelings.

Validity of the Sexual Authenticity Scale

Evidence of construct validity was provided through the examination of correlations between sexual authenticity and other theoretically related measures. All of the relationships were correlated in the expected direction. Total sexual authenticity scores were significantly correlated with relationship authenticity, honesty, and sexual deception. The scale as a whole had

a strong negative relationship with relationship inauthenticity, and each of the subscales were significantly correlated with relationship inauthenticity.

Sexual authenticity overall was significantly correlated with honesty, but the effect size was small. Two of the three sexual authenticity factors were significantly related to honesty. The Honest Sexual Communication subscale of authenticity was not significantly associated with honesty. The correlation was in the expected direction, but the relationship was not statistically significant. This is in congruence with existing research that examined the orthogonality between dispositional authenticity and honesty. Bailey and Iyengar (2022) stated "honesty is defined as an objective and verifiable truthfulness" (p. 1), whereas authenticity is more about expressing one's own internal feelings, beliefs, and perceptions. The researchers asked participants to describe a time where they had been authentically dishonest. Participants readily provided descriptions of such accounts, which were categorized into four groups: dishonesty because of self-deception, dishonesty to protect a relationship, dishonesty to protect oneself, and dishonesty to protect someone else. Despite acknowledging dishonest behaviour, participants felt that all of these accounts were authentic. This could explain the lack of significant association between honesty and the Honest Sexual Communication factor. It is also possible that this factor represents a greater comfort with sexual communication overall but might not extend to significant differences in different types of honesty. As discussed above, sex is particularly difficult to communicate about so it is possible that sexual honesty and traditional measures of honesty might have unrelated components. Future research is needed to further examine the scale and its relationship with other related constructs.

Sexual authenticity was also moderately correlated with sexually deceptive behaviours. Again, the first factor was not significantly correlated. However, Marelich and colleagues (2008)

identified that one of the most common reasons for engaging in sexually deceptive behaviours was to avoid confrontation or conflict with a partner. It is possible that individuals who scored high on Honest Sexual Communication are less concerned about avoiding conflict or disagreement with their partners as evidenced by their willingness to engage in awkward and risky conversations with their sexual partners. It is also possible that authentic individuals are motivated to engage in deceptive behaviours to protect themselves and/or their partners. For example, some of the items from the Sexual Deception Scale included: "Had sex with someone because you wanted to please them" and "had sex with someone because you wanted to maintain your relationship with them". In fact, research by Bailey and Iyengar (2022) found that being dishonest or deceitful to protect oneself or someone else often felt authentic. Thus, future research should examine the motivations behind why individuals are willing to engage in sexually deceptive behaviours and whether these deceptions might still be considered authentic.

Relationship and Sexual Satisfaction

Previous research has illustrated a positive association between relationship authenticity and relationship satisfaction (Brunell et al., 2010; Impett et al., 2012; Le & Impett, 2013; Lopez & Rice, 2006). It is therefore unsurprisingly that sexual authenticity was found to be a positive predictor of both relationship and sexual satisfaction. Behaving in an authentic way allows for the portrayal of one's innermost wants, needs, and desires. Harbin (2011) described that when we are able to share our sexual wants and desires with others we feel more "at home in ourselves". This type of sharing and understanding between oneself and a sexual partner allows for deeper relationship and sexual fulfillment.

Despite the overall association between authenticity and levels of satisfaction, the Sexual Self-Doubt factor was not a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction and Sexual Placating

was not a significant predictor of sexual satisfaction. The reason for the lack of association between Sexual Self-Doubt and relationship satisfaction is unclear, but perhaps individuals who lack the confidence to advocate for their sexual wants and needs are with partners that are more intuitive and sensitive to these needs and thus relationship satisfaction is not significantly impacted. Overall, sexual authenticity had a small impact on relationship satisfaction, so future research is needed to establish the relationship between these two variables. Overall sexual authenticity scores were predictive of sexual satisfaction, but the Sexual Placating subscale was not significantly associated. Sexual Placating involves behaviours that sooth the individual's partner and avoid personal feelings of insecurity. It was expected that authentic individuals would not engage in these behaviours and instead prioritize their own wants and desires because of authenticity's focus on portraying one's true self. However, it is also possible that some individual's internal beliefs of themselves is that they are good sexual partners, which could lead to a prioritization of fulfilling their partners' sexual wants and needs.

Sexual Communication

Authentic behaviour requires the genuine outward expression of internal thoughts, feelings, wants, and desires. Existing research has found support that relationship authenticity is associated with improvements in sexual communication (Amaro et al., 2001; Impett et al., 2010). It was hypothesized that this desire to accurately and honestly communicate these internal states would lead to improved sexual communication. The current research explored a variety of types of sexual communication: verbal sexual communication, nonverbal initiation of sexual behaviour, and nonverbal refusal of sexual behaviour.

The results generally supported the prediction that sexual authenticity levels would be predictive of different types of sexual communication. All three of the sexual authenticity

variables significantly predicted more frequent verbal sexual communication between partners. Authentic individuals may be more motivated to engage in direct sexual communication since it is the most effective way to communicate internal feelings. However, because of the correlational nature of this study, it is also possible that the relationship between these variables is reciprocal in nature.

One of the sexual authenticity factors, Honest Sexual Communication, was a significant predictor of nonverbal initiation behaviours. Sexually authentic individuals appear to be more confident about expressing their sexual desire to their partners and are willing to initiate sex with their partners. Alternatively, authentic people might be better communicators overall and engage in many different ways of communicating (i.e., both verbal and nonverbal behaviours). For example, research has found that authentic women are more likely to use condoms than inauthentic women (Impett et al., 2010), which likely requires a mixture of verbal and non-verbal behaviours to communicate to their partners. The other two authenticity factors were not significantly associated with nonverbal initiation behaviours. This is not necessarily surprising since Sexual Placating and Sexual Self-Doubt both seem to place a higher importance on their partners. These individuals might not feel confident enough to initiate sex and might wait for their partners to engage in these behaviours instead. Overall, there is some evidence that authenticity may improve nonverbal initiation behaviours, but future research is needed to understand the role of each factor.

Finally, all three authenticity factors significantly predicted nonverbal sexual refusal behaviours. It was expected that authentic individuals would use less of these behaviours and instead rely on more direct forms of sexual refusal. However, the hypothesis was only partially supported. The Sexual Placating and Sexual Self-Doubt variables supported the hypothesis.

However, the results from the Honest Sexual Communication variable indicated that increased levels of this authenticity variable lead to increased nonverbal refusals. It is possible that individuals who are high in this factor of authenticity are willing to engage in more communication behaviours overall to refuse sex despite the potential negative reactions to these refusals. As previously discussed, individuals who score high on this factor appear to be less concerned about the potential risks and judgements associated with engaging in authentic behaviours. Widman and colleagues (2006) have found that inauthentic individuals may not refuse sexual behaviour to avoid upsetting their partners, whereas authentic individuals are more likely to advocate for themselves and refuse unwanted behaviour. Individuals who score high in this factor may also prioritize communication in general and rely on a variety of behaviours to convey the message to their partners. In other words, the use of nonverbal refusals can be done in conjunction with more explicit (i.e., verbal) forms of refusal.

Sexual Consent

This research also examined the relationship between sexual authenticity and sexual consent behaviours. Given the benefits that authenticity has on sexual communication, it was hypothesized that sexual authenticity would have a positive impact on sexual consent behaviours. This study examined two features of sexual consent: external sexual consent and perceived behavioural control.

In terms of external consent behaviours, communication/initiator behaviours were examined. Examples of this type of behaviour include using verbal cues to indicate interest in sex and implying interest in sex (e.g., talking about getting a condom). Overall, there was support that sexual authenticity significantly predicted this type of external consent behaviour. In other words, highly authentic individuals were more likely to engage in initiation consent

behaviours with their partners. The Honest Sexual Communication and Sexual Placating variables were both significant predictors of communication/initiation consent behaviours. However, the Sexual Self-Doubt did not significantly contribute to this relationship, and the model only accounted for a very small portion of the total variance (4%) after accounting for control variables. Thus, there is some evidence that sexual authenticity improves these consent behaviours, but predictability is limited, and future research is needed to better understand this relationship.

The relationship between sexual authenticity and sexual consent was further explored through examining individuals' levels of perceived behavioural control over sexual consent behaviours. Essentially, this factor focuses on whether individuals felt that they had the self-efficacy and skillset to navigate sexual consent with their partners. Support was provided for the hypothesis that sexual authenticity would be predictive of individual levels of perceived behavioural control. It was determined that individuals who were high in sexual authenticity believed that they could engage in the appropriate behaviours to give and obtain sexual consent.

Strengths and Limitations

There are several strengths and limitations of the present research that should be noted. First, the construct of sexual authenticity is new and there is very little research examining its components or the impact that it has on sexual and romantic relationships. Most of the existing research described focuses on dispositional or relationship authenticity, which is different from sexual authenticity. A major strength of this study is that it provides a measure for the construct of sexual authenticity and delineates sexual authenticity from relationship authenticity. The items for the Sexual Authenticity Scale were developed utilizing a relationship authenticity scale as a framework to build from, and we sought to create additional items that closely related to

definitions of sexual authenticity. However, the initial item pool was modest in size, and it is possible that there are other dimensions of sexual authenticity that were not captured by these items. Therefore, future research in this area should consider the possibility of other important dimensions of sexual authenticity, and more research is needed to provide further validity of the scale.

Additionally, this study was cross-sectional and retrospective in nature. Individuals were eligible to participate as long as they had engaged in partnered sexual activity. However, there was no time constraint on this criterion. Many of the included measures asked about specific sexual behaviours and participants were asked to think to their most recent sexual partner. Although all participants are responding retrospectively, some participants would have responded based on a current sexual partner whereas others may be responding years afterwards. Existing research on relationship authenticity has utilized a daily diary methodology to reduce this recall bias (Impett et al., 2010; Le & Impett, 2013), which may be useful in future research. However, this methodology would require that individuals are actively engaging in partnered sexual activity and may omit many single individuals. This research is also correlational in nature so directionality cannot be assumed.

Another strength of this study was that multiple samples were used. Four samples were included in this project (2 student, 2 community). Existing research has highlighted that relying solely on a student sample can be problematic since these samples are not necessarily representative of the larger population (Hanel et al., 2016). This study included community samples in order to improve the generalizability to the larger population of adults. Although steps were taken to improve the generalizability of this sample, there were some important characteristics within the samples. Most of the Canadian participants were from student sample,

the student sample was predominantly women, and the community sample was mostly

American. In both samples, participants were predominantly white and heterosexual.

It is also important to note that this research used convenience samples and all

participants were aware that they would be participating in a study that asked about their sexual

behaviour. There may be important differences in the individuals who are likely to participate in

sex research. For example, Dunne et al (1997) found that individuals who consent to sex research

are typically more highly educated, attend church less often, and have less conservative beliefs

than those who do not consent to sex research. Other research has found that volunteers in sex

research are more sexually experienced, had less traditional attitudes, had higher levels of sexual

confidence and sexual sensation seeking (Wiederman, 1999).

The current study focused exclusively on individuals who reside in Canada and the

United States, but there are important cultural differences in definitions and understandings of

authenticity. For example, in Russia, individuals understand authenticity as their ability to

maintain their personhood and resist conformity, which makes them particularly unlikely to

report inauthentic behaviours (Nartova-Bochaver et al., 2020). Another study by Kokkoris and

Kühnen (2014) examined differences in perceptions of authenticity between Chinese

(collectivist) and German (individualist) cultures. The researchers found that participants

perceived individuals who expressed both likes and dislikes as more authentic in individualist

cultures and less authentic in collectivist cultures. When individuals expressed only likes the

opposite was true. Authenticity differs across cultures and requires a measure that can capture

the fundamental essence of authenticity, so future research is needed to determine the

appropriateness of the SAS in other cultures. However, it is possible that different cultures may

vary in their understandings of authenticity to such a degree that they may need entirely different measures altogether.

MacCallum and colleagues (1992) discussed the issues with adding modification indices to improve the model fit. In the current study, multiple modification indices were added to model post hoc to improve the overall fit of the model. MacCallum explained that there are issues with this process since these decisions are data-based rather than theoretically based a priori and are prone to issues with generalizability. However, in the current research, the model was verified with a second independent sample which helps to buffer against these negative effects. Additionally, the items that were allowed to covary intuitively make sense. In general, the items the modification indices that were added were between items that focused on similar concepts.

Additionally, research by Ryan and Ryan (2019) has highlighted the importance of examining sexual authenticity in lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals. While this study included individuals of all orientations, sexual orientation was not examined specifically. One of the main considerations here is that LGB individuals face a unique stigma in terms of their sexual authenticity, and they could be inclined to behave less authentically as a result. These individuals may feel inclined to conceal their sexual orientation to avoid stigmatization, inequity, discrimination, and physical harm. Therefore, future research is needed to ensure generalizability across different populations and sexual orientations.

Future Directions

The primary objective of this research was to develop a measure that could be used to measure individual levels of sexual authenticity. Given that this is a new measure of a construct with limited existing research, there are many opportunities for future research. While examining the potential outcomes of sexual authenticity, relationship status, relationship length, age, and

sample group (SONA versus MTurk) emerged as relevant predictors of sexual authenticity. These variables were controlled for in the regression analyses. However, it is important to note that these variables have an influence on sexual authenticity and future research should explore these relationships in more depth.

Future research should examine how sexual authenticity operates in different types of relationships (e.g., hookups, monogamous relationships, marriages). Sexual authenticity is likely different depending on the type of relationship and level of commitment. In the current study, relationship status and length were shown to be significant predictors of sexual authenticity and previous research has shown that individuals' reported levels of authenticity varies between the various people they interact with (Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012). However, there does not appear to be research that examines the differences in authenticity between different types of partnerships. Since research has found that individuals behave more authentically in environments where they feel supported (Ryan & Ryan, 2019; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012), it is likely that sexual authenticity is influenced by relationship characteristics.

Practical Applications of The Sexual Authenticity Scale

The development of the Sexual Authenticity Scale offers a stepping stone to better understanding and exploration of the concept of authenticity. The behaviour-based scale could be used to understand individual levels of sexual authenticity and how it relates to other relationship and sexual outcomes. The scale could also be used to compare and contrast the different types of authenticity and develop a stronger understanding of authenticity as a whole. Additionally, the scale could be used to understand how sexual authenticity develops across time within relationships.

In a therapeutic setting, this scale could be administered to both couples and single individuals to gain a better understanding of current levels of sexual authenticity. Even the administration of such a measure could motivate individuals to make positive changes towards improving their authenticity. The scale could be used to inform individuals, promote discussion, and motivate intervention with a therapist or clinician. Couples may find benefit in identifying and understanding their differences in sexual authenticity and could work together with a therapist to try to improve lower levels of authenticity. Couples therapists may find benefit in understanding their clients' levels of authenticity as the current study found evidence that sexual authenticity positively influences relationship and sexual satisfaction. This information could be leveraged to teach and promote authentic behaviour between partners. Given the body of research that positions authenticity as important in romantic relationships, this tool could be used to understand and improve authenticity over time and provide measurable outcomes pre- and post-intervention.

The scale could also be used in the development of intervention programs. For example, existing sexual consent programs are largely based on risk-avoidance and educating individuals about affirmative consent. Research has consistently found that despite an awareness of affirmative consent, individuals do not engage in these behaviours in their personal lives (Shumlich & Fisher, 2018). Since sexual authenticity has been demonstrated to positively influence sexual communication and sexual consent behaviours, this research could be used as a tool to identify individuals low in authenticity and to build programs that aim to improve authentic communication.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research presents a new measure for investigating sexual authenticity. The Sexual Authenticity Scale has shown evidence of reliability and validity in both a student and community sample. This scale provides opportunity for further exploration of sexual authenticity as a construct. The present study also provided evidence of the association between sexual authenticity and many positive sexual and relationship outcomes. Specifically, sexual authenticity predicted sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, more frequent sexual communication, and improved sexual consent outcomes.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Study 1 Recruitment Scripts

SONA Advertisement

Credits: 0.5 credits

Abstract: Researchers trying to validate a scale pertaining to sexual communication.

Description: You are invited to participate in a study which explores sexual communication, sexual behaviours, and intimate relationships. The current study is part of a Master's Thesis project. The study will be completed entirely online (in approximately ½ an hour). If you choose to participate, you will be asked several demographic questions along with several questions about your sexual behaviours, sexual communication, and other more general questions about your personality. Please be aware that some questions may be of a sensitive nature. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator before signing the consent form. Participation in this study is voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

Eligibility requirements: Participants must be over 18 years old, speak English fluently, and must have been in at least one sexual partner.

MTurk Advertisement

Compensation: $0.10

Abstract: Researchers trying to validate a scale pertaining to sexual communication.

Description: You are invited to participate in a study which explores sexual communication, sexual behaviours, and intimate relationships. The current study is part of a Master's Thesis project. The study will be completed entirely online (in approximately ½ an hour) If you choose to participate, you will be asked several demographic questions along with several questions about your sexual behaviours, sexual communication, and other more general questions about your personality. Please be aware that some questions may be of a sensitive nature. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator before signing the consent form. Participation in this study is voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

Eligibility requirements: Participants must be over 18 years old, speak English fluently, and must have been in at least one sexual partner.

Appendix B – Study 1 Informed Consent Form

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Project Title: Sexual Communication Scale Development Study

Information and Consent Form

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Merissa Prine, HBA (Department of Psychology)

INFORMATION You have been invited to participate in a study by Merissa Prine, a Master's student at Trent University, who is being supervised by Dr. Terry Humphreys. The aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of sexual communication and intimate relationships. Participation in this study involves filling out online questionnaires pertaining to sexual communication, intimate relationships, consent, and sexual behaviours. It is a **prerequisite** of this study that you are at least 18 years old, speak fluent English, and have had at least one sexual partner. The questionnaires take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

RISKS & BENEFITS One potential risk or discomfort in this study is that some individuals may feel uncomfortable stating their sexual history/behaviours, however, please note that your responses are **completely anonymous** and **confidential**—your data cannot be linked to you in any way. You are free to leave any question(s) blank if you prefer not to answer. You may also withdraw from the study at any time. Once you have completed the survey, there is no way to retract or erase your responses as the survey is anonymous.

You may value the opportunity to experience being a research participant. You will also be contributing to the psychological literature pertaining to relationships and communication.

CONFIDENTIALITY Your responses will be kept **completely anonymous** and **confidential**. In no way can the responses you give in this survey be traced back to you personally. Qualtrics will not collect IP addresses or geographic locations to ensure participant anonymity. The aggregated data (i.e., averages from many people) may be reported in psychological journals and/or presentations at academic conferences. In addition, the Data will be stored on a secure server through Qualtrics, the information is protected by Transport Layer Security encryption and processed without leaving the jurisdiction, the data is only accessible to specific authorized accounts.

For those completing through MTurk, MTurk operates by allowing researchers to outsource their surveys to a large number of potentially interested individuals. Participants who are interested in completing the questionnaire are redirected to Qualtrics to complete the questionnaire. MTurk has some interest in data about you (e.g., information that could be used to improve the website) but will not have access to the responses you provide for this study. MTurk works to protect the security of your information during transmission by using Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) software, which encrypts information you input. MTurk's privacy policy can be found at https://www.mturk.com/worker/privacy-notice. In order to minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure your confidentiality, we recommend that you use standard safety measures such as signing

out of your account, closing your browser and locking your screen or device when you have completed the study.

It is expected that the results of this study will be reported in a thesis, psychological journal article(s) and in presentations at academic conferences. Note, however, that the responses of individual participants will not be identified in any reports of this research; only aggregated data (i.e., averages from many people) will be reported. No directly identifying information can be downloaded. The results will be kept in an encrypted file. Raw data will be destroyed five years after the completion of this study, in accordance with the American Psychological Association's guidelines.

COMPENSATION For completing at least 50% of the questionnaire, Trent student participants (SONA) will receive 0.5 research credits towards selected Psychology courses. An alternative way to receive the same amount of credit is to complete a written assignment (guidelines are available through the PSYC101 instructor). If SONA participants leave the study before completing 50% of the study, they will not be provided credit.

For those completing the survey through MTurk, participants will receive $0.10 for completing at least 50% of the questionnaire. If participants leave the study before completing 50% of the study, they will not be provided compensation.

CONTACT If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the primary researcher, Merissa Prine, email: merissaprine@trentu.ca or, Dr. Terry Humphreys in the Psychology Department, Trent University, email: terryhumphreys@trentu.ca.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Trent University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions about the ethical aspects of this research, you may contact Jamie Muckle, Certifications and Regulatory Compliance Officer, Trent University, Phone: 705-748-1011 ext. 7896, Email: jmuckle@trentu.ca.

FEEDBACK If you wish to receive the results of this study, you can email the primary researcher at merissaprine@trentu.ca to request them. The results will be sent out at the completion of the study, approximately June of 2021.

CONSENT Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may choose to skip a question or to cease your participation at any time by closing your screen. However, once you have submitted your responses, they are anonymous, and your contributions cannot be withdrawn.

I understand that withdrawal will not affect my future opportunities for research participation.
I understand that I can print this consent form for my records.
I have read and understood the preceding description.
I have read the consent form and consent to participate in this research.

Appendix C – Study 1 Debriefing Form

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Project Title: Sexual Communication Scale Development Study
Debriefing Form

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Merissa Prine, HBA (Department of Psychology)

Thank you for taking part in this study. Your participation is greatly appreciated! We would like to take this opportunity to provide you with a more in-depth understanding of the study.

As you are aware, the purpose of this study was to examine communication and intimate relationships. More specifically, this study aims to help validate a measure of sexual authenticity. Previous research on **relationship authenticity** has found that higher levels of authenticity are associated with positive outcomes such as: increased condom negotiation (Impett, Breines, & Stachman, 2010), desire to protect oneself against unwanted pregnancy/STIs (Amaro, 1995; Amaro, Raj, & Reed, 2001), higher sexual self-efficacy (Impett et al., 2006) increased self-esteem and less depression (Tolman, Impett, Tracy, & Michael, 2006). **Sexual authenticity** is an individual's level of congruence between what they think and feel and what they actually do and say in sexual contexts. Future research will examine whether higher levels of sexual authenticity are associated with positive outcomes.

The researchers involved in this project developed a measure to assess an individual's level of sexual authenticity. This measure was assessed by experts in the field for face validity. The purpose of this study was to assess whether or not the developed questionnaire is a valid measure of sexual authenticity.

The results of this research will be used to conduct further research on sexual authenticity.
If you would like to know the results of this study, you may contact the principal investigator at merissaprine@trentu.ca. If you are interested more specifically in consent and/or authenticity, the following papers may be of interest to you:

Hickman, S. E., & Muehlenhard, C. L. (1999). "by the semi-mystical appearance of a condom": How young women and men communicate sexual consent in heterosexual situations. *Journal of Sex Research*, 36(3), 258-272.

Impett, E. A., Breines, J. G., & Strachman, A. (2010). Keeping it real: Young adult women's authenticity in relationships and daily condom use. *Personal Relationships*, 17(4), 573–584.

Shumlich, E. J., & Fisher, W. A. (2018). Affirmative sexual consent? Direct and unambiguous consent is rarely included in discussions of recent sexual interactions. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 27(3), 248-260.

Please remember that it is normal for some people to experience uncomfortable feelings as a result of filling out questionnaires on sensitive topics, such as sexuality. If any of the material that you have experienced in this study has disturbed you on a personal level, to the point that you may wish to discuss it, we recommend a number of resources available in the local community:

Trent University, Counselling Centre: 705-748-1386

Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre (24hr crisis line): 1-866-298-7778

Peterborough Public Health, Sexual Health Clinic: 705-748-2021

Indigenous Cultural Advisor: Betty Carr-Braint - bettycarrbraint@trentu.ca

Indigenous Cultural Counsellor: Nancy Hanlon - nancyhanlon@trentu.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association: 705-748-6711

Mental Health Support: 1-855-242-3310

National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800-656-HOPE (4673)

Mental Health America: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Thank you again for your participation!

Appendix D – Study 1 Questionnaire

Q1 How did you hear about this questionnaire?

○ SONA participant pool (Trent University)

○ MTURK

Q2 What country do you live in?

○ Canada

○ United States

○ Other (please specify): _____

Q3 Please identify your gender.

○ Woman

○ Man

○ Transgender

○ Non-binary

○ I prefer not to disclose

○ Other (please identify): _____

Q4 How old are you (years)?

_____

Q5 Have you ever had a sexual partner (this includes oral, manual, vaginal, and anal sex)?

○ Yes

○ No

Q6 What is the highest level of education you have received?

○ Completed high school education

○ Some high school

○ Apprenticeship

○ Currently enrolled in an undergraduate program

○ Currently enrolled in a graduate program

o Completed Undergraduate degree

o Completed Master's degree

o Completed Doctoral degree

o Completed College diploma

o Other (please specify): _____

Q7 Please identify your ethnicity.

o Caucasian

o Asian

o Black/African American

o Indigenous

o Mixed ethnicity

o Hispanic/Latino

o Other (please identify): _____

Q8 What is your current relationship status? (check all that apply)

☐   Monogamous relationship

☐   Married

☐   Widowed

☐   Cohabitating

☐   Polyamorous relationship

☐   Open relationship

☐   Single (not dating)

☐   Casually dating

☐   Divorced

Q9 If you are in a relationship, how long have you been in your current relationship?

☐   Years _____

☐   Months _____

☐   I am not in a relationship

Q10 Do you have children?

   o Yes

   o No

Q11 What is your sexual orientation?

-    Same-sex attracted (e.g. lesbian, gay)
-    Heterosexual
-    Different-sex attracted
-    Bisexual
-    Pansexual
-    Asexual
-    Other (please identify):

_____

Q12 How many sexual partners have you had (this includes oral, manual, vaginal, and anal sex partners)?

-    Same-sex partners: _____
-    Different-sex partners:_____

Q13 How honestly do you plan to answer the questions in this survey?

                              0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Q14 Below you will find a series of statements about you. Please read each statement and decide how much you agree or disagree with that statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral (neither agree nor disagree)	Agree	Strongly agree

I would be quite bored by a visit to an art gallery.	○	○	○	○	○
I plan ahead and organize things, to avoid scrambling at the last minute.	○	○	○	○	○
I rarely hold a grudge, even against people who have badly wronged me.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel reasonably satisfied with myself overall.	○	○	○	○	○
I would feel afraid if I had to travel in bad weather conditions.	○	○	○	○	○
I wouldn't use flattery to get a raise or promotion at work, even if I thought it would succeed.	○	○	○	○	○
I'm interested in learning about the history and politics of other countries.	○	○	○	○	○

I often push myself very hard when trying to achieve a goal.	o	o	o	o	o
People sometimes tell me that I am too critical of others.	o	o	o	o	o
I rarely express my opinions in group meetings.	o	o	o	o	o
I sometimes can't help worrying about little things.	o	o	o	o	o
If I knew that I could never get caught, I would be willing to steal a million dollars.	o	o	o	o	o
I would enjoy creating a work of art, such as a novel, a song, or a painting.	o	o	o	o	o
When working on something, I don't pay much attention to small details.	o	o	o	o	o

People sometimes tell me that I'm too stubborn.	o	o	o	o	o
I prefer jobs that involve active social interaction to those that involve working alone.	o	o	o	o	o
When I suffer from a painful experience, I need someone to make me feel comfortable.	o	o	o	o	o
Having a lot of money is not especially important to me.	o	o	o	o	o
I think that paying attention to radical ideas is a waste of time.	o	o	o	o	o
I make decisions based on the feeling of the moment rather than on careful thought.	o	o	o	o	o

People think of me as someone who has a quick temper.	o	o	o	o	o
On most days, I feel cheerful and optimistic.	o	o	o	o	o
I feel like crying when I see other people crying.	o	o	o	o	o
I think that I am entitled to more respect than the average person is.	o	o	o	o	o
If I had the opportunity, I would like to attend a classical music concert.	o	o	o	o	o
When working, I sometimes have difficulties due to being disorganized.	o	o	o	o	o
My attitude toward people who have treated me badly is "forgive and forget".	o	o	o	o	o

I feel that I am an unpopular person.	o	o	o	o	o
When it comes to physical danger, I am very fearful.	o	o	o	o	o
If I want something from someone, I will laugh at that person's worst jokes.	o	o	o	o	o
I've never really enjoyed looking through an encyclopedia.	o	o	o	o	o
I do only the minimum amount of work needed to get by.	o	o	o	o	o
I tend to be lenient in judging other people.	o	o	o	o	o
In social situations, I'm usually the one who makes the first move.	o	o	o	o	o
I worry a lot less than most people do.	o	o	o	o	o

I would never accept a bribe, even if it were very large.	o	o	o	o	o
People have often told me that I have a good imagination.	o	o	o	o	o
I always try to be accurate in my work, even at the expense of time.	o	o	o	o	o
I am usually quite flexible in my opinions when people disagree with me.	o	o	o	o	o
The first thing that I always do in a new place is to make friends.	o	o	o	o	o
I can handle difficult situations without needing emotional support from anyone else.	o	o	o	o	o
I would get a lot of pleasure from owning	o	o	o	o	o

expensive luxury goods.					
I like people who have unconventional views.	o	o	o	o	o
I make a lot of mistakes because I don't think before I act.	o	o	o	o	o
Most people tend to get angry more quickly than I do.	o	o	o	o	o
Most people are more upbeat and dynamic than I generally am.	o	o	o	o	o
I feel strong emotions when someone close to me is going away for a long time.	o	o	o	o	o
I want people to know that I am an important person of high status.	o	o	o	o	o

I don't think of myself as the artistic or creative type.	o	o	o	o	o
People often call me a perfectionist.	o	o	o	o	o
Even when people make a lot of mistakes, I rarely say anything negative.	o	o	o	o	o
I sometimes feel that I am a worthless person.	o	o	o	o	o
Even in an emergency I wouldn't feel like panicking.	o	o	o	o	o
I wouldn't pretend to like someone just to get that person to do favours for me.	o	o	o	o	o
I find it boring to discuss philosophy.	o	o	o	o	o
I prefer to do whatever comes to mind, rather than stick to a plan.	o	o	o	o	o

When people tell me that I'm wrong, my first reaction is to argue with them.	o	o	o	o	o
When I'm in a group of people, I'm often the one who speaks on behalf of the group.	o	o	o	o	o
I remain unemotional even in situations where most people get very sentimental.	o	o	o	o	o
I'd be tempted to use counterfeit money, if I were sure I could get away with it.	o	o	o	o	o

Q15 Below are a number of items addressing things you may or may not have done sometime in your life. Please answer each item "yes" or "no". The term "sex" below can is defined as intercourse or other forms of sexual intimacy (e.g. oral sex, manual stimulation).

	Yes	No
Told someone "I love you", but really didn't just to have sex with them?	o	o

Told someone "I care for you" just to have sex with them?	o	o
Had sex with someone so they would leave you alone?	o	o
Had sex with someone so you would have someone to sleep next to?	o	o
Had sex with someone even though you didn't want to?	o	o
Had sex with someone in order to maintain your relationship with them?	o	o
Had sex with someone in order to maintain resources you get from them (e.g., money, clothes, companionship)?	o	o
Had sex with someone in order to get resources from them (e.g., money, clothes, companionship)?	o	o
Had sex with someone just so you could tell your friends about it?	o	o
Had sex with someone so they wouldn't break up with you?	o	o
Gotten a partner really drunk or stoned in order to have sex with them?	o	o
Told someone they'd be your boyfriend/girlfriend/partner just so they would have sex with you?	o	o

Had sex with someone, then never returned their calls after that?	o	o
Had sex with someone because you wanted to please them?	o	o
Faked "who you are" in order to have sex with somebody?	o	o

Q16 Partners may communicate with each other about different aspects of their sexual relationship. Think about your sexual relationship with your partner (or most recent sexual relationship) and check the number that best describes how often you communicate to your partner about each sexual topic.

	1 = Never	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Always
I use nonverbal cues (smiling, caressing, etc.) to indicate to my partner that they are pleasing me.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I give sexual praise to my partner when they do things that I like.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
It is easy to tell my partner the sexual things that don't work for me and why.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

When I want to, I ask my partner for sex.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
When things go wrong during sex, I avoid being touched by my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I use nonverbal cues (such as touching, kissing, etc.) to initiate sex with my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I tell my partner what we need to do differently to increase my sexual pleasure.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I feel comfortable using nonverbal cues (such as touching, kissing, etc.) to initiate sex with my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I snuggle and kiss my partner when they	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

sexually please me.							
I praise my partner when our sexual contact pleases me.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
When I want sex, I start things by touching my partner sexually.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
If you are reading this, please select option "5".	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I use nonverbal cues (e.g., avoiding eye contact) to show my partner that I am not sexually satisfied.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I stop my partner when he/she does something sexual that I do not like, but do not say anything.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

I use nonverbal cues (stop eye contact, use my hands, etc.) to let my partner know if I don't like their sexual techniques.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
When my partner starts to touch me sexually and I'm not interested, I move their hands away.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I feel comfortable asking my partner to try sexual things that we have never done before.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I feel comfortable snuggling and kissing my partner when he/she pleases me sexually.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I ask my partner to keep doing things that sexually please me.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I tell my partner if I don't want to have sex.							
I feel comfortable telling my partner the things that sexually please me.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I suggest new things for my partner and I to try during our sexual contacts.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I start to kiss my partner when I want to have sex.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I feel comfortable telling my partner if I want to have sex.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

When my partner does something that doesn't please me, I usually let them know this nonverbally (such as stopping with my hands or avoiding eye contact) instead of saying something.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
It is difficult for me to ask my partner for sex when I want it.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I prefer to use nonverbal communication when something goes wrong in my sexual encounters.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
When it comes to sex, I ask my partner to do things that we have never tried before.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

I use eye contact with my partner when I want to initiate sexual contact.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

Q17 Using the following scale, please select the response that best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, just your opinions. (Please respond to the statements based on your most recent sexual partner).

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I would tell my partner I think they look nice, even if I think they shouldn't go out dressed like that.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I express my opinions to my partner only if I can think of a nice way of doing it.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I worry that I might make my partner feel bad if I am successful.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

I would not change the way I do things in order to please my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I tell my partner what I honestly think even when it is an unpopular idea.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Often, I look happy outwardly in order to please my partner, even if I don't feel happy on the inside.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I wish I could say what I feel more often than I do.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I feel like it's my fault when I have disagreements with my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

When my partner ignores my feelings, I think that my feelings weren't very important anyway.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I usually tell my partner when they hurt my feelings.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q18 Using the following scale, please select the response that best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. (Please respond to the statements based on your most recent sexual partner).

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I would tell my partner I think they look sexually attractive, even if I don't believe it.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I express my sexual preferences only if I can think of a nice way of doing it.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I often downplay my sexual experience in order to make my partner feel more comfortable.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I would not change the way I do things sexually in order to please my sexual partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I engage in sexual behaviours that make me uncomfortable in order to please my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I tell my sexual partner my wants/desires even when they might be unusual.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
Often, I express sexual arousal outwardly in order to please my partner, even if I don't feel aroused.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

Often, I express sexual desire towards my partner, even if I don't feel desire towards them.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I often pretend to enjoy myself sexually in order to please my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I often fake orgasms to please my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I often tell my partner that I am sexually satisfied even when I am not.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I wish I could express my sexual desires to my partner more often than I do.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I feel like it is my fault when my partner and I have sexual disagreements.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

When my partner ignores my sexual feelings, I think that my feelings weren't very important.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I usually tell my sexual partner when they have upset me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I usually tell my partner what I want sexually.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I usually tell my sexual partner what I want emotionally.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I often engage in sexual behaviours that I would rather not in order to please my partner.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I often express my sexual wants to my partner.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Even if it might be awkward, I talk honestly	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

about sex with my partner.							
Even if it might be awkward, I talk honestly about sex with my friends.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I make sure I get my desires met even if it means doing it myself.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
I communicate my sexual fantasies honestly with my sexual partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

Q19 How often do you **pretend** to have an orgasm when you have sex?

o Every time

o Most of the time

o Sometimes

o Not regularly

o Never

Q20 How often do you orgasm during partnered sexual activity?

o Every time

o Most of the time

o Sometimes

o Not regularly

o Never

Q21 How honestly did you answer the questions in this questionnaire? (10 = completely honest)

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Appendix E – Study 2 Recruitment Scripts

SONA Advertisement

Credits: 0.50 credit

Abstract: An exploration of sexual communication in intimate relationships.

Description: You are invited to participate in a study which explores sexual communication, sexual behaviours, and intimate relationships. The current study is part of a Master's Thesis project. The current study aims to explore how sexual communication impacts other areas of intimate relationships. The study will be completed entirely online (in approximately 1/2 hour) If you choose to participate, you will be asked several demographic questions along with several questions about your sexual behaviours, sexual communication, and other more general questions about your personality. Please be aware that some questions may be of a sensitive nature. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator (merissaprine@trentu.ca) before signing the consent form. Participation in this study is voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

Eligibility requirements: Participants must be over 18 years old, speak English fluently, and must have been in at least one sexual partner.

MTurk Advertisement

Compensation: $0.25

Abstract: An exploration of sexual communication in intimate relationships.

Description: You are invited to participate in a study which explores sexual communication, sexual behaviours, and intimate relationships. The current study is part of a Master's Thesis project. The current study aims to explore how sexual communication impacts other areas of intimate relationships. The study will be completed entirely online (in approximately 1/2 hour) If you choose to participate, you will be asked several demographic questions along with several questions about your sexual behaviours, sexual communication, and other more general questions about your personality. Please be aware that some questions may be of a sensitive nature. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact the Principal Investigator (merissaprine@trentu.ca) before signing the consent form. Participation in this study is voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

Eligibility requirements: Participants must be over 18 years old, speak English fluently, and must have been in at least one sexual partner.

Appendix F – Study 2 Informed Consent Form

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Project Title: Sexual Communication and Intimate Relationships

Information and Consent Form

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Merissa Prine, HBA (Department of Psychology)

<u>INFORMATION</u> You have been invited to participate in a study by Merissa Prine, a Master's student at Trent University, who is being supervised by Dr. Terry Humphreys. This is an exploratory study about communication and intimate relationships. Participation in this study involves filling out online questionnaires pertaining to sexual communication, intimate relationships, consent, and sexual behaviours. It is a **prerequisite** of this study that you are at least 18 years old, speak English fluently, and have had at least one sexual partner. The questionnaires take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

<u>RISKS & BENEFITS</u> One potential risk or discomfort in this study is that some individuals may feel uncomfortable stating their sexual history/behaviours, however, please note that your responses are **completely anonymous** and **confidential**—your data cannot be linked to you in any way. You are free to leave any question(s) blank if you prefer not to answer. You may also withdraw from the study at any time. Once you have completed the survey, there is no way to retract or erase your responses as the survey is anonymous.

You may value the opportunity to experience being a research participant. You will also be contributing to the psychological literature pertaining to relationships and communication.

<u>CONFIDENTIALITY</u> Your responses will be kept **completely anonymous** and **confidential**. In no way can the responses you give in this survey be traced back to you personally. Qualtrics will not collect IP addresses or geographic locations to ensure participant anonymity. The aggregated data (i.e., averages from many people) may be reported in psychological journals and/or presentations at academic conferences. In addition, the Data will be stored on a secure server through Qualtrics, the information is protected by Transport Layer Security encryption and processed without leaving the jurisdiction, the data is only accessible to specific authorized accounts.

For those completing through MTurk, MTurk operates by allowing researchers to outsource their surveys to a large number of potentially interested individuals. Participants who are interested in completing the questionnaire are redirected to Qualtrics to complete the questionnaire. MTurk has some interest in data about you (e.g., information that could be used to improve the website) but will not have access to the responses you provide for this study. MTurk works to protect the security of your information during transmission by using

Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) software, which encrypts information you input. MTurk's privacy policy can be found at https://www.mturk.com/worker/privacy-notice. In order to minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure your confidentiality, we recommend that you use standard safety measures such as signing out of your account, closing your browser and locking your screen or device when you have completed the study.

It is expected that the results of this study will be reported in a thesis, psychological journal article(s) and in presentations at academic conferences. Note, however, that the responses of individual participants will not be identified in any reports of this research; only aggregated data (i.e., averages from many people) will be reported. No directly identifying information will be downloaded. The results will be kept in an encrypted file. Raw data will be destroyed five years after the completion of this study, in accordance with the American Psychological Association's guidelines.

COMPENSATION For completing at least 50% of the questionnaire, Trent student participants will receive 0.5 research credits towards selected Psychology courses. An alternative way to receive the same amount of credit is to complete a written assignment (guidelines are available through the PSYC101 instructor). If SONA participants leave the study before completing 50% of the study, they will not be provided credit.

For those completing the survey through MTurk, participants will receive $0.25 for completing at least 50% of the questionnaire. If participants leave the study before completing 50% of the study, they will not be provided compensation.

CONTACT If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the primary researcher, Merissa Prine, email: merissaprine@trentu.ca or, Dr. Terry Humphreys at the Psychology Department, Trent University, DNA C114 at (705) 748-1011, extension 7773, email: terryhumphreys@trentu.ca.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Trent University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions about the ethical aspects of this research, you may contact Jamie Muckle, Certifications and Regulatory Compliance Officer, Trent University, Phone: 705-748-1011 ext. 7896, Email: jmuckle@trentu.ca.

FEEDBACK If you wish to receive the results of this study, you can e-mail the primary researcher at merissaprine@trentu.ca to request them. The results will be sent out at the completion of the study, in approximately June of 2021.

CONSENT Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may choose to skip a question or to cease your participation at any time by closing your screen. However, once you have submitted your responses, they are anonymous, and your contributions cannot be withdrawn.

I understand that withdrawal will not affect my future opportunities for research participation.

I understand that I can print this consent form for my records.

I have read and understood the preceding description.

I have read the consent form and consent to participate in this research.

Appendix G – Study 2 Questionnaire

Q1 How did you hear about this questionnaire?

  o SONA participant pool (Trent University)

  o MTURK

Q2 What country do you live in?

  o Canada

  o United States

  o Other (please specify): _____

Q3 Please identify your gender.

  o Woman

  o Man

  o Transgender

  o Non-binary

  o I prefer not to disclose

  o Other (please identify): _____

Q4 How old are you (years)?

  _____

Q5 Have you ever had a sexual partner (this includes oral, manual, vaginal, and anal sex)?

  o Yes

  o No

Q6 What is the highest level of education you have received?

  o Some high school

  o Completed high school education

  o Apprenticeship

  o Currently enrolled in an undergraduate program

  o Currently enrolled in a graduate program

o Completed Undergraduate degree

o Completed Master's degree

o Completed Doctoral degree

o Completed College diploma

o Other (please specify): _____

Q7 Please identify your ethnicity.

o Caucasian

o Asian

o Black/African American

o Indigenous

o Mixed ethnicity

o Hispanic/Latino

o Other (please identify): _____

Q8 What is your current relationship status? (check all that apply)

☐   1. Monogamous relationship

☐   2. Married

☐   3. Widowed

☐   4. Cohabitating

☐   5. Polyamorous relationship

☐   6. Open relationship

☐   7. Single (not dating)

☐   8. Casually dating

☐   9. Divorced

Q9 If you are in a relationship, how long have you been in your current relationship?

o Years _____

o Months _____

o I am not in a relationship

Q10 Do you have children?

o Yes

o No

Q11 What is your sexual orientation?

☐ Same-sex attracted (e.g. lesbian, gay)

☐ Heterosexual

☐ Different-sex attracted

☐ Bisexual

☐ Pansexual

☐ Asexual

☐ Other (please identify):

_____

Q12 How many sexual partners have you had?

☐ Same-sex partners: _____

☐ Different-sex partners: _____

Q13 How honestly do you plan to answer the questions in this survey?

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Q14 Using the following scale, please select the response that best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, just your opinions.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

1. I would tell my partner I think they look sexually attractive, even if I don't believe it.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
2. I express my sexual preferences only if I can think of a nice way of doing it.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
3. I often downplay my sexual experience in order to make my partner feel more comfortable.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
4. I would not change the way I do things sexually in order to please my sexual partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
5. I engage in sexual behaviours that make me uncomfortable in order to please my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

6. I tell my sexual partner my wants/desires even when they might be unusual.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
7. Often, I express sexual arousal outwardly in order to please my partner, even if I don't feel aroused.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
8. Often, I express sexual desire towards my partner, even if I don't feel desire towards them.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
9. I often pretend to enjoy myself sexually in order to please my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
10. I often fake orgasms to please my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
11. I often tell my partner that I am sexually satisfied even when I am not.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

12. I wish I could express my sexual desires to my partner more often than I do.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
13. I feel like it is my fault when my partner and I have sexual disagreements.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
14. When my partner ignores my sexual feelings, I think that my feelings weren't very important.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
15. I usually tell my sexual partner when they have upset me.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
16. I usually tell my partner what I want sexually.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
17. I usually tell my sexual partner what I want emotionally.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

18. I often engage in sexual behaviours that I would rather not in order to please my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
19. I often express my sexual wants to my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
20. Even if it might be awkward, I talk honestly about sex with my partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
21. Even if it might be awkward, I talk honestly about sex with my friends.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
22. I make sure I get my desires met even if it means doing it myself.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
23. I communicate my sexual fantasies honestly with my sexual partner.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

Q15 Using the following scale, please select the response that best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, just your opinions.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I would tell my partner I think they look nice, even if I think they shouldn't go out dressed like that.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
2. I express my opinions to my partner only if I can think of a nice way of doing it.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
3. I worry that I might make my partner feel bad if I am successful.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
T. If you are reading this, please select "strongly disagree".	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

4. I would not change the way I do things in order to please my partner.

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

5. I tell my partner what I honestly think even when it is an unpopular idea.

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

6. Often, I look happy outwardly in order to please my partner, even if I don't feel happy on the inside.

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

7. I wish I could say what I feel more often than I do.

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

6. I feel like it's my fault when I have disagreements with my partner.

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

9. When my partner ignores my feelings, I think that my feelings weren't very important anyway.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
10. I usually tell my partner when they hurt my feelings.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q16 Using the following scale, please select the response that best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, just your opinions.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I feel that sexual consent should always be obtained before the start of any sexual activity.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
2. I believe that asking for sexual consent is in my best interest because it reduces any misinterpretation	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

s that might arise.

3. I think it is equally important to obtain sexual consent in all relationships regardless of whether or not they have had sex before.

O   O   O   O   O   O   O

4. I feel that verbally asking for sexual consent should occur before proceeding with any sexual activity.

O   O   O   O   O   O   O

5. When initiating sexual activity, I believe that one should always assume they do not have sexual consent.

O   O   O   O   O   O   O

6. I believe that it is just as necessary to obtain consent for genital fondling as it is for sexual intercourse.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
7. Most people that I care about feel that asking for sexual consent is something I should do.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
8. I think that consent should be asked before any kind of sexual behaviour, including kissing or petting.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
9. I feel it is the responsibility of both partners to make sure sexual consent is established before sexual activity begins.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
10. Before making sexual advances, I think that one should assume 'no' until there is clear	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

indication to proceed.

11. Not asking for sexual consent some of the time is okay.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
12. I would have difficulty asking for consent because it would spoil the mood.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
13. I am worried that my partner might think I'm weird or strange if I asked for sexual consent before starting any sexual activity.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
14. I would have difficulty asking for consent because it doesn't really fit with how I like to engage in sexual activity.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

15. I would worry that if other people knew I asked for sexual consent before starting sexual activity, that they would think I was weird or strange.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

16. I think that verbally asking for sexual consent is awkward.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

17. I have not asked for sexual consent (or given my consent) at times because I felt that it might backfire and I wouldn't end up having sex.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

18. I believe that verbally asking for sexual consent reduces the pleasure of the encounter.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

19. I would have a hard time verbalizing my consent in a sexual encounter because I am too shy.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

20. I feel confident that I could ask for consent from a new sexual partner.

   o   o   o   o   o   o   o

21. I would not want to ask a partner for consent because it would remind me that I'm sexually active.

   o   o   o   o   o   o   o

22. I feel confident that I could ask for consent from my current partner.

   o   o   o   o   o   o   o

23. I think that obtaining sexual consent is more necessary in a new relationship than in a committed relationship.

   o   o   o   o   o   o   o

24. I think that obtaining sexual consent is more necessary in a casual sexual encounter than in a committed relationship.

   o   o   o   o   o   o   o

25. I believe that the need for asking for sexual consent decreases as the length of an intimate relationship increases.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
26. I believe it is enough to ask for consent at the beginning of a sexual encounter.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
27. I believe that sexual intercourse is the only sexual activity that requires explicit verbal consent.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
28. I believe that partners are less likely to ask for sexual consent the longer they are in a relationship.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
29. If consent for sexual intercourse is established, petting and fondling can be assumed.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

30. Typically, I communicate sexual consent to my partner using nonverbal signals and body language.

o   o   o   o   o   o   o

31. It is easy to accurately read my current (or most recent) partner's non-verbal signals as indicating consent or non-consent to sexual activity.

o   o   o   o   o   o   o

32. Typically, I ask for consent by making a sexual advance and waiting for a reaction, so I know whether or not to continue.

o   o   o   o   o   o   o

33. I don't have to ask or give my partner sexual consent because my partner knows me well enough.

o   o   o   o   o   o   o

34. I don't have to ask or give my partner sexual consent because I have a lot of trust in my partner to "do the right thing."	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
35. I always verbally ask for consent before I initiate a sexual encounter.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
36. I have discussed sexual consent issues with a friend.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
37. I have heard sexual consent issues being discussed by others.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
38. I have discussed sexual consent issues with my current (or most recent) partner at times other than during sexual encounters.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
39. I have not given much thought to the topic of sexual consent.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

Q17 People may have different feelings associated with their *consent* or *willingness* to engage in sexual activity. Think back to the last time you engaged in sexual activity. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that you felt the following during the last time you engaged in sexual activity. If you have never engaged in any sexual behaviour, please select NA (not applicable)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	NA
1. I felt interested.	o	o	o	o	o
2. I felt heated.	o	o	o	o	o
3. I felt aroused.	o	o	o	o	o
4. I felt secure.	o	o	o	o	o
5. I felt in control.	o	o	o	o	o
6. I felt turned on.	o	o	o	o	o
7. The sex felt consented to.	o	o	o	o	o
8. I felt rapid heart beat.	o	o	o	o	o
9. I felt ready.	o	o	o	o	o

10. The sex felt desired.	o	o	o	o	o
11. I felt sure.	o	o	o	o	o
12. I felt lustful.	o	o	o	o	o
13. I felt willing.	o	o	o	o	o
14. The sex felt agreed to.	o	o	o	o	o
15. I felt comfortable.	o	o	o	o	o
16. I felt safe.	o	o	o	o	o
17. I felt erect/lubricated.	o	o	o	o	o
18. I felt aware of my surroundings.	o	o	o	o	o
19. The sex felt wanted.	o	o	o	o	o
20. I felt certain.	o	o	o	o	o
21. I felt respected.	o	o	o	o	o

22. I felt flushed.	○	○	○	○	○
23. I felt protected.	○	○	○	○	○
24. I felt eager.	○	○	○	○	○
25. The sex felt consensual.	○	○	○	○	○

Q18 People communicate their willingness or consent to engage in sexual activity in a variety of ways. Think about the last time you engaged in sexual activity with another person. Which of the following behaviours did you engage in to indicate your consent or agreement to engage in sexual activity? Indicate all responses that may apply. If you have never engaged in sexual activity, please select the last option.

☐   1. I used non-verbal cues such as body language, signals, or flirting

☐   2. I did not resist my partners attempts for sexual activity.

☐   3. I initiated sexual behaviour and checked to see if it was reciprocated.

☐   4. I took my partner somewhere private.

☐   5. It just happened.

☐   6. I increased physical contact between myself and my partner.

☐   7. I did not say no or push my partner away.

☐   8. I used verbal cues such as communicating my interest in sexual behaviour or asking if they wanted to have sex with me.

☐   9. I shut or closed the door.

☐   10. I did not say anything.

☐   11. I touched my partner, showed them what I wanted through touch or increasing physical contact between myself and the other person.

☐   12. I let the sexual activity progress (to the point of intercourse).

☐   13. I indirectly communicated/implied my interest in sex (e.g., talked about getting a condom/dental dam).

☐   14. I just kept moving forward in sexual behaviours/actions unless my partner stopped me.

☐   15. I did not do anything; it was clear from my actions or from looking at me that I was willing to engage in sexual activity/sexual intercourse.

☐   16. I reciprocated my partner's advances.

☐   17. I removed mine or my partner's clothing.

☐   18. I engaged in some level of sexual activity such as kissing or "foreplay".

☐   19. I have never engaged in sexual activity.

Q19 Partners may communicate with each other about different aspects of their sexual relationship. Think about your sexual relationship with your partner (or most recent sexual relationship) and check the number that best describes how often you communicate to your partner about each sexual topic.

	1 = Never	2	3	4	5	6	7 = Always
1. I use nonverbal cues (smiling, caressing, etc.) to indicate to my partner that they are pleasing me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
2. I give sexual praise to my partner when they do things that I like.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
3. It is easy to tell my partner the sexual things that	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

don't work for me and why.

4. When I want to, I ask my partner for sex.

o   o   o   o   o   o   o

5. When things go wrong during sex, I avoid being touched by my partner.

o   o   o   o   o   o   o

6. I use nonverbal cues (such as touching, kissing, etc.) to initiate sex with my partner.

o   o   o   o   o   o   o

7. I tell my partner what we need to do differently to increase my sexual pleasure.

o   o   o   o   o   o   o

8. I feel comfortable using nonverbal cues (such as touching, kissing, etc.) to initiate sex

o   o   o   o   o   o   o

with my partner.							
9. I snuggle and kiss my partner when they sexually please me.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
10. I praise my partner when our sexual contact pleases me.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
T. If you are reading this, please select option "5".	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
11. When I want sex, I start things by touching my partner sexually.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
12. I use nonverbal cues (e.g., avoiding eye contact) to show my partner that I am not sexually satisfied.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

13. I stop my partner when he/she/they do something sexual that I do not like, but do not say anything.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
14. I use nonverbal cues (stop eye contact, use my hands, etc.) to let my partner know if I don't like their sexual techniques.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
15. When my partner starts to touch me sexually and I'm not interested, I move their hands away.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
16. I feel comfortable asking my partner to try sexual things that we have never done before.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

17. I feel comfortable snuggling and kissing my partner when he/she pleases me sexually.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
18. I ask my partner to keep doing things that sexually please me.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
19. I tell my partner if I don't want to have sex.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
20. I feel comfortable telling my partner the things that sexually please me.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
21. I suggest new things for my partner and I to try during our sexual contacts.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o
22. I start to kiss my partner when I want to have sex.	o	o	o	o	o	o	o

23. I feel comfortable telling my partner if I want to have sex.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

24. When my partner does something that doesn't please me, I usually let them know this nonverbally (such as stopping with my hands or avoiding eye contact) instead of saying something.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

25. It is difficult for me to ask my partner for sex when I want it.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

26. I prefer to use nonverbal communication when something goes wrong in my sexual encounters.

○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○   ○

| 27. When it comes to sex, I ask my partner to do things that we have never tried before. | o | o | o | o | o | o | o |
| 28. I use eye contact with my partner when I want to initiate sexual contact. | o | o | o | o | o | o | o |

Q20 Thinking about your sex life, please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects:

	1 = Not at all satisfied	2 = A little satisfied	3 = Moderately satisfied	4 = Very satisfied	5 = Extremely satisfied
1. The intensity of my sexual arousal.	o	o	o	o	o
2. The quality of my orgasms.	o	o	o	o	o
3. My "letting go" and surrender to sexual pleasure during sex.	o	o	o	o	o
4. My focus/concentration during sexual activity.	o	o	o	o	o
5. The way I sexually react to my partner.	o	o	o	o	o

6. My body's sexual functioning.	o	o	o	o	o
7. My emotional opening up in sex.	o	o	o	o	o
8. My mood after sexual activity.	o	o	o	o	o
9. The frequency of my orgasms.	o	o	o	o	o
10. The pleasure I provide my partner.	o	o	o	o	o
11. The balance between what I give and receive in sex.	o	o	o	o	o
12. My partner's emotional opening up during sex.	o	o	o	o	o
13. My partner's initiation of sexual activity.	o	o	o	o	o
14. My partner's ability to orgasm.	o	o	o	o	o
15. My partner's surrender to sexual pleasure ("letting go").	o	o	o	o	o
16. The way my partner takes care of my sexual needs.	o	o	o	o	o

17. My partner's sexual creativity.	o	o	o	o	o
18. My partner's sexual availability.	o	o	o	o	o
19. The variety of my sexual activities.	o	o	o	o	o
20. The frequency of my sexual activity.	o	o	o	o	o

Q21

	1 = Not well	2	3	4	5 = Very well	N/A
How well does your partner meet your needs?	o	o	o	o	o	o

	1 = Not satisfied	2	3	4	5 = Very satisfied	N/A
In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship with your partner?	o	o	o	o	o	o

	1 = Not good	2	3	4	5 = Very good	N/A
How good is your relationship with your partner compared to most?	o	o	o	o	o	o

	1 = Never	2	3	4	5 = Always	N/A
How often do you wish you weren't in this relationship with your partner?	o	o	o	o	o	o

	1 = Not at all	2	3	4	5 = Very much	N/A
To what extent has your relationship with your partner met your expectations?	o	o	o	o	o	o

	1 = Not much	2	3	4	5 = Very much	N/A
How much do you	o	o	o	o	o	o

	1 = Not many	2	3	4	5 = Very many	N/A
love your partner?						
How many problems are there in your relationship with your partner?	o	o	o	o	o	o

Q22 How often do you **pretend** to have an orgasm when you have sex?

o Every time

o Most of the time

o Sometimes

o Not regularly

o Never

Q23 How often do you orgasm during partnered sexual activity?

o Every time

o Most of the time

o Sometimes

o Not regularly

o Never

Q24 How honestly did you answer the questions in this questionnaire? (10 = completely honest)

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

Appendix H – Study 2 Debriefing

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Project Title: Sexual Communication and Intimate Relationships

Debriefing Form

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Merissa Prine, HBA (Department of Psychology)

Thank you for taking part in this study. Your participation is greatly appreciated! We would like to take this opportunity to provide you with a more in-depth understanding of the study.

As you are aware, the purpose of this study was to examine communication and intimate relationships. More specifically, this study aims to explore sexual authenticity. Previous research on **relationship authenticity** has found that higher levels of authenticity are associated with positive outcomes such as: increased condom negotiation (Impett, Breines, & Stachman, 2010), desire to protect oneself against unwanted pregnancy/STIs (Amaro, 1995; Amaro, Raj, & Reed, 2001), higher sexual self-efficacy (Impett et al., 2006) increased self-esteem and less depression (Tolman, Impett, Tracy, & Michael, 2006). **Sexual authenticity** is an individual's level of congruence between what they think and feel and what they actually do and say in sexual contexts.

The current study examined whether individuals' levels of sexual authenticity were associated with sexual consent behaviours, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction.

The results of this study will provide important insights as to whether sexual authenticity is associated with positive relationship outcomes (e.g., higher relationship satisfaction). If we find support for our hypotheses, future research will be able to examine potential strategies to promote sexual authenticity within couples.

If you would like to know the results of this study, you may contact the principal investigator at merissaprine@trentu.ca. If you are interested more specifically in consent and/or authenticity, the following papers may be of interest to you:

Hickman, S. E., & Muehlenhard, C. L. (1999). "by the semi-mystical appearance of a condom": How young women and men communicate sexual consent in heterosexual situations. *Journal of Sex Research*, 36(3), 258-272.

Impett, E. A., Breines, J. G., & Strachman, A. (2010). Keeping it real: Young adult womens authenticity in relationships and daily condom use. *Personal Relationships*, 17(4), 573–584.

Shumlich, E. J., & Fisher, W. A. (2018). Affirmative sexual consent? direct and unambiguous consent is rarely included in discussions of recent sexual interactions. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 27(3), 248-260.

Please remember that it is normal for some people to experience uncomfortable feelings as a result of filling out questionnaires on sensitive topics, such as sexuality. If any of the material that you have experienced in this study has disturbed you on a personal level, to the point that you may wish to discuss it, we recommend a number of resources available in the local community:

Trent University, Counselling Centre: 705-748-1386

Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre (24hr crisis line): 1-866-298-7778

Peterborough Public Health, Sexual Health Clinic: 705-748-2021

Indigenous Cultural Advisor: Betty Carr-Braint - bettycarrbraint@trentu.ca

Indigenous Cultural Counsellor: Nancy Hanlon - nancyhanlon@trentu.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association: 705-748-6711

Mental Health Support: 1-855-242-3310

National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800-656-HOPE (4673)

Mental Health America: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Thank you again for your participation!