THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SEXUAL AGENCY, SEXUAL CONSENT COMMUNICATION, SEXUAL MOTIVATIONS, AND POSITIVE SEXUAL EVALUATIONS

A Thesis Submitted to the Committee on Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in the Faculty of Arts and Science

TRENT UNIVERSITY

Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

Psychology M.Sc. Graduate Program

January, 2024

Abstract

The Interrelationships Between Sexual Agency, Sexual Consent Communication, Sexual Motivations, and Positive Sexual Evaluations

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Sexual agency is receiving more attention in sexuality research though its contribution to sexual well-being has yet to be determined. Sexual agency has been theorized as an overarching concept comprised of both internal and external components. Both feelings and behaviours in the sexual domain can be impacted by prevalent culturally prescribed sexual scripts. The present study assessed sexual assertiveness, sexual self-concept, and comfort in sexual communication (i.e., together conceptualized as sexual agency) to determine if greater levels of these indices led to more direct consent communication, more intrinsic motivations for engaging in sex, and more positive sexual evaluations. Analyses were run separately on two samples: a student and community participant pool. Results indicate that greater sexual agency predicts being more intrinsically driven to engage in sex, using more direct consent communication, and reporting more positive evaluations of one's most recent sexual encounter. Gendered analyses reveal that cismen and ciswomen have similar levels of sexual agency, and rate their encounters similarly. Having greater sexual agency was a better predictor of experiencing sexual well-being compared to gender. Implications for policy development and sexual education curriculum reform are discussed, and future research directions are suggested.

Keywords: sexual agency, sexual assertiveness, sexual self-concept, sexual consent, sexual communication, sexual motivations, sexual satisfaction, sexual regret

Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank my committee for the help and support they provided throughout this process. To Dr. Terry Humphreys, your guidance, patience, and understanding throughout this process has been greatly appreciated; thank you for being a wonderful mentor and pushing me to become a better academic. To Dr. Geoff Navara, I am thankful for your statistical help and insights into theoretical matters. Thank you to Dr. Robin Milhausen for agreeing to be part of my committee and for presenting me with such inspired comments and questions. I would also like to thank my lab mates for their continued support and feedback on my project. To my Peterborough family, thank you for being my support system and taking care of me while I was away from home. I will forever cherish the memories I made and the kindness I received from my roommates (Ivy Nixon, and Teia and Myah Ferguson) and the students in my program. Thank you Dr. Elizabeth Russell for your mentorship and all the opportunities you have given me. Immense gratitude goes to my Stats Trio Fam Jam for staying by my side through all the chaos and helping me become a better scholar and person. I will forever be grateful for having shared this experience with you both. Specifically to Eva Fernandes, I extend my gratitude for being the best lab mate I could have asked for and for becoming an even better friend. Most importantly, I wish to extend appreciation to those who have supported me the longest. Thank you to my partner, friends, and family back home who encouraged and supported me while I was away, and who have always believed in me (yes, you reading this). Last, and most of all, j'aimerais remercier mes parents qui ont toujours vu le meilleur en moi et ont tout fait pour me voir réussir. Merci, Mom et Dad pour votre amour et soutien durant toutes ces années. J'espère que je vous ai rendu fiers.

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Introduction

Negative sexual experiences (NSEs) are common, especially for young adults, and young women specifically. NSEs comprise a large range of interactions, including experiences of sexual assault, unwanted sex, pressure or coercion , feeling unsafe, or regret. Arguably the most extreme case of NSE is sexual assault, and though the prevalence is variable (dependant on factors such as environment, age, and location), approximately one in five women will experience sexual assault over the course of an undergraduate degree (Cantor et al., 2015; Krebs et al., 2016; Muehlenhard et al., 2017). Moreover, rates of sexual assault are not isolated to campuses as nonstudent women are found to experience similar (if not slightly higher) rates of sexual assault (Buddie & Testa, 2005; Muehlenhard et al., 2017; Sinozich & Langton, 2014). Women are also quite likely to experience other types of NSEs, though research on sexual regret and coercion is less extensive. Women have been found to comply to engaging in sex that is consented to yet unwanted (Katz & Schneider, 2015; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Willis et al., 2022), feel more pressure and coercion to engage in sex (Eyre et al., 1997; Hines, 2007; Kennair et al., 2018; Livingston et al., 2004), and have been found to report more feelings of sexual regret compared to men (Ahmadabadi et al., 2015; Fisher et al., 2012; Kennair et al., 2018). Consenting to and engaging in sex that is unwanted can result in feeling more disappointed in oneself (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998) and experiencing less sexual pleasure (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2010), both of which may increase instances of regret.

One possible reason why a discrepancy in NSE exists between men and women might be related to social factors and the subsequent sexual roles that are taught to (predominantly heterosexual) individuals. Supporting this notion, Scappini and Fioravanti (2022) found that women who more strongly endorsed gendered norms and a heterosexual script were less able to

view themselves as active sexual agents entitled to sexual pleasure and desires. I argue that this lack of agency brought about by social dictation can have marked impacts on the sexual lives and well-being of individuals, and especially for women who have sex with men as they might feel less agentic than their partner. Women have been found to be more discouraged to act in self-serving ways compared to men (Wiederman, 2005). Having sexual agency or acting in sexually agentic ways has been linked to having more satisfaction, better sexual functioning, and better sexual communication (Fetterolf & Sanchez, 2015; Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007; Laan & Rellini, 2011; Levin et al., 2012; Sanchez et al., 2006), among other positive outcomes. One aspect that remains unclear however, is how the affective and behavioural components of sexual agency shape how individuals approach sex and communicate during sex, and how these relationships impact how individuals ultimately feel about and evaluate their sexual interactions.

The current thesis aimed to better understand sexual agency and evaluate the extent to which agency impacts individuals' sexual lives and well-being; from how it shapes individuals' motivations for engaging in sex, to how it influences their use of sexual consent communication, to how it effects one's evaluations of their sexual experiences, as well as how all these aspects are interrelated.

Sexual Agency

Sexual agency is an emergent topic in sexuality research. As such, there is a foundational debate on how to define, conceptualize, and measure agency in this field (for a review see Fahs & McClelland, 2016). Due to the contention and ambiguity surrounding this relatively new topic it is important to properly evaluate and integrate the existing literature on the topic. Scholars of various disciplines such as psychologists and feminist scholars have started to examine sexual agency, though their conceptualizations and definitions tend to differ between their respective

fields. To present a new and integrated understanding of sexual agency, a brief overview of researchers' differing notions of the construct follows.

Sexual agency is a complex construct for which no definitive definition has yet been adopted. Some researchers have described sexual agency as being able to enact one's true desires, having the ability to direct sexual exchanges to fulfil one's goals, or having a sense of sexual power in one's encounters (Albanesi, 2009; Braksmajer et al., 2022; Fetterolf & Sanchez, 2015; Froyum, 2010; Stoebenau et al., 2022; Ward et al., 2018). Other scholars have used the term synonymously with concepts such as sexual self-efficacy or sexual autonomy. Sexual self-efficacy has been defined as one's *belief in* their ability to be an agent in their sexual life (Anderson, 2013; Levin et al., 2012) whereas sexual autonomy is more often described as one's *ability to act* in authentic and freely chosen manners (Deci & Ryan, 1995; Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007). These two concepts are useful when considering and assessing positive sexuality and sexual well-being, yet I argue that sexual agency is the better term as it can encapsulate not only the *beliefs* or cognitions individuals have about sexual ability and entitlement, but their actual *abilities* and behaviours in sexual contexts as well. Sexual agency incorporates important components from both self-efficacy and autonomy; agency integrates one's interpersonal appraisals about their sexual entitlement with their actual ability to enact these sexual desires to promote sexual well-being. In other words, it is not only feeling empowered to take sexual space and action, but also having the skills to do so. At its root, I posit that sexual agency involves *feeling empowered* and *being equipped* to make choices which are congruent with one's own self-interest; two interconnected yet clearly distinct aspects. In line with this notion, Klein and colleagues (2018) state that sexual agency involves feeling entitled to receive sexual pleasure,

enact one's sexual needs, and communicate one's expectations and boundaries with a sexual partner.

This definition nicely highlights that sexual agency is made up of two aspects; both an intrapersonal factor, which can be understood as one's internal thoughts or feelings, and an interpersonal aspect which focuses on one's outward behaviours and actions with other people. Similarly, it has been argued that sexual well-being includes both cognitive and affective components (Byers & Rehman, 2014). I argue that both of these components are necessary to properly understand sexual agency as they highlight the complete scope of sexual agency's reach on sexual well-being. To *feel* like a sexual agent involves having sexual self-confidence, positive self-concept, and self-efficacy, whereas to *act* as a sexual agent includes properly communicating desires, asserting refusals, and acting in self-fulfilling ways. This study uses these components to describe the interpersonal and intrapersonal factors of agency in order to provide a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of what sexual agency is actually comprised of.

It then becomes important to determine how individuals come to feel and act like sexual agents in their intimate lives. Researchers of various disciplines have differed in their theoretical understanding in regards to this question. Psychologists more often think of sexual agency as a personal capacity to make sexual decisions and feel confident in those choices, and they think of this capacity as inherent to the individual (Fetterolf & Sanchez, 2015). The psychological approach on sexual agency has centered the individual as the locus for change in this domain. This notion of sexual agency places responsibility on the individual to produce their desired sexual outcome and places blame on people if they find themselves in non-gratifying sexual encounters. Feminist scholars in sexuality studies, however, have warned of the problematic nature of placing blame on individuals for having or not having sexual agency (Bay-Cheng,

2015; Braksmajer et al., 2022; Fahs & McClelland, 2016). Feminist researchers also suggest that agency should be conceptualized as being a capacity available to all, yet they argue that one's propensity to being agentic is determined not only by the individual but by societal notions of who should and should not cultivate agency in their sexual lives (Klein et al., 2018). I agree with previous feminist scholars that sexual agency should be considered from a social perspective and seen as a dynamic trait. Echoing the work of prior scholars, I posit that sexual agency is either encouraged or discouraged in individuals based on relational, situational, or social circumstances.

Sexual agency should be thought of as a continuous variable that fluctuates in intensity within individuals due to the social factors which dictate how much or how little agency one is entitled to, and due to the relational factors which may impact how agentic one feels they can be in specific situations. In this more socially constructed conceptualization of sexual agency an individual may usually feel and act like a highly sexually agentic person, but may not refuse a sexual encounter with an aggressive partner due to the risk of doing so in that instance. In such a case, it is not the individual who is less sexually agentic, rather it is the situation which has stripped them of enacting agentic behaviours. It is important to mention that acting in agentic ways cannot protect against all negative aspects of sexuality. For example, sexual assault, including coercive or forced sexual encounters are beyond the control of survivors no matter how equipped or empowered they may be to refuse or revoke their consent. It is the hope rather, that sexual agency can help mitigate other NSEs, such as regret, by empowering individuals to refuse unwanted encounters or ask for what they need or desire. Just as an individual may be more or less predisposed to be sexually agentic, so can culture, partners, peers, and parents all shape how much sexual agency individuals feel entitled to embody and enact in everyday life.

Sexual Agency as Socially Constructed

It is imperative to determine if social pressure can in fact impact one's internal beliefs and outward actions in sexual situations. Simon and Gagnon (1984) were some of the first scholars to consider this, and cemented the argument that our actions are driven by our cognitions, which are themselves shaped by social instruction. They believed that behaviour is shaped by scripts which guide and instruct our understanding of how we should act. This school of thought has come to be known as Social Script Theory (Simon & Gagnon, 1984). The main tenet of social script theory is that individual behaviour can be influenced by three levels of social scripts: cultural scenarios—which are prescribed roles within society that dictate which behaviours are appropriate for each actor; interpersonal scripts—which allow for variation in the script so that one's identity can conform to societal expectations while also being malleable to various individualized scenarios; and intrapsychic scripts—which are most central to the self, being comprised of a persons' feelings and desires (Simon & Gagnon, 1984). Simon and Gagnon (1986) noted how the broader cultural scenario can permeate every subsequent level of scripting such that one's behaviours are never truly free from social influence. This is also true for sexual behaviours; Sexual Script Theory (SST) was later developed to better understand and examine how individual and social influence can mold specific patterns and tendencies of sexual behaviour (Simon & Gagnon, 2003). In the sexual domain specifically, cultural scenarios can perpetuate social expectations of human behaviour and dictate which sexual thoughts and ideas are acceptable, leading individuals to engage in scripted behaviours congruent with one's learnt schemas.

Simon and Gagnon (2003) also posit that the reason certain culturally constructed scripts are upheld in the private domain (such as during sexual encounters) is in part because they can

provide actors with a blueprint to guide their behaviours in such a way that they are more likely to expect and obtain a pleasurable outcome. It has been found that if an actor perceives a gratifying experience to be the result from following a social script, they are more likely to adhere to, uphold, and replicate that beneficial script (Wiederman, 2005). It is the predictability of the socially prescribed scripts which reinforces their continued use. Scripts remain stable over time because they allow actors to obtain their goals, leading them to fixate on the reliable extant formulas rather than implement any variations on the proven scripts (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). It should be noted, however, that sexual interactions are dynamic and involve two or more actors with their own interpersonal and intrapersonal interpretations of scripts which can alter and impact how empowered and equipped individuals feel in their sexual interactions. It is possible for patterns and tendencies in sexual behaviours to change depending on one's partner, type of romantic partnership, or just change over time. Though the scripts which dictate individuals' actions may be fairly rigid, the behaviours themselves may still change due to interpersonal and intrapsychic understandings which can be negotiated and developed over time. It is important to consider that sexual behaviours can be relatively dynamic even if the sexual scripts which inform them are quite static.

Sexual Agency: A Double Standard

Sexual scripts which differ for men and women are referred to as sexual double standards (SDS). These different scripts, where men are encouraged to pursue certain sexual behaviours—and women are disparaged from engaging in sex acts arise because the standards regarding who is more entitled to have casual sex, have multiple sex partners, or seek sexual interactions vary by gender, especially within a Western heterosexual context. It is not the behaviours themselves that might differ between gender, but the societal evaluations and expectations of those actions

which vary for men and women. The idea of a SDS was first articulated by Reiss (1956, 1964) who aimed to determine if participant's attitudes about premarital sex differed depending on who engaged in the behaviour. Reiss (1964) found that men were less discouraged to have sex before marriage and less shamed for such behaviour compared to women who engaged in the same sexual behaviours prior to marriage. Though the notion of premarital sex may be outdated and that particular standard is no longer heavily enforced, the tendency to hold men and women to different standards regarding sexual behaviour remains (Endendijk et al., 2020). It is crucial to consider that just like premarital sex was subject to scrutiny in previous years, multiple behaviours may be impacted by SDSs including sexually agentic behaviours such as initiating sex, or asserting sexual desire.

There is evidence that certain sexual double standards persist today. A review of 30 studies which assessed the prevalence of the SDS found that while some of the studies failed to find evidence of a SDS for certain behaviours, the majority of articles continued to demonstrate support for the persistence of SDS (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Crawford and Popp (2003) were able to find evidence that men in the United States rated women more harshly for engaging in sexual behaviours compared to how they rated other men. Furthermore, Jonason and Marks (2009) found that women were more negatively evaluated for being sexually promiscuous and engaging in uncommon sex acts compared to men. Women also tend to lose more friends after reporting engaging in sex compared to men who report a significant increase in friendships post sexual debut (Kreager et al., 2016). In the most recent meta-analysis on the topic, Endendijk et al. (2020) found evidence that individuals do in fact have differing expectations and evaluations of men and women's sexual behaviours, with the most prevalent double standards relating to sexual debut, promiscuity, and level of sexual activity. These results suggest that there is a

persistent difference in how men and women are judged for engaging in similar sexual behaviours. Men tend to gain more peer acceptance for engaging in sexual acts and receive greater societal leniency compared to women who are penalized for the same behaviour. These standards may impact an individual's perception of their right to sexual consideration and could alter the value they place on themselves in sexual encounters.

SDSs are commonly found in qualitative studies where participants are asked to report on their understanding of the cultural level expectations about sex. Men tend to receive more positive evaluations for being sexually permissive compared to women. As an example, students who were asked to discuss what types of sexual standards are present for young adults, endorsed themes such as: 'good-girls' don't have sex, women owe sex if men put in effort or provide them with attention, and women should uphold men's egos to make sure their needs are met (Jozkowski et al., 2017). These prominent beliefs and standards about sexual interactions place not only more expectations, but more scrutiny onto women.

It is important to examine how the aforementioned sexual scripts and societal standards impact heterosexual individuals' perceptions and behaviours regarding sex. Specifically, how do socially prescribed sexual double standards impact who feels entitled to sexual consideration, and who is given the tools to ensure fulfilling sexual experiences? I argue that societal pressure and gendered sexual scripts impact individual's sexual self-concept and self-efficacy, and influence individuals' behavioural tendencies to be assertive of their desires, or to communicate direct sexual consent. Specifically, I posit these social scripts may differently impact the amount of sexual agency men and women have, and theorize that differences in sexual agency can have tangible impacts to one's sexual wellbeing.

The Impact of Sexual Agency

Research on sexual agency tends to only consider its impact in one of two ways; the focus is either on agency as a protective factor, in which sexual agency can protect against (and reduce) negative experiences, or agency is seen as a productive factor, in which it promotes and encourages more positive and pleasurable encounters (J. F. Chmielewski et al., 2020; Fahs, 2014). Some researchers have focused on the protective components of agency, highlighting how greater agency can reduce instances of unwanted sex, increase sexual refusal, and can increase contraceptive use and sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention (Higgins & Browne, 2008). Other scholars however, who have been preoccupied with the promotional qualities of sexual agency, have illustrated how agency can be useful in facilitating sexual communication, and increasing the amount of sexual satisfaction and orgasms reported by individuals (Fetterolf & Sanchez, 2015; Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007; Laan & Rellini, 2011; Levin et al., 2012; Sanchez et al., 2006). I argue that research on sexual agency should consider both the protective and productive nature of sexual agency concurrently and refrain from assessing the two axes separately as they are highly interconnected. Chmielewski et al. (2020) found that young women who felt more comfortable in their desire were not only better able to ask for pleasure but were also more likely to protect themselves against unsafe sex. Moreover, having high sexual assertiveness is linked with more positive outcomes such as higher self-esteem and sexual satisfaction (Menard & Offman, 2009; Oattes & Offman, 2007), yet greater assertiveness can also serve to protect individuals as it has been found to increase one's ability to refuse unwanted sexual experiences (Darden et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2011). It is important to consider sexual agency comprehensively in order to properly determine the extent to which this construct can impact one's sexual well-being. Positive sexuality and sexual well-being is not just the absence

of harm or the presence of safety, it must also include the promotion of equitable, pleasurable, and autonomous encounters.

More than specific sexual outcomes, it is necessary to assess if agency impacts one's sexual life on multiple levels. One's sense of empowerment and equipment in sexual situations can impact not only the *outcomes,* such as rates of orgasm or satisfaction, but one's level of agency can also play a role in how one feels about the encounter, communicates their consent within that encounter, and could even impact what drives or motivates an individual to engage in said encounter in the first place. I argue that the more sexual agency an individual is afforded by social scripts the more ability they will have to enact positive outcomes in sexual situations, such as increase their pleasure and consent communication, while also mitigating negative sexual outcomes such as unwanted or regretful encounters. Furthermore, I posit that sexual agency can influence one's psyche to such an extent that one might list different reasons for engaging in sex based on their amount of sexual agency.

Sexual Agency and Sexual Motivations

The double standards we see in sexual agency, such that heterosexual men are more entitled to sexuality and are more agentic in their sexual behaviours compared to women, may lead men and women to be motivated to engage in sex for different reasons. Sakaluk and colleagues (2014) aimed to ascertain which sexual scripts young adults uphold and how said scripts influence their sexual behaviours. Using thematic analysis, the researchers found evidence for the persistence of specific gendered sexual scripts. The men and women of the study reported cultural assumptions of sexual double standards such as: men are constantly willing to have sex whereas women should inhibit their sexual desire; physical release is most important for men, but women uphold an imperative for emotional connection and relational

intimacy; men are sexual initiators whereas women are sexual gatekeepers; and men are rewarded for being sexual while women are judged (Sakaluk et al., 2014). Participants of this study reiterated cultural scripts rooted in patriarchal ideology, and stated that it is typically cis-gendered heterosexual men who are entitled to sex and are most often sexual actors. Social dictations, such as these (i.e. women should be sexual gatekeepers and suppress their desire whereas men should act on sexual impulse and be sexual agents) can infiltrate individuals' intrapsychic understandings of their wants and needs. Broader cultural scenarios and social scripts can shape the intrapersonal scripts individuals refer to, impacting not only their goals for sex, but altering their motives for engaging in sex as well.

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivations

Ryan and Deci (2000) focus on the "orientation of motivations", positing that the 'why' behind a specific action may differ for people. That is, two individuals might both want to have sex, but the attitudes and goals driving their desire might differ. For example, one individual may be wanting to obtain sexual release whereas the other might want to stop an argument. The motivations may differ, yet both might engage in the same sexual behaviours. The most fundamental distinction between motivation types is between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The former involves preforming an action because of the inherent value of the activity itself, whereas the latter suggests engaging in an activity due to an external drive or to attain a separate outcome (Deci & Ryan, 1985). To be intrinsically motivated an individual preforms an activity or task because it gives personal gratification or satisfaction—positive feelings result from the activity itself; on the other hand, extrinsic motivations are influences outside of the individual and are not centered on personal desires. Someone who is extrinsically motivated may engage in an activity due to outside forces, such as: for reward or punishment, to

please others, or to ensure an outcome detached from the activity itself (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Ryan and Deci have elaborated on the distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations by proposing an extension of their work called Self-Determination Theory (SDT). This theory posits that individuals seek to have their psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness met, and that having these needs fulfilled (or not) can impact what motivates individuals to behave (Ryan & Deci, 2017). They also expanded upon how motivations are not just intrinsic to the person or extrinsically linked to a related outcome, rather the most influential distinction is if motivations are autonomous or controlled (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Intrinsic motivations are argued to be (by definition) autonomous, and behaviours which are autonomously driven require volition, inherent interest, and a willingness to engage (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Extrinsic motivations, however, can be more varied in their position on this autonomy-control continuum. Behaviours are more controlled when they are pressured either internally or externally, and either rely on reward or punishment. With this distinction, even a seemingly extrinsic motivation, such as having sex for relational upkeep or to please a partner, can be autonomous to some extent if the reason for engaging in the behaviour is integrated into the self and the desire to please a partner comes from a place of love or the individual inherently values relational upkeep and satisfaction.

A link can be made between motivations (for the self or for other reasons) and the sexual scripts socialized to Western heterosexual men and women. It can be theorized that those who are socialized to hold more agency and autonomy in their sexual lives may choose to engage in sex for reasons more central to the self and for personal gratification, whereas those who follow a more restrictive social script—with less fulfillment of their autonomy or competence needs, might be more inclined to engage in sex to appease a partner or because of different societal

pressures. These sexual roles are often found to differ between men and women, with women more often times being thought of as passive and subservient (Wiederman, 2005). Thus, it is important to understand the connection between sexual agency and one's motivations for engaging in sex. To my knowledge, little known literature has looked into this relationship.

Gender Differences in Sexual Motives

Men and Sexual Motives. The sexual standard for heterosexual men involves being highly sexual and acting on those salient impulses. When asked about motivations for engaging in sex men consistently state more utilitarian or impulse driven reasons (Ahmadabadi et al., 2015; Meston & Buss, 2007). Examples of utilitarian reasons include: to enhance one's social status or to improve one's sexual skills and prowess (Meston & Buss, 2007). Cultural scripts dictate that it is acceptable (and even lauded) for men to think about sex and improve upon their sexual skills. There is also evidence that sexual gratification is more central to the male script and that men are taught that sexual pleasure is paramount. This focus on enjoyment may also influence why men choose to engage in sex. Men who follow a more traditional sexual script are more likely to list reasons for engaging in sex based on pleasure and recreation (Ahmadabadi et al., 2015). Men endorse physical and pleasure type motivations significantly more so than women do, listing reasons such as their partner was attractive, or because they wanted to experience pleasure or sexual release (Meston & Buss, 2007). Vannier and O'Sullivan (2012) aimed to ascertain if one's motivations for engaging in oral sex differed from their reasons for engaging in sex generally. Men listed physical and pleasure motives for engaging in oral sex just as for penetrative sex. To further emphasize how central pleasure can be for men, the authors reported that there were no instances where men reported giving oral sex without also receiving it, though the majority of women reported giving oral sex without receiving it in return (Vannier

& O'Sullivan, 2012). It is important to determine what drives individuals to act and reciprocate actions in sexual encounters to ensure that fulfilling experiences are available for all involved.

Social scripts, unfortunately, reinforce that men are more entitled to sex and that they should assert their needs, sometimes at the cost of their partner's desires. This can have negative repercussions as too much sexual entitlement can undermine the reciprocal and equitable nature of partnered sexual encounters. Moreover, sexual entitlement can lead individuals to be driven to obtain sex for self-gratification with little concern for their partner's well-being. Jozkowski and colleagues (2017) found that male student participants endorsed a problematic SDS; a 'sex as a conquest' theme emerged from the interviews conducted with college men, where participants discussed that men should play 'the game' to *convince* (read coerce) women to engage in sex with them. In line with this script, there is evidence that young American men list more nefarious strategies for obtaining sex such as lying, pressuring, getting their partner drunk, or forcing their partners to engage in sex (Eyre et al., 1997). Men listed these types of strategies to acquire sex significantly more so than women. Clearly, the social scripts around sexual agency can, and do, have impacts on how individuals approach their sexual encounters. It is important to note however, that sexual agency does not equate to sexual entitlement because it focuses on producing equity and ensuring intimate justice (McClelland, 2010). Agency differs from entitlement in that all individuals should feel empowered to sexual consideration and sexual fulfilment, but not at the expense of others. As is apparent in the literature however, aspects of sexual agency vary so much between heterosexual men and women that a sense of entitlement can drive individuals to engage in sex at the cost of others.

Women and Sexual Motives. In contrast to men, the (hetero)sexual scripts ascribed to women often strip them of sexual agency as they perpetuate passive and placating roles.

Traditional Western sexual scripts only see women in a sexual context when in response to men's sexual desire; women are seen as the gatekeepers, the pleasers, and the receptacles for men. It stands to reason that as such, women might be less likely to list self-serving reasons for engaging in sex, and rather report motivations which are less central to the self and focus instead on their partner or relationship. Many studies corroborate this notion, having found that heterosexual women have sex for more relational reasons such as to please (or appease) their partners, to enhance their connection, or avoid tension and conflict (Goldhammer & McCabe, 2011; Kelly et al., 2017). Mitchell and colleagues (2011) conducted interviews with participants and asked them to note what makes a sexual encounter fulfilling and gratifying. They were able to identify three sexual scripts from the participants' responses: an erotic script focussed on excitement and pleasure, a biomedical script preoccupied with procreation and sexual release, and a relational script which was related to connection and partnership. Interestingly, more women spoke about engaging in sex following a relational script while more male participants were driven by the erotic script. The authors caution that due to the small number of participants significance was not tested and more research is needed to explore if true differences exist (Mitchell et al., 2011).

Some gender differences in sexual motivations have been documented however. Women endorse 'reasons of love' items as motivations for engaging in sex significantly more than men (Meston & Buss, 2007). Women also tend to perform oral sex more than men and report engaging in these behaviours for reasons tangential to the self, including to please their partner or to promote security in their relationship (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012). Women even list placatory reasons for faking orgasm with their partners such as not wanting to hurt their partners feelings or to protect their partner's pride (Fahs, 2014). Evidence suggests that women do report more extrinsic motivations for engaging in sex and that their sexual satisfaction and fulfillment is

more often separate from sexual release and orgasm. Kelly and colleagues (2017) point out that it is difficult to differentiate how much of the relational or connection imperative expressed by women is due to social pressures of acting in a feminine role or if its derived from intrinsic desire. The current study sought to investigate this connection to better understand what informs one's sexual motivations. It is possible that gendered sexual agency scripts lead women to be more motivated to engage in sex for their partner rather than for themselves, to build up their relationships rather than building their climax, or to fulfil a duty rather than for sexual fulfillment itself.

What becomes important, is understanding how these motivations impact how individuals act within the sexual encounter and ultimately discern if these motives affect how pleasurable or regretful the outcome is. Little research has assessed how one's sexual motivations impact the outcome of that encounter or how the individual evaluates that interaction. Ahmadabadi et al. (2015) found that women who listed reasons for engaging in sex related to marriage, fear of abandonment, and non-pleasure were more regretful about their sexual encounters. They also noted that women regretted their first sexual encounters significantly more so than men, who did not list these reasons with similar frequency. Just as sexual agency can influence what motivates individuals to have sex, it might also impact how individuals feel about the sex they have.

Sexual Agency and Sexual Consent Communication

Another facet that sexual motivations might be related to is sexual consent. It serves to reason that individuals who are personally driven to engage in sex and intrinsically want the encounter will probably be willing to express their consent. However, sexual consent might still be given even if the encounter is itself unwanted or extrinsically motivated. Consenting to sex

that is not wanted is known as sexual compliance (Katz & Schneider, 2015; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2010) and reasons for compliancy may include preserving the relationship, to please a partner, or to appease social pressure and adhere to a sexual script (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Scappini & Fioravanti, 2022; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2010). It's important to determine which relationships exist between agency, sexual motivations, and consent to ensure authentic enthusiastic consent is given for the self not for others.

Sexual consent, though sometimes defined in various ways, can be thought of in a similar way to sexual agency as being made up of both internal feelings and appraisals, and outward expressions and actions. Muehlenhard and colleagues (2016) posit that sexual consent is a construct which has two components: it involves outwardly expressing agreement either in words or by actions, and must also include the internal appraisals and feelings of wanting and willingness to engage in the encounter. Jozkowski and team (2014) also posit that consent is comprised of both internal and external components and even developed a measure to assess both the behaviours—such as being direct about sexual intent, and the feelings—such as feeling ready and willing, that a person may have. I argue that sexual agency can impact not only sexual motivations, but affect the amount of willingness someone feels for an encounter and the types of sexual consent behaviours they use.

Internal components of agency, such as sexual assertiveness and self-esteem can impact how likely one is to express sexual consent within interactions, or communicate about sex in general. Previous research demonstrates that women who have greater sexual assertiveness do in fact express consent for sex that is wanted and refuse unwanted sex compared to those with lower assertiveness (Darden et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2011). Women with greater sexual self-efficacy have also been found to use more verbal consent communication (Satinsky &

Jozkowski, 2015). Furthermore, young adults have reported that having skills and encouragement to engage in sexual consent behaviours can help promote affirmative sexual consent in their interactions (Shumlich & Fisher, 2020). Being more confident in sexual communication in general might be linked to engaging in more direct consent communication, though consent communication tends to be mostly indirect. Shumlich and Fisher (2018) found that nonverbal sexual consent behaviours were most frequently endorsed by participants regardless of gender. However, women were more likely to indicate passive consent in contexts with either new partners or long-term partners whereas men were more assertive in new partner scenarios. A reason for this difference in direct versus indirect consent behaviours between genders could be that discussing consent might threaten prevalent sexual scripts.

While sexual scripts can dictate who should feel agentic and in which situations, they can also affect individuals' behaviours influencing how and with whom a person can express their sexual desires and needs. A person who is socialized to internalize less sexual empowerment and worth might be less inclined to assert themselves in sexual encounters or refuse others' sexual advances. People who feel more empowered to sexual consideration and are better equipped to be their own advocate may be more open and direct with their communication during sexual encounters, whereas those who are more passive and diffident may not express how they are feeling nor assert what they want.

Evidence suggests that the more SDS messages women receive from friends, the less confidence in sexual communication they report (Levin et al., 2012). This relationship was not found for the men in the study. Greater exposure to positive messages about sex is linked to lower levels of inauthentic communication, and greater self-efficacy in women (Levin et al., 2012). Social scripts also uphold that women should be less agentic and more passive within

sexual encounters. In keeping with this script women have been found to list more indirect strategies to promote sexual encounters such as hinting, flirting, and "just letting it happen" (Eyre et al., 1997) rather than using verbal indicators of interest. Letting (hetero)sex happen—or being indirect in sexual communication (either in terms of disclosing desires or willingness)—places the power and responsibility on the man to be the initiator and actor in sexual situations which further perpetuates the inequity inherent to current (hetero)sexual scripts and affirms the gendered role of men needing to be the seekers of consent not the givers of consent (Jozkowski, Peterson, et al., 2014; Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014; Shumlich & Fisher, 2018). Jozkowski, Peterson, and colleagues (2014) reported that men are more likely to interpret consent by asking their partner if they are willing to engage in sex, whereas women more often assume a man consents to sex if he asks about her consent (without explicitly asking their male partner about consent in return).

It could be that sexually agentic individuals use more direct ways of expressing consent such as words or action, whereas non-agentic individuals may use more passive forms of external consent like not resisting or simply allowing their partner to undress them. These associations remain relatively understudied, thus this study hopes to provide more information on how sexual agency impacts sexual consent communication. This relationship is also important to study in the context of sexual outcomes as those who engage in compliant sex or do not properly express or revoke their consent can experience less sexual satisfaction and more sexual regret, as well as be at a greater risk for experiencing NSEs (Darden et al., 2019; Javidi et al., 2022; Jozkowski, 2013).

The Impact of Agency on Sexual Well-Being

Sexual agency can be seen as serving two complimentary functions. It can be useful in encouraging more positive and pleasurable sexual encounters, and can aid in protecting against—and reducing negative sexual experiences as well. With greater agency individuals may be more equipped to facilitate positive encounters such as enacting safer sex practices or communicating desires, and reduce negative outcomes by advocating for their needs, asserting disinterest, and expressing refusal. These acts may serve to decrease one's regret and increase one's sexual satisfaction, ultimately improving one's sexual well-being.

Impacts on Sexual Satisfaction

In terms of positive sexual encounters, Kiefer and Sanchez (2007) argue that sexual agency might be a necessity in order for both partners of a heterosexual encounter to experience sexual fulfillment. These authors found that feelings of autonomy were linked with sexual satisfaction whereas passive sexual behaviours (which are more often encouraged in women) predicted less overall sexual satisfaction (Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007). I argue that aspects of agency such as empowerment, confidence, assertiveness, and clear consent communication, are all crucial components to ensuring positive sexual experiences. More positive sexual encounters have been found to be correlated with traits such as assertiveness, self-esteem, and autonomy (Anderson, 2013). Moreover, Greene and Faulkner (2005) found that those who engaged in more sexual communication and were more sexually assertive reported greater relational and sexual satisfaction compared to those with lower levels of these traits. Women have also been found to report experiencing more memorable orgasms when they feel entitled to sexual pleasure and consideration, and when they can ask for what they want sexually (Fahs, 2014).

Women with less agency often times place their satisfaction in reference to their partners' and have a lower baseline for satisfactory sex (Bell & McClelland, 2018; McClelland, 2010, 2017). This may be because women are socialized to expect less of their encounters, are taught to think more communally than individually, or because their social roles afford them less satisfaction in general. The different agentic scripts prescribed to heterosexual men and women can impact one's sense of entitlement to sexual consideration possibly leading to differing baselines of perceived satisfaction. McClelland (2010) found that men and women list different anchors when considering what constitutes as sexually satisfying. While men imagine unsatisfactory sex to include an absence of fulfilment or a lack of sufficient stimulation, women are more likely to base their satisfaction as an absence of pain, coercion, and degradation (McClelland, 2017). Even if men and women were to conceptualize satisfaction in the same way, women may be more likely to lie about being satisfied due to their placatory sexual role. Women report faking orgasms in ambivalent situations or to end unwanted (but agreed upon) encounters (Fahs, 2014). Moreover, the reason women most commonly list for faking orgasm is to protect their partners feelings and to avoid hurting the relationship (Fahs, 2014), highlighting that the influence sexual scripts have on sexual motivations has far reaching implications. Furthermore, women also report not wanting to tell their partners about painful experiences because they would rather prioritize their partner's pleasure and uphold their pleaser role, all in an effort to maintain the relationship (Carter et al., 2019). It becomes important to consider how (hetero)sexual double standards can have far reaching impacts, not only affecting how satisfied one is, but also impacting how one thinks about satisfaction in the first place.

Links to Sexual Regret

More than ensuring satisfaction or positive sexual experiences generally, sexual agency may also be a protective factor against negative sexual experiences as well. To be confident in one's own sexuality, to assert one's sexual needs, and to communicate consent or refusal are all tools which are useful in protecting one's-self against regretful or unwanted sexual situations. Kennair and colleagues (2018) found that being the one to take initiative in sexual situations predicted less sexual regret. Both men and women have been found to regret at least some of their uncommitted sexual encounters, however women report regret for these interactions more so than men do (Fisher et al., 2012). The dichotomy of who is entitled to sexual agency disserves women as it leaves them with fewer tools to ensure equitable and satisfactory sexual encounters. Crawford & Popp (2003) suggested that gender roles might explain why reasons for sexual regret differ by gender. A lack of agency in women's sexual scripts means that they are less likely to initiate sexual encounters, act on their own sexual desires, communicate in direct ways, act in their own self-interest, and arrange satisfactory interactions. Such a restrictive script is disadvantageous to women, as those with a lack of sexual assertiveness (i.e. sexual passivity) were found to be most at risk for engaging in unwanted sexual encounters (Darden et al., 2019). This passivity might also leave women at a greater risk to experience more sexual regret if they engage in sexual encounters which are not completely wanted. Engaging in unwanted sex is linked with less sexual pleasure and sexual enjoyment (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2010). Such an imbalance in sexual agency between men and women can leave women to feel less entitled to sexual consideration and as a result be seen as a sexual targets their more sexually entitled partners. This might be because though women are encouraged to 'just say no', they are rarely taught how to respond to unwanted advances and communicate refusal. Engaging in sexual

behaviours when there is no real desire, a sense of obligation, or an ulterior motive might lead individuals to be more regretful of their encounter, though little research investigates these links.

Current Study

Research on sexual agency and its relationship to other facets within sexuality is still in its infancy. By including both cognitive and behavioural aspects to conceptualize sexual agency a better picture can emerge and more meaningful results can be drawn. I argue that sexual agency is an important factor in promoting sexual well-being within all aspects of the sexual domain. The amount of agency one has is impacted by social prescriptions which can influence one's cognitions and internal appraisals about sex as well as their external actions and behaviours within sexual encounters. Furthermore, it is crucial to determine if sexual agency impacts how passive or direct one is in their sexual encounters as passivity may impede positive outcomes. One overarching goal of sexuality research is to discover how to promote positive sexual outcomes. Related to this goal, it is imperative to ascertain if sexual agency can impact how one evaluates their sexual encounter. Sexual scripts can impact one's perceived empowerment to sexual satisfaction and consideration, and this may result in more negative sexual experiences. Sexual scripts and a SDS continue to offer men more opportunity for sexual empowerment and provide men with the tools to enact gratifying sexual encounters more often than women. I argue that it is beneficial to investigate the mechanisms by which sexual agency impacts various aspects of one's sexual life and determine if a gender difference exists in the hopes of providing evidence to support the alteration of gendered sexual scripts.

This study had two main goals: the first was to provide information and clarity on a relatively new concept useful to promoting sexual well-being—that is sexual agency. And the second was to determine which relationships exist between this concept and the various aspects

of individuals' sexual lives; including how agency influences what motivates people to engage in sex, how agency affects how people communicate consent during a sexual encounter, and how agency impacts the amount of positive evaluations one has for their sexual interaction. To attain these goals, the following eight hypotheses were put forth:

Hypothesis 1. Individuals with higher sexual agency will have better evaluations of their most recent sexual encounter. That is, participants with higher sexual agency scores will, **a)** report higher sexual satisfaction scores, **b)** indicate more willingness to engage in sex, and **c)** report less regret for engaging in sex compared to those with lower sexual agency.

Hypothesis 2. Individuals high in sexual agency will report engaging in more direct consent communication than indirect communication during their most recent sexual encounter compared to those lower in sexual agency.

Hypothesis 3. a) Individuals with greater sexual agency scores will list more intrinsic reasons for engaging in sex compared to those with lower sexual agency scores. **b)** Those with lower sexual agency scores will list more extrinsic motivations for engaging in sex compared to those with higher sexual agency.

Hypothesis 4. Individuals who list more intrinsic motivations for their most recent sexual encounter will report better evaluations of their most recent sexual encounter compared to those who are extrinsically driven. That is, participants will **a)** report higher sexual satisfaction scores, **b)** indicate more willingness to engage in sex, and **c)** report less regret for engaging in sex when more intrinsically motivated than extrinsically motivated.

Hypothesis 5. It is predicted that the more agentic an individual is, the more intrinsically motivated they will be which will in turn predict more positive sexual evaluations. It is

hypothesized that intrinsic motivations will partially mediate the relationship between sexual agency predicting more positive evaluations of one's sexual encounter.

Hypothesis 6. The relationship between sexual agency and positive sexual evaluations is predicted to partially mediated by direct communication. I hypothesize that greater sexual agency will predict more direct communication and that this relationship will be associated with better evaluations of individuals' most recent sexual encounter.

Hypothesis 7. Men are predicted to report greater sexual agency scores than women.

Hypothesis 8. Men are predicted to **a)** report higher sexual satisfaction scores, **b)** indicate more willingness to engage in sex, and **c)** report less regret for engaging in sex compared to women.

Exploratory Gender Analyses. Do any significant gender differences exist in **a)** motivations to engage in sex and **b)** consent communication behaviours?

Method

Participants

This study utilized two separate samples of participants—a community sample as well as a student sample. The two participant pools were chosen to improve the inclusivity of the sample, to obtain sufficient power for the analyses, and to increase the generalizability of the results. Participants (N = 890) were recruited to complete an online questionnaire from three separate locations: from social media platforms such as Facebook and Reddit (n = 176), from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) task distributor (n = 226), and Trent University's psychology student SONA pool (n = 488). Participants were all required to meet the following inclusion criteria: 1) be living in Canada at the time of the study, 2) be at least 18 years of age, and 3) have had at least one sexual encounter (defined as either penile-vaginal, anal, or oral sex).

The data were cleaned using the same approach for each sample, and cases were removed on the following bases: a) if the participant took less than 9 minutes to complete the study; b) if the participant withdrew; c) if the inclusion criteria were not met; d) if at least 2 of the check questions were answered incorrectly; and e) if the entry had more than 50% of the data missing. The total retained sample comprised of $N = 661$ individuals. The complete cleaning process breakdown, and the cleaned sample sizes by recruitment type can be found in Table 1.

Table 1
Number of Participants Removed During Cleaning

Item	Social Media	MTurk	SONA
Under 9 minutes	64	80	2
Withdrew	1	2	4
Inclusion criteria	9	2	6
2+ wrong check Q	27	3	3
More than one issue	0	0	12
Missing data	8	5	1
Total Cleaned *n*	67	134	460

The data from the three samples (MTurk, Social Media, and SONA) were compared to assess the suitability of merging the participant pools. A MANOVA was run to determine if the social media, MTurk, and SONA samples were similar enough on key dependent variables to be combined (variables assessed included the sexual agency constructs, ICS and ECS measures, and sexual satisfaction). There was a statistically significant difference between the three sample groups on the combined dependent variables, $F(26, 1294) = 3.855$, $p < .001$; Pillai's Trace = .144. A second MANOVA was conducted to determine if the two community sample groups, from social media and MTurk were similar in their responses. The two groups were not found to differ significantly on key dependent variables, $F(13, 187) = 1.604$, $p = .087$; Pillai's Trace = .100, however this combined community group was significantly different than the student

SONA sample, $F(13, 647) = 5.530$, $p < .001$; Pillai's Trace = .100. The MTurk and social media groups were merged to make a community sample and the SONA group was kept as a separate student sample. All analyses for this study were conducted on the two samples separately and will be presented as such.

The mean ages for the two samples differed; students were younger ($M = 20.8$, $SD = 5.58$), and community members had a mean age of 32.2, $SD = 9.26$. For the community sample, most participants identified as men (58.2%), whereas the student sample had mostly women participants (81.5%). Both samples were predominantly of European Ancestry; 61.2% for community, and 73.5% for student. For both participant groups, the majority reported being with a mixed- or opposite-gender partner during their last sexual encounter (88.6% for community, and 91.5% for student). The student and community samples reported similarly on how long it had been since their last sexual encounter; 47.8% and 42.8% respectively, said they had had sex within the last week. A breakdown of the demographic information can be found in Table 2.

Procedure

This study and all of its methods and procedures were approved by the Trent University Research Ethics Board (REB; see Appendix A). After receiving approval from the REB, advertisements were posted to four different sites (see Appendix B). Participants were recruited via SONA—the student research participant-pool at Trent University, via MTurk—an online task manager which provides community members with the opportunity to complete studies for compensation, and via social media on websites such as Reddit and Facebook. Recruitment was limited to Canada, and only participants currently living in Canada were eligible to participate. Participants were recruited from multiple locations in the aim of making the sample more representative of the general population and increasing diversity in the participant pool. All

participants received the same study advertisement though the compensation sections slightly differed to reflect the various recruitment locations. Compensation for completing the survey was different yet comparable for each group. Students who enlisted via SONA were offered supplementary course credit for their involvement, participants recruited on MTurk were offered .50$ US for completion of the survey, and individuals approached on Social Media were offered the option to self-select into a lottery draw for one of two $50 gift-cards for their participation. All participants were presented with the same questionnaire. Data collection for all locations started in the Summer of 2022 and spanned until the end of 2022. SONA recruitment was extended into the month of January 2023 in order to over-sample male participants in the hopes to make the distribution more gender-balanced.

Participants self-selected to partake in this study. Those who were interested in participating in the study after reading the advertisement were prompted to follow a link to the online survey hosted by Qualtrics. An online survey was chosen due to the sensitive and personal nature of the questions in the hopes of reducing social desirability bias and alleviating participants' discomfort or hesitancy in answering intimate questions. Participants were first presented with a consent form to provide them with all the necessary details to make an informed decision to participate in the study. Participants were asked to confirm that they met the inclusion criteria and were asked to provide their consent. The consent form was similar for all samples though the compensation section was altered for each group to reflect the recruitment location. The consent form can be found in Appendix C. Individuals had the right to refuse to answer any question presented to them, and were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristic Frequencies by Sample

Demographic	*n* (% of participants)	
	Community	Student
Gender		
Man	117 (58.2)	65 (14.1)
Woman	78 (38.8)	375 (81.5)
Transman	3 (1.5)	3 (.7)
Transwoman	1 (.5)	1 (.2)
Non-binary	1 (.5)	14 (3.0)
Two-Spirit	0	1 (.2)
Ethnicity		
Indigenous	5 (2.5)	9 (2.0)
African	15 (7.5)	22 (4.8)
Asian	29 (14.5)	30 (6.6)
European	123 (61.2)	338 (73.5)
Hispanic	12 (6.0)	13 (2.8)
Middle Eastern	4 (2.0)	4 (.9)
Pacific Islander	2 (1.0)	0
Mixed	5 (2.5)	33 (7.1)
Relationship Status		
Single	57 (28.4)	161 (35.0)
Casually Dating	45 (22.4)	47 (10.2)
Serious/Exclusive	42 (20.4)	236 (51.3)
Married	57 (28.4)	15 (3.3)
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	160 (79.6)	310 (67.4)
Bisexual	19 (9.5)	87 (18.9)
Gay	7 (3.5)	5 (1.1)
Lesbian	1 (.5)	6 (1.3)
Queer	3 (1.5)	8 (1.7)
Pansexual	2 (1.0)	22 (4.8)
Asexual	6 (3.0)	2 (.4)
Questioning	1 (.5)	20 (4.6)
Partnership Type		
Same Gender	22 (10.9)	38 (8.3)
Mixed Gender	178 (88.6)	421 (91.5)
Last Sexual Encounter		
Past Week	86 (42.8)	220 (47.8)
2 Weeks	35 (17.4)	61 (13.3)
Past Month	23 (11.4)	61 (13.3)
2-3 Months	18 (9.0)	54 (11.7)
3-6 Months	9 (4.5)	26 (5.7)
Last Year	6 (3.0)	20 (4.3)
Over a Year	24 (11.9)	18 (3.9)

Note. $N = 661$; Community $n = 201$, Student $n = 460$

Participants completed a four-part questionnaire where they were asked to respond to measures assessing components of their sexual agency, they were instructed to list their motivations for engaging in their most recent sexual encounter, they were presented with scales measuring their sexual consent behaviours within that encounter, and they were asked to evaluate said sexual encounter on measures of willingness, satisfaction, and regret. On average it took participants just under 30 minutes to complete the survey (average calculated after data cleaning). Upon completion, participants were given a debriefing form where they were provided with the researcher's contact information should they have any questions, as well as contact information to various counselling services should they be useful. The debriefing form can be found in Appendix D.

Materials

The survey consisted of three measures assessing sexual agency: namely sexual assertiveness, sexual self-concept, and sexual communication. Furthermore, the survey instructed individuals to assess if certain thoughts and behaviours were present during their most recent sexual encounter; participants were asked about the reasons why the engaged in their last encounter and what types of sexual consent behaviours they used. Lastly, participants were asked to evaluate that encounter and were asked what kind of consent feelings they remembered having for that encounter, and reported how much satisfaction and regret they felt for the encounter. A breakdown of the means, standard deviations, and reliabilities for each of the scales and subscales used can be found in Table 3.

Demographics

Participants were asked to respond to demographic questions assessing their age, gender, sexual orientation, and relationship status. Participants were also asked about their sexual

orientation and the gender of the partner with whom they had their last sexual experience. Because participants were asked to assess their most recent sexual encounter, partner gender was used to determine if the sexual encounter was same-gender or mixed-gender. Participants also listed the type of behaviours that were included in their most recent sexual encounter. Check questions were also included to validate that participants met inclusion criteria (i.e. country of residence, and previous sexual experience). The complete list of demographic questions can be found in Appendix E.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliabilities of the Various Scales by Subsample

Scale	Possible Range	Community			Students		
		M (*SD*)	Range	α	*M* (*SD*)	Range	α
ISA	25-125	91.50 (17.0)	39-123	.92	93.31 (16.3)	45-122	.91
SSC	17-85	61.82 (10.5)	34-85	.83	63.85 (9.5)	33-84	.81
VNSCQ							
VCom	13-65	45.31 (8.9)	20-59.19	.90	47.00 (9.2)	16-60	.92
NVInit	8-40	28.02 (5.1)	11-35	.87	29.67 (4.1)	15-35	.80
NVRef	7-35	18.84 (5.7)	7-34	.81	18.62 (5.6)	7-35	.78
ESMS	37-148	50.36 (18.4)	37-117	.96	41.47 (8.1)	37-103	.88
ISMS	28-112	72.87 (17.9)	28-108	.93	74.00 (15.8)	28-110	.91
ECS							
DCC	0-8	5.16 (2.5)	0-8	.81	6.24 (2.0)	0-8	.79
INCC	0-7	3.56 (2.1)	0-7	.74	4.16 (1.5)	0-7	.54
ICS							
Physical	1-5	3.29 (.69)	1-5	.84	3.37 (.64)	1-4.67	.81
Safety	1-5	3.38 (.66)	1-4.43	.88	3.52 (.61)	1-4.71	.92
Arousal	1-5	3.53(.65)	1-4.33	.84	3.54 (.60)	1-4	.86
Agree	1-5	3.58 (.62)	1-4.20	.88	3.69(.51)	1-4.6	.88
Ready	1-5	3.44 (.64)	1-4.5	.78	3.56 (.59)	1-4.75	.83
GMSEX	5-35	25.55 (8.6)	5-35	.93	26.31 (7.9)	5-35	.91
Regret	0-8	1.42 (1.94)	0-8	.65	1.09 (1.97)	0-8	.87

Note. Community sample $n = 201$, student sample $n = 460$. ISA = Index of Sexual Assertiveness, SSC = Sexual Self-Concept Scale, VNSCQ = Verbal and Nonverbal Sexual Communication Questionnaire, VCom = Verbal Communication, NVInit = Nonverbal Initiation, NVRef = Nonverbal Refusal, ESMS = Extrinsic Sexual Motivations Scale, ISMS = Intrinsic Sexual Motivations Scale, ECS = External Consent Scale, DCC = Direct Consent Communication, INCC = Indirect Consent Communication, ICS = Internal Consent Scale, GMSEX = General Measure of Sexual Satisfaction

Sexual Agency

Three scales were used to measure individual's sexual agency. Three components of sexual agency—namely sexual assertiveness, sexual self-concept, and sexual communication behaviours, were included in the survey. These constructs were chosen using Klein and colleagues' (2018) definition of agency as reference; the included measures were meant to capture one's belief in their sexual ability and propensity (sexual self-concept), one's ability to assert their sexual needs (assertiveness), and one's tendency to communicate their expectations and boundaries (communication type). All three scales were administered using a five-point Likert scale to ensure consistency and comparability between the scales. This ensured that the scales could be averaged and summed to create a Total Sexual Agency score (explained further in the Results section). For the majority of the analyses, the measures were used as indicators for the latent variable sexual agency, and a total sexual agency score was only computed for mediational and gender analyses.

Sexual Assertiveness. The Hurlbert Index of Sexual Assertiveness (ISA; Pierce & Hurlbert, 1999) is made up of 25 items which measure how often individuals assert their interests and desires in sexual situations. The scale ranges from (1) "never" to (5) "always". The original scale was reverse scored (0 indicating the greatest agreement) though this was changed to maintain consistency with the other scales in this study and to facilitate comparisons and interpretation. A sample item from this scale reads "It is hard for me to be honest about my sexual feelings". This scale has been found to have adequate internal consistency for both men ($\alpha = .88$) and for women ($\alpha > .84$; Pierce & Hurlbert, 1999). Furthermore, this scale has been found to have strong test-retest reliability and is not overly prone to social desirability bias (Pierce & Hurlbert, 1999). The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was determined for both the

community (α = .92) and student (α = .91) samples. The items of this scale can be found in Appendix F.

Sexual Self-Concept. Relevant items from six subscales of the Multidimensional Sexual Self-Concept Questionnaire (Snell & Kilimnik, as cited in Milhausen, 2020) were utilized to assess individuals' cognitions and feelings about themselves in a sexual context. Items from the Internal Sexual Control, Sexual Esteem, Sexual Self-Efficacy subscales were used as positive valence items, whereas items form the Power-Other Control, Sexual Problem Self-blame, and Sexual Monitoring subscales were used to measure negative aspects of sexual self-concept and were chosen to act as reverse coded items. All other subscales, such as "chance/luck sexual control' and "sexual preoccupation" were not deemed theoretically relevant to the research questions and were not included. In total, only 17 items (3 from each subscale with the exception of "power-other sexual control" which had 2 items) were utilized for the current study. Participants were asked to rate the items in terms of agreement from 1 to 5 ("not at all characteristic" to "very characteristic"). Eight of the items were reverse coded as they captured a lower sexual self-concept. The complete MSSCQ has been found to be both valid and reliable for each subscale (Cronbach's alphas ranging from .76 to .88 for the sampled subscales; Snell & Kilimnik, as cited in Milhausen, 2020). Reliability for the 17 items used in this study was found to be α = .83 for the community sample and α = .81 for the student sample. The list of items presented to participants can be found in Appendix G.

Sexual Communication. The Verbal and Nonverbal Sexual Communication Questionnaire measures participants' sexual communication preferences (Santos-Iglesias & Byers, 2020). There are 28 items in this scale which measure 3 communication types: Verbal Communication (13 items), Nonverbal Sexual Initiation and Pleasure (8 items), and Nonverbal

Sexual Refusal (7 items). Participants were asked to rate how often they communicate in such ways on a five-point Likert-scale (1 “never” to 5 “always”). The original scale used a 7-point Likert scale though this was changed to maintain consistency with the rest of the sexual agency measures. A sample item of this questionnaire reads “I ask my partner to keep doing the things that sexually please me” (see Appendix H for the other items). The original authors found the scales to be adequately reliable for both men and women: Verbal Communication $\alpha = .87$ and .89, Nonverbal Initiation $\alpha = .75$ and .85, and Nonverbal Refusal $\alpha = .85$ and .78 respectively. For the community and student samples in this study, the subscales were also found to be reliable: Verbal Communication $\alpha = .90$ and $\alpha = .92$, Nonverbal Initiation $\alpha = .87$ and $\alpha = .80$, and Nonverbal Refusal $\alpha = .81$ and $\alpha = .78$ respectively.

Motivations

Participants motivations for engaging in sex were assessed using an 80-item scale. The Why Have Sex Questionnaire (Meston & Buss, 2007) was used as a guide to develop the items included for this study. The original questionnaire by Meston and Buss (2007) is comprised of 142 items, though not all can be categorized as specifically intrinsic or extrinsic motivations. The scale was evaluated by members of the research team to determine which items were relevant to the constructs of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and only items with high inter-rater reliability were retained to be presented to participants (some with minor rewording for inclusivity). In total 80 items were kept, and efforts were made to ensure that all four original factors (physical, goal attainment, emotional, and insecurity) were represented in the new measure. Participants were asked to rate how much of a consideration each motivation was in driving them to engage in their last sexual encounter. Responses to these items were scored on a 4-point Likert-scale ranging from “not relevant” (1) to “major contribution” (4). Each of the four

factors from the original scale demonstrated high internal consistency (all Cronbach alphas > .85; Meston & Buss, 2007).

The goal of this study, however, was not to capture the original 4 factors, but rather to assess if participants listed more intrinsic or extrinsic motivations for engaging in sex. Thus, prior to hypothesis testing, a principle components analysis (PCA) was conducted to determine which items would fall into a forced 2 factor model of intrinsic vs extrinsic motivations. All 80 items were added into the PCA, and only items which loaded onto their primary component with a strength of .4 or above, and which did not load onto the secondary component over .3 were retained. In total 65 items were retained to capture both internal motivations (28 items) and external drives (37 items) for engaging in sex. The list of items can be found in Appendix I. These sub-scales were found to be reliable, as Cronbach's alphas ranged from .88 for the student sample and $\alpha = .96$ for the community sample on the Extrinsic Motivations Subscale (EMS), and $\alpha = .91$ (student) and $\alpha = .93$ (community) for the Intrinsic Motivation Subscale (IMS).

Consent Communication

To assess how directly or indirectly participants communicated their consent for their most recent sexual encounter, the external consent scale (ECS) was used (Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014). The ECS asks participants to list the behaviours they used to express consent in their last sexual encounter by selecting yes or no to the use of 18 consent behaviours. An example item reads "I initiated sexual behavior and checked to see if it was reciprocated". Participants were presented with all 18 items and asked to check all items that apply. The ECS is comprised of 5 subscales assessing various consent behaviours, including: Nonverbal, Passive, Communicator/Initiator, Pressure, and No Response behaviours. The subscales were found to be reliable by the original authors, ranging from .67 to .81 (Jozkowski et al., 2014). Because this

study looks at direct vs indirect behaviours specifically, subscales were aggregated to create more comprehensive constructs. The Nonverbal Communication and the Communicator Initiator subscales were combined to represent direct communication (8 items), while the Passive and No Response subscales were added together (7 items) to represent more indirect types of sexual consent communication. Because the Pressure subscale taps into a more coercive form of communication which was not central to this research, it was not utilized in the analyses. The two aggregated subscales of Direct and Indirect communication were found to be reliable for both the community and student samples, $\alpha = .81$ and $\alpha = .79$ for direct, and $\alpha = .74$ and $\alpha = .54$ for indirect, respectively. See Appendix J for the complete list of items.

Satisfaction, Willingness, and Regret

Participants were also asked to evaluate their most recent sexual experience using three measures. Measures of internal consent feelings, satisfaction, and regret were chosen to determine how individuals felt about their encounter in a more comprehensive way. This allowed participants to disclose how safe and willing they felt during their encounter, how satisfied they were directly after the experience, and if any feelings of regret followed. See Appendix K for the three sexual evaluation measures.

Sexual Satisfaction. The Global Measure of Sexual Satisfaction subscale (GMSEX) of the Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction Questionnaire (IEMSS; Lawrance, Byers, & Cohen, as cited in Milausen, 2020) asked participants to rate their most recent sexual encounter on several components such as how good or bad, or how satisfying or unsatisfying the experience was. The original prompt was rephrased to be more inclusive of uncoupled participants and to be more time-specific. Instead of asking participants to describe their sexual relationship with their partner, they were asked to “describe [their] last sexual experience”.

Participants rated their sexual encounter on a seven-point Likert scale—1 being the least satisfactory for 7 items assessing satisfaction. The scale was found to be reliable in the current study's two samples (α = .93 for community and α = .91 for students) which is comparable to what other researchers have found (α ranging from .90 to .96; Lawrance, Byers, & Cohen, as cited in Milausen, 2020).

Willingness to Engage in Sex. The Internal Consent Scale (ICS; Jozkowski et al., 2014) was used to determine participants internal feelings of willingness to engage in their last sexual encounter. The ICS is comprised of 25 items and asks participants to state their agreement from 1 to 4 (higher numbers representing more agreement) on items assessing one's readiness and willingness to engage in sex. A sample item from this scale reads "I felt sure". The ICS has 5 subscales assessing various consent feelings: Physical Response, Safety/Comfort, Arousal, Agreement/Wantedness, and Readiness. All items and subscales were presented to participants, however only two subscales were of most relevance to the research. The Safety/Comfort and Agreement/Wantedness factors were used for this study's analyses as they capture the feelings and cognitive components of internal consent rather than the physiological and arousal components of internal consent. That is, the interest was on individuals' feelings of willingness to engage in sex, not their physical wanting. The original authors found these subscales to be reliable with alphas greater than .90. In this sample the subscales were still found to be quite reliable, though alphas were not as high as the original authors listed. For the student sample alphas ranged from .81 to .92, whereas for the community sample the subscales ranged from .78 to .88 on Cronbach's alpha (see Table 3 for a breakdown of reliability).

Sexual Regret. Lastly, two original items were included to determine how unhappy or regretful participants were with their decision to engage in their most recent sexual encounter.

Participants were asked to rate their experience on a 5-point scale for the two dimensions. The two questions had similar prompts “how do you feel about your most recent sexual encounter”, and participants used a sliding scale to choose their response: from no regret to complete regret, and from unhappy to happy. These two items were found, as expected, to be significantly negatively correlated with each other (r = -.48 for community and r = -.77 for student). The happiness item was reverse coded so the two could be combined for a total regretful (or unhappy) measure. The two-item regret measure was found to be reliable for both the community (α = .65) and the student (α = .87) sample.

Data Preparation

All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 28.0.1) predictive analytics software. No patterns of missing data were found for the participants’ responses. Overall, only .9% of the data were missing from the dataset which is below the advised value of 5% (Tabachnick et al., 2019). To replace the missing values, series means was chosen as the estimation method. Each missing value was replaced with the mean of the entire sample on that particular item. All data were assessed visually for normality, and the appropriate assumptions were checked for each analysis (explained throughout results). Most of the data was skewed to some extent though this was expected as skewed results are common in sexuality research. Most analyses in this study were regressions, which are robust to deviations of normality, and so no transformations or deletions were conducted to rectify the non-normal distributions. Non-parametric tests were used when assumptions of parametric equivalents were violated.

The components of sexual agency were used both separately and combined for a total sexual agency score. It is important to determine which of the indicators of sexual agency are

stronger predictors of the various dependent variables to speak to the validity or agency as a holistic construct. Furthermore, because sexual agency is proposed to be made up of both internal feelings and appraisals of the self as well as capacities and capabilities to act in agentic ways, it is also important to see how influential this construct is as a whole. All components of sexual agency were measured on a 5-point Likert scale so that scale means could be calculated and combined to reflect an overall sexual agency score. The total sexual agency measure is comprised of means on Sexual Assertiveness, Self-Concept, Verbal Communication, Nonverbal Initiation, and the mean of reversed Nonverbal Refusal scores. When Nonverbal Refusal is presented on its own, it is in its original scale. The nonverbal refusal subscale was reverse coded as this scale was meant to assess the frequency that individuals use behaviours such as avoiding a partner's touch, stopping eye contact, or moving away when in an undesired sexual encounter (Santos-Iglesias & Byers, 2020). It is important to note that this form of refusal is less agentic in nature than other measures as it is passive rather than assertive. Researchers (Bouchard & Humphreys, 2019) posit that "refusal sexual assertiveness" involves being able to avert and remove oneself from an unwanted or undesired encounters, not just deflect the undesired actions. Nonverbal refusal appears to be distinct from refusal assertiveness. I argue that the nonverbal refusal behaviours assessed in the present study are passive in nature and lack a sense of agency as they focus on avoidance and evasion, thus this subscale is reverse coded.

Results

Bivariate correlations for the independent variables were conducted to determine if the IVs were correlated and to assess for multicollinearity. Table 4 and 5 demonstrates these relationships. The measures of Assertiveness, Self-Concept, Verbal Communication, and Nonverbal Initiation were found to be positively correlated, ranging from medium to strong

associations. The measure of Verbal Communication was found to be very strongly correlated with Assertiveness for both samples (r = .795 for Community and r = .869 for Student). These correlation coefficients do not meet the cut-off for concerning multicollinearity (Tabachnick et al., 2019). Nonverbal Refusal was found to be negatively correlated with all the other indices of sexual agency as was expected due to its passive nature. As such, Nonverbal Refusal was conceptualized as a reverse coded indicator of greater sexual agency.

Table 4
Bivariate Correlations Between all Constructs of Sexual Agency (Community)

	1	2	3	4
1. Assertiveness	1			
2. Self-Concept	.621**	1		
3. Verbal Communication	.795**	.486**	1	
4. Nonverbal Initiation	.597**	.326**	.791**	
5. Nonverbal Refusal	-.224**	-.172*	-.141*	1

Note: N = 201

Table 5
Bivariate Correlations Between all Constructs of Sexual Agency (Student)

	1	2	3	4
1. Assertiveness	1			
2. Self-Concept	.630**	1		
3. Verbal Communication	.869**	.511**	1	
4. Nonverbal Initiation	.510**	.265**	.570**	
5. Nonverbal Refusal	-.239**	-.194**	-.187**	1

Note: N = 460

Hypothesis 1: Sexual Agency Predicts Better Evaluations

Participants were asked to evaluate their most recent sexual encounter on three measures: amount of sexual satisfaction, willingness feelings (ICS measures of safety and agreement), and amount of regret after the experience. It was hypothesized that the greater one's sexual agency

(as assessed by sexual assertiveness, positive self-concept, and ease in sexual communication), the more positive evaluations one would report. As such, three sub-hypotheses were proposed: **a)** individuals with greater sexual agency will report more sexual satisfaction; **b)** those with higher sexual agency scores will have more internal feelings of consent and willingness to engage in the encounter; and **c)** participants with greater sexual agency will report less sexual regret than those with lower sexual agency scores. To test these hypotheses, a stepwise multiple regression was run for each sub-hypothesis. This method was chosen so that each indicator of sexual agency could be added to the model and examined for predictive feasibility separately. Bivariate correlations between the independent variables and the four dependent variables were first run to determine the relationships between the variables. Table 6 demonstrates these correlations for the community sample and see Table 7 for the student sample results. Correlations with the three other subscales of the ICS (which are tangential to the research) are also included for reference.

Table 6

Correlations Between IVs and DVs for Hypothesis 1 (Community)

	IVs				
DVs	Assertive-ness	Self-Concept	Verbal Comm.	Nonverbal Initiation	Nonverbal Refusal
Sexual Satisfaction	.163*	-.116	.174*	.149*	-.273**
Physical Feelings	.343**	.201**	.359**	.315**	-.132
Safety Feelings	.392**	.229**	.397**	.388**	-.201**
Arousal Feelings	.486**	.304**	.478**	.435**	-.211**
Agreement Feelings	.420**	.320**	.378**	.397**	-.278**
Readiness Feelings	.423**	.301**	.444**	.382**	-.229**
Sexual Regret	-.407**	-.185*	-.432**	-.392**	.210*

Note: N = 201

Prior to interpretating the results of each sub-hypothesis, assumptions of multiple linear regression were first examined. Independence of residuals was assessed by ensuring each Durbin-Watson statistic was close to the desired value of 2. Partial regression plots were examined to visually assess whether there were linear relationships between the 5 IVs and each

DV. Homoscedasticity was assessed by visual inspection of a scatterplot of the studentized residuals versus unstandardized predicted values. Furthermore, Tolerance values were checked to ensure they were greater than 0.1 indicating no issue with multicollinearity. Studentized deleted residual scores were also assessed and if any were found to surpass 3 *SDs*, Cooks values were also examined to ensure they did not surpass 1 and were not overly influential to the model. The distribution of the standardized residuals were visually assessed to check normal distributions. All checks of assumptions followed the same procedure and are not commented on unless an issue arose. In the sections which follow, similar means of assessment as described were used for all regression-type analyses, only deviations from normality and violations of the assumptions are noted if they were present.

Table 7

Correlations Between IVs and DVs for Hypothesis 1 (Students)

	IVs				
DVs	Assertive-ness	Self-Concept	Verbal Comm.	Nonverbal Initiation	Nonverbal Refusal
Sexual Satisfaction	.421**	.306**	.446**	.277**	-.223**
Physical Feelings	.396**	.246**	.413**	.333*	-.076
Safety Feelings	.443**	.329**	.475**	.345**	-.156**
Arousal Feelings	.442**	.284**	.442**	.376**	-.130**
Agreement Feelings	.424**	.273**	.436**	.323**	-.134**
Readiness Feelings	.423**	.322**	.406**	.311**	-.127**
Sexual Regret	-.451**	-.381**	-.415**	-.296**	.189**

Note: N = 460

H1a: Sexual Agency Predicts More Satisfaction

Assumptions for multiple regression were first checked to ensure the data were suitable for the analysis, no violations were identified, though the distribution of the standardized residuals appeared to have a slight ceiling effect and skewed positively. It is important to interpret the results with caution, however multiple regression is robust to minor deviations, and sexual data

(especially in regards to satisfaction) is normally positively skewed. The results for this analysis will be presented by sample group.

Community Sample. A Stepwise analysis was conducted to determine the best predictors of sexual agency on sexual satisfaction. Of the five indices added to the model only three variables were retained. The addition of Nonverbal Refusal, Self-Concept, and Sexual Assertiveness explained 15.5% of the variability in total satisfaction. These three components of sexual agency were found to significantly predict sexual satisfaction, $F(3, 197) = 13.26$, $p < .001$. Specifically, having lower Self-Concept (ß = -.367) and Nonverbal Refusal (ß = -.262) were significant predictors of reporting greater satisfaction, and having greater Sexual Assertiveness (ß = .332) significantly predicted more sexual satisfaction. All slope coefficients can be found in Table 8.

Table 8

Stepwise Regression of Sexual Agency Variables on Sexual Satisfaction (Community)

	B	*SE B*		*p*
Constant	36.275	4.46		< .001
Included Variables			ß	
Assertiveness	.168	.043	.332	< .001
Self-Concept	-.302	.068	-.367	< .001
Nonverbal Refusal	-.395	.101	-.262	< .001
Excluded Variables	Beta In			
Verbal Communication	.140			.193
Nonverbal Initiation	.073			.370

Note: $n = 201$

Student Sample. Within this sample, components of sexual agency were also found to significantly predict sexual satisfaction, $F(2, 457) = 64.14$, $p < .001$. For this sample however, having greater Verbal Communication (ß = .419) and less Nonverbal Refusal (ß = -.144) were the only significant predictors of reporting more sexual satisfaction. Together, these variables accounted for 21.6% of the variability in total satisfaction. The complete list of coefficients is presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Stepwise Regression of Sexual Agency Variables on Sexual Satisfaction (Student)

	B	*SE B*		*p*
Constant	13.115	2.222		< .001
Included Variables			ß	
Nonverbal Refusal	-.203	.059	-.144	< .001
Verbal Communication	.361	.036	.419	< .001
Excluded Variables	Beta In			
Nonverbal Initiation	.052			.308
Assertiveness	.091			.285
Self-Concept	.087			.072

Note: $n = 460$

H1b: Sexual Agency Predicts Greater Willingness

It was hypothesized that greater sexual agency would predict more feelings of safety and willingness to engage in sex. Assumptions for the two subscales of the Internal Consent Scale, namely, feelings of safety and feelings of agreement/willingness were checked in the same way as mentioned above for each sample. Multiple regression assumptions were met for both the community and student samples on both internal consent subscales. A stepwise multiple regression was run for each subscale, and a Bonferroni correction was applied to the 2 analyses to account for type I error ($p = .05/2 = .025$). Results from the stepwise regressions are presented below for each sample.

Safety Feelings. Components of sexual agency explained 18.3% of the variance in internal feelings of safety in the community sample. The stepwise regression indicates the sexual communication factors as the significant predictors of feelings of safety, $F(3, 197) = 15.95$, $p < .001$, as the final model retained only Verbal Communication (ß = .213), Nonverbal Initiation (ß = .206), and Nonverbal Refusal (ß = -.153). However, after Bonferroni correction, only having less Nonverbal Refusal was a significant predictor of reporting more feelings of safety for the encounter. Table 10 shows the coefficients for the community sample.

Table 10

Stepwise Regression of Sexual Agency Variables on Safety Feelings (Community)

	B	*SE B*		*p*
Constant	2.240	.295		< .001
Included Variables			ß	
Verbal Communication	.016	.008	.213	.044
Nonverbal Refusal	-.018	.007	-.153	.019
Nonverbal Initiation	.027	.014	.206	.050
Excluded Variables	Beta In			
Assertiveness	.185			.085
Self-Concept	.044			.556

Note: n = 201

Table 11

Stepwise Regression of Sexual Agency Variables on Safety Feelings (Student)

	B	*SE B*		*p*
Constant	1.435	.221		<.001
Included Variables			ß	
Verbal Communication	.023	.004	.348	< .001
Self-Concept	.008	.003	.121	.011
Nonverbal Initiation	.017	.007	.115	.021
Excluded Variables	Beta In			
Assertiveness	.028			.760
Nonverbal Refusal	-.068			.103

Note: n = 460

For the student sample, the best model retained 3 variables of sexual agency which explained 24% of the variability in safety feelings. Similarly to the community sample, listing more Verbal Communication increased one's feelings of safeness (ß = .348), and having more Nonverbal Initiation behaviours also increased safety feelings (ß = .115), though having greater Self-Concept was also found to increase internal safety feelings (ß = .121). These components of SA significantly predicted greater feelings of safety, $F(3, 456) = 49.25$, $p < .001$, even after Bonferroni correction. Table 11 shows the remaining student coefficients.

Agreement Feelings. In the community sample, three variables of sexual agency were found to significantly predict agreement feelings, $F(3, 197) = 21.81$, $p < .001$. Adding sexual

Assertiveness (ß = .230) into the model accounted for 17.2% of the variance in agreement feelings, while adding both Nonverbal Refusal (ß = -.205) and Nonverbal Initiation (ß = .242) into the model increased the variability accounted for to 23.8%. Tables 12 and 13 show the coefficients for community and student samples respectively.

Table 12

Stepwise Regression of Sexual Agency Variables on Agreement Feelings (Community)

	B	*SE B*		*p*
Constant	2.411	.291		< .001
Included Variables			ß	
Assertiveness	.008	.003	.230	.004
Nonverbal Refusal	-.022	.007	-.205	.001
Nonverbal Initiation	.029	.009	.242	.002
Excluded Variables	Beta In			
Verbal Communication	-.116			.387
Self-Concept	.104			.187

Note: n = 201

Table 13

Stepwise Regression of Sexual Agency Variables on Agreement Feelings (Student)

	B	*SE B*		*p*
Constant	2.195	.166		< .001
Included Variables			ß	
Assertiveness	.006	.003	.117	.037
Verbal Communication	.012	.005	.221	.013
Nonverbal Initiation	.013	.006	.107	.036
Excluded Variables	Beta In			
Nonverbal Refusal	-.051			.237
Self-Concept	.034			.527

Note: n = 460

In the student sample, a three factor model explained 20.1% of the variance in feelings of agreement, with Verbal Communication being the biggest predictor accounting for 18.8% of the variance. This model significantly predicted greater agreement feelings, $F(3, 456) = 39.39$, $p < .001$, though after Bonferroni correction, only greater Verbal Communication (ß = .221) was found to significantly predict greater feelings of willingness to engage in sex.

H1c: Sexual Agency Predicts Less Regret

It was also expected that sexual agency impacts how an individual feels about having had a sexual encounter. A multiple stepwise regression was run to determine which aspects of sexual agency were good predictors of reporting lower instances of regret and unhappiness for a sexual experience. Assumptions for multiple regression were first checked to ensure the data were suitable for the analysis (see aforementioned section). The results for this analysis will be presented by sample group.

Community Sample. The best model to predict sexual regret included Verbal communication and Nonverbal Refusal. The addition of these two variables accounted for 20.2% of the variability in Regret. Verbal communication was the strongest predictor in the model, indicating that the more verbal communication an individual uses the less likely they are to regret their encounter (ß = -.411), and the less Nonverbal Refusal used in the encounter the less likely participants were to regret their encounter (ß = .156). These two components of sexual agency were found to significantly predict regretful encounters, $F(2, 189) = 25.14$, $p < .001$. All slope coefficients can be found in Table 14.

Table 14

Stepwise Regression of Sexual Agency Variables on Sexual Regret (Community)

	B	*SE B*		*p*
Constant	4.497	.826		< .001
Included Variables			ß	
Verbal Communication	-.090	.014	-.411	< .001
Nonverbal Refusal	.053	.022	.156	.018
Excluded Variables	Beta In			
Assertiveness	-.117			.293
Self-Concept	.063			.401
Nonverbal Initiation	-.131			.239

Note: $n = 192$

Student Sample. For this sample, Sexual Assertiveness, Self-Concept, and Nonverbal Initiation were retained as strong predictors of sexual regret. This three factor model accounted for 22.4% of the variance in sexual regret. These sexual agency factors significantly predicted reports of regret, $F(3, 406) = 40.37$, $p < .001$. Specifically, having greater Sexual Assertiveness (ß = -.290), greater Self-Concept (ß = -.174), and using more Nonverbal Initiation (ß = -.110) all significantly predict reporting lower instances of regret. See Table 15 for the coefficients.

Table 15

Stepwise Regression of Sexual Agency Variables on Sexual Regret (Student)

	B	*SE B*		*p*
Constant	8.48	.781		< .001
Included Variables			ß	
Assertiveness	-.036	.008	-.290	<. 001
Self-Concept	-.037	.012	-.174	.002
Nonverbal Initiation	-.053	.024	-.110	.029
Excluded Variables	Beta In			
Verbal Communication	-.090			.317
Nonverbal Refusal	.086			.058

Note: n = 410

Hypothesis 2: Sexual Agency Predicts Consent Communication

It was hypothesized that having more sexual agency, that is being more assertive, having greater positive self-concept, and being more verbal in sexual communication, would predict being more direct in the consent behaviours individuals would use. Oppositely, those with lower amounts of sexual agency were hypothesized to use more indirect consent behaviours. Importantly, bivariate correlations were run to assure that the variables were not too strongly correlated (see Tables 16 and 17). In order to ensure comparability, the Indirect Consent scale (which ranged from 0-7 behaviours) was transformed to range from 0-8 (see IMB, 2020 for the procedure) in order to match the eight behaviour Direct Consent scale. Both discrete scales were then recoded into 3 ordered ranks: from low, medium, to high amounts of each of the two types

of behaviours. Participants who scored 0-2 were coded as exhibiting low levels of that behaviour, those who listed 3-5 behaviours were designated as the medium behaviour group, and those with 6-8 behaviours were deemed to be using a high amount of the consent behaviours. These levels of low, medium, and high were used to predict both the direct and indirect consent behaviours of participants. The results for these analyses will be presented by sample group.

Table 16
Correlations Between IVs and DVs for Hypothesis 2 (Community)

DVs	IVs				
	Assertive-ness	Self-Concept	Verbal Comm.	Non Verbal Initiation	Non Verbal Refusal
Direct Consent	.378**	.141*	.467**	.363**	-.042
Indirect Consent	.185**	.212**	.172*	.116	.023

Note: n = 201

Table 17
Correlations Between IVs and DVs for Hypothesis 2 (Students)

DVs	IVs				
	Assertive-ness	Self-Concept	Verbal Comm.	Non Verbal Initiation	Non Verbal Refusal
Direct Consent	.388**	.189**	.394**	.323**	-.174**
Indirect Consent	-.046	-.092*	-.030	.108*	.023

Note: : n = 460

H2a: Sexual Agency Predicts More Direct Consent Communication

Community Sample. A multinomial logistic regression was run to determine which components of sexual agency were most predictive of increasing the odds of using more direct consent communication due to the discrete nature of the DV. The assumptions of logistic regression were met, including the necessity of proportional odds, as assessed by a full likelihood ratio test comparing the fit of the proportional odds model to a model with varying location parameters, $\chi2(5) = 5.998$, $p = .306$. The deviance goodness-of-fit test indicated that the model was a good fit to the observed data, $\chi2(395) = 352.818$, $p = .937$, but most cells were sparse with

zero frequencies in 66.7% of cells. However, the final model statistically significantly predicted the direct communication over and above the intercept-only model, $\chi2(5) = 45.679$, $p < .001$. An increase in positive sexual self-concept (expressed on a Likert scale) was associated with a decrease ($B = -.043$) in the odds of using direct consent communication, with an odds ratio of .958 (95% CI, .925 to .993), Wald $\chi2(1) = 5.647$, $p = .017$. An increase in verbal communication (expressed on a Likert scale) was associated with an increase ($B = .117$) in the odds of using direct consent communication, with an odds ratio of 1.124 (95% CI, 1.049 to 1.205), Wald $\chi2(1) = 11.008$, $p < .001$. The non-significant coefficients are listed in Table 18.

Table 18

Odds Ratio Coefficients of Using Direct Consent Communication (Community)

	B	Exp(*B*)	*p*
Assertiveness	.017	1.017	.276
Self-Concept	-.043	.958	.017
Verbal Communication	.117	1.124	< .001
Nonverbal Initiation	-.022	.978	.621
Nonverbal Refusal	.000	1.000	.987

Note: N = 201

Student Sample. All logistic regression assumptions, including the assumption of proportional odds was also met for the student sample, $\chi2(5) = 603.697$, $p = .965$. The deviance goodness-of-fit test indicated that the model was a good fit to the observed data, $\chi2(913) = 604.671$, $p = 1.00$, but most cells were sparse with zero frequencies in 66.7% of cells. The final model did statistically significantly predict direct communication over and above the intercept-only model, $\chi2(5) = 83.550$, $p < .001$. An increase in nonverbal initiation communication (expressed on a Likert scale) was associated with an increase ($B = .086$) in the odds of using direct consent communication, with an odds ratio of 1.089 (95% CI, 1.026 to 1.157), Wald $\chi2(1) = 7.859$, $p = .005$. An increase in nonverbal refusal communication (expressed on a Likert scale) was associated with a decrease ($B = -.066$) in the odds of using direct consent communication,

with an odds ratio of .936 (95% CI, .898 to .976), Wald $\chi2(1) = 9.643$, p =.002. See Table 19 for more information on the coefficients.

Table 19
Odds Ratio Coefficients of Using Direct Consent Communication (Student)

	B	Exp(*B*)	*p*
Assertiveness	.024	1.024	.109
Self-Concept	-.014	.986	.343
Verbal Communication	.035	1.036	.145
Nonverbal Initiation	.086	1.089	.005
Nonverbal Refusal	-.066	.936	.002

Note: N = 460

H2b: Sexual Agency Predicts Less Indirect Consent Behaviours

To determine if greater sexual agency could predict having greater odds of using less indirect communication, ordinal regressions were run for the Indirect Consent scale in the same manner as listed above. For both samples the assumption of proportional odds was met (community sample, $\chi2(5) = 10.314$, $p = .067$; and student sample, $\chi2(5) = 10.964$, $p = .052$).

Community Sample. The deviance goodness-of-fit test indicated that the model was a good fit to the observed data, $\chi2(395) = 398.629$, $p = .439$, but most cells were sparse with zero frequencies in 66.7% of cells. Moreover, the final model did not statistically significantly predict indirect consent behaviours over and above the intercept-only model, $\chi2(5) = 10.832$, $p = .055$, though this did approach significance. The nonsignificant coefficients are noted in Table 20.

Table 20
Odds Ratio Coefficients of Using Indirect Consent Communication (Community)

	B	Exp(*B*)	*p*
Assertiveness	.002	1.002	.878
Self-Concept	.032	1.032	.056
Verbal Communication	.008	1.008	.815
Nonverbal Initiation	.017	1.017	.697
Nonverbal Refusal	.041	1.042	.095

Note: N = 201

Student Sample. For the student sample, the deviance goodness-of-fit test indicated that the model was a good fit to the observed data, $\chi2(913) = 709.276$, $p = 1.00$, with 66.7% of the cells with zero frequencies. For this sample however, the final model did statistically significantly predict indirect consent communication over and above the intercept-only model, $\chi2(5) = 12.641$, $p = .027$. An increase in nonverbal initiation communication (expressed on a Likert scale) was associated with an increase ($B = .086$) in the odds of reporting indirect consent communication, with an odds ratio of 1.090 (95% CI, 1.026 to 1.158), Wald $\chi2(1) = 7.780$, $p = .005$. The coefficients for the student sample are listed Table 21.

Table 21
Odds Ratio Coefficients of Using Indirect Consent Communication (Student)

	B	Exp(*B*)	*p*
Assertiveness	-.014	.986	.329
Self-Concept	-.008	.992	.553
Verbal Communication	-.013	.987	.574
Nonverbal Initiation	.086	1.09*	.005
Nonverbal Refusal	.003	1.003	.873

Note: N = 460

H2c: Greater Sexual Agency Associated with More Direct Consent

Kruskal-Wallis H tests were run to determine which types of consent communication behaviours were associated with greater total sexual agency scores. The two consent communication scales, Direct and Indirect were combined to create a difference score. Participants Indirect scores were subtracted from their Direct scores so that it could be determined if an individual used more direct (positive values) or indirect (negative values) consent behaviours, or if they used similar amounts of both (values close to 0). Three groups were created to represent a Mostly Direct, Mostly Indirect, and a Both Types group. A 25% percent cut-off was chosen so that only those who listed 3 or more behaviours of one category over the other category were classified in the “mostly” groups. Total sexual agency was

calculated using an averaged total of the 5 indicators as described in the Data Preparation section. The results for these analyses will be presented by sample group.

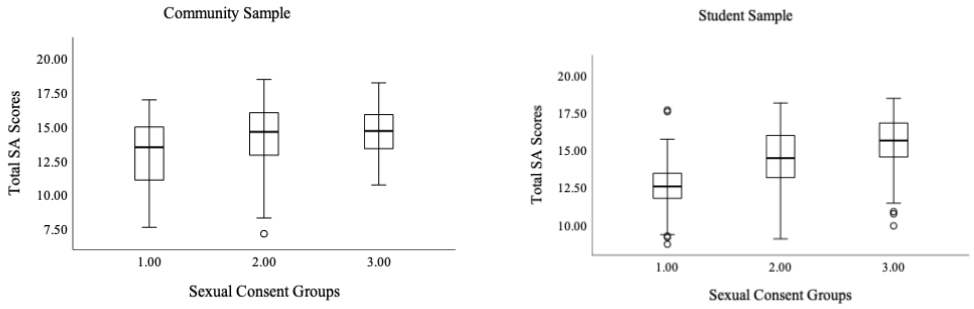
Community Sample. Due to outliers in the data, and unequal variances, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was run to determine if there were differences in sexual agency scores between three groups of participants with different types of consent communication: "mostly indirect" (n = 17), "both types" (n = 107), and "mostly direct" (n = 77) groups. Distributions of sexual agency scores were not similar for all groups, as assessed by visual inspection of a boxplot. Sexual agency scores increased from mostly indirect (mean rank = 75.00), to both types (mean rank = 101.41), to mostly direct (mean rank = 106.17), though the differences were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(2) = 4.010$, $p = .135$.

Student Sample. A Kruskal-Wallis H test was also conducted for this sample as Assumptions of ANOVA were violated. Distributions of sexual agency scores were not similar for all groups, as assessed by visual inspection of a boxplot, thus mean ranks were used. The mean ranks of sexual agency scores were statistically significantly different between the three groups, $\chi^2(2) = 63.408$, $p < .001$, mostly indirect (n = 34), both types (n = 197), and mostly direct (n = 229). Figure 1 illustrates the differences in total sexual agency scores between consent groups for both subsamples.

Pairwise comparisons were performed using Dunn's (1964) procedure with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. Adjusted p-values are presented. This post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences in sexual agency scores between the mostly indirect (mean rank = 106.47) and both types (mean rank = 201.46; $p < .001$), mostly indirect and mostly direct (mean rank = 273.90; $p < .001$), and both types and mostly direct ($p < .001$) groups.

Figure 1

Total Sexual Agency Scores by Sexual Consent Communication Groups for Each Subsample



Hypothesis 3: Sexual Agency Predicts More Intrinsic Motivation

It was hypothesized that having more sexual agency, i.e. being more assertive, having greater positive self-concept, and using more effective sexual communication would predict being more intrinsically driven to engage in sex compared to those with lower sexual agency. Alternatively, those with lower sexual agency were hypothesized to list more extrinsic drives for engaging in sex than intrinsic drives. Bivariate correlations were first run between the independent and dependent variables to ensure the variables were associated (see Table 22 for community and Table 23 for student correlations). Stepwise linear regressions were run for both the community and the student samples to determine if components of sexual agency could predict individuals' motivations to engage in sex. Assumptions for linear regression were assessed in a similar way as described in Hypothesis 1, and only significant violations are noted. The results for these analyses will be presented by sample group.

Table 22

Correlations Between IVs and DVs for Hypothesis 3 (Community)

DVs	IVs				
	Assertive-ness	Self-Concept	Verbal Comm.	Nonverbal Initiation	Nonverbal Refusal
Intrinsic Motives	.431**	.210**	.584**	.571**	.086
Extrinsic Motives	-.278**	-.166*	-.128	-.176*	.324**

Note: $n = 210$

Table 23

Correlations Between IVs and DVs for Hypothesis 3 (Student)

DVs	IVs				
	Assertive-ness	Self-Concept	Verbal Comm.	Nonverbal Initiation	Nonverbal Refusal
Intrinsic Motives	.341**	.151**	.397**	.422**	-.052
Extrinsic Motives	-.402**	-.343**	-.330	-.145**	.187**

Note: $n = 460$

H3a: Greater Sexual Agency Predicts Intrinsic Motives

Community Sample. All assumptions were met for this sample though the distribution did appear slightly platykurtic. Linear regression is robust to certain violations of normality, thus results were interpreted with confidence but with some caution. The model which best predicts intrinsic motivations only includes three of the five components of sexual agency. Namely, the greatest predictors of reporting more personal drives for engaging in sex was verbal communication, followed by nonverbal initiation, and nonverbal refusal. Including these three components into the regression model explained 39.1% of the variability in intrinsic motivation. The communication aspects of sexual agency were found to significantly predict personal drives for engaging in sex, $F(3, 197) = 43.84$, $p < .001$. Specifically, reporting greater usage of verbal communication (ß = .384), nonverbal initiation (ß = .282), and nonverbal refusal (ß = .166) all significantly predicted listing more intrinsic motivations for engaging in sex. All slope coefficients can be found in Table 24.

Student Sample. Assumptions of linear regression were met for this sample. For the students, only two components of sexual agency significantly predicted more intrinsic motives for engaging in sex, $F(2, 457) = 62.402$, $p < .001$. Adding nonverbal initiation and verbal communication into the model explained 21.1% of the variance in intrinsic motivation. Looking

at the slope coefficients, reporting greater verbal communication (ß = .232) and nonverbal initiation (ß = .289) significantly predicts listing more personal drives for engaging in sex. See Table 25 for all variable coefficients.

Table 24

Stepwise Regression of Sexual Agency Variables on Intrinsic Motives (Community)

	B	*SE B*		*p*
Constant	.279	6.866		.968
Included Variables			ß	
Verbal Communication	.777	.183	.384	< .001
Nonverbal Initiation	.986	.315	.282	.002
Nonverbal Refusal	.518	.174	.166	.003
Excluded Variables	Beta In			
Assertiveness	-.018			.843
Self-Concept	-.054			.399

Note: n = 201

Table 25

Stepwise Regression of Sexual Agency Variables on Intrinsic Motives (Student)

	B	*SE B*		*p*
Constant	22.164	4.847		< .001
Included Variables			ß	
Verbal Communication	.399	.087	.232	< .001
Nonverbal Initiation	1.115	.194	.289	< .001
Excluded Variables	Beta In			
Assertiveness	-.037			.664
Self-Concept	-.060			.214
Nonverbal Refusal	-.001			.973

Note: n = 460

H3b: Lower Sexual Agency Predicts Extrinsic Motives

Community Sample. All assumptions were met for this sample though the distribution did appear slightly negatively skewed due to the large number of participants who reported low amounts of external drives. Because regressions are robust to minor violations of normality, results were still interpreted. The addition of all sexual agency components excluding self-concept were found to significantly predict extrinsic motives for engaging in sex, $F(4, 196) =$

11.60, $p < .001$. Adding sexual assertiveness, verbal communication, nonverbal initiation, and nonverbal refusal into the regression model explains 17.5% of the variability in extrinsic motivation.. Specifically, the largest predictor, nonverbal refusal, was positively associated with listing more external reasons for engaging in sex (ß = .269); using more verbal communication was also linked with having more external drives for sex (ß = .441). Meanwhile, reporting more assertiveness (ß = -.420), and listing more nonverbal initiation (ß = -.249) was associated with reporting less external drives for engaging in sex. All slope coefficients can be found in Table 26.

Table 26

Stepwise Regression of Sexual Agency Variables on Extrinsic Motives (Community)

	B	*SE B*		*p*
Constant	59.135	9.025		< .001
Included Variables			ß	
Nonverbal Refusal	.866	.212	.269	< .001
Assertiveness	-.454	.117	-.420	< .001
Verbal Communication	.917	.290	.441	.002
Nonverbal Initiation	-.895	.378	-.249	.019
Excluded Variables	Beta In			
Self-Concept	.012			.882

Note: $n = 201$

Student Sample. Assumptions were also checked for this sample and appeared to be met, though the distribution did appear leptokurtic. Results were still interpreted due to the robust nature of regressions. For the younger sample, three variables were found to be significant predictors of extrinsic motivations. The addition of sexual assertiveness, self-concept, and nonverbal refusal explained 17.7% of the variability in extrinsic motivation. These components of sexual agency were found to significantly predict extrinsic motivation, $F(3, 456) = 33.963$, $p < .001$. Having both lower sexual assertiveness (ß = -.290) and sexual self-concept (ß = -.143) predicted being more externally motivated to engage in sex, while using more nonverbal refusal predicted having greater external drives (ß = .090). See Table 27 for more coefficients.

Table 27
Stepwise Regression of Sexual Agency Variables on Extrinsic Motives (Student)

	B	*SE B*		*p*
Constant	60.282	2.974		< .001
Included Variables			ß	
Assertiveness	-.144	.027	-.290	< .001
Self-Concept	-.122	.046	-.143	.009
Nonverbal Refusal	.130	.063	.090	.04
Excluded Variables	Beta In			
Verbal Communication	.051			.555
Nonverbal Initiation	.060			.227

Note: $n = 460$

Hypothesis 4: Intrinsic Motivations Predict Better Evaluations

It was hypothesized that those who listed more intrinsic motivations for engaging in sex would report more satisfaction, more feelings of consent (willingness and safety), and less regret for that encounter compared to those who were more externally driven to engage in sex, who were predicted to have worse evaluations for their encounter. Linear regressions were run to determine if having stronger intrinsic drives could predict better evaluations of the sexual encounter. The same was done to determine if the reverse pattern was present for those who were extrinsically motivated. Though only two of the ICS subscales were utilized for this hypothesis (safety and agreement), correlations for all five subscales of the ICS are presented below so that inferences on the overall patterns could be made (See Tables 28 and 29 for the community and student correlations respectively). Significance was set at .05 for these analyses and a Bonferroni correction was used when looking at the two ICS subscales: feelings of safety and agreement. Results for the intrinsic motivations predicting sexual evaluations are presented first, followed by extrinsic motivations predicting more positive outcomes, with results from the community sample proceeding the student sample.

Table 28
Correlations between IVs and DVs for Hypothesis 4 (Community)

DVs	IVs		
	Internal Motives	External Motives	Motives Difference
Sexual Satisfaction	.137	-.209**	.274**
Physical Feelings	.461**	-.080	.424**
Safety Feelings	.437**	-.188**	.492**
Arousal Feelings	.506**	-.181*	.540**
Agreement Feelings	.437**	-.283**	.569**
Readiness Feelings	.434**	-.106	.424**
Sexual Regret	-.330**	.326**	-.338**

Note: $n = 201$

Table 29
Correlations between IVs and DVs for Hypothesis 4 (Student)

DVs	IVs		
	Internal Motives	External Motives	Motives Difference
Sexual Satisfaction	.271**	-.340**	.390**
Physical Feelings	.460**	-.242**	.512**
Safety Feelings	.416**	-.333**	.513**
Arousal Feelings	.474**	-.301**	.550**
Agreement Feelings	.377**	-.329**	.477**
Readiness Feelings	.271**	-.340**	.390**
Sexual Regret	-.323**	.464**	-.321**

Note: $n = 460$

H4a - Motivations Predicting Satisfaction

Intrinsic Motives. Assumptions for linear regression were met for the community sample. No significant relationship was found between intrinsic motivation and sexual satisfaction. Average intrinsic motivation scores accounted for only 1.4% of the variation in sexual satisfaction. Intrinsic motivation scores did not statistically significantly predict sexual satisfaction $F(1, 199) = 3.78$, $p = .053$ for community participants.

In the student sample however, average intrinsic motivation scores accounted for 7.1% of the variance in sexual satisfaction. Intrinsic motivation scores were found to statistically

significantly predict sexual satisfaction $F(1, 458) = 36.29$, $p < .001$. One increase in reported intrinsic motivation led to a .136 increase on sexual satisfaction Likert scales, 95% CI [.092, .180].

Extrinsic Motives. Average extrinsic motivation scores accounted for more variability in sexual satisfaction than intrinsic drives, accounting for almost 4% of the variance in the community sample. Being extrinsically motivated statistically significantly predicted lower sexual satisfaction $F(1, 199) = 9.05$, $p = .003$. One increase in external drives led to a .098 decrease in sexual satisfaction, 95% CI [-.162, -.034].

Table 30

Linear Regressions: Motivation Type on Sexual Satisfaction by Subsample

	Community				Student			
	B	*SE B*	ß	*p*	*B*	*SE B*	ß	*p*
Intrinsic Motives	.066	.034	.137	.053	.136	.023	.271	< .001
Constant	20.76	2.54		<. 001	16.24	1.71		< .001
Extrinsic Motives	-.098	.032	-.209	.003	-.334	.043	-.340	<.001
Constant	30.48	1.74		<.001	40.14	1.82		< .001

Note: n = 201

For the student sample, this trend was repeated though there was a somewhat stronger association. Extrinsic motivation was able to account for 11.4% of the variability in sexual satisfaction. This relationship was found to be significant, $F(1, 458) = 59.87$, $p < .001$. For every increase in external drives, sexual satisfaction was found to decrease by .334, 95%CI [-.418, -.249]. See Table 30 for unstandardized coefficients for all regressions with sexual satisfaction.

H4b – Motivations Predicting Safety Feelings

Intrinsic Motives. Average intrinsic motivation scores accounted for 18.7% of the variance in safety feelings. Intrinsic motivation scores statistically significantly predicted feelings of safety $F(1, 199) = 47.03$, $p < .001$. One increase in intrinsic motivation led to a .016 increase on the internal safety feelings scale, 95% CI [.012, .021].

This was very similar for the student sample, as 17.1% of the variance in safety feelings was accounted for by intrinsic motives. Furthermore, being internally motivated significantly predicted feeling safe $F(1, 458) = 95.86$, $p < .001$. Similarly to the community sample, internal feelings of safety increased by .016 for one unit increase on intrinsic motives, 95% CI [.013, .019].

Extrinsic Motives. For the community group, extrinsic motivations were a less powerful predictor of safety feelings. Three percent of the variance in feeling safe was accounted for by external drives. The model significantly predicted feeling less safe, $F(1, 199) = 7.27$, $p = .008$. For one unit increase in extrinsic motivations safety feelings decreased by .007, 95% CI [-.012, -.002].

Close to 11% of the variance in safety feelings was explained by external motives for the student sample. External motives were found to significantly predict listing less feelings of safety for individual's most recent sexual encounter, $F(1, 485) = 56.94$, $p < .001$. Increasing one's extrinsic motivations led to a .025 decrease on safety feelings, 95% CI [-.032, -.019]. See Table 31 for unstandardized coefficients for all regressions with safety feelings.

Table 31

Linear Regressions: Motivation Type on Safety Feelings by Subsample

	Community				Student			
	B	*SE B*	ß	*p*	*B*	*SE B*	ß	*p*
Intrinsic Motives	.016	.002	.437	< .001	.016	.002	.416	< .001
Constant	2.20	.177		< .001	2.33	.124		< .001
Extrinsic Motives	-.007	.003	-.188	.008	-.025	.003	-.333	< .001
Constant	3.72	.135		< .001	4.56	.140		< .001

Note: $n = 201$ for Community, $n = 460$ for Student

H4c – Motivations Predicting Willingness Feelings

Intrinsic Motives. For the community sample, average intrinsic motivation scores accounted for 18.7% of the variation in feelings of agreement and willingness. Intrinsic

motivation scores significantly predicted feelings of willingness for an encounter, $F(1, 199) = 47.10$, $p < .001$. For one unit increase in intrinsic motivation, feelings of agreement increase by .015, 95% CI [.011, .020].

Furthermore, for the student sample, 15% of the variance in agreement feelings was accounted for by intrinsic motives. This model significantly predicted more willingness feelings, $F(1, 458) = 81.99$, $p < .001$. As an individuals' intrinsic motivation increases to engage in an encounter, feelings of willingness are expected to increase by .013, 95% CI [.010, .015].

Extrinsic Motives. As expected, the opposite pattern emerged for extrinsic motives. For the community sample, being extrinsically motivated to engage in sex significantly predicted feeling less willing to engage in sex, $F(1, 199) = 17.39$, $p < .001$. Extrinsic motives explained 7.6% of the variance in willingness/agreement feelings. Being more externally driven to engage in sex was associated with a .01 decrease in feelings of agreement, 95% CI [-.014, -.005].

In the student sample the pattern was similar, though stronger. The model was also found to be significant, $F(1, 458) = 74.04$, $p < .001$, with 13.7% of the variance in agreement feelings being explained by external drives. One unit increase in external motivation led to a .024 decrease in feelings of willingness/agreement for the sexual encounter, 95% CI [-.029, -.018]. The unstandardized coefficients for all regressions with feelings of agreement/willingness can be found in Table 32.

Table 32

Linear Regressions: Motivation Type on Willingness Feelings by Subsample

	Community				Student			
	B	*SE B*	ß	*p*	*B*	*SE B*	ß	*p*
Intrinsic Motives	.015	.002	.437	< .001	.013	.001	.390	< .001
Constant	2.47	.166		< .001	2.75	.106		< .001
Extrinsic Motives	-.01	.002	-.283	.008	-.024	.003	-.373	< .001
Constant	4.06	.123		< .001	4.67	.116		< .001

Note: $n = 201$ for Community, $n = 460$ for Student

H4d – Motivations Predicting Regret

Intrinsic Motives. For the community sample, regret for an individual's most recent sexual encounter was significantly predicted by how intrinsically motivated they were for the encounter, $F(1, 190) = 23.17$, $p < .001$. Intrinsic motivation accounted for 10.4% of the variance in regret feelings. Being more personally driven to engage in sex led to a .036 decrease in experiencing sexual regret for that encounter, 95% CI [-.05, -.021].

For the student sample this relationship was similar. Personal drives for engaging in sex accounted for 10.2% of the variability in regret feelings. Intrinsic motivations significantly predicted experiencing less regret, $F(1, 408) = 47.58$, $p < .001$. Having more internal motivations was linked with a .041 decrease on the regret scale, 95% CI [-.053, -.029].

Table 33
Linear Regressions: Motivation Type on Regret Feelings

	Community				Student			
	B	*SE B*	ß	*p*	*B*	*SE B*	ß	*p*
Intrinsic Motives	-.036	.007	-.330	< .001	-.041	.006	-.323	< .001
Constant	4.025	.558		< .001	4.16	.454		< .001
Extrinsic Motives	.034	.007	.326	< .001	.115	.011	.464	< .001
Constant	-.313	.387		.420	-.363	.454		< .001

Note: $n = 201$ for Community, $n = 460$ for Student

Extrinsic Motives. Being highly extrinsically motivated to engage in sex shows an opposite pattern in regards to experiencing regret. For the community sample, external drives for sex account for 10.2% of the variability in sexual regret. External motives significantly predicted experiencing more regret, $F(1, 190) = 22.59$, $p < .001$. Having more external drives led to a .034 increase on the regret scale, 95% CI [.02, .048].

For the student sample, this pattern was even more pronounced. Having more external drives was found to predict more regret, $F(1, 408) = 111.84$, $p < .001$. External motivations accounted for 21.3% of the variance in sexual regret. Being more externally motivated to have

sex is linked with reporting .115 more regret for that encounter, 95% CI [.093, .136]. See Table 33 for all coefficients for both samples.

Hypothesis 5: Mediation of Sexual Agency and Evaluations by Sexual Motives

Linear regression analysis was used to investigate the hypothesis that intrinsic motivations mediates the effect of sexual agency on sexual evaluations: namely, satisfaction, feelings of safety, willingness feelings, and regret feelings. For the following mediational analyses the total sexual agency measure was used. The four mediational analyses were run on the community and the student samples separately. For these mediational analyses assumptions of linear regression were first assessed in a similar manner as described at the beginning of the results section. Assumptions are met unless otherwise noted. Furthermore, to test the indirect effects for each mediation, a percentile bootstrap estimation approach with 5000 samples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002) was used and was implemented with the PROCESS macro Version 4.2 beta (Hayes, 2018). This approach was chosen as it is easier to implement than structural equation modeling (SEM), it allows the model to be assessed as a whole rather than just in pieces, and allows for bootstrap confidence intervals to be surmised for the indirect effects in the model (Hayes et al., 2017). For mediational analysis with larger sample sizes there appears to be no substantive differences in the standard error rate when using either the PROCESS macro or implementing a more complicated SEM analysis (Hayes et al., 2017), thus the more user friendly approach was chosen.

H5a: Sexual Agency Predicts Sexual Satisfaction, Mediated by Intrinsic Motivations

Community Sample. Sexual agency significantly predicted sexual satisfaction, $F = 8.11$, $p = .005$, $B = .684$, $SE = .240$, 95% CI [.210, 1.159], ß = .200. Sexual agency significantly predicted intrinsic motives, $B = 3.022$, $SE = .466$, 95%CI[2.102, 3.941], β = .421, $p < .001$, but

intrinsic motives did not significantly predict sexual satisfaction, *B* = .049, *SE* = .037, 95%CI [-.024, .122], β = .103, *p* = .1851. These results indicate that there is no mediation of intrinsic motives on satisfaction for sexual agency, though sexual agency did become a less strong predictor when adding intrinsic motives to the model, *B* = .536, *SE* = .265, 95%CI [.015, 1.057], β = .157, *p* = .044. The predictors only accounted for 4.9% of the variance in satisfaction (R^2= .049). See Figure 2 for a visual of the coefficients.

Figure 2

Sexual Agency Predicting Sexual Satisfaction, Mediated by Intrinsic Motives (Community)

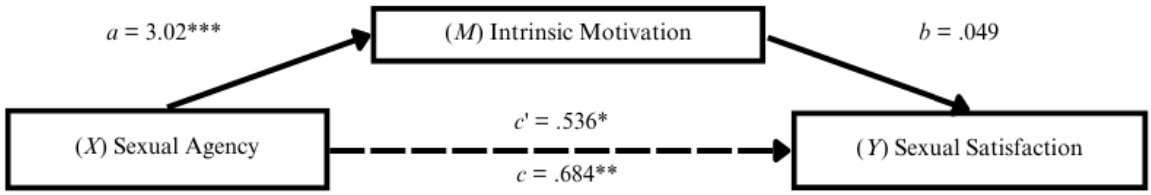
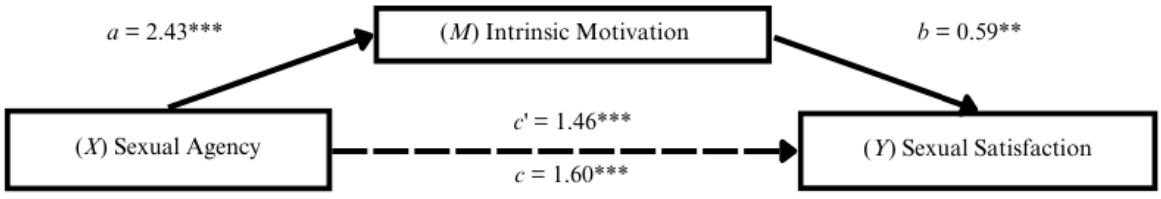


Figure 3

Sexual Agency Predicting Sexual Satisfaction, Mediated by Intrinsic Motives (Student)



Student Sample. Results indicate that there is a relationship between sexual agency and sexual satisfaction, *F* (1, 453) = 124.66, *p* <.001, *B* = 1.599, *SE* = .143, 95% CI [1.318, 1.881], ß = .465, *p* <. 001. Sexual agency was a significant predictor of intrinsic motivations, *B* = 2.433, *SE* = .298, 95%CI[1.848, 3.018], β = .359, *p* < .001, and intrinsic motives was a significant

predictor of satisfaction, B = .059, SE = .023, 95%CI [.014, .103], β = .115, p = .009. The mediational hypothesis seems to be supported (see Figure 3 for path coefficients). Sexual agency was still a significant predictor of satisfaction after controlling for intrinsic motivations, B = 1.457, SE = .153, 95%CI [1.157, 1.757], β = .424, p < .001, indicating a partial mediation. Approximately 23% of the variance in satisfaction was accounted for by the predictors (R^2= .228). Bootstrap results indicate the indirect coefficient was significant, B = .142, SE = .062, 95%CI [.029, .269], completely standardized β = .041. Reporting more agency was associated with satisfaction scores that were approximately .142 points higher as mediated by intrinsic drives.

H5b: Sexual Agency Predicts Safety Feelings, Mediated by Intrinsic Motivations

Community Sample. Results indicate that sexual agency is significantly predictive of safety feelings, B = .117, SE = .018, 95%CI [.083, .152], ß = .433, F(1, 195) = 44.9, p < .001. Sexual agency was a significant predictor of intrinsic motivations, B = 3.022, SE = .466, 95%CI[2.102, 3.941], β = .421, p < .001, and intrinsic motives was a significant predictor of feelings of safety, B = .012, SE = .003, 95%CI[.007, .017], β = .308, p < .001. These results support the mediational hypothesis. Sexual agency was still a significant predictor of safety feelings after controlling for sexual motives, B = .0822, SE = .018, 95%CI[.046, .119], β = .303, p < .001, indicating a partial mediation (See Figure 4). The predictors accounted for 26.5% of the variance in safety feelings (R^2 = .265). Bootstrap estimation revealed the indirect coefficient as significant, B = .0351, SE = .012, 95%CI[.014, .059], completely standardized β = .130. Reporting more sexual agency was associated with safety scores that were approximately .035 points higher as mediated by intrinsic motives.

Figure 4

Sexual Agency Predicting Safety Feelings, Mediated by Intrinsic Motives (Community)

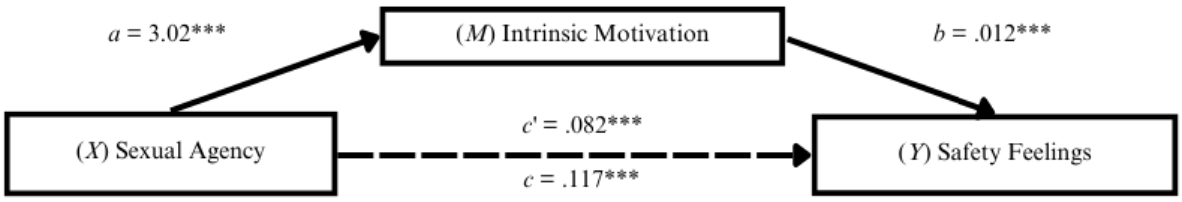
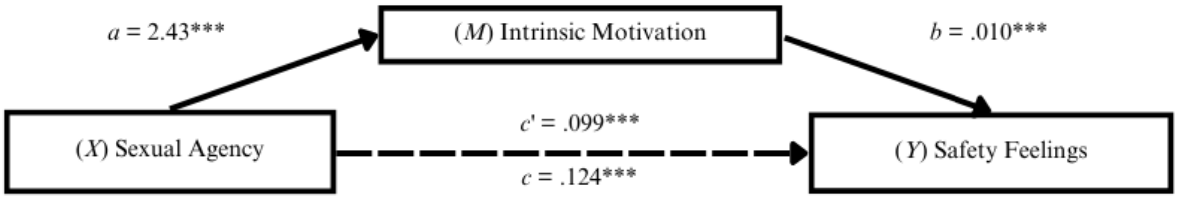


Figure 5

Sexual Agency Predicting Safety Feelings, Mediated by Intrinsic Motives (Student)



Student Sample. The mediational hypothesis was also supported for this sample (see Figure 5 for coefficients). Sexual agency were found to significantly predict feelings of safety, *B* = .124, *SE* = .011, 95%CI [.102, .145], ß = .472, $F(1, 453) = 129.29$, $p < .001$. Sexual agency was a significant predictor of intrinsic motivations, *B* = 2.433, SE = .298, 95%CI [1.848, 3.018], β = .359, $p < .001$, and internal motives was a significant predictor of feelings of safety, *B* = .010, *SE* = .002, 95%CI [.007, .014], β = .267, $p < .001$. Sexual agency was still a significant predictor of safety feelings after controlling for intrinsic motives, *B* = .099, *SE* = .011, 95%CI [.077, .121], β = .376, $p < .001$, indicating a partial mediation. The predictors accounted for 28.4% of the variance in safety feelings ($R^2 = .284$). Results indicated the indirect coefficient was significant, *B* = .025, *SE* = .005, 95%CI [.015, .036], completely standardized β = .096. Reporting more

sexual agency was associated with safety scores that were approximately .025 points higher as mediated by intrinsic drives.

H5c: Sexual Agency Predicts Agreement Feelings, Mediated by Intrinsic Motivations

Community Sample. Sexual agency significantly predicts feelings of agreement and willingness to engage in sex, $B = .121$, $SE = .016$, 95%CI [.089, .152], ß = .479, $F(1, 195) = 57.91$, $p < .001$. Sexual agency was a significant predictor of intrinsic motives, $B = 3.022$, SE = .466, 95%CI[2.102, 3.941], β = .421, $p < .001$, and internal motivations was a significant predictor of agreement feelings, $B = .010$, $SE = .002$, 95%CI [.005, .014], β = .272, $p < .001$. These results support the mediational hypothesis. Sexual agency was still a significant predictor of feelings of willingness after controlling for intrinsic motivations, $B = .092$, $SE = .017$, 95%CI [.059, .125], β = .364, $p < .001$, indicating a partial mediation. The predictors accounted for 28.9% of the variance in agreement/willingness feelings ($R^2 = .289$). Bootstrap estimation indicated the indirect coefficient was significant, $B = .029$, $SE = .011$, 95%CI[.009, .052], completely standardized β = .115. Reporting more sexual agency was associated with sexual willingness scores that were approximately .029 points higher as mediated by intrinsic motives. See Figure 6 for the model.

Student Sample. The mediational hypothesis was also supported for this sample. Sexual agency was found to significantly predict feeling more willing to engage in sex, $B = .092$, $SE = .009$, 95%CI [.074, .110], ß = .425, $F(1, 453) = 99.675$, $p < .001$. Sexual agency was a significant predictor of being intrinsically motivated, $B = 2.433$, SE = .298, 95%CI [1.848, 3.018], β = .359, $p < .001$, and intrinsic motivations was a significant predictor of feelings of agreement/willingness, $B = .008$, $SE = .001$, 95%CI [.005, .011], β = .246, $p < .001$. Sexual agency was still a significant predictor of agreement feelings after controlling for internal

motives, B = .073, SE = .009, 95%CI [.054, .092], β = .337, p < .001, indicating a partial mediation (see Figure 7 for a visual representation). The predictors accounted for 23.4% of the variance in safety feelings (R^2 = .234). These results indicated the indirect coefficient was significant, B = .019, SE = .004, 95%CI [.011, .028], completely standardized β = .088. Reporting more sexual agency was associated with agreement feeling scores that were approximately .019 points higher as mediated by personal motivations.

Figure 6

Sexual Agency Predicting Agreement Feelings, Mediated by Intrinsic Motives (Community)

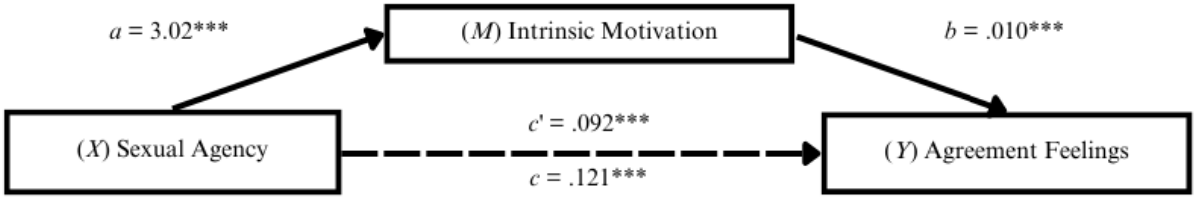
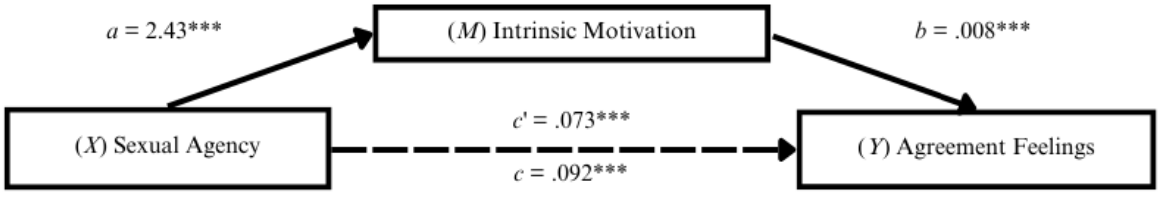


Figure 7

Sexual Agency Predicting Agreement Feelings, Mediated by Intrinsic Motives (Student)



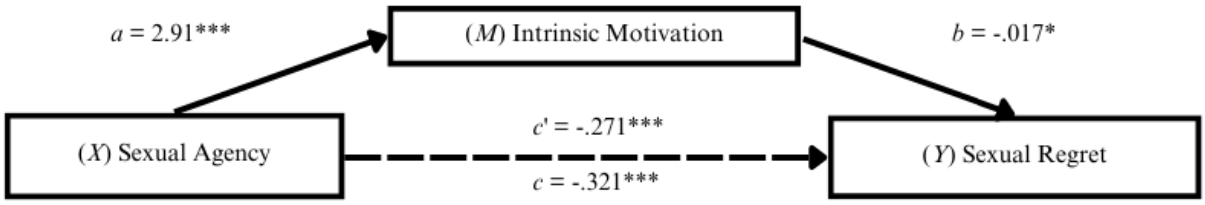
H5c: Sexual Agency Predicts Sexual Regret, Mediated by Intrinsic Motivations

Community Sample. Having greater sexual agency significantly predicted reporting less regret, B = -.321, SE = .052, 95%CI [-.423, -.219], ß = -.414, F(1, 186) = 38.47, p < .001. Sexual agency was a significant predictor of intrinsic motivations, B = 2.908, SE = .478, 95%CI[1.965,

3.851], β = .407, $p < .001$, and internal motivations was a significant predictor of experiencing less regret, $B = -.017$, $SE = .008$, 95%CI [-.033, -.002], β = -.157, $p = .031$. These results support the mediational hypothesis. Sexual agency was still a significant predictor of experiencing less regret after controlling for intrinsic motives, $B = -.271$, $SE = .056$, 95%CI [-.382, -.161], β = -.350, $p < .001$, indicating a partial mediation (see Figure 8 for a visual). The predictors accounted for 19.2% of the variance in regret feelings ($R^2 = .192$). These results indicated the indirect coefficient was not significant, $B = -.050$, $SE = .032$, 95%CI[-.118, .006], completely standardized β = -.064. Reporting more sexual agency for engaging in sex was associated with sexual regret scores that were approximately .05 points lower as mediated by intrinsic motivations.

Figure 8

Sexual Agency Predicting Sexual Regret, Mediated by Intrinsic Motives (Community)

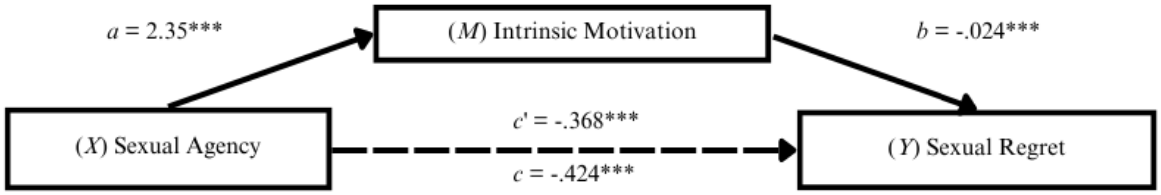


Student Sample. Similarly, in this sample sexual agency was found to significantly predict having less sexual regret, $B = -.424$, $SE = .038$, 95%CI [-.499, -.348], ß = -.483, $F(1, 404) = 122.38$, $p < .001$. Sexual agency was also a significant predictor of intrinsic motivations, $B = 2.351$, SE = .322, 95%CI [1.718, 2.984], β = .342, $p < .001$, and intrinsic drives was a significant predictor of experiencing less regret, $B = -.024$, $SE = .006$, 95%CI [-.035, -.012], β = -.185, $p < .001$. Sexual agency was still a significant predictor of experiencing less regret after controlling for intrinsic drives, $B = -.368$, $SE = .04$, 95%CI [-.447, -.289], β = -.419, $p < .001$, indicating a

partial mediation (see Figure 9 for all path coefficients). Approximately 26% of the variance in regret feelings were accounted for by the predictors (R^2 = .263). Bootstrap estimation indicates a significant indirect coefficient, *B* = -.055, *SE* = .017, 95%CI [-.091, -.025], completely standardized β = -.063. Reporting more sexual agency was associated with sexual regret scores that were approximately .055 points lower as mediated by intrinsic motives.

Figure 9

Sexual Agency Predicting Sexual Regret, Mediated by Intrinsic Motives (Student)



Hypothesis 6: Mediation of Sexual Agency and Evaluations by Sexual Consent

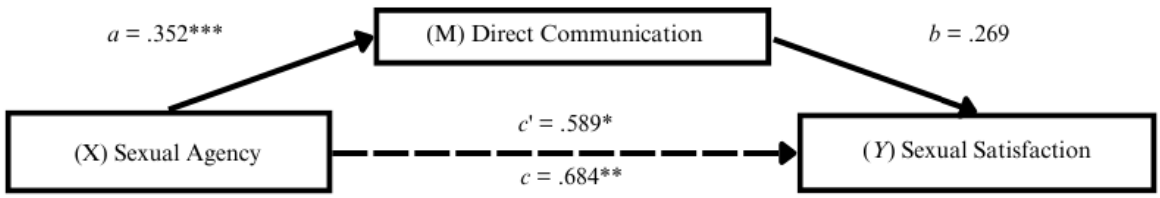
It was hypothesized that direct consent communication would mediate the relationship between sexual agency and the types of evaluations people have for their encounter. In other words, it was predicted that sexual agency would act as an underlying driver for the relationship between consent communication and sexual evaluations, such that if sexual agency were to increase so should direct consent behaviours. The total sexual agency measure was used for these analyses in order to capture the holistic construct. Results are presented for the Community sample followed by the Student sample. All assumptions of linear regression were met unless otherwise noted. In order to test the indirect effects for each mediation, a percentile bootstrap estimation approach with 5000 samples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002) was used and was implemented with the PROCESS macro Version 4.2 beta (Hayes, 2018).

H6a: Sexual Agency Predicts Sexual Satisfaction, Mediated by Direct Consent

Community Sample. There was a significant relationship between sexual agency and sexual satisfaction, $F(1, 196) = 8.10$, $p = .005$, $B = .684$, $SE = .240$, 95% CI [.210, 1.159], ß = .200. Having more sexual agency was a significant predictor of greater direct consent, $B = .352$, $SE = .067$, 95%CI [.221, .483], β = .354, $p < .001$, but direct sexual consent was not found to be a significant predictor of satisfaction, $B = .269$, $SE = .259$, 95%CI [-.241, .779], β = .078, $p = .299$. These results indicate that there is no mediation of consent communication on satisfaction for sexual agency, though sexual agency did become a less strong predictor when adding direct communication in the model, $B = .589$, $SE = .257$, 95%CI [.083, 1.096], β = .172, $p = .023$. The predictors only accounted for 4.5% of the variance in satisfaction ($R^2 = .045$). See Figure 10 for the mediation model.

Figure 10

Sexual Agency Predicting Sexual Satisfaction, Mediated by Direct Consent (Community)

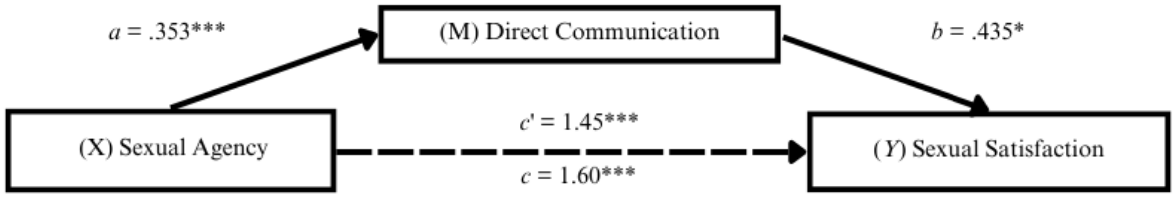


Student Sample. Results indicate that there is a relationship between sexual agency and sexual satisfaction, $F(1, 453) = 124.66$, $p < .001$, $B = 1.600$, $SE = .143$, 95% CI [1.318, 1.88], ß = .465, $p < .001$. Having more sexual agency was a significant predictor of direct consent behaviour, $B = .353$, $SE = .037$, 95%CI [.280, .426], β = .410, $p < .001$, and direct consent was found to be a significant predictor of satisfaction, $B = .435$, $SE = .182$, 95%CI [.079, .792], β = .109, $p = .017$. These results support the mediational hypothesis. Sexual agency was still a

significant predictor of satisfaction after controlling for the mediator, direct sexual consent, *B* = 1.446, *SE* = .156, 95%CI [1.139, 1.753], β = .420, *p* < .001, indicating a partial mediation. Approximately 23% of the variance in satisfaction was accounted for by the predictors (R^2= .226). Bootstrap results indicate a significant indirect coefficient, *B* = .154, *SE* = .069, 95%CI [.026, .298], completely standardized β = .045. Listing more sexual agency was associated with satisfaction scores that were approximately .154 points higher as mediated by direct consent behaviours. See Figure 11 for the mediation model.

Figure 11

Sexual Agency Predicting Sexual Satisfaction, Mediated by Direct Consent (Student)



H6b: Sexual Agency Predicts Safety Feelings, Mediated by Direct Consent

Community Sample. There was a significant relationship between sexual agency and feelings of safety, *F*(1, 196) = 44.90, *p* <.001, *B* = .117, *SE* = .018, 95% CI [.083, .152], ß = .433, *p* <. 001. Having more sexual agency was a significant predictor of reporting greater direct sexual consent, *B* = .352, *SE* = .067, 95%CI [.221, .483], β = .354, p < .001, and direct sexual consent was found to be a significant predictor of feelings of safety, *B* = .070, *SE* = .018, 95%CI [.034, .106], β = .257, *p* < .001. These results support the mediational hypothesis. Sexual agency was still a significant predictor of safety feelings after controlling for consent behaviours, *B* = .093, *SE* = .018, 95%CI [.057, .128], β = .342, *p* < .001, indicating a partial mediation. The predictors accounted for 24.5% of the variance in safety feelings (R^2= .245). Bootstrap

estimation indicates a significant indirect coefficient, *B* = .025, *SE* = .010, 95%CI [.008, .046], β = .091. Listing more sexual agency was associated with scores on safety feelings that were approximately .025 points higher as mediated by direct consent behaviours. This mediation model is depicted in Figure 12.

Figure 12

Sexual Agency Predicting Safety Feelings, Mediated by Direct Consent (Community)

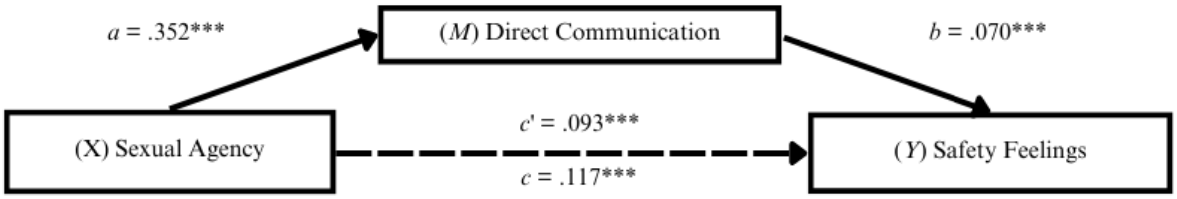
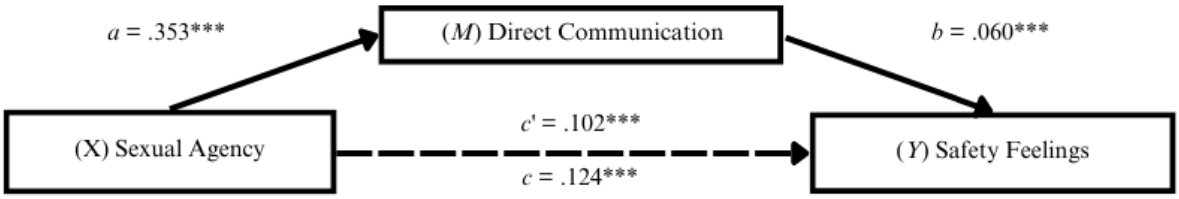


Figure 13

Sexual Agency Predicting Safety Feelings, Mediated by Direct Consent (Student)



Student Sample. Results from this sample also support the mediational hypothesis. Sexual agency was found to significantly predict feelings of safety, $F(1, 453) = 129.29$, $p < .001$, *B* = .124, *SE* = .011, 95% CI [.102, .145], ß = .472, $p <. 001$. Having more sexual agency was a significant predictor of direct consent behaviours, *B* = .353, *SE* = .037, 95%CI [.280, .426], β = .410, $p < .001$, and direct consent was found to be a significant predictor of feeling safe, *B* = .060, *SE* = .014, 95%CI [.034, .087], β = .198, $p < .001$. These results support the mediational

hypothesis. Sexual agency was still a significant predictor of safety feelings after controlling for the mediator, direct consent, B = .102, SE = .012, 95%CI [.079, .125], β = .390, p < .001, indicating only a partial mediation. Close to 26% of the variance in safety feelings was accounted for by the predictors (R^2= .255). Results indicate a significant indirect coefficient, B = .021, SE = .007, 95%CI [.009, .036], completely standardized β = .081. Listing more sexual agency behaviours was associated with safety feeling scores that were approximately .021 points higher as mediated by direct consent. See Figure 13 for the mediation model.

H6c: Sexual Agency Predicts Agreement Feelings, Mediated by Direct Consent

Community Sample. There was a significant relationship between sexual agency and feelings of willingness to engage in sex, F(1, 196) = 57.91, p <.001, B = .121, SE = .016, 95% CI [.089, .152], ß = .479, p <. 001. Having more sexual agency was a significant predictor of using more direct consent behaviours, B = .352, SE = .067, 95%CI [.221, .483], β = .354, p < .001, and direct consent was found to be a significant predictor of feelings of willingness/agreement, B = .054, SE = .017, 95%CI [.021, .087], β = .214, p = .001. These results support the mediational hypothesis. Sexual agency was still a significant predictor of agreement feelings after controlling for sexual agency, B = .102, SE = .017, 95%CI [.069, .134], β = .403, p < .001, indicating a partial mediation. The predictors accounted for 26.9% of the variability in willingness feelings (R^2= .269). Results indicate a significant indirect coefficient, B = .019, SE = .009, 95%CI [.004, .040], completely standardized β = .076. Reporting more sexual agency was associated with willingness scores that were approximately .019 points higher as mediated by direct consent. See Figure 14 for the mediation model.

Student Sample. The mediational hypothesis was also supported. Sexual agency significantly predicted greater feelings of willingness to engage in sex, F(1, 453) = 99.67, p

<.001, *B* = .092, *SE* = .009, 95% CI [.074, .110], ß = .425, *p* <. 001. Greater sexual agency significantly predicted direct consent behaviour, *B* = .353, *SE* = .037, 95%CI [.280, .426], β = .410, *p* < .001, and direct consent behaviour significantly predicted willingness feelings, *B* = .069, *SE* = .011, 95%CI [.047, .091], β = .273, *p* < .001. Sexual agency was still a significant predictor of agreement feelings after controlling for direct consent, *B* = .067, *SE* = .010, 95%CI [.049, .087], β = .313, *p* = .001, indicating a partial mediation. The predictors accounted for 24.3% of the variability in willingness feelings (R^2= .243). Bootstrap estimation results indicate a significant indirect coefficient, *B* = .024, *SE* = .007, 95%CI [.012, .039], completely standardized β = .112. More sexual agency was associated with willingness scores that were approximately .024 points higher as mediated by direct consent behaviours (see Figure 15).

Figure 14

Sexual Agency Predicting Agreement Feelings, Mediated by Direct Consent (Community)

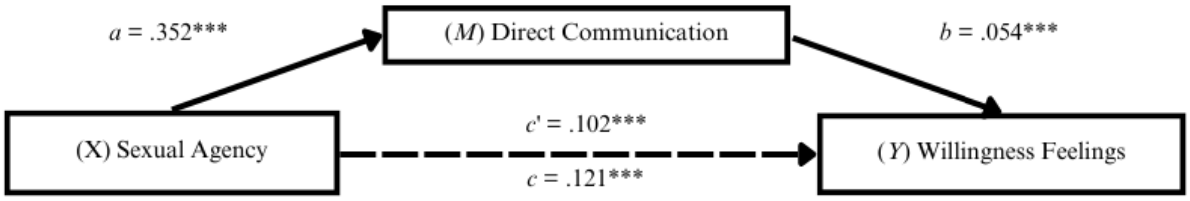
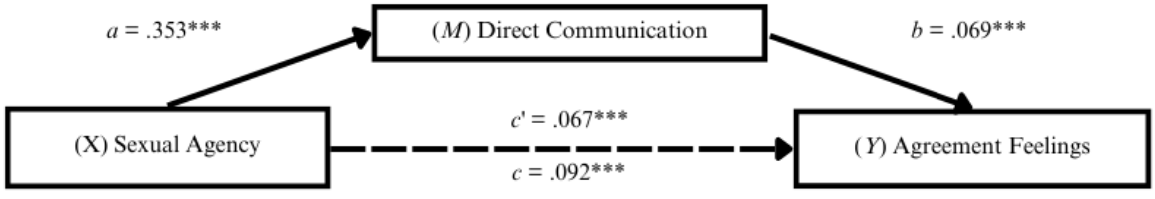


Figure 15

Sexual Agency Predicting Agreement Feelings, Mediated by Direct Consent (Student)



H6c: Sexual Agency Predicts Sexual Regret, Mediated by Direct Consent

Community Sample. There was a significant relationship between sexual agency and regret feelings, $F(1, 187) = 38.47$, $p < .001$, $B = -.321$, $SE = .052$, 95% CI [-.423, -.219], ß = -.414, $p <. 001$. Having more sexual agency was a significant predictor of greater direct consent behaviour, $B = .359$, $SE = .067$, 95%CI [.227, .491], β = .367, $p < .001$, and using direct consent was found to be a significant predictor of experiencing less regret, $B = -.143$, $SE = .056$, 95%CI [-.254, -.033], β = -.181, $p = .011$. These results support the mediational hypothesis. Sexual agency was still a significant predictor of regretful feelings after controlling for consent communication, $B = -.270$, $SE = .055$, 95%CI [-.378, -.161], β = -.348, $p < .001$, indicating a partial mediation. Approximately 20% of the variability in regret feelings was explained by the predictors ($R^2 = .199$). Bootstrap results indicate a significant indirect coefficient, $B = -.051$, $SE = .028$, 95%CI [-.110, -.003], completely standardized β = -.066. Listing more sexual agency was associated with regret scores that were approximately .051 points lower as mediated by direct consent behaviour. See Figure 16 for the mediation model.

Student Sample. Results for this sample support the mediational hypothesis. Sexual regret significantly predicts regret feelings, $F(1, 404) = 122.383$, $p < .001$, $B = -.424$, $SE = .038$, 95% CI [-.499, -.348], ß = -.483, $p <. 001$. Having more sexual agency was a significant predictor more direct consent behaviours, $B = .353$, $SE = .039$, 95%CI [.275, .430], β = .408, $p < .001$, and using direct consent significantly predicts experiencing less regret, $B = -.248$, $SE = .047$, 95%CI [-.341, -.156], β = -.245, $p < .001$. Sexual agency was still a significant predictor of regretful feelings after controlling for direct consent, $B = -.336$, $SE = .041$, 95%CI [-.416, -.256], β = -.383, $p < .001$, indicating a partial mediation. The predictors accounted for 28.3% of the variance in regret feelings ($R^2 = .283$). These results indicate a significant indirect coefficient, $B =$

-.088, *SE* = .026, 95%CI [-.142, -.041], completely standardized β = -.100. Listing more sexual agency was associated with regret scores that were approximately .088 points lower as mediated by direct consent behaviours. The mediation model can be found in Figure 17.

Figure 16

Sexual Agency Predicting Sexual Regret, Mediated by Direct Consent (Community)

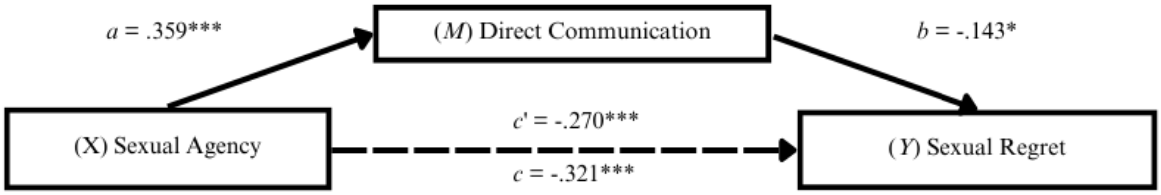
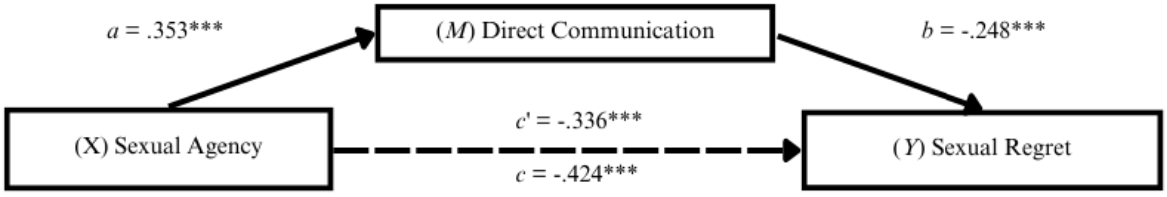


Figure 17

Sexual Agency Predicting Sexual Regret, Mediated by Direct Consent (Student)



Gender Analyses

The following two hypotheses and two exploratory analyses were focused on determining if any gender differences exist between men and women on the variables of interest in this study. Due to the unequal variances of gender within the student sample and the unequal sample sizes for men and women (81.5% women, 14.1% men), only the community sample was used for these analyses. The community sample has a more balanced gender breakdown, consisting of 58.2% men and 38.8% women. It was planned to conduct the analyses including gender minorities, however only 2.5% of the community sample reported a diverse gender identity.

Consideration was made to possibly include transmen with cismen and transwomen with ciswomen, however 2 of the 4 trans individuals repeatedly showed up as outliers in the data and thus the decision was made to only assess cismen and ciswomen for the gendered analyses. There is evidence that trans individuals might need to navigate scripts which are based not only on their gender identity but also their biological sex which can lead to conflicting understandings of which scripts to follow. For example, a trans man might experience less sexual satisfaction than their cis counterpart because before transitioning they were exposed to more passive sexual scripts which emphasised pleasing a partner which can influence the behaviours they engage in after transitioning (Harvey et al., 2023). Furthermore, trans or queer folk might be more focused on their intrapsychic understandings of desire rather than affected by dominant social scripts because they do not identify with the roles presented to them and co-create their narratives separately from heterocentric scripts (Bradford et al., 2019; Harvey et al., 2023). Future research should look at the differences and similarities within trans individuals and between cis individuals in sexual agency and sexual outcomes like regret. This was beyond the scope of the current research.

Hypothesis 7: Gender Difference in Sexual Agency

It was hypothesized that women would report lower sexual agency compared to men. To test this, an independent samples t-test was conducted with the 115 men and 76 women in the community sample. A Levene's test for equality of variances demonstrated equal variances, $F = 2.59$, $p = .109$, and there were no outliers indicated via visual inspection of the boxplots. A visual assessment of normal Q-Q plots indicated that the agency scores for each level of gender were approximately normally distributed. Men were found to report marginally more sexual agency ($M = 17.73$, $SD = 2.26$) compared to women ($M = 17.53$, $SD = 2.66$), and the mean difference (M

= .198, CI [-5.11, .906]) was not statistically significant, $t(189) = .550$, $p = .291$. Table 34 demonstrates the means of sexual agency and its indices for the student sample as well as the community sample for observational comparison. The trends between the two samples appear to be similar however no official analyses were conducted to assess sexual agency differences between the subsamples.

Table 34

Average Sexual Agency Component Scores by Gender and Subsample

	Community		Student	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
	M(SD)	*M(SD)*	*M(SD)*	*M(SD)*
Sexual Assertiveness	92.68 (15.08)	90.09 (18.98)	92.77 (14.36)	92.87 (17.31)
Self-Concept	60.83 (9.07)	63.86 (11.90)	61.21 (8.65)	64.20 (10.06)
Verbal Communication	46.59 (7.78)	43.67 (9.92)	46.48 (7.52)	46.53 (9.76)
Nonverbal Initiation	28.58 (4.81)	27.32 (5.43)	28.73 (4.55)	29.41 (4.46)
Nonverbal Refusal	19.03 (5.64)	18.60 (5.91)	17.56 (5.69)	19.15 (5.58)
Combined Total Sexual Agency	17.73 (2.26)	17.53 (2.66)	17.99 (2.16)	18.03 (2.44)

Note: Community *n*s: men = 117, women = 78; Student *n*s: men = 182, women = 453

Hypothesis 8: Gender Difference in Positive Evaluations

It was hypothesized that women would report more instances of sexual regret than men. To test this prediction, a chi-square (2x2) test for association was conducted between gender (cismen or ciswomen) and experiencing sexual regret (yes or no). All expected cell frequencies were greater than five. There was no statistically significant association between gender and experiencing sexual regret, $\chi^2(1, N = 192) = 3.793$, $p = .051$, though this did approach significance (see Table 35 for the counts and expected counts). Of the participants in the community sample, 21.8% of women reported regret, whereas 11.4% of men reported sexual regret (see Figure 18 for a visual representation of the difference). Though no tests of significance were run within the student sample due to unequal sample sizes, only 7.8% of men

reported regretting their sexual encounter, while 14.2% of women were regretful. In both samples women seem to experience regret just less than double the rate that men do.

Table 35

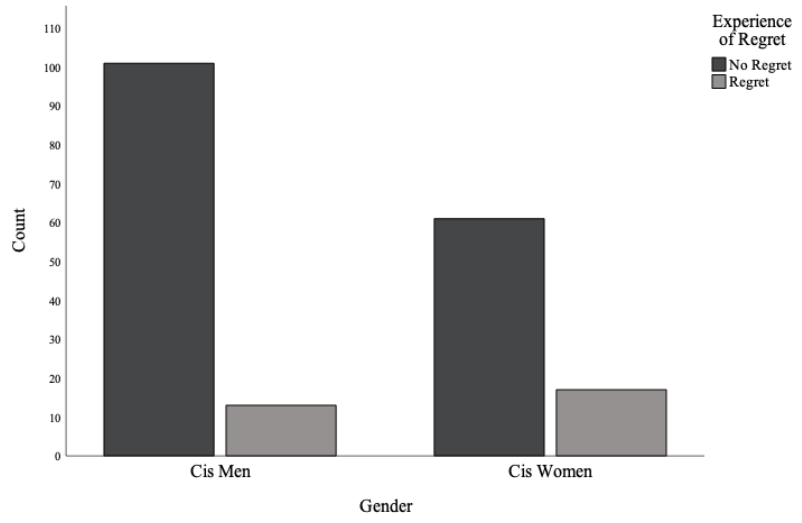
Count of Men and Women Reporting Regret or Not

	Men		Women	
	No Regret	Regret	No Regret	Regret
Count	101	13	61	17
Expected Count	96.2	17.8	65.8	12.2

*Note: n*s: men = 117, women = 78

Figure 18

Frequency of Experiencing Regret or Not by Gender (for Community)



Furthermore, it was hypothesized that women would report less sexual satisfaction, safety feelings, and willingness to engage in sex compared to men. To test the significance of the differences in these evaluations independent t-tests were conducted. A total of 117 men and 78 women were included for these analyses. Levene's test for equality of variances demonstrated the groups had equal variances for safety and willingness feelings (F .382, p = .537 and F = .071, p = .790 respectively), but unequal variances were found for the sexual satisfaction measure F = 4.99, p = .027. There were no outliers detected via inspection of the boxplots. No significant

gender differences were found for feelings of safety (mean difference = .056, *t* (193)= .588, *p* = .279, CI [-.131, .243]), feelings of willingness (mean difference = -.009, *t* (193)= -.096, *p* = .462, CI [-.186, .169]), or sexual satisfaction (mean difference = 1.336, *t* (193)= 1.039, *p* = .150, CI [-1.204, 3.877]). Mean scores for men and women on the three relevant evaluation variables, as well as the other ICS subscales can be found in Table 36 for both the community and student samples.

Table 36

Average Evaluation Scores by Gender and Subsample

	Community		Student	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
	M(SD)	*M(SD)*	*M(SD)*	*M(SD)*
Sexual Satisfaction	26.14 (7.89)	24.81 (9.35)	26.39 (7.49)	26.02 (8.32)
ICS				
Physical	3.36 (.615)	3.19 (.757)	3.33 (.599)	3.35 (.677)
Safety	3.40 (.653)	3.35 (.643)	3.41 (.619)	3.51 (.624)
Arousal	3.59 (.593)	3.45 (.683)	3.57 (.590)	3.53 (.619)
Agreement	3.57 (.629)	3.58 (.598)	3.61 (.564)	3.67 (.545)
Readiness	3.46 (.655)	3.42 (.623)	3.44 (.630)	3.56 (.596)

Note: Community *n*s: men = 117, women = 78; Student *n*s: men = 182, women = 453

Gender Difference in Sexual Motivations (Exploratory)

It was of interest to determine if the motivations listed by individuals differed by gender. Independent t-tests were chosen to evaluate if any significant differences emerged between cis-men and cis-women on both their scores on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Seeing as very little research has been conducted on this specific topic, no hypotheses were proposed, and so a two-sided significance value was used. A total of 117 men and 78 women were included for this analysis. A Levene's test for equality of variances demonstrated the groups had equal variances *F* = 1.78, *p* = .183. There were no outliers detected via inspection of a boxplot. A visual assessment of normal Q-Q plots indicated that the motivation scores for each level of gender were approximately normally distributed. Men were found to report slightly more intrinsic drives for

engaging in sex (M = 75.05, SD = 16.91) compared to women (M = 70.64, SD = 18.75), though the mean difference (M = 4.41, CI [-.685, 9.505]) was not found to be statistically significant, $t(193) = 1.707$, $p = .089$.

For the extrinsic motivations variable, the data were not normally distributed, with boxplots demonstrating significant outliers. A Mann-Whitney U test was thus run to determine if there were differences in extrinsic motivation scores between cismen and ciswomen. The shape of the distribution for motivation scores were similar for men and women, as assessed by visual inspection. Extrinsic motivation scores were not found to differ significantly between men (Mdn = 43) and women (Mdn = 41), U = 4196, z = -.957, p = .339. See Table 37 for both the community and student mean values on sexual motivations.

Table 37

Average Sexual Motivation Scores by Gender and Sample

	Community		Student	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Intrinsic Motives				
Men	75.05	16.91	73.89	13.73
Women	70.64	18.75	73.76	16.13
Extrinsic Motives				
Men	52.35	20.36	40.41	6.12
Women	47.97	15.17	41.57	8.37

Note: Community *n*s: men = 117, women = 78; Student *n*s: men = 182, women = 453

Gender Differences in Consent Behaviours (Exploratory)

Another research question that warranted investigating was if there was a gender difference in the types of consent behaviours individuals engaged in. Independent t-tests were chosen to evaluate if any significant differences emerged between cismen and ciswomen on both their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation scores. No hypotheses were specifically proposed, though literature has found that women list more relational reasons for engaging in sex (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008; Carter et al., 2019), a two-sided significance value was used. Cis men (M =

3.87, *SD* = 2.33) and women (*M* = 4.42, *SD* = 2.33) indicated similar amounts of indirect consent communication behaviours. Furthermore, cismen listed only slightly more direct consent communication behaviours (*M* = 5.44, *SD* = 2.24) compared to ciswomen (*M* = 4.82, *SD* = 2.71). The assumption of homogeneity of variances was met for both direct consent *F* = 3.735, *p* = .055, and for indirect consent, *F* = .448, *p* =.504. Cis-men had scores on direct consent communication which were .615, 95% CI [-.088, 1.319] higher than women's scores—a nonsignificant difference, *t*(193) = 1.726, two-sided *p* = .086. The mean difference in indirect consent communication scores (-.557, 95% CI [-1.229, .116]) between men and woman was also found to be insignificant, *t*(193) = -1.631, *p* = .105. These trends did approach directional significance and provides support for a directional hypothesis to be tested in future research. Both the community and student sample averages can be found in Table 38 to see the trends of the data.

Table 38

Average Consent Communication Scores by Gender and Sample

	Community		Student	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Direct Behaviours				
Men	5.44	2.24	6.60	1.98
Women	4.82	2.71	6.21	2.01
Indirect Behaviours				
Men	3.87	2.33	4.53	1.55
Women	4.42	2.33	4.79	1.66

Note: Community *n*s: men = 117, women = 78; Student *n*s: men = 182, women = 453

Exploratory Analysis of Consent Behaviours By Sample

Out of interest and curiosity, exploratory analyses were also conducted to determine if community and student participants differed in the types of consent communication they reported engaging in for their most recent sexual experience. Chi-Square tests of independence were run on the consent items to see if agreement (yes or no) differed by subsample (community or

student). Table 39 demonstrates the percentage of participants who reported using each consent behaviour in their last encounter for both direct and indirect behaviours respectively. Significant differences between the groups are denoted via asterisks in the aforementioned Table. Overall, students listed more direct consent behaviours (both nonverbal and communicator/initiator), and more indirect passive behaviours. Community participants more often listed no response signals, and significantly so for “not saying anything".

Table 39

Percentage of Agreement to Direct and Indirect Consent Behaviours

Variables	Community	Students
Nonverbal Behaviours (Direct)		
I used non-verbal cues such as body language, signals, or flirting**	77.1%	89.6%
I increased physical contact between myself and my partner**	69.7%	83.7%
I touched my partner, showed him/her what I wanted through touch…**	67.7%	80.0%
I removed mine or my partners clothing**	66.7%	83.9%
I engaged in some level of sexual activity such as kissing/foreplay**	78.1%	92.6%
Communicator/Initiator Behaviours (Direct)		
I initiated sexual behavior and checked to see if it was reciprocated**	50.2%	64.3%
I used verbal cues (communicated interest/asked if they wanted to have sex)*	63.2%	72.6%
I implied my interest in sex (e.g. talked about getting a condom)**	43.8%	57.6%
Passive Behaviours (Indirect)		
I did not resist my partner’s attempts for sexual activity**	64.7%	82.8%
I did not say no or push my partner away**	56.7%	77.0%
I let the sexual activity progress (to the point of intercourse)**	72.1%	86.7%
I reciprocated my partner’s advances**	64.7%	84.1%
No Response Signals (Indirect)		
It just happened	44.3%	41.1%
I did not say anything*	17.9%	11.5%
I did not do anything; it was clear that I was willing	35.8%	32.8%

Note: * < .05, ** < .001. Significance from Chi-Square tests between community and student groups. $N = 661$.

Discussion

The present study was conducted with the aim of developing a better understanding of sexual agency as a whole and sought to determine which of its components are useful factors in predicting more positive sexual outcomes. A secondary goal was to illuminate the relationships sexual agency has within sexual encounters—that is, how it influences one’s sexual motives, and

how it impacts the types of sexual consent communication individuals use in their sexual encounters. In recent years, researchers of human sexuality have argued the nature of sexual agency (Fahs & McClelland, 2016). Overall, there seems to be consensus among researchers that sexual agency requires individuals to think of themselves as sexual beings entitled to sexual consideration, who are able to determine and communicate their sexual needs, and behave in a way that ensures fulfilling and pleasurable encounters (Albanesi, 2009; Braksmajer et al., 2022; Fahs & McClelland, 2016; Fetterolf & Sanchez, 2015; Froyum, 2010; Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2005; Stoebenau et al., 2022; Ward et al., 2018).

In the present study, careful consideration was taken to synthesize various definitions of sexual agency to develop a construct which included both the cognitive (beliefs about sexual-self) and behavioural (sexual communication tools and skills) components of agency. To capture these distinct yet interconnected facets of sexual agency, this research included indicators of sexual agency such as: how assertive one felt in sexual encounters, how much sexual self-concept (confidence and esteem) they had about themselves as sexual beings, and how comfortable they were communicating sexual desires and refusals. The indicators were all found to be positively significantly correlated to each other, with the exception of nonverbal refusal which was, as expected, significantly negatively correlated with the other sexual agency components. The nonverbal refusal subscale measures passive behaviours thus was used as a reverse coded indicator of sexual agency. Only sexual assertiveness and verbal communication were highly intercorrelated though this was not found to breach the cut-off for multicollinearity (Tabachnick et al., 2019). These relationships are discussed in more detail as follows.

Sexual Agency and Positive Evaluations

In hypothesis one, it was predicted that individuals with greater sexual agency would report better evaluations for their most recent sexual encounter. This hypothesis was supported as components of sexual agency were found to significantly predict reporting greater satisfaction, feeling safer and more willing, and having less regret for one's most recent sexual encounter. The indices of sexual agency however, were not universal predictors of better evaluations; each post-sex feeling was predicted by different combinations of the sexual agency factors, which are described in turn below.

Having greater sexual satisfaction was predicted by lower reports of nonverbal refusal for both the community and the student samples. Nonverbal refusal can be thought of as a passive and indirect form of communication, which have been linked to lower sexual satisfaction (Sanchez et al., 2012; Theiss, 2011). Bouchard and Humphreys (2019) noted how refusal behaviours may be harder for women to implement because the passivity inherent to women's' sexual scripts might make them less likely to assert refusal. Sexual passivity has been linked to traditional sexual scripts where women are encouraged to be passive in sexual situations. This lack of assertive sexual behaviour has been found to be related to being less sexually satisfied and having lower sexual functioning overall (Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007; Sanchez et al., 2006, 2012). The present study supports previous findings that nonverbal passive behaviours are associated with less sexual satisfaction.

The other sexual agency indicators were not significant predictors of satisfaction across both subsamples. For example, greater assertiveness was a significant predictor of satisfaction for the community sample but not the students, whereas verbal communication was a significant predictor for the student—but not the community sample. Assertiveness and verbal communication were found to be highly intercorrelated in both the community (r = .795) and the

student samples (r = .867) which might account for why each component was found to be a strong predictor in their respective samples. These two factors may be tapping into the same underlying ability—to advocate for one's needs and desires. Sexual communication and sexual assertiveness have even been used interchangeably in research (Mallory, 2022; Menard & Offman, 2009). Greater quality of sexual communication with a partner is related to greater relational and sexual satisfaction, even more so than how frequently one communicates about sex (Mallory, 2022), indicating how being both assertive and receptive are important factors when discussing sex with a partner. Furthermore, research has found that engaging in more disclosure of sexual desires, talking about sexual likes and dislikes, feeling comfortable about communicating about sex, and being more sexually assertive are all linked to greater sexual satisfaction (Bridges et al., 2004; Byers, 2011; MacNeil & Byers, 2005, 2009; Menard & Offman, 2009). Overall, this study supported the claims of extant literature by finding that direct and firm communication is important in promoting sexual satisfaction.

The most surprising result for this hypothesis was that lower sexual self-concept was found to significantly predict more satisfaction in the community sample (this was contrary to expectations). For the student sample, more positive self-concept predicted greater satisfaction which was in line with the original prediction. Menard and Offman (2009) assessed self-esteem (rather than self-concept) and found that having greater sexual self-esteem significantly predicted more sexual satisfaction. The difference in pattern between the two samples in this study may be due to the fact that individuals in the community sample were on average older (mean age of 32.2 vs mean age of 20.8 for students), and in longer term and more serious relationships (only 3.3% of students were married compared to 28.4% of community participants). It is possible that when individuals are in long-term committed partnerships, their sense of (sexual) self becomes

more interdependent and related to their sexual partner rather than on solely their own self-evaluations. The sexual self-concept of the individuals in this study may have been shaped more so by interpersonal scripts created by both themselves and and their partner, rather than only being influenced by solely their intrapsychic notions or cultural scripts. Simon and Gagnon (1986) noted that the stabilization of relationships and sexual identities could stabilize interpersonal scripts, and that sexual passion may become increasingly dependent on intrapsychic scripting rather than explicitly social scripts. Masters et al. (2013) conducted qualitative interviews with participants who were for the majority in longer term relationships, and found that for these individuals sexual scripts could be either transformed or exceptions to their scripts could be rationalized. This indicates a possibly that within relationships or with sexual experience, an individual's sexual scripts may change. More research is needed to assess this potential association. It could be that one's sexual-esteem becomes more interdependent, and related to their significant other over time. A "relational"-concept (rather than self-concept) might be a better measure of satisfaction for individuals in longer-term relationships. To my best knowledge, research on this association is lacking. It has yet to be examined if partners can influence each other's self-concepts in the sexual domain specifically, however, Orth and colleagues (2018) looked at the influence partners have on how much general self-esteem each partner reports overtime. They found that there is no indication of mutual influence between partners influencing individual and couple self-esteem (generally). It is worth noting that sexual self-esteem and global self-esteem have been found to be distinct constructs (Oattes & Offman, 2007), and as such, more research should be conducted to determine if sexual self-concept becomes less important over the course of a relationship, and if it becomes replaced with a more communal or relational sexual sense.

It could also be that with age, self-concept becomes a less important factor in enabling individuals to determine what they like and don't like in sexual situations because sexual precedent and experience may play a larger role. Sexual experience was not measured in this study and thus future research should investigate if experience and time with a partner impacts one's sexual self-concept. Previous research has found that over a year-long period, girls tend to experience less negative sexual affect (O'Sullivan et al., 2006), and furthermore it is not until a woman is in her mid-twenties until she feels comfortable and confident to share sexual interests with her partner (Herbenick et al., 2019). More should be done to determine how one's self-concept (both positive and negative aspects) change over time.

Looking at the internal consent feelings, and seeing which sexual agency predictors were best suited to predict feeling both safer and more willing to engage in sex, a similar pattern emerged. Individuals seemed to feel safer and be more willing to engage in sex when they were able to express their desires and needs, and felt confident in initiating the sexual encounter. Nonverbal initiation was a significant predictor of feeling both safer and more willing; yet verbal communication only significantly predicted feelings of safety whereas sexual assertiveness only predicted more willingness. As previously discussed, sexual assertiveness and verbal communication may be capturing similar constructs which would account for one being a significant predictor for one feeling but not the other. Furthermore, as was expected, reporting more nonverbal refusal was negatively related to agreement in the community sample. Since refusal is an antonym of agreement this seems like a logical association, and since refusal is usually used in situations where an activity is undesired, it stands to reason that greater nonverbal refusal also predicted less feelings of safety as well. It is important to stress the reciprocal nature of feelings of safety and refusal as individuals who feel less safe may not feel comfortable

enough to verbally refuse and might resort to less direct forms of refusal instead, or comply to unwanted or risky sex all together. I argue that the use of more passive refusal might stem from the social scripts individuals learn which uphold a rhetoric of power imbalance within sexuality, and also prevents individuals from learning the proper tools to assert disinterest. Women have been found to engage in unwanted sex or not refuse painful sex due to relational obligation, to satisfy a partner, or because of social pressure (Carter et al., 2019; Impett & Peplau, 2002). Bouchard and Humphreys (2019) posit that women might perceive having less control in unwanted situations due to societal notions of power, obligation, precedent, and satisfaction in heterosexual encounters.

Having higher self-concept in the student sample predicted more safety feelings, and having higher sexual assertiveness predicted greater willingness to engage in sex for both subsamples. This finding might elude to the roll internal appraisals have on facilitating healthy and positive sexual experiences. One such link that has been previously documented is that sexual assertiveness and sexual wanting are crucial components in predicting if an individual will be sexually compliant. Darden and colleagues (2019) found that if someone does not want to engage in sex they are at a greater risk for complying to unwanted if they also report lower levels of sexual assertiveness. Sexual assertiveness and agreement/willingness are interrelated: just like assertiveness can impact one's self-assurance in their sexual desire and their feelings of willingness, how much internal agreement one feels and confidence in the desire they feel can also influence how assertive they act. Moreover, evidence suggests that having both higher self-esteem and greater assertiveness in the sexual domain is related to more sexual satisfaction and better sexual functioning (Bridges et al., 2004; MacNeil & Byers, 2005; Menard & Offman, 2009).

Lastly, sexual regret was found to be predicted by different components of sexual agency for the community and student samples. It is important to note that the majority of participants did not regret their most recent sexual encounters which is line with previous literature (Uecker & Martinez, 2017). Within the community sample, participants were, on average, both older and in more committed relationships compared to the students, and it was found that using greater verbal communication and less nonverbal refusal predicted being less regretful. These two aspects of sexual agency seem to be complimentary to each other as verbal communication captures a more direct form of sexual communication whereas nonverbal refusal captures a more passive and indirect way of interacting in sexual relationships. It stands to reason that someone who is more comfortable in verbally communicating about sex would also resort to less passive or nonverbal forms of refusal. Women who are more submissive tend to report lower sexual satisfaction (Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007; Sanchez et al., 2012) and lower satisfaction is linked with regret. As previously mentioned, using less nonverbal refusal also significantly predicted more satisfaction in the community sample, which highlights a complementary relationship between satisfaction and regret; satisfaction and regret were significantly negatively correlated in the present study. Ahmadabadi et al. (2015) found that a lack of sexual agency, or less intentionality and self-control in a sexual encounter was associated with more sexual regret. Individuals in long-term relationships have also been found to report higher rates of sexual compliance, a type of sexual interaction which is rated as less enjoyable overall (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012). The results of this study support that complying to sex, not verbally expressing one's desires, or stating disinterest can lead to more regret. For the student sample, the cognitive components of sexual agency played a bigger role. Having greater assertiveness and self-concept—along with using more nonverbal initiation—predicted less regret. The sense of self aspects of agency might

be more important when it comes to protecting against negative aspects of sex; more so than in promoting positive sexual situations. This could be linked to resiliency such that the more self-assured and empowered you feel to sexual consideration the more resilient you might be to feeling negative consequences in sexual interactions.

Sexual Agency and Sexual Consent

Hypothesis two aimed to determine the relationship between sexual agency and consent communication. It was predicted that those who reported more sexual agency would use more direct forms of consent communication, while those with lower sexual agency would use more indirect consent communication. Total sexual agency scores, as well as its individual components were used in two separate analyses to assess the relationship agency has with consent communication. Results are mixed, and thus will be discussed separately.

When looking at differences in total sexual agency scores between consent-type groups, the trend was the same for both subsamples, however the findings were only significant for the student sample. Students participants who reported mostly direct consent communication had significantly higher scores on sexual agency than those who used similar amounts of both direct and indirect consent communication, and had even higher sexual agency scores than those who listed mostly indirect consent behaviours. It could be that this larger difference was only found in the student sample because students in university are often encouraged to consent to sexual liaisons and can be provided with resources and campaigns to encourage direct consent behaviours. Specifically at Trent University, Consent at Trent is an organisation that provides information, resources, and learning events which promote the use of sexual consent behaviours on campus. These programs may increase sexual agency as they let individuals know that they are entitled to sexual autonomy and these programs may also provide individuals with the

necessary skills to facilitate sexual consent communication. Evidence is starting to emerge that including affirmative sexual consent in campus sexual health programming can increase individuals intentions to use consent and comfort with the topic (Ortiz, 2019). However, more in depth research is needed to test the efficacy of university programming to see exactly what topics and skills are most useful in providing students with the confidence and understanding of how to navigate sexual encounters.

Though the community sample also tended to have higher sexual agency scores in the direct consent group compared to the other consent groups, levels were not found to differ significantly across consent-type groups. This could be because as relationships progress or as individuals age, sexual experience becomes a more salient predictor of the use of consent behaviours. People in long term relationships may be more likely to use sexual precedent as an indicator of consent rather than explicit consent communication. Sexual (consent) precedent can be understood as a shift from needing to obtain and give explicit consent to a an assumption that consent is present unless otherwise revoked because of the sexual history or length of a sexual relationship (Muehlenhard et al., 2016; Shotland & Goodstein, 1992). Researchers have found that individuals who have sexual history together report using less consent cues with that partner than those who have less shared sexual experience, and that people perceive explicit mention of sexual consent to be less important in longer term relationships or when sexual actions have already taken place (Beres, 2014; Humphreys, 2007; Willis & Jozkowski, 2019). The way individuals conceptualize consent or think about its relevance may change over the course of a relationship as new and specific rules and sexual scripts are formulated to fit the relational dynamics. Sexual agency might be a more crucial factor in negotiating consent at the onset of the relationship because this is when scripts are negotiated and altered. As Simon and Gagnon

(2003) posit, individuals can make changes to scripts to fit their interpersonal needs, however having the confidence and skills to navigate those discussions such as self-esteem and assertiveness can help ensure an individual's preference is considered in the new script. Some evidence exists that sexual scripts can be transformed or exceptions to the cultural norm can be made in intrapsychic understandings of scripts (Masters et al., 2013), however more research is needed in this area.

Analyses were also conducted to determine which sexual agency components were the best predictors of using more direct sexual consent. Different patterns of predictors emerged for the student and community samples. For community participants the significant predictors of using more direct sexual consent were having less positive sexual self-concept and more verbal communication. Similar to hypothesis one, self-concept was related to consent communication in a way contrary to what was expected. Again, this link may be due to the longer term relationships listed by the community sample. If one does in fact become more relationally oriented (rather than self-determined) in more committed relationships, if sexual consent becomes more readily assumed, and if scripts shift to be more co-created and based on previous experiences central to the couple, then it would make sense that having less of a positive self-concept might impact how much consent behaviours are being used. If an individual's lack of positive self-concept prevents them from forming a strong relational-concept than this could predict more consent communication as these individuals might feel less at ease in their sexual relationship and depend on concrete consent behaviour more than depending on assumed relational precedent.

Work in attachment theory has found distinctions in individual's sense of self such that anxiously or avoidantly attached individuals have lower senses of selves compared to securely

attached individuals (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). In terms of sexual consent, evidence does suggest that women who have anxious and avoidant attachment styles consent to sex that is unwanted in order to preserve the relationship (Impett & Peplau, 2002). Though attachment theory was not central to the current study's investigation, it may be a useful theory to incorporate in future research to understand why some individuals with lower self-concept might consent to sexual encounters. It should be noted that in the current study it is unclear if the consent communication reported by participants was for wanted or unwanted encounters.

For the student sample, reporting more nonverbal initiation behaviours and less nonverbal refusal were the only significant predictors of reporting more direct sexual consent.
It seems counterintuitive that the more agreement with indirect nonverbal behaviours predicts more direct sexual consent behaviours however research finds that sexual consent tends to be mostly nonverbal (Muehlenhard et al., 2016; Shumlich & Fisher, 2018). It is worth mentioning that the student sample was for the majority comprised of women identifying participants (81%), and that the sexual scripts that women learn may make them more likely to be more nonverbal in their assertion of sexual consent as to not appear too eager or intimidate a male partner who's script involves being the initiator. Heterosexual women have been found to more likely assume sexual consent from their partner when he asks for consent (rather than asking for consent themselves) which could explain the link between nonverbal behaviours and participants' perceptions of direct consent behaviours (Jozkowski, Peterson, et al., 2014). The finding that direct consent was best predicted by comfort in nonverbal sexual communication in a predominantly woman identifying sample supports the notion that women are more often presented with a more passive script where asserting interest in sex and assenting to sexual activity is best done discreetly as not to defy social norms in sexuality.

It is worth noting that the cognitive components of sexual agency, namely assertiveness beliefs and positive self-concept, were not as strong of predictors as were the more behavioural aspects of sexual agency. Expressing sexual consent with a partner is a type of communication in and of itself, thus it is logical that how comfortable individuals feel in enacting sexual communication is more relevant than how comfortable and confident individuals feel as sexual beings. Evidence suggests that when young adults have both the skills and the encouragement to use sexual consent in their sexual interactions they are more likely to use affirmative consent (Shumlich & Fisher, 2020).This further emphasizes that both empowerment to sexual consideration and equipment to facilitate sexual conversations and negotiations are two necessary axes in sexual situations. Particularly, when it comes to communicating sexual desire and being willing to engage in sex, one must feel like they can act in sexually agentic ways. However, in the discussion that follows, we see that one's internal appraisals are also important.

Sexual Agency and Sexual Motivations

It was predicted in hypothesis three that those who reported greater sexual agency would list more intrinsic motivations for engaging in sex, while those with lower sexual agency were expected to list more extrinsic motives. This hypothesis was partially supported as not all sexual agency indicators were significant predictors for each motivation, yet sexual agency was generally found to significantly predict more intrinsic motives for engaging in sex. It was found that listing more ease in sexual communication significantly predicted more intrinsic drives for engaging in sex for both subsamples, while having lower appraisals of one's sexual-self significantly predicted more extrinsic motivations for having intercourse.

The reason communication played a bigger role in predicting more personal motivations might be because those who feel more capable and comfortable discussing sexuality or their

sexual desires are more likely to enact the types of sexual situations they want, and are able to ask for sex that is intrinsically desired. Wongsomboon et al. (2022) found that communicating assertively was associated with more autonomous motives for engaging in casual sex within their female sample. There is also evidence that women who feel more entitled to sexual consideration, or in other words feel as though they are allowed to have their sexual desires, are better able to ask for pleasure and engage in safer sex (Chmielewski et al., 2020). This highlights the reciprocal relationship between making an autonomous decision and a positive one. For this reason, it was also expected that one's sexual sense of self might impact the reasons behind why they engage in sex. The societal messaging about sexual entitlement and one's right to sexual consideration was thought to possibly impact an individual's personal sexual schema, in turn influencing their motivations for engaging in sex. However, in these samples the cognitive components of sexual agency were not found to be significant predictors of reporting more personal drives, yet they did predict reporting more extrinsic motivation.

Though the schemas individuals have about their sexual selves might not be useful in producing more positive outcomes (as was indicated with the communication components of sexual agency), the affective components of sexual agency—namely sexual assertiveness and self-concept—could be more useful in protecting against negative, unwanted, or placatory experiences. Previous research has found that when one feels entitled to sexual pleasure, the less their likelihood of preforming undesired sex acts in hookup situations (Kettrey, 2018). A sense of entitlement to sexual consideration, and positive sexual affect may then lead to less externally motivated sexual encounters, such as due to compliance or external pressure. In the current study it was found that reporting lower assertiveness and less positive self-concept significantly predicted more extrinsically motivated sexual interactions. These results support a previous

finding that women who list more reasons based in insecurity for engaging in sex (a nonautonomous motivation) report lower sexual assertiveness (Wongsomboon et al., 2022). It should be noted however, that the current sample surveyed both men and women, and more research is needed to determine how men's sexual motivations are specifically impacted by sexual agency. It was also found that greater nonverbal refusal significantly predicted more external drives for both samples. Though impossible to tell if the participants of this study who engaged in sex for extrinsic reasons were also more ambivalent, the external reasons may indicate less personal wanting as one's main motive and rather be more related to appeasement, relational upkeep, or a transactional approach. Research indicates that when women engage in ambivalent or unwanted (but consensual) sex they list extrinsic reasons such as to please a partner, to maintain their partner's interest, because of social or partner pressure (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008; Impett & Peplau, 2002; Livingston et al., 2004). It makes sense then, that the less wanted interactions might be more passively refused to and involve less engaged sexual communication.

The predictors for both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations were relatively similar between the two subsamples and followed the same trends, indicating that sexual motivations may be more consistent across samples and relationship types. This provides validity that sexual agency may in fact be a good predictor to determine if an individual will be motivated by more intrinsic factors, however (to my best knowledge) this is the first study to test this association and thus replication is needed to determine if this finding is generalizable. Though motivations for engaging in sex may differ between gender (Ahmadabadi et al., 2015; Meston & Buss, 2007) and it may change over time (Armstrong & Reissing, 2015; Muise, 2017), the current study finds that

individuals were, on average, more likely to be motivated by intrinsic reasons compared to extrinsic ones, no matter their demographic identity.

Sexual Motivations and Sexual Well-Being

Hypothesis four aimed to determine if having more intrinsic drives for engaging in sex would lead to better evaluations for that encounter—that is, it was expected that someone who was driven to have sex for the sex itself would be more satisfied, feel safer, be more willing, and report less regret compared to someone who had sex to obtain a secondary goal. It was predicted that having more external drives for engaging in sex would lead to poorer evaluations and more regret for the encounter, seeing as extrinsic motives are less central to the self and are not as focussed on self-serving or actualizing outcomes. These hypotheses were supported as intrinsic sexual motivations significantly predicted better outcomes for both the community and the student samples with the exception of more satisfaction for the community sample which only approached significance. It may be possible that no significant relationship between satisfaction and intrinsic motives were found for the community sample because these participants were in more long-term relationships where sexual satisfaction is found to steadily decrease over time (Liu, 2003; Schmiedeberg & Schröder, 2016). In the current study, the community sample was found to have an average sexual satisfaction score that was slightly lower than that of the student sample.

Furthermore, individuals in long-term relationships could be experiencing more stable sexual satisfaction and base their sexual satisfaction more on relational aspects rather than their own pleasure motives. Such relational drivers for satisfaction may include wanting to be connected with a partner, wanting to please a partner, compromising for the betterment of the relationship, or trying something new to boost variety. Reasons such as these may be more

focussed on engaging in the behaviour not for the pleasure of sex itself, but rather for the pleasure that comes with sexual connection and relational bonding. Mitchell et al. (2011) found that both men and women reported engaging in sex for relational reasons—i.e. ensuring reciprocity, emotional connection, and compromise, rather than engaging in sex for sexual pleasure (another of the scripts identified by participants and mostly men). It could be that both these erotic and relational drives are simply different types of autonomous motivations. Intrinsic motivations are based on self-determined actions and necessitates that individuals engage in a behaviour for the gratification of the behaviour itself, however there is a type of extrinsic motivation which is also quite autonomous. Integrated regulation is a type of autonomous motivation which results when an external motivation for engaging in behaviour becomes fully assimilated into the self and the reason for engaging becomes self-determined (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Having sex because one wishes to preserve the relationship or to please a partner is undoubtably extrinsically motivated, however if one genuinely values the relationship and having sex supports their intrinsic desire for emotional connection with a partner, then the extrinsic motive is fully integrated and the behaviour becomes autonomous and self-determined. Evidence exists that when individuals engage in sex to promote positive relational outcomes they are themselves more satisfied and their partners are happier as well (Cooper et al., 2011; Muise, 2017; Muise et al., 2013). Though extant literature has looked at sexual motivations in varying ways, more work is needed to fully understand motivation and its relationship to sexual agency, and future research should use self-determination theory to further tease apart the driving forces for engaging in sex.

Overall, being more intrinsically motivated to engage in sex predicted feeling more satisfied in the encounter, feeling safer, being more willing, and having less regret for engaging

in sex. Researchers have found that engaging in sex for self-determined reasons is associated with having one's sexual needs met (Brunell & Webster, 2013; Sanchez et al., 2011; Smith, 2007). Speciffically, Brunell and Webster (2013) found that participants reported greater sexual well-being and relational connection when their sexual needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness were met. Nonautonomous motives for engaging in sex are also linked to lower orgasmic function, especially in casual relationships where sexual scripts are more prevalent (Wongsomboon et al., 2022). Moreover, Smith (2007) found that engaging in sexual behaviours that were self-determined led to less regret and guilt, and that participants reported feeling more relaxed and satisfied. The results from the current study support the extant literature as intrinsic-type reasons for engaging in sex were more likely to predict positive outcomes, while extrinsic reasons for engaging in sex were more likely to predict negative ones. As predicted for both samples, being more externally driven to engage in sex led to lower reports of satisfaction, lower feelings of safety, lower amounts of willingness, and more regret for engaging in sex. This could be due to the low amounts of self-determination involved in engaging in sex for others, because of social influence which make one's decisions to engage in sex seem less autonomously decided, or due to cultural scripts which impose non-integrated motives for having sex. Extrinsic motives might be especially influential in terms of causal sexual encounters because without relational aspects influencing the drives of individuals, having little autonomy or competence to enact desired outcomes may lead to more disappointment as it is less important if the individual's partner is satisfied or the relationship is strengthened.

Motivations Mediating the Sexual Agency and Evaluations Relationship

Hypothesis five argued that intrinsic motivations would partially mediate the relationship between sexual agency and reporting better sexual evaluations. It was expected that sexual

agency would precede motivations in the causal path, influencing how one's intrinsic motivations might impact positive sexual evaluations. This was found to be true for each of the four aspects of positive sexuality, namely having greater sexual satisfaction, more willingness to engage in sex, feeling safer in the encounter, and reporting less regret for the student sample, and for the community sample with one exception: intrinsic motivations were not found to significantly predict more sexual satisfaction (as discussed in the section prior). For both the community and student samples, the associations between individual's sexual agency scores and their better evaluations was explained (partially) by intrinsic motivations. That is, sexual agency directly impacts how positive one evaluates their sexual encounters but also influences how personally motivated one is to engage in sex which also impacts better sexual evaluations. As mentioned in the previous sections, *acting* in agentic ways more accurately predicted feeling intrinsically motivated whereas *feeling* more agentic more accurately predicted feeling less extrinsically motivated, indicating that these motivations may be preceded and influenced by different factors. Sexual agency as a whole predicted more intrinsic motivations but as seen in the breakdown of the sexual agency indicators stated prior, this may have been due to one's comfort in sexual communication more than anything else.

One possible pathway to more positive sexual evaluations may involve feeling more empowered or entitled to satisfaction. If an individual is taught that their satisfaction or desires matter in sexual situations, they may have more sexual agency and self-determination to enact sexual encounters that are truly desired leading to more positive sexual evaluations of that encounter. Supporting this notion, Chmielewski et al. (2020) found that women who feel entitled to sexual consideration are better able to engage in pleasurable sex. Moreover, women who feel more sexually assertive list more autonomous motives for engaging in casual sex

(Wongsomboon et al., 2022). This drive to engage in sex that is both pleasurable and desired can lead to better personal outcomes because sex that is self-motivated is more focussed on the sexual outcome itself rather than to fulfill an external or secondary condition. Engaging in sex where the motivation is to meet one's needs of sexual autonomy, competence, and relatedness can be referred to as self-determined sex. Self-determined sex has been found to be linked with greater sexual well-being and relational connection, as well as lower sexual guilt and regret (Brunell & Webster, 2013; Sanchez et al., 2011; Smith, 2007). Alternatively, the more confidence and tools an individual is afforded to enact the sexual encounters they truly desire, the more they might be motivated to seek such pleasurable encounters and as a result have positive and fulfilling sexual interactions. Women have been found to only speak about what brings them pleasure when they feel confident with their partner (Herbenick et al., 2019) and having sex for pleasure is linked with better orgasmic function (Wongsomboon et al., 2022).

Previous research on the mediating effects of sexual agency and motivations are lacking though literature is starting to emerge. Wongsomboon and colleagues (2022) found evidence for a mediation model in which pleasure motives for engaging in sex predicted more sexual assertiveness which in turn predicted better orgasmic function. This model differed from the current study's model, as sexual agency was theorized to precede intrinsic motivations in the causal path. It is also worth noting that sexual satisfaction can be measured in many ways and did differ between the two studies; orgasmic functioning was assessed in Wongsomboon and colleagues' (2022) study though this is not comparable to the feelings of sexual satisfaction which were assessed in the current study. Furthermore, Wongsomboon et al. (2022) used the pleasure subscale from the YSEX questionnaire as their measure of motivation whereas the current study used a theoretical conceptualization of intrinsic motives which did include pleasure

motives but also included other subscales such as the Love and Commitment and Experience Seeking subfactors from the YSEX questionnaire. Despite the differences in the two studies however, evidence emerges that sexual agency (or aspects of sexual agency such as sexual assertiveness), sexual motivations, and sexual outcomes such as pleasure and satisfaction are all related. In the current study sexual agency significantly predicted having greater intrinsic motivations, yet previous findings also suggest that pleasure motives significantly predict reporting more sexual assertiveness (Wongsomboon et al., 2022). More work is needed to properly map out and interpret the relationships which exist between sexual agency, sexual motivations, and sexual outcomes.

I argue that the amount of entitlement to pleasure prescribed to individuals by societal ideals can impact ones feeling of empowerment in sexual situations also influencing how much sexual agency they have. Having high or low amounts of agency can then impact the amount of consideration to sex an individual feels allowed to have further affecting how self-determined they act to ensure an intrinsic sexual interaction. These scripts can also directly impact how much satisfaction or consideration one feels like they are entitled to, possibly changing the baseline of what they find acceptable or satisfactory in sex. These interrelationships need to be further examined to better understand the impact sexual agency has both directly and indirectly within sexual encounters and on sexual well-being.

Sexual Consent Mediating the Sexual Agency and Evaluations Relationship

Similarly to the section discussed prior, hypothesis six predicted that direct sexual consent would mediate the relationship between sexual agency and one's evaluation of their most recent encounter. It was expected that having more sexual agency would predict using more direct sexual consent which would in turn promote more positive sexual evaluations. Greater

direct sexual consent was found to be significantly predicted by higher sexual agency scores, and this direct consent significantly predicted more positive evaluations for both the student and community sample. The only exception was that no significant relationship was found between direct consent behaviours and sexual satisfaction for the community sample. Greater satisfaction (for students), as well as more sexual safety and agreement feelings, and lower rates of sexual regret (for both subsamples) were all significantly predicted by the indirect path through consent communication and were also directly affected by greater sexual agency.

Results indicate that sexual agency predicts sexual satisfaction though this was partially mediated by direct consent communication during an individual's most recent sexual encounter. The results of the mediation model indicated that sexual agency has direct impacts on how positively one evaluates their most recent encounter and also can impact how directly one feels they can communicate consent during their sexual encounter which subsequently affects the amount of sexual satisfaction one experiences. Greene and Faulkner (2005) similarly looked that the indirect effect of sexual assertiveness on relational satisfaction, and determined how SDSs might influence this relationship. The authors reported that greater SDS endorsement led to less sexual assertiveness which in turn impacted sexual communication, and ultimately affected how much relational satisfaction the participants reported. This study provides support for the current study's findings that a socially influenced construct such as sexual agency can impact one's communication behaviours to such an extent that it also impacts their sexual satisfaction. More evidence also suggests that feeling empowered and confident in sexual situations can impact one's ability to express sexual needs in a direct manner. Satinsky and Jozkowski (2015) noted that feeling both entitled to sexual pleasure and having the self-efficacy to express these desires predicted a woman's greater ability to use direct consent communication with a partner when

communicating about oral sex. Increases in direct sexual communication have been linked to greater sexual satisfaction (Herbenick et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2013; Richters et al., 2014).

Direct sexual consent was found to be used more by individuals who reported high sexual agency scores. This increase in consent communication may be because individuals high in sexual agency feel more assertive and have more comfort in communicating about sex. Ease and confidence in sexual communication generally has been related to improved sexual outcomes (Byers, 2011; MacNeil & Byers, 2005, 2009; Menard & Offman, 2009). It is evident that feeling like a sexual subject (rather than object) can improve individual's communication within sexual encounters and foster more direct sexual consent behaviours, but I argue that empowerment must also include equipment; direct sexual consent cannot be expected of individuals if they are not also taught how act like sexual agents. Individuals must be given the tools and learn the skills to negotiate sexual expectancies, state desires, and set boundaries—all important components of direct consent communication. Shumlich and Fisher (2020) found that when young adults are provided with sexual communication skills and encouraged to use them they are more likely to use affirmative consent. Women are less likely to receive such skills if they learn about sexuality in terms of abstinence or if they are exposed to more SDS messaging. Women have been found to receive more SDS and abstinence messaging about sex compared to men which was linked with lower comfort in sexual communication (Levin et al., 2012). Increasing individual's sexual agency can improve individual's capacity to constructively, affirmatively, and clearly communicate sexual consent. As seen in the current study, efficacy in sexual consent communication can have marked impacts on sexual well-being, as direct sexual consent leads to more feelings of safety and willingness in a sexual situation and reduces one's odds of experiencing sexual regret.

Sexual agency components such as self-esteem and assertiveness can directly impact how one feels in sexual situations, but they can also improve consent communication which in turn makes the encounter safer, and more positive. It is the hope that greater sexual agency leads to more instances where sex is not only consented to but also wanted. Consenting to sex that is unwanted is linked to poorer outcomes such as feeling a sense of self-disappointment (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998), experiencing less pleasure (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2010), and being less consistent with condom use (Fair & Vanyur, 2011). Feeling agentic however, or having higher sexual subjectivity, may be an important contributing factor which not only leads to more sexual consent but leads to more sexual consent in desired and wanted interactions. The current study demonstrated that willingness to engage in sex was positively linked with direct consent communication, however more research is needed to determine if sexual agency can increase the amount of sexual interactions which are both wanted and consented to. Past researchers have warned that gender stereotypes and sexual scripts can be a barrier to sexual well-being (Fetterolf & Sanchez, 2015; Maas et al., 2015). Evidence suggests that women meet gendered expectations of passivity in sexual consent communication, more often using passive consent behaviours compared to men (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008; Jozkowski, Peterson, et al., 2014). Increasing sexual agency may be a useful way to counteract the harmful SDSs in sexual communication in order to promote greater sexual well-being.

Gender Analyses

The final predictions of the current study focussed on gender differences. Men were predicted to report both greater sexual agency and have better evaluations of their most recent sexual encounter compared to women. Two exploratory analyses were also proposed to determine if gender differences existed in the types of motivations individuals listed and the

types of consent communication they used. These analyses were conducted using only the community sample as the student sample did not have an adequate number of male participants (81% women) and the variances were unequal. Contrary to the predictions, none of the gender analyses revealed significant differences between cismen and ciswomen.

Men were not found to have higher total sexual agency scores compared to women. Though sexual double standards still exist and heterosexual scripts do uphold men and women to different standards and behavioural expectations (Endendijk et al., 2020; Jonason & Marks, 2009; Kreager et al., 2016), there is evidence that SDSs are becoming more egalitarian and are not prevalent across all sexual behaviours (Crawford & Popp, 2003; Endendijk et al., 2020). Evidence such as this suggests that the amount of agency men and women feel entitled to may be becoming more similar. In a study where individuals were asked to assess different dating profiles with varying levels of sexual agency, both sexually agentic men and women were rated similarly, indicating a possible shift in SDSs on sexual agency (Fetterolf & Sanchez, 2015). Sexual agency might also be more equal across gender because of sexual health education curricula which integrate sexual consent negotiation into its programming and encourage initiation and refusal assertiveness—especially for young women. Evidence suggests that women more often use refusal assertiveness while men use more initiation assertiveness, however this does highlight that both genders are using assertive behaviours in sexual situations (Sierra et al., 2012). Furthermore, it is important to consider the ages at which agency might be most impactful. With experience, individuals may report increased sexual agency and self-efficacy (Hewitt-Stubbs et al., 2016; Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2011). This sample was on average 32 years old, were mostly in long-term relationships, and the majority reported experience with multiple sexual behaviours indicating that sexual agency

might have already been developed through experience and the difference in sexual agency due to SDSs may have been lessened. More work is needed to explore if any large discrepancies in sexual agency exist between young men and women, and how this changes over time.

No gender differences were found on individuals' rates of sexual satisfaction, feelings of safety, or feelings of agreement for the encounter. Though some slight differences emerge in what men and women consider to be pleasurable in sexual encounters (Barnett & Melugin, 2016), finding small to no gender differences in sexual satisfaction is consistent with previous literature (Petersen & Hyde, 2010). There is evidence however, that the baselines of what individuals consider as satisfactory are different between men and women. Women have been found to report lower expectations for what they consider to be satisfactory in sex, and often base their evaluations of how good they perceived their sex to be on how satisfied their partner appeared, or on the absence of pain or discomfort in their sexual encounter (Bell & McClelland, 2018; McClelland, 2010, 2017). Because the majority of the individuals in this sample reported on partnered sexual interactions, safety and agreement to sex may have already been established in previous interactions thus was set as precedent. Feelings of safety and willingness might be more important in casual sex encounters, and at younger ages where these internal feelings regarding consent might be more central to one's evaluations. Furthermore, no significant differences were found in men and women's reports of sexual regret. Very little of the sample reported regret (21.8% of women compared to 11.4% of men), which is similar to previous rates of prevalence and patterns between genders (Ahmadabadi et al., 2015; Kennair et al., 2018; Uecker & Martinez, 2017). Women did seem to be about two times more likely to report regretful experiences which was an almost significant difference ($p = .051$). It is important to note that the reasons why individuals regretted their experience were not assessed. Men have

been found to regret sexual encounters more so because of physical reasons (i.e. a lack of attraction) whereas women list more guilt and shame reasons for regretting past uncommitted sexual encounters (Fisher et al., 2012). Future research should recruit participants to complete a study with a specific focus on unwanted or regretful experiences to see if there are gender differences in who experiences more regretful encounters and for which reasons.

Exploratory analyses did not indicate any significant difference in intrinsic or extrinsic motivations between cismen and ciswomen, nor any significant difference in direct and indirect consent behaviour use between genders. Passive consent is the most used regardless of gender (Jozkowski, 2013; Jozkowski, Sanders, et al., 2014). Nonverbal indirect behaviours are used more frequently than direct verbal cues (Beres et al., 2004; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Humphreys, 2007; Muehlenhard et al., 2016) which was supported in this study though direct verbal consent behaviours were heavily reported. It could be that this sample overall was more likely to use consent which could be due to the rise of the MeToo movement and social discourse around sexual consent. The lack of gender difference in motivations might also be because differences in motivations are more socially and situationally based rather than based on gender. Individuals tend to list multiple reasons for engaging in sex (Meston & Buss, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2011; Muise et al., 2013), and these reasons are both intrinsic and extrinsic in nature. It is useful to consider that many different reasons might be at play for any given sexual situation. It was hypothesized that sexual motives and consent behaviours were dependent on one's amount of sexual agency (which was supported) and seeing as participant's agency was not found to significantly differ, a lack of significant difference in these motives and consent constructs is in line with that finding. It seems as though agency is a bigger indicator of how direct one might communicate or how self-motivated one feels to engage in sex than gender is. It is important to

focus on agency and find ways to support and encourage agency development in both young men and women so that all individuals can experience the benefits of enacting desired and safer sexual encounters. Findings from the current study further support the notion that men and women are more similar than they are different.

It also must be noted that age and sexual experience were not controlled for which has been found to impact consent communication and satisfaction. Herbenick et al. (2019) found that, on average, it is not until a woman is in her mid-twenties that she feels comfortable communicating her sexual desires with a partner or that she even considers her pleasure to matter to her partner. It could be that with a younger sample gender differences would emerge as social impacts and peer pressure might play a larger role. Furthermore, feeling more entitled to sexual pleasure has been associated with having more sexual experience (Hewitt-Stubbs et al., 2016). Young heterosexual women are found to prioritize their partners' pleasure over than their own (Carter et al., 2019) and ask for less in sexual situations (McClelland, 2011), one example being that young women are more likely to give oral sex to a partner than they are to receive oral sex from their partner (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012). Future research should look at how aspects of sexual agency and entitlement to sexual pleasure changes over time, and if any gender differences exist at younger ages.

Study Limitations

The present study contributes meaningful findings to the knowledge gap in human sexuality research, however it is not without its limitations. The retrospective and the self-report nature of the study may skew results due to social desirability and/or recall bias. To limit the impact of time influencing the accuracy of participants' recollections, participants were asked to only reflect on their most recent sexual encounter. Even with this precaution, participants may

have been unconsciously influenced by previous interactions with their partner (or with other partners) and could have based their responses on these sexual interactions which may have biased the results. Moreover, a small yet considerable number of participants had their last sexual interaction over 3 months ago and were asked to think back to the specific feelings and behaviours they experienced and engaged in at that time. This retrospection may have impacted the accuracy of their recollections. Participants may have also reported on the measures with socially desirable answers to appear either more sexually adept or because they did not feel comfortable disclosing their accurate feelings and beliefs.

Efforts were made to broaden the generalizability of the sample by including both students and community participants in the study. Despite the efforts to promote inclusivity in the sample, it is worth noting that the participant pool was limited to an exclusively Canadian population, and of the participants who partook in the study the majority were of European decent, most were under 35 years of age, and the sample was predominantly heterosexual. The results cannot be generalized to all individuals in Canada, nor should the results be used to speak to individuals of different cultures or ethnicities, sexual orientations, or age groups. Separate analyses were envisioned for the 2SLGBTQI+ individuals of the study, however there were not enough trans and 2SLGBQI+ participants to have sufficient power for these analyses. Research on sexual agency in these communities is important and future research should oversample these populations.

Another consideration to note regarding this study's sample includes where the participants were recruited from. The retention rate for the data provided by the student sample on SONA was approximately 94% whereas the retention rate for the data from the community participants (from social media and MTurk) was 38% and 59% respectively (see Table 1). This

brings into question the accuracy and reliability of the data collected from these online sources. Community participants were recruited broadly from social media platforms such as Reddit and Facebook where they were asked to complete the study anonymously for a chance to win a gift-card. The advertisements were placed on general forums and online groups and thus it could be that this location of recruitment attracted participants who did not care about the accuracy of their responses and were not concerned with the quality of their contribution to research. More quality data may have resulted by increasing the participants' compensation. This may also be the case for the MTurk sample as their rate of compensation for participating in the study was quite low. Evidence suggests that the quality of MTurk data has been declining in recent years which may impact the conclusions drawn from this recruitment location (Chmielewski & Kucker, 2020). In order to address this risk, I followed recommendations to ensure quality of online data. This included: screening the data for patterned responding, including attention questions to ensure validity in the responses, and a qualitative question was included to assess if robot type responses (i.e. illogical sentences, or exact repeated sentences) were present (Aguinis et al., 2021; Chmielewski & Kucker, 2020; Newman et al., 2021). The participants' true motivations for engaging in the study cannot be assessed, thus the reliability of their responses must be considered. It is important for future researchers to consider from where they recruit their community samples. Working with community organisations such as clinics, non-for-profits, and local outreach programs may be a better avenue for recruitment which may result in more quality participant engagement.

Evidence also suggests that individuals who participate in sexuality research tend to have more sexual experience, have less shame about their sexual encounters, and are more positive about their sexuality (Dawson et al., 2019; Strassberg & Lowe, 1995). These participant

characteristics may all be related to how sexually agentic an individual is. It could be that individuals with low levels of sexual agency felt too ashamed or demure to participate in this study which may have biased the volunteer pool for this study, possibly skewing the results. Furthermore, compensation for participation was quite low, possibly impacting the quality of the results obtained. With more time and funding it would be important to replicate the findings of the current study by recruiting participants from all across Canada, from various locations to ensure proper representation of ethnicities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and ages.

It should also be noted that certain factors were not assessed or controlled for in this study. Participants were asked to reflect on their most recent sexual experience, and individuals of all relationship types (from casual to long-term married) were welcome to participate, however relationship length was not assessed and so it could not be controlled for in the analyses. It could be that length of relationship impacts the intrapsychic and interpersonal scripts individuals have (Masters et al., 2013), shaping their sense of sexual agency and ultimately impacting their motivations for engaging in sex or the consent behaviours they engage in. Age and gender were also not added into the models as covariates for the regression analyses of this study as the age range in participants was quite narrow (the majority were early adults) and gender analyses were conducted separately. Exploratory analyses on the impacts of age were envisioned, though due to time, and a limited participant age range, they were not conducted. In regard to the gendered analyses, efforts were made to oversample men in the student sample though the final pool remained unbalanced. Due to the invariance between men and women in the student sample, gender analyses were only conducted on the community sample which was also slightly skewed (58.2% men). More data should be collected to properly assess if gender

differences exist in individuals' reports of sexual agency, and the gender analyses results from this study should be interpreted with caution unless properly replicated.

It is also worth noting that repeated regression analyses were conducted which may have inflated type I error rate. Due to the significant differences between the samples, the community and student groups were not combined and rather were kept separate. Separate analyses were thus run for both subsamples which doubled the amount of analyses conducted for this study, however these analyses were conducted on different data sets comprised of two distinct samples (not on the same participants) which can be considered as two separate families of tests. Because of the possibility of inflation of error for the subsequent regressions conducted on each sample, any conclusions drawn from these results should be done so with caution until these findings are replicated, or a more sophisticated model (such as SEM or multiple test procedures) can be used.

The final two limitations are more theoretical in nature. This research only considered one conceptualization of sexual agency and used a set of specific indices to capture this facet. Research on sexual agency is still relatively new and our understanding of this construct needs ongoing refinement. Though much thought went into finding a definition of sexual agency which was comprehensive and accurate, more work should be done to test which factors are the best indicators for this construct, and future research should begin to use more consistent measures to capture this concept. Constructs such as sexual autonomy and self-efficacy are sometimes used interchangeably with sexual agency, yet validated measures for these aspects were not included in the present study. It could be that terms such as sexual self-efficacy or sexual subjectivity are conceptually similar enough to sexual agency and that measures of these factors might be well suited in agency research as they may adequately represent the sexual agency factor. The current study used measures of self-concept, sexual assertiveness, and comfort in sexual communication

as indices of sexual agency, though these might not have been the best indicators of sexual agency. Future research may choose to include constructs and measures on sexual confidence, sexual self-subjectivity, sexual autonomy, and feelings of sexual empowerment as components of sexual agency.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that this research was based on an inferred notion that SDSs still exist and can impact individuals' feelings of empowerment to sexual consideration, and the types of actions and behaviours individuals feel comfortable enacting in sexual situations. Literature on SDS is mixed, however evidence suggests that double standards persist for evaluations and expectations of men and women's sexual behaviours (Endendijk et al., 2020). To determine if SDS truly exist for sexual agency or are related to individuals' amounts of sexual agency, future research should include a measure on SDS and assess its relationship to agency. Furthermore, future research could assess this relationship with qualitative interviews to better understand how young people experience cultural scripts on sexual agency and how they feel society, family, and peers impact their perceived right to sexual agency.

Implications and Future Directions

The findings from the current study present new lines of inquiry for future research. Contrary to what was hypothesized, cismen and ciswomen were not found to significantly differ on rates of sexual agency, nor their feelings of safety, willingness, or satisfaction for a sexual encounter. This result provides promising evidence that certain SDSs may be changing and gendered sexual scripts may be becoming more egalitarian. What should be addressed in future studies is if this lack of gender difference persists in different cohorts of individuals. The age range in this study was relatively restricted to young adults, and research on sexual agency in adolescents and individuals who are just starting to be sexually active will be useful in

determining if sexual experience and age can impact how much sexual self-esteem, right to sexual assertiveness, and comfort in sexual communication young individuals feel entitled to. It would be also beneficial to ascertain if these rates of sexual agency more greatly differ by gender in teenaged years. It was found in the current study that sexual regret was almost two times higher in women than in men, however it is important to determine if the prevalence of regret is higher in a teenage population as it has been found that comfort in sexual communication, disclosure, and negotiation all increase with age and sexual experience (Hewitt-Stubbs et al., 2016). Qualitative studies assessing adolescents' motivations for engaging in sex, and their perceived self-efficacy and self-esteem in sexual situations would be important to conduct. I suggest that future research assess these relationships, as well as sexual agency development in younger samples in the hopes of using this information to provide recommendations for sexual health curriculum change.

Future research should also assess if sexual scripts and SDSs affect individuals who engage in same-gendered sex in a similar way to those who have mixed-gendered or heterosexual experiences. Sexual agency development may be impacted by one's sex assigned at birth as this designation influences which cultural scripts they were surrounded by while growing up. Moreover, sexual agency may also be impacted by the gender an individual most identifies with, as any incongruencies between one's assigned sex and their gender identity might lead to more negotiation and restructuring of the hegemonic scripts presented to them. Furthermore, sexual orientation and the gender of one's partner may also impact sexual agency expression and development as in 2SLGBTQI+ relationships there might be more room to build upon interpersonal or intrapsychic understandings of scripts, or create entirely new scripts more fitting to the queer community the individual affiliates with. Qualitative studies may also be useful in

this case to better understand what notions 2SLGBTQI+ individuals have about sexual agency, where they learn and get sexual scripts on agency from, and how they navigate developing their own sense of agentic self.

Another future direction, which was mentioned previously but is worth reiterating, is the need for longitudinal research. The associations mentioned in the current study are enlightening, yet they are correlational thus no causation can be inferred from these data. As was seen in the discussion on mediations of sexual agency and better sexual evaluation, many of the components of agency might influence sexual behaviours, but these agentic actions might also influence one's cognitions and appraisals. More work is needed to tease apart the specific relationships between feeling sexually agentic and acting in a sexually agentic way to determine which is most influential in the causal path. Furthermore, it is important to see if sexual agency can develop over time and with sexual experience, and it would be useful to determine which factors are best at promoting sexual agency in young adults, and especially young women. It would be useful to have such information to curate specific interventions and advocate for sexual health education reprogramming. Future research needs to focus on the implications of sexual agency development and ascertain how to increase individuals' ability to act and feel agentic in sexual situations, and determine which tools, skills, and modalities affects the most sexual agency development and change.

The current study's findings have implications for policy and sexual health education development. Results suggest that greater sexual agency scores predict being more intrinsically motivated to engage in sex and using more direct consent communication in a sexual encounter. Teaching individuals how to foster sexual agency can have tangible impacts in individuals' sexual lives by increasing their use of safer sexual communication and promoting having sex for

one's self rather than due to peer or partner pressure. Efforts should be made to integrate lessons about sexual self-efficacy, assertiveness behaviours, rights to sexual consideration, and entitlement to sexual pleasure in sexual education curricula. Sexual literacy programs should also foster individuals' sexual confidence, comfort in sexual communication, and empowerment as sexual beings. The development of sexual agency may not come without personal experience (Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2005), however it is crucial that everyone is taught that they have the capacity to become sexually agentic and that they are provided with tools to facilitate that growth while navigating new sexual situations. It is foundational that individuals first feel like sexual agents and embody that subjectivity in order to then be able to act in agentic and self-determined ways in their sexual encounters. Embodiment is a key component in increasing both comfort in sexual desire and entitlement to sexual pleasure (J. F. Chmielewski et al., 2020). By promoting all aspects of sexual agency, both the affective and the behavioural, safer and more desired sexual experiences can ensue, and regretful and disappointing outcomes may diminish.

Improving individual's entitlement to sexual agency and providing them with the skills, tools, confidence, and empowerment to feel and act in agentic ways can ensure that individuals engage in sex for more self-determined reasons and use more direct consent communication in these encounters ultimately leading to more positive sexual outcomes and decreasing the odds of experiencing NSEs such as regretful or unsafe sexual encounters.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that sexual agency is a vital construct in sexual well-being. Sexual agency influences one's comfort in sexual consent communication, their motives for engaging in sex, and their internal feelings and appraisals about sex. Sexual agency was found to be a crucial component in promoting more positive sexual outcomes while also protecting

against experiences of regret. The cognitive and behavioural aspects of agency were found to be predictive of varied sexual outcomes, and both are crucial components to better understand sexual agency's varied influence on individuals' sexual lives. Overall, a potential way to increase individuals' consent behaviours and positive evaluations of sex is to foster their sexual agency. Effort should continue in the advancement of sexual agency research so that this concept can be better understood, its impact on sexuality can be mapped, and ways to promote its development in youth can be identified. Ensuring that individuals of all genders, sexual orientations, and ages feel sexually agentic and have the tools to act in sexually agentic ways can lead to the promotion of sexual well-being and healthier sexual interactions for all.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Letter Of Approval from the Research Ethics Board

April 11, 2022

File #: 27912
Title: Working Title: Sexual Agency and One's Motivations for Engaging in Sex

Dear Ms. Hébert,

The Research Ethics Board (REB) has given approval to your proposal entitled "Working Title: Sexual Agency and One's Motivations for Engaging in Sex".

When a project is approved by the REB, it is an Institutional approval. It is not to be used in place of any other ethics process.

To maintain its compliance with this approval, the REB must receive via ROMEO:

An Annual Update for each calendar year research is active;

A Study Renewal should the research extend beyond its approved end date of February 01, 2023;

A Study Closure Form at the end of active research.

This project has the following reporting milestones set:

Renewal Due-2023/02/01

To complete these milestones, click the Events tab in your ROMEO protocol to locate and submit the relevant form.

If an amendments to the protocol is required, you must submit an Amendment Form, available in the Events tab in your ROMEO protocol, for approval by the REB prior to implementation.

Any questions regarding the submission of reports or Event forms in ROMEO can be directed to Jamie Muckle, Coordinator, Research Conduct and Reporting, at jmuckle@trentu.ca

On behalf of the Trent Research Ethics Board, I wish you success with your research.

Best Wishes,

Appendix B

Advertisements for Each Recruitment Location

SONA Advertisement

You are invited to participate in a study about motivations for engaging in sex and sexual agency (one's tendency to feel entitled to sexual consideration/pleasure, and the efficacy to communicate ones' desires with a partner). This study will ask you to evaluate and reflect on the quality of your past sexual interactions. It is a prerequisite of this study that you are 18 years of age or older, and that you have had at least one sexual experience (defined as either penis-in-vagina, penis-in-anus, oral (on vaginal/vulva, penis, or anus), or digital sex (i.e. hand-job, fingering)). The questionnaire takes approximately 45 minutes to complete. For completing this study, you will be compensated 1credit in your participating psychology class. To participate in the study please click the following link; you will be redirected to an informed consent form and the survey.

MTurk Advertisement

You are invited to participate in a study about motivations for engaging in sex and sexual agency (one's tendency to feel entitled to sexual consideration/pleasure, and the efficacy to communicate ones' desires with a partner). This study will ask you to evaluate and reflect on the quality of your past sexual interactions. It is a prerequisite of this study that you are living in Canada, are 18 years of age or older, and that you have had at least one sexual experience (defined as either penis-in-vagina, penis-in-anus, oral (on vaginal/vulva, penis, or anus), or digital sex (i.e. hand-job, fingering)). The questionnaire takes approximately 45 minutes to complete. For completing this study, you will be compensated $0.50. To participate in the study please click the following link; you will be redirected to an informed consent form and the survey. This study has been approved by Trent's Ethics Committee.

Social Media Advertisement

You are invited to participate in a study about motivations for engaging in sex and sexual agency (one's tendency to feel entitled to sexual consideration/pleasure, and the efficacy to communicate ones' desires with a partner). This study will ask you to evaluate and reflect on the quality of your past sexual interactions. It is a prerequisite of this study that you are living in Canada, are 18 years of age or older, and that you have had at least one sexual experience (defined as either penis-in-vagina, penis-in-anus, oral (on vaginal/vulva, penis, or anus), or digital sex (i.e. hand-job, fingering)). The questionnaire takes approximately 45 minutes to complete. As an incentive to participate in the study, you will be able to enter a lottery for a chance to win one of two $50 Visa gift-cards. To participate in the study please click the following link; you will be redirected to an informed consent form and the survey. This study has been approved by Trent's Ethics Committee.

Appendix C

Consent Form (with Compensation for Each Recruitment Location)

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
Information and Consent Form

Project Title: Sexual Agency and One's Motivations for Engaging in Sex

Researchers:

Primary Investigator: Kalyca Hébert, Dept. of Psychology, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada. Email: kalycahebert@trentu.ca
Supervisor: Dr. Terry Humphreys, Dept. of Psychology, Trent University, Ontario, Canada
Email: terryhumphreys@trentu.ca

You are invited to participate in a study which aims to assess your sexual agency (or capacity to be assertive and self-confident in your right to sexual pleasure and refusal), your motivations for engaging in past sexual experiences, as well as your current evaluations of said interactions. It is a **prerequisite** of this study that you have had at least one sexual encounter, defined as either penis-in-vagina, penis-in-anus, oral (on vaginal/vulva, penis, or anus), or digital sex (i.e. hand-job, fingering). Participants must be 18 years of age or older to participate and must reside in Canada at the time of the study.

Research Procedure: You are asked to complete an online questionnaire which will assess your past motivations for engaging in sex. The questionnaire includes measures on sexual agency, assertiveness, and asks you to rate your last sexual encounter. Total time to complete this survey is estimated to be 45 minutes. Please make sure to set aside enough time in a comfortable and private location to complete the study.

Risks and Discomforts: This survey uses questionnaires that are standard measures in the field of Psychology. There are no known risks associated with these measures—they are simply asking about your past sexual experiences and your current evaluations of said interactions. Some individuals may feel uncomfortable sharing their sexual history, however, your responses are completely anonymous and confidential and you are free to leave any question(s) blank if you prefer not to answer.

Withdrawal from the Study: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision to stop participating, or to decline to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researchers, the university, or any other group associated with this project. If you wish to withdraw from the study you can press the "withdraw from study" button at any time and all associated data collected will be destroyed wherever possible.

Benefits: You will learn about how psychological research is conducted, and have the opportunity to be a research participant.

Compensation A: For completing the survey through SONA, participants will receive 1 research credit toward their course requirements. Student participants must complete a minimum of 75% of the study in order to be

provided the full compensation (i.e., credit). Participants who complete between 50% and 75% of the study will be allocated half the research credit (.5). Data is reviewed once a week to assess credit allocation. The SONA research ID numbers are used within the system to allocate credit.

Compensation B: Participants completing the survey through MTurk will receive $0.50. Participants must complete a minimum of 75% of the study in order to be provided any compensation. Data is reviewed once a week to assess monitory allocation. The MTurk ID numbers are used to allocate compensation.

Compensation C: Participants completing the survey through social media links will be eligible to enter a lottery for a chance to win one (1) of two $50 Visa gift-cards. Participants must self-select into the draw by providing an email in a separate survey presented at the end of the questionnaire. This email is gathered in a separate survey and is not linked to your answers.

Confidentiality: All information you supply during the research will be confidential. You are only known by your survey panel ID. 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. Results of this study may be reported in a thesis, psychological journal article or in presentations at academic conferences. Note, however, that individual responses will not be identified in any reports of this research; only aggregated data (i.e., averages from many people) will be reported. Raw data will be destroyed seven years after the completion of this study, in accordance with the American Psychological Association's guidelines.

Questions About the Research?
If you have questions about the study in general you may contact the primary researcher, Kalyca Hébert using the contact information above. This project has been reviewed and approved by the Trent University Research Ethics Board (#27912). If you have any questions about the ethical aspects of this research, you may contact Jamie Muckle, Certifications and Regulatory Compliance Officer, Trent University, (705) 748-1011, ext. 7896. Should you wish to receive results from this study, you can email the primary investigator to request them. Results will be sent out at the completion of the study, approximately at the end of June 2023.

CONSENT
Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your consent to participate in this study does not equal a waiver of legal rights/recourse. You may choose not to answer a question and you may withdraw from the study at any time by pressing "withdraw from study". Your responses are anonymous, and thus once submitted your contributions cannot be withdrawn. Please consider printing this consent form for your records.

I confirm that I meet the following inclusion criteria:

- I am over 18
- I am Canadian or Currently living in Canada
- I have had at least one sexual encounter as described above

I have read and understood the preceding description and give my voluntary consent to participate in this study:

Yes No (please cancel this study)

Appendix D

Debrief Form

TRENT UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Project Title: Sexual Agency and One's Motivations for Engaging in Sex

Principal Investigator: Kalyca Hébert

Thank you for taking part in this study. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Here is a bit more information regarding this study.

As you are aware, the purpose of this study is to assess individuals' motivations for engaging in sex as well as their current evaluations of said interactions.The current study aims to explore if aspects of sexual agency are related to the motivations individuals list for engaging in sex and if certain motivations lead to more reluctant sexual experiences and subsequently more regret. For this reason, you were asked to consider your most recent sexual experience and provide your motivations for engaging in that encounter and your evaluation of that interaction. Furthermore, we asked you to rate items assessing your sexual agency.

Though research has explored what motivates individuals to have sex (Meston & Buss, 2007) and has listed reasons why individuals regret sexual encounters (Kennair et. al, 2018), no research has evaluated whether the motivations people list for engaging in sex is related to regret their sexual experiences. Moreover, it is unknown whether sexual regret is linked to the absence of sexual agency. Your participation will have a valuable impact in furthering the research in this area.

Should you wish to receive results from this study, or have any questions, you may contact the principal investigator at kalycahebert@trentu.ca. If you are interested more specifically in regretful sexual experiences, the following paper may be of interest to you:

Jeremy E. Uecker & Brandon C. Martinez (2017) When and why women regret sex in hookups more than men do: An analysis of the online college social life survey. *The Sociological Quarterly, 58*:3, 470-494, DOI: 10.1080/00380253.2017.1331716

Please remember that it is normal for some people to experience uncomfortable feelings as a result of filling out questionnaires on highly sensitive issues, such as sexuality. Should you wish to discuss any feelings that have come up after completing this study, know there are resources available to you.

For Trent University students: Counselling Centre, 705-748-1386, counselling@trentu.ca
Other community based resources:
Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre (24hr crisis line), 1-866-298-7778
Community Mental Health Crisis Response Program,1-866-995-993
Canadian Crisis Hotline, 1-888-353-2273

Thanks again for your participation!

Appendix E

Demographic Questions

1) How old are you? _____ years of age

2) With which gender do you identify?

   Man Woman Transman Transwoman Genderqueer

   I would like to specify Prefer not to specify

3) What is your Ethnic ancestry?

   Indigenous (e.g., First Nations, Métis, Inuit) African (e.g., Black, Caribbean)

   East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean) South Asian (e.g., Indian, Pakistani)

   Southeast Asian (e.g., Thai, Indonesian) European (e.g., White, Caucasian)

   Hispanic (e.g., Latino) Middle Eastern (e.g. Arab) Pacific Islander

   Mixed ancestry (please specify) Other (please specify)

4) Where do you currently live?

   Canada United States Central America South America
   Europe Asia Africa Oceania

5) What is your current relationship status?

   Single Casually dating Serious/exclusive Married

6) What is your sexual orientation?

   Heterosexual(straight) Bisexual Gay Lesbian Queer

   Asexual Pansexual Questioning Other (please specify)

7) Have you had sex (penile-vaginal, anal or oral) before?

   Yes No

8) What is the gender of the individual with whom you had your last sexual interaction?

   Man Woman Transman Transwoman Genderqueer

I would like to specify_____

9) Which activities were involved in your last sexual encounter? Check all that apply

Kissing

Non-penetrative genital touching/fondling

Hand job (manual stimulation of penis)

Fingering (manual stimulation of vagina/vulva)

Blow-job (oral sex on penis)

Eating out (oral sex on vaginal/vulva)

Anal penetration

Penile-vaginal penetration

Other _____

10) How long ago was your most recent sexual encounter?

This past week 2 weeks ago This past month 2-3 months ago

3-6 months ago Within the last year Over a year ago

Appendix F

The Hurlbert Index of Sexual Assertiveness

This inventory is designed to measure the degree of sexual assertiveness you have in your sexual encounters. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer each item as accurately as you can by indicating how often these prompts are true for you.

0-Never 1-Rarely 2-Some of the time 3-Most of the time 4-All of the time

1. I feel uncomfortable talking during sex.
2. I feel that I am shy when it comes to sex.
3. I approach my partner for sex when I desire it.
4. I think I am open with my partner about my sexual needs.
5. I enjoy sharing my sexual fantasies with my partner.
6. I feel uncomfortable talking to my friends about sex.
7. I communicate my sexual desires to my partner.
8. It is difficult for me to touch myself during sex.
9. It is hard for me to say no even when I do not want sex.
10. I am reluctant to describe myself as a sexual person.
11. I feel uncomfortable telling my partner what feels good.
12. I speak up for my sexual feelings.
13. I am reluctant to insist that my partner satisfy me.
14. I find myself having sex when I do not really want it.
15. When a sexual technique does not feel good, I tell my partner.
16. I feel comfortable giving sexual praise to my partner.
17. It is easy for me to discuss sex with my partner.
18. I feel comfortable in initiating sex with my partner.
19. I find myself doing sexual things with my partner that I do not like.
20. Pleasing my partner is more important than my own sexual pleasure.
21. I feel comfortable telling my partner how to touch me.
22. I enjoy masturbating myself to orgasm.
23. If something feels good in sex, I insist on doing it again.
24. It is hard for me to be honest about my sexual feelings.
25. I try to avoid discussing the subject of sex.

Appendix G

Sexual Self-Concept Questions

As accurate as you can, please indicate how characteristic the following statements are of you in sexual situations:

0-Not at all characteristic of me 1-slightly characteristic of me

2-somewhat characteristic of me 3-moderately characteristic of me

4-very characteristic of me

1. The sexual aspects of my life are determined in large part by my own behaviour.
2. I am in control of and am responsible for the sexual aspects of my life.
3. My sexuality is something that I myself am in charge of.
4. I am proud of the way I deal with and handle my own sexual desires and needs.
5. I have positive feelings about the way I approach my own sexual needs and desires.
6. I feel good about the way I express my own sexual needs and desires.
7. I have the ability to take care of any sexual needs and desires that I may have.
8. I am competent enough to make sure that my sexual needs are fulfilled.
9. I have the skills and ability to ensure rewarding sexual behaviours for myself.
10. My sexual behaviours are largely controlled by people other than myself (e.g., my partner, friends, family).
11. In order to be sexually active, I have to conform to other more powerful individuals.
12. I would be to blame if the sexual aspects of my life were not going very well.
13. If I were to develop a sexual problem, then it would be in my own fault for letting it happen.
14. If something went wrong with my own sexuality, then it would be my own fault.
15. I notice now others perceive and react to the sexual aspects of my life.
16. I'm concerned with how others evaluate my own sexual beliefs and behaviours.
17. I'm concerned about how the sexual aspects of my life appear to others.

Appendix H

The Verbal and Nonverbal Sexual Communication Questionnaire

Think about how you usually communicate in sexual interactions. Check the number that best describes how often you communicate to your sexual partner(s) about each topic.

1-Never 2-Rarely 3-Some of the time 4-Most of the time 5-Always

1. I use nonverbal cues (smiling, caressing, etc.) to indicate to my partner that he/she is pleasing me.
2. I give sexual praise to my partner when he/she does things that I like.
3. It is easy to tell my partner the sexual things that don't work for me and why.
4. When I want to, I ask my partner for sex.
5. When things go wrong during sex, I avoid being touched by my partner.
6. I use nonverbal cues (snuggling, kissing, etc.) to let my partner know that I want to have sex.
7. I tell my partner what we need to do differently to increase my sexual pleasure.
8. I feel comfortable using nonverbal cues (such as touching, kissing, etc.) to initiate sex with my partner.
9. I snuggle and kiss my partner when he/she sexually pleases me.
10. I praise my partner when our sexually contacts please me.
11. When I want sex, I start things going by touching my partner sexually.
12. I use nonverbal cues (e.g., avoiding eye contact) to show my partner that I am not sexually satisfied.
13. I stop my partner when he/she does 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 his/her 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.
18. I ask my partner to keep doing the things that sexually please me.
19. I tell my partner if I don't want have sex.
20. I feel comfortable telling my partner the things that sexually please me.
21. I suggest new things for my partner and I to try during our sexual contacts.
22. I start to kiss my partner when I want to have sex.
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.
28. I use eye contact with my partner when I want to initiate sexual contact.

Appendix I

Motivation Questions Pulled from the YSEX Questionnaire

All items were presented to participants. A principle components analysis with varimax rotation using a fixed 2 factor model was conducted to determine which items were to be retained for the analyses. Only items which fell into their primary component with a strength of .4 or above, and which did not load onto the secondary component over .3 were retained. All items which were retained are denoted with an asterisks. *denotes intrinsic motives; **denotes extrinsic motives

People have sex (i.e., sexual intercourse) for many different reasons. Below is a list of some of these reasons. Please indicate how much each of the following reasons led you to have sex in your most recent sexual encounter. In my last sexual encounter, I had sex because…

Did not contribute (1) Contributed a little (2)

Contributed somewhat (3) Major contribution (4)

1. I wanted to release anxiety/stress/frustration.
2. I thought it would relax me.*
3. I was bored.
4. I hadn't had sex for a while.
5. I wanted to satisfy a compulsion.*
6. It feels good.*
7. I wanted to experience the physical pleasure.*
8. I was “horny.” *
9. It’s fun. *
10. I wanted to achieve an orgasm.*
11. I found their face attractive.*
12. I was attracted to their body.*
13. The person’s physical appearance turned me on.*
14. I was turned on by their naked body.*
15. I found the person too “hot” (sexy) to resist.*
16. I was curious about sex.
17. I wanted to experiment sexually.*
18. I wanted to see what it would be like to have sex with them.
19. I wanted to improve my sexual skills.

20. I wanted to lose my inhibitions.*
21. I wanted to try out new sexual techniques or positions.*
22. The opportunity presented itself.
23. I wanted to act out my fantasy.
24. I was trying to get a job/raise/promotion.**
25. I wanted to hurt/humiliate the person.**
26. Please select "Did not contribute" for this item.
27. Someone offered me money to do it.**
28. I wanted to have a child.**
29. It was an initiation rite to a club or organization.**
30. The person offered me drugs for doing it.**
31. I wanted to end the relationship.**
32. I wanted to be popular. **
33. I wanted to have more sex than my friends.**
34. I was competing with someone else to “get the person.” **
35. I thought it would boost my social status.**
36. My friends pressured me into it.**
37. It was a favor to someone.**
38. Someone dared me.**
39. I wanted to impress friends.**
40. I wanted to get back at my partner for having cheated on me.**
41. I was mad at my partner so I had sex with someone else.**
42. I wanted to get even with someone.**
43. I was on the “rebound” from another relationship.**
44. I wanted to make someone else jealous.**
45. The person had taken me out for an expensive dinner.**
46. I thought it would my relieve pain.**
47. I thought it would help me to fall asleep.
48. I wanted to get a favor from someone.**
49. I wanted to defy my parents.**
50. I wanted to feel connected to the person. *

51. I wanted to increase the emotional bond by having sex.*
52. I wanted to intensify my relationship.*
53. I desired emotional closeness (i.e., intimacy).*
54. I wanted to become one with another person.*
55. I realized I was in love.*
56. I wanted to please the other person.*
57. I wanted to welcome someone home.*
58. I wanted to express how I was feeling.*
59. It was a birthday/anniversary/special occasion.
60. It would lift my partner's spirits.*
61. It would make my partner feel good.*
62. I wanted to feel powerful.*
63. I wanted to make myself feel better about myself.
64. I wanted to boost my self-esteem.
65. I wanted to feel attractive.*
66. I wanted my partner to notice me.
67. I wanted the attention.
68. I didn't know how to say "no."**
69. I was pressured/coerced into doing it.**
70. I felt obligated to.**
71. My partner kept insisting.**
72. I felt like I owed it to the person.**
73. It was expected of me.**
74. I didn't want to disappoint the person.**
75. I was being nice.**
76. I didn't want my partner to stray from me.**
77. I wanted to decrease my partner's desire to have sex with someone else.**
78. I wanted to prevent a breakup.**
79. I didn't want to "lose" the person.**
80. I wanted the person to love me.
81. I thought it would help "trap" a new partner.**

Appendix J

External Consent Scale

Which of the following behaviours did you engage in to indicate your consent or agreement to engage in sex during your **most recent encounter**? Check all that apply.

1. I used non-verbal cues such as body language, signals, or flirting.
2. I did not resist my partner's 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 he/she 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 him/her 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).
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 vaginal-penile intercourse (sexual activity).

Appendix K

Sexual Evaluation Measures

Appendix K.1

The Global Measure of Sexual Satisfaction subscale (GMSEX) of the Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction Questionnaire

Overall, how would you describe your last sexual experience? Please indicate your rating on the following 5 prompts.

Very bad	Very good
Very unpleasant	Very pleasant
Very negative	Very positive
Very unsatisfying	Very satisfying
Very worthless	Very valuable

Appendix K.2

The Internal Consent Scale

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that you felt the following during your **last sexual encounter.**

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree N/A

1. I felt interested
2. I felt heated
3. I felt aroused
4. I felt secure

5. I felt in control
6. I felt turned on
7. The sex felt consented to
8. I felt rapid heart beat
9. I felt ready
10. The sex felt desired
11. I felt sure
12. I felt lustful
13. I felt willing
14. The sex felt agreed to
15. I felt comfortable
16. I felt safe
17. I felt erect/vaginally lubricated
18. I felt aware of my surroundings
19. The sex felt wanted
20. I felt certain
21. I felt respected
22. I felt flushed
23. I felt protected
24. I felt eager
25. The sex felt consensual

Appendix K.3

Thinking about your most recent sexual encounter, how you feel about that interaction?

No regret Some regret Complete regret

Thinking about your most recent sexual encounter, how you feel about that interaction?

Unhappy Neutral Happy