Men’s (Normalized) Sexual Violence Against Intimate Partners

by

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ABSTRACT

MEN’S (NORMALIZED) SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST INTIMATE PARTNERS

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Men’s sexual violence (SV) against women remains common, especially in intimate relationships (Smith et al., 2017; Wegner, Pierce, & Abbey, 2014). Using three studies, I answered two key questions in this dissertation relating to university men’s intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) in my samples: (a) what did IPSV look like? and (b) how did men socially construct and support IPSV? In the first study, I used a survey with 441 Canadian university men to examine incidence rates of different types of IPSV, contextual features of perpetrators’ IPSV incidents, and perpetrators’ perceptions of the effects of their IPSV. I found that 15.87% of my sample reported at least one instance of using SV in their most recent heterosexual relationship in the past year. The most common tactic was verbal coercion and the most common sexual act was oral sex. Men’s most memorable incidents often occurred either in their own or their partner’s home and involved alcohol consumption. Most men reported no effects of their IPSV on their relationships. In the second study, I used interviews with a subset of 10 men from the survey study who had perpetrated IPSV. I used a feminist poststructuralist form of discourse analysis and examined men’s talk about their use of a range of SV in intimate relationships. In the third study, I used a feminist poststructuralist form of discourse analysis and examined how 29 Canadian university men talked and negotiated conversations about
heterosexuality in intimate relationships in focus groups with other men. In the latter two studies, I found that men drew on dominant discourses about (a) SV and (b) heterosexuality in ways that worked to normalize SV. In the third study, I also examined the rhetorical function of men’s talk and found that they often used language that was difficult for other men to challenge. Ultimately, I argue that men’s talk and dominant discourses about SV and normative heterosexuality work to construct versions of heterosexuality that are male-centered and violent, thus, maintaining gendered power relations between women and men.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SV: sexual violence
IPSV: intimate partner sexual violence
1 Introduction

Despite considerable recent research on men’s sexual violence (SV) against women, occurrence rates remain high. SV is especially common in intimate relationships (Smith et al., 2017; Wegner, Pierce, & Abbey, 2014). Intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) occurs at the intersection of intimate partner violence and SV but, because these two research areas have developed largely independently, IPSV has often been overlooked in research (Bagwell-Gray, Messing, & Baldwin-White, 2015). This is especially true for research among university samples. The research on intimate partner and dating violence among university students has tended to examine SV only in the context of otherwise violent relationships, thus overlooking at least some forms of IPSV that occur in otherwise nonviolent relationships. In contrast, the research on SV among university students has tended to examine lifetime types and rates of SV against any woman in any relational context, thus overlooking SV specifically in intimate relationships. No studies to date have examined a detailed and separated breakdown of university men’s IPSV by tactic and sexual act, or contextual features of IPSV such as location and alcohol use. Thus, we know little about what university IPSV actually looks like (main gap 1).

The comparatively little SV research that has used male participants has focused on individual and peer contributors of SV perpetration, with little focus on broader social contributors. Moreover, most of the existing research on perpetrators’ talk has focused on the most physically violent forms of men’s SV and other forms of violence against known women.
This persists despite evidence that SV is most commonly nonphysically violent\(^1\) (i.e., involves verbal or psychological coercion), especially in intimate relationships (Salwen & O’Leary, 2013; Smith et al., 2017; Wegner et al., 2014). Thus, less is known about the broader social forces and discourses that construct and support university men’s SV, especially IPSV and nonphysical SV (main gap 2).

The three studies presented in this dissertation fill both of these main gaps in our understanding of men’s (IP)SV against women. Specifically, I answered two key questions in this dissertation relating to university men’s intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) in my samples: (a) what did IPSV look like? and (b) how did men socially construct and support IPSV? Ultimately, I argue that men’s talk and dominant discourses about SV and normative heterosexuality work to construct versions of heterosexuality that are male-centered and violent, thus, maintaining gendered power relations between women and men.

### 1.1 Organization of Dissertation

Following this introduction, in Chapter 2 I provide an overview of the theoretical and analytical frameworks that I drew from in undertaking this dissertation research. I discuss my approaches to (a) reading men’s reports (i.e., my data) and, relatedly, (b) defining sexual violence. I also situate myself as a researcher and active participant in producing the knowledge reported on in this dissertation, as well as the research context. In Chapter 3 I review the relevant literature on: occurrence rates and contexts of men’s SV against women; individual, peer, and broader social contributors of men’s SV against women; and heterosexual consent and

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\(^1\) I use the terms *physical* and *nonphysical violence* to differentiate types of SV tactics, not to make claims about severity or harmfulness (see also Chapter 2.2: Defining Sexual Violence).
communication. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6 I present three manuscripts describing the following three separate but related studies of this dissertation²:

a) Study 1 (manuscript under review for publication): a survey study with 441 Canadian university men in which I examined their self-reported IPSV perpetration incidence rates (including specific tactics and acts), contextual features of IPSV incidents, and perceptions of the effects of IPSV;

b) Study 2 (manuscript published³): an interview study with 10 Canadian university men who had perpetrated IPSV in which I examined how they talked about their use of IPSV and how this talk both reflected and enacted the normalization of violent heterosexuality; and

c) Study 3 (manuscript under review for publication): a focus group study with 29 Canadian university men in which I examined how they talked and negotiated conversations about normative (i.e., male-centered and violent) heterosexuality in intimate relationships.

I provide a table summarizing the methods, data analyses, and results of all three of these studies in Table 1.1.

Following the three manuscripts, in Chapter 7 I provide a general discussion in which I draw together the key findings and explicitly answer the two key questions noted above: (a) what did IPSV look like among the university men in my sample? and (b) how did university men in my sample socially construct and support IPSV? I also review implications for future research

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² I developed this program of research independently. The research questions were my own and I analyzed the results independently. I also was the principal author on the three manuscripts. The role of my advisor, Dr. Paula Barata (who was a co-author on the three manuscripts), was to advise on my research methods and drafts of the manuscripts and overarching dissertation.

³ The Version of Record of this manuscript has been published and is available in Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma (2019), https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2018.1500406. The version included in this dissertation is the Accepted Manuscript with minor differences.
and practice and discuss the strengths and limitations of this work. I list references cited in Chapters 1: Introduction, 2: Theoretical and Analytical Frameworks, 3: Literature Review, and 7: General Discussion at the end of the dissertation. I list references cited in each of the three manuscripts at the end of each respective manuscript.
Table 1.1: Summary of Methods, Analyses, and Results of the Three Dissertation Studies

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<td>• Participant Pool</td>
<td>• Participant Pool</td>
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<tr>
<td>Posters around campus</td>
<td>• SES-SFP from study 1; email invitation</td>
<td>• Posters around campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>• 441 university men aged 18-24 in intimate relationship in past year</td>
<td>• 10 university men aged 18-22 who perpetrated IPSV in intimate relationship in past year</td>
<td>• 29 heterosexual university men aged 18-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>• Online surveys: o Demographics and dating information o Sexual Experiences Survey-Short Form Perpetration (SES-SFP; Koss et al., 2006) o Contextual features and perceptions of most memorable IPSV incident</td>
<td>• Individual interviews in which men were mainly asked to describe incidents of IPSV • Demographics questions from study 1</td>
<td>• 4 focus groups with 6 to 8 men each in which men were mainly asked to discuss sex in steady dating relationships • Demographics survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>• Descriptive statistics • Quantitative content analysis</td>
<td>• Feminist post-structuralist form of discourse analysis</td>
<td>• Feminist post-structuralist form of discourse analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>• IPSV perpetration incidence rates o Total incidence: 16% o Verbal coercion most common o Oral sex most common • Contextual features of most memorable IPSV incidents o Home most common o Alcohol use common • Men’s perceptions of the effects of most memorable IPSV incidents o More than half made at least one statement claiming no effects</td>
<td>• Men’s use of IPSV o Verbal and physical tactics described • Men normalized violent heterosexuality by positioning: o Self and behavior as normal o Self and behavior as not abnormal/violent • Some men challenged violent heterosexuality through: o Negative accounts about their IPSV o Alternative accounts about heterosexuality o Focus on consent and communication</td>
<td>• Men legitimized a dominant version of heterosexuality whereby men have higher sex drives, heterosex starts naturally, and miscommunication causes SV by: o Working up particular heterosexual practices as biologically and socially essential o Marginalizing heterosexuality practices that do not fit the alleged norm • Few men successfully resisted dominant discourses</td>
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2 Theoretical and Analytical Frameworks

2.1 Reading Men’s Reports

In my reading of men’s reports (i.e., my data), I deliberately drew on multiple and sometimes contradictory theoretical understandings of knowledge and language (i.e., epistemologies) within and between my three studies; namely, a feminist poststructuralist and discursive understanding on one hand, and a realist/positivist understanding on the other. I developed this “theoretical impurity” (Gavey, 2011, p. 187) deliberately and thoughtfully over time and believe it reflects my feminist and social justice orientation to research. Indeed, it was important for adequately understanding and unpacking men’s accounts of (IP)SV and heterosexuality.

Mainstream psychology tends toward positivist and realist approaches that seek neutral and objective truth and that understand language as a transparent or straightforward reflection and description of a preexisting reality (Gavey, 1989, 2011). Feminist poststructuralism, in contrast, “rejects the possibility of absolute truth and objectivity” and understands knowledge as socially constructed through language and discourse (Gavey, 1989, p. 462; Hollway, 2005; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Weedon, 1997). As such, knowledge is neither fixed/essential nor neutral; rather, it can include multiple meanings and often reflects and maintains (gendered) power relations (Gavey, 1989). Thus, as summarized by Gavey (1989), “rather than ‘discovering’ reality, ‘revealing’ truth, or ‘uncovering’ the facts”—goals more in line with realist or positivist approaches—feminist poststructuralism is “concerned with disrupting and displacing dominant (oppressive) knowledges” (p. 463).
For the surveys in Study 1, I used a realist/positivist approach whereby I generally took men’s self-reports as straightforward (though partial) reflection of actual incidents of IPSV, contextual features of these incidents, and perpetrators’ perceptions of the effects of their IPSV. For the interviews in Study 2 and the focus groups in Study 3, however, my approach was more multifaceted. I read men’s talk about SV and heterosexuality as both straightforward description (a realist understanding) and constitutive (a poststructuralist/discursive understanding). For example, I took at least some of men’s talk as descriptions, albeit partial, of actual incidents or heterosexual practices while simultaneously identifying and subverting the discursive productions of their talk.

Using these two contradictory approaches together within and between my three studies allowed me something straightforward and concrete to “talk about and against [...] at the same time as destabilizing [SV], in the belief that this is an important part of the same fight at a different level” (Gavey, 2005, p. 169). The realist approach in all three studies (and especially Study 1) provided grounding in actual material practices and allowed me to make claims about the scope and range of IPSV among the university men in my sample, as well as contextual features of IPSV and perpetrators’ perceptions. It also allowed me to do justice to the violence committed. As noted by Gavey (2011), “if we are interested in this material world, then we have to rely on taking realist accounts of that world at least somewhat at face value in order to be able to discuss a working idea of what these conditions are” (p. 187). In particular, the realist approach helped me to answer the first key question of this dissertation: what did IPSV look like among the university men in my sample? In contrast, the poststructuralist/discursive approach allowed me to examine men’s talk in relation to broader discourses about SV and heterosexuality
and how this talk worked to construct SV as normal and expected in heterosexual intimate relationships. Thus, this approach helped me to answer the second key question of this dissertation: how did university men in my sample socially construct and support IPSV?

Moreover, the two approaches together allowed me to examine how discourses shape material heterosexual practices and SV, and men’s normalizing accounts thereof.

In a similarly contradictory vein, I drew on positivist/realist and poststructuralist/discursive empirical research in my literature review to help contextualize my studies and support my arguments. I understand positivist findings as partial and am sometimes critical of their underlying assumptions (Gavey, 2005). Nevertheless, I maintain that this work—much like my own survey findings in Study 1—offer some important support for the scope of SV and maintain material grounding in men’s violence. For example, I used past realist/positivist research on the occurrence rates of men’s (IP)SV to outline the ubiquity and urgency of the issue in my literature review. Poststructuralist and discursive research, on the other hand, has been crucial for “disrupting and displacing dominant (oppressive) knowledges” about men’s SV against women (Gavey, 1989, p. 463), including its normalization. In some cases, I used past discursive research in my literature review to highlight the shortcomings of realist/positivist research. For example, whereas a realist/positivist understanding of women and men’s reports would suggest that miscommunication is a cause of SV, a poststructuralist/discursive understanding highlights the social construction and rhetorical function of this talk (see Chapter 3: Literature Review; e.g., Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Ehrlich, 1998; Frith & Kitzinger, 1997; O’Byrne et al., 2008). I attempt to describe the samples and contexts of past research to help...
contextualize the knowledge produced therein, which I understand as socially and historically situated.

2.2 Defining Sexual Violence

I also deliberately used multiple and sometimes contradictory understandings of SV within and between my three studies. Again, each were important for understanding and unpacking men’s IPSV. In general, I understood SV in terms of two continuums (adapted from DeGue and DiLillo, 2005; see Figure 2.1): (a) type of sexual act or contact sought or obtained, ranging from sexual touching to intercourse; and (b) coercive tactic used to seek or obtain the sexual act or contact, ranging from verbal or psychological coercion to physical force. An incident of SV can exist anywhere at the intersection of these two continuums. This inclusive and continuous conceptualization was useful because it included acts (such as verbal coercion) that have traditionally been ignored in SV research and that have been construed as “just sex” (Gavey, 2005, p. 172).

Although this continuum and other dimensional definitions of SV tend to understand physical force and intercourse (and the intersection of the two) as the most invasive and severe, I am cautious about labelling and classifying severity. My caution is based on my own and others’ findings that women still experience harm from verbal forms of SV and intimate partner violence, sometimes more than from physical forms (Arias & Pape, 1999; Jeffrey & Barata, 2017; Livingston, Buddie, Testa, & VanZile-Tamsen, 2004; Pico-Alfonso, 2005; Lacey, McPherson, Samuel, Sears, Head, 2013; Zweig et al., 1997). Throughout this dissertation, I use the terms physical violence and nonphysical violence (i.e., verbal or psychological coercion) to differentiate types of SV tactics, not to make claims about severity or harmfulness. This language
matches that used by some past researchers (e.g., Bagwell-Gray et al., 2015; Black et al., 2011; Casey et al., 2009; DeGue & DiLillo, 2004, 2005; DeGue et al., 2010; Vanderlaan & Vasey, 2009). Nevertheless, an instance of what I refer to as nonphysical SV (which refers exclusively to the tactic/behavior used) might still include physical/bodily violation by virtue of the attempted or resulting sexual act (e.g., sexual touching; oral, vaginal, or anal penetration).

Despite this general continuous conceptualization, my SV definitions within and between my three studies sometimes varied in terms of (a) the acts and tactics included and (b) the ontological underpinnings. For the surveys in Study 1, I defined SV according to the Sexual Experiences Survey-Short Form Perpetration (SES-SFP; Koss et al., 2006). This scale uses behaviorally-worded items pertaining to various sexual acts (sexual touching/kissing and attempted and completed oral sex, vaginal penetration, and anal penetration) that occurred without consent through various coercive tactics (verbal coercion, intoxication, threatened physical force, actual physical force). Thus, it uses a similar continuum as noted above but includes a very specific set of tactics and sexual acts. Like most empirical (and legal) definitions of SV, the SES-SFP also defines SV as sexual activity that occurred or was attempted through various behaviors without consent (according to participants’ own self-reports).

My use of the SES-SFP in Study 1 also resulted in a realist/positivist understanding of SV, whereby certain acts straightforwardly and objectively constituted SV and closed categories of perpetrators and nonperpetrators were created. This approach, although limiting, allowed me a starting point and to make some claims about what IPSV is and what it looked like in my sample. Thus, it was important in offering something to ground my analyses in and to critique. It also allowed for comparison with and grounding in previous occurrence rate research.
In Study 2, I used the SES-SFP to screen IPSV perpetrators to participate in follow-up interviews. In this case, my use of the SES-SFP and its realist understanding of IPSV was largely pragmatic: I wanted to ensure that most of the interviews were going to be relevant; that is, that most or all interviewees had engaged in some form of sexually violent or coercive behavior (albeit predefined). The interviews themselves, however, allowed me to capture some nuance that may have been lost in the SES-SFP and to, in a sense, re-open my definition of SV. The interviewers (myself and a male undergraduate research assistant) sometimes used participants’ responses in the SES-SFP to facilitate conversation; however, we always began by asking each participant to describe an instance in which he wanted to engage in sexual activity with his partner but she did not want to or did not feel like it or, if necessary, where he kept trying even though his partner did not want to. This allowed for tactics and sexual acts that might not have been included in the SES-SFP. It also allowed for experiences beyond those that occurred (or that the participant interpreted as occurring) “without consent,” such as instances where he persisted after an initial refusal (and possibly where his partner did not resist or ended up consenting). Thus, my definition of SV here was much more fluid and was also focused more on men’s behavior than women’s response or nonconsent to this behavior. As Pugh and Becker (2018) argued, consent resulting from verbal or other forms of coercion “is not freely given and therefore akin to sexual assault” (p. 12).

Nevertheless, I did make some decisions after the interviews about what to define as SV. For example, I excluded four men from my interview analysis because they did not describe clearly coercive incidents. Some claimed to have mis-answered the survey and/or described experiences in the interview in which: (a) he requested sex, his partner declined, and he stopped;
(b) he initiated sexual activity, his partner stopped him, and he stopped and did not insist; or (c) he and his partner were drunk and engaged in mutually desired sexual activity, but then he stopped it from going further because they were at a party in his friend’s room. In the latter example, it was not clear if he thought she was too drunk to give consent, but he did describe that she initiated the sexual activity.

In addition to expanding the set of behaviors included in my definition of SV from those included in the SES-SFP in Study 2, in both Studies 2 and 3 I also expanded my ontological understanding of SV. Although to some extent I defined the limits of SV, assuming an objective reality of what SV is and when men’s behaviors became SV (a more realist/positivist approach), I also destabilized the concept by examining how it is socially constructed through discourse (a more poststructuralist/discursive approach). I did this by unpacking the discourses that normalize SV and that produce forms of heterosex that construct or create space for SV in the first place. In many cases, these discourses worked to obscure men’s SV (i.e., position it as something other than SV). I am cognizant that my exclusion of some men from the interview analysis in Study 2 may have similarly worked to obscure possible SV. In some cases, this exclusion was pragmatic. Some men denied having any experiences in which they wanted to have sex and their partner did not and further reported mis-answering the survey. In these cases, we had nothing further to discuss in the interview (and clearer instances of men denying SV as a potential rhetorical strategy for minimizing/normalizing were captured in other interviews). In other cases (e.g., where men described instances in which he requested sex, his partner declined, and he stopped), there was no theoretical basis with which to label these experiences as SV. Nevertheless, there
were limitations to these decisions and I discuss related implications for future research in Chapter 7.3: Implications for Research.

My expanded ontological understanding of SV in Studies 2 and 3 was informed by feminist poststructuralist approaches, especially those that have paid attention to experiences that fall short of actual or threatened physical force and the limitations of choice and consent in heterosex (e.g., Gavey, 1992, 2005). For example, women may not signal nonconsent out of fear that their refusal will have no effect and what follows will be construed as rape (Gavey, 1992). Women also sometimes give in or consent to unwanted sex for many reasons, including current or previous SV or a sense of obligation (e.g., Gavey, 1992; Jeffrey & Barata, 2017; Katz & Tirone, 2010). Thus, instances of SV are not always clearly distinguishable from instances of sexual compliance or “normal” heterosex and I wanted to leave space for this in my understanding of SV. As noted above, SV should not be defined (at least not solely) based on women’s nonconsent; it should be defined primarily based on men’s behavior, especially given that consent resulting from verbal or other forms of coercion is not freely given (Pugh & Becker, 2018). Thus, in addition to my poststructuralist approach to reading men’s reports (described above in Chapter 2.1: Reading Men’s Reports), my more fluid and poststructuralist understanding of SV itself was critical for examining the gendered nature and social and linguistic construction of SV.

2.3 Situating Myself and the Research Context

Reflexivity—that is, “critical reflection on the research process and on one’s own role as a researcher”—is a key tenant of both qualitative and feminist research (Braun & Clark, 2013, p. 10; Hesse-Bibber & Piatelli, 2012). It may be particularly important in poststructuralist and other
postpositivist research that understand knowledge and meaning as “made rather than found” (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, p. 414). Thus, my role as researcher and co-constructor of the knowledge produced in this research must be acknowledged. My interpretation of the data in this dissertation was one among many possible interpretations. I was influenced by past academic and personal experiences. I have a longstanding academic interest in women’s health issues and violence against women. I have conducted interviews with victims of domestic violence and IPSV. These experiences enhanced my knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity to the issues being addressed in this dissertation and may have influenced my chosen research questions, study design, interactions with participants, and data interpretations. As part of my reflexive process, I checked my own interpretations of the data against the individual interview/focus group transcripts as well as against the data as a whole (i.e., across data sources) and the extant psychological literature (Lather, 1986).

I identify as a critical and feminist social psychology researcher and, as such, sought in particular to examine the broader social forces that support men’s SV against women. Much of the existing research on men’s SV has individualized the issue by focusing predominantly on individual predictors of men’s SV perpetration. Even predictors that are theorized as part of a broader social patriarchal ideology (e.g., rape myths; Burt, 1998) are typically measured as cognitions, attitudes, and beliefs that reside within the individual (Smiler, 2004). See also Chapter 3: Literature Review. The psychological SV literature, in particular, has a strong tradition of studying the issue from an individualistic perspective (Salazar & Cook, 2002). I believe that moving beyond the individual allows for a deeper understanding of SV and the normative discourses and gendered power relations that support SV. This fills an important gap
in the field and is crucial for informing more effective prevention efforts and, ultimately, improving women’s lives, wellbeing, and relationships.

This identity and orientation also shaped my theoretical thinking about men’s reports and SV. Part of my reflexive process involved thinking deeply about and explicitly articulating the epistemological and ontological assumptions underpinning my analyses (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003; see Chapters 2.1 and 2.2 above). I chose a balanced realist-poststructuralist approach because I believe both are important for highlighting different sides of the issue of men’s SV and for disrupting it. Throughout this research, I reflexively engaged with the data by critically examining my interpretations and checking them against my epistemological and ontological assumptions.

I also critically examined my reactions during data analysis. For example, at the outset of this research, I had planned to examine men’s subjective experiences perpetrating IPSV in Study 2 (e.g., men’s reasons for using IPSV, their interpretations of their IPSV, their thoughts and emotions during the IPSV incident). However, during data analysis, I became uncomfortable with reading men’s accounts in this way. Even had I included some critical analysis of men’s accounts, this more phenomenological approach would not have been as effective at subverting the discursive productions of men’s talk and the ways they worked to normalize SV (see also Chapter 7.3: Implications for Research).

Also relevant to reflexivity, poststructuralist and other postpositivist approaches understand knowledge and meaning as socially constituted and contextually situated (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). Thus, the particular moment in time and place that I conducted this research must also be acknowledged and may have shaped both my own interpretations of the data and
men’s responses to my studies (more on this in Chapter 7: General Discussion). This research took place at a mid-sized university in Southwestern Ontario, Canada with a student population that predominantly occupies positions of race and class privilege. All participants self-identified as men (I did not exclude trans men but cannot confirm if any trans men participated) and were aged 18 to 24. All data collection took place between September 2016 and October 2017.

In the past decade or so, there has been increased political and media attention to the issue of SV, especially SV on university campuses. Beginning in 2011, the U.S. federal government under the Obama administration began a mandate and awareness campaign about universities’ responsibilities pertaining to SV. The mandate under Title IX—which prohibits discrimination based on sex in all educational institutions receiving federal funding—outlined educational institutions’ responsibilities to investigate and adjudicate campus SV and protect victims’ rights (Office for Civil Rights, 2011). This sparked increased research and media attention to the issue of campus SV.

Possibly a result of this increased attention in the U.S., the Toronto Star released an investigation of over 100 Canadian colleges and universities, finding that only nine had stand-alone SV policies (Mathieu & Poisson, 2014). The University of Guelph (where this research was conducted) was one of these nine (Mathieu & Poisson, 2014). Many universities have since increased their attention to SV, developing policies and educational campaigns. In 2015, a bill was passed in Ontario (Bill 132) that required universities and colleges to have formal SV policies. Possibly prompted by this bill, the University of Guelph updated its SV policy in January 2017 (about four months into my data collection; Wilcox, 2017). The updated policy included a clearer articulation of the wide range of acts included under the definition of SV and a
process for disclosing SV and receiving university supports without having an investigation conducted (Wilcox, 2017). Around the same time, the University of Guelph also developed its Sexual Violence Support & Information website, training for university staff and faculty, and new education events for students. During the 2016-2017 academic year, the University of Guelph held a number of SV and consent-related campaigns and programs that my participants were likely exposed to, such as:

a) Stop. Ask., a new campaign intended to remind students that everyone has a responsibility to stop and ask for consent. The campaign included a video message from the University President and messages posted around campus.

b) “Can I Kiss You” program by Mike Domitrz, a mandatory program for all first-year students that discusses consent, respect in relationships, and bystander intervention.

The media has also increased its attention to SV in recent years, including highly publicized trials and controversies such as: the Jian Ghomeshi case publicized mainly between 2014 and 2016; Emma Sulkowicz’ “Mattress Performance (Carry That Weight)” publicized mainly between 2014 and 2015; and the Access Hollywood video in which Donald Trump discussed groping women, publicized mainly in 2016. At a similar time, the Ontario government also released a new sex education curriculum for elementary and secondary public schools that specifically addressed issues of healthy relationships and consent (Rushowy, 2015). This new curriculum was discussed fairly widely in the media. The “me too” movement (founded in 2006 by Tarana Burke) also resurfaced in October 2017 (Johnson & Hawbaker, 2019). My participants were likely exposed to this media attention. Three of my interviews (Study 2) and about 20 of my surveys (Study 1) were completed around the time of the “me too” resurgence.
While I understand knowledge (including knowledge produced through research) as culturally and historically situated, I do at times speak of a more generalized (often male-centered) culture throughout this dissertation. This culture refers to what I and others understand as shared, dominant Western, English-speaking cultural patterns produced through “the news media, television, film, literature, dominant religions, modes of education, and so on” (Gavey, 2005, p. 4). While I recognize the importance of geographical and other local particularities, I focus more on this broader shared cultural context. My analyses and arguments throughout this dissertation pertain to my contextually situated research samples; however, I do not understand them as necessarily unique to this precise local context (Gavey, 2005). As such, I also draw on (and situate my analyses within) past research from multiple Western countries such as Canada, the U.S., the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand. As noted above, I do attempt to describe the samples and contexts of this past research to help contextualize the knowledge produced therein. In my qualitative analyses in Studies 2 and 3, in particular, I also speak to different levels. I speak to what participants’ talk might be doing in the immediate context of the research: often their talk worked in face-saving or self-preserving ways. But I also speak to what this talk might mean and do on a broader level: participants drew on the language that was available to them and so their talk says something about the broader male-centered ideology of Western society.
Figure 2.1: My Conceptual Model of the Two Continuums of Sexual Violence

Coercive Tactic
Verbal Coercion

Sexual Act
Sexual Touching

Intercourse
Physical Force

Note. Adapted from DeGue and DiLillo (2005).
3 Literature Review: Sexual Violence as a Gendered Phenomenon

SV is committed most often by men toward women (Black et al., 2011; Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008) and is an important social determinant of health and wellbeing in many women’s lives. It has been consistently associated with a range of lasting negative consequences for women such as depression, suicidal ideation and behavior, self-blame, and restricted sexual decision-making (Breitenbecher, 2006; Katz & Tirone, 2010; Stepakoff, 1998; Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 1997). Regardless of its negative impacts, SV violates women’s right to make free and autonomous decisions about their bodies. In this chapter, I review the relevant literature on: occurrence rates and contexts of men’s SV against women; individual, peer, and broader social contributors of men’s SV against women; and heterosexual consent and communication.

3.1 Occurrence Rates and Contexts

Despite increased attention to the issue of men’s SV against women over the past 30 years, occurrence rates remain high in the U.S. and Canada (Black et al., 2011; Perreault, 2015). Occurrence rates vary depending on the type of SV examined; however, research has consistently found significantly higher perpetration rates of both physical and nonphysical SV among men and higher victimization rates among women (Cantor et al., 2015; Gámez-Guadix, Straus, & Hershberger, 2011; Hartwick, Desmarais, & Hennig, 2007; VanderLaan & Vasey, 2009). SV is particularly common among university populations (Kilpatrick, Resnick, Ruggiero, Conoscenti, & McCauley, 2007), making this an important group to focus on.

Most university occurrence research has examined women’s self-reported victimization and has found that between 6% and 44.2% of U.S. university women have reported some form of sexual victimization since entering university, or during a study follow-up period while attending
university (see Fedina, Holmes, & Backes, 2016 for a review). Muehlenhard, Peterson, Humphreys, and Jozkowski (2017) reviewed past research using large, representative samples of U.S. female undergraduates and concluded that, although risk varies depending on campus, year in school, race, and so on, one in five (20%) “is a reasonably accurate average” of the percentage of U.S. undergraduate women sexually assaulted while in college (p. 549)\(^4\). The comparatively fewer studies that have examined university men’s self-reported perpetration have found incidence rates of 11% to 19% who reported having committed some form of SV in the past year (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Anderson, Cahill, & Delahanty, 2017; Calzada, Brown, & Doyle, 2011; Johnson, Murphy, & Gidycz, 2017).

Although less work has distinguished between relationship type, there is evidence that SV is especially common in heterosexual intimate relationships. The most recent U.S. national prevalence rates suggest that 16.4% of U.S. women have experienced SV by an intimate partner during their lifetime (Smith et al., 2017). Similarly, 45.1% of U.S. women victims of SV reported that the perpetrator was a current or former intimate partner (Smith et al., 2017). More than half of university men’s self-reported SV perpetration occurred within a steady or casual dating relationship (Abbey, McAuslan, & Ross, 1998; Gidycz, Warkentin, & Orchowski, 2007; Gidycz, Warkentin, Orchowski, & Edwards, 2011). While most of these studies with university men combined steady and casual dating relationships or did not clearly define “dating relationship”, subsequent research (albeit with a community sample) found that more SV perpetrators were in a committed relationship with the victim compared to a casual one (Wegner et al., 2014).

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\(^4\) Muehlenhard et al.’s (2017) review included only studies that defined sexual assault as including sexual acts obtained by force, threats of force, or incapacitation (not verbal pressure).
Studies with U.S. and Canadian university men in committed relationships found that between 27% and 36% reported SV against their current partner (Brousseau, Bergeron, Hébert, & McDuff, 2011; Rapoza & Drake, 2008). The only Canadian nationally representative study with university men, to my knowledge, found that 11% of men reported having used some form of SV against a female dating partner in the past year (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993a). DeKeseredy and Kelly (1993a) and Brousseau et al. (2011) conducted the only studies to my knowledge to have examined a more detailed breakdown of university men’s IPSV. Brousseau et al. (2011) used a convenience sample of 222 men from a Canadian university (or whose partner was from the university). They found that the most common events reported by men were: (a) unwanted kissing and touching because of verbal pressure/arguments and (b) unwanted sexual intercourse because the perpetrator was too excited to stop. They also reported the following rates using the categories recommended by the creators of the Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss & Gidycz, 1985; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987): 21.2% reported sexual coercion; 15.8% reported unwanted sexual contact; 3.2% reported attempted rape; and 1.8% reported rape. DeKeseredy and Kelly (1993) reported incidence rates across the ten Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss et al., 1987) items. They similarly found that the most commonly reported events were sexual contact or intercourse through continual arguments or pressure. Neither of these studies, however, separated IPSV occurrence rates by tactic and sexual act. Thus, we do not yet know university men’s self-reported IPSV rates for each tactic and each sexual act alone or for each combination of tactic and sexual act.

5 Both studies included both members of each couple in their sample. In Brousseau et al. (2011), only one member of each couple was required to be a university student. In Rapoza and Drake (2008), most participants were students.
The majority of the past SV prevalence and incidence studies referenced above were conducted in the U.S. Thus, additional Canadian research is needed on men’s SV perpetration rates in general, and IPSV perpetration in particular. Nevertheless, SV perpetration rates are likely similar across the two countries. One recent study compared SV victimization rates among nationally representative samples of Canadian and U.S. university students (Daigle, Johnston, Azimi, & Felix, 2019). The researchers found that rates were similar among Canadian and U.S. students, but slightly (and statistically significantly) higher among Canadian students (7.5% versus 6.9%; Daigle et al., 2019). Moreover, compared to being an American student, being a Canadian student increased the likelihood of SV victimization by 17% when controlling for other factors (Daigle et al., 2019).

3.2 Contributors of Men’s Sexual Violence Perpetration

The comparatively little SV research that has used male participants has focused predominantly on individual-level predictors of men’s SV perpetration and, to a lesser extent, peer- and broader social-level predictors. It is, again, worth noting that much of the research referenced below has been conducted in the U.S., with fewer studies conducted in Canada and elsewhere. Thus, additional Canadian research is needed on the contributors of men’s SV perpetration. Nevertheless, contributors of men’s SV perpetration are likely similar across Canada and the U.S. Although focused on SV victimization, Daigle et al. (2019) found mostly similar risk factors between their nationally representative samples of Canadian and U.S. university students.
3.2.1 Individual-Level Contributors

Research has identified the following individual-level predictors of men’s general SV perpetration (not necessarily against intimate partners; see also Tharp et al., 2013 for a review):

a) Childhood abuse experiences, including sexual and physical abuse/punishment, and exposure to domestic violence (Abbey, Parkhill, BeShears, Clinton-Sherrod, & Zawacki, 2006; Casey, Beadnell, & Lindhorst, 2009; Gámez-Guadix et al., 2011; Loh & Gidycz, 2006; Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991; Schatzel-Murphy, Harris, Knight, & Milburn, 2009; Senn, Desmarais, Verberg, & Wood, 2000; Simons, Wurtele, & Heil, 2002; White & Smith, 2009; Williams et al., 2014).

b) Cognitions, attitudes, and beliefs, including rape myth acceptance (see Suarez & Gadalla, 2010 for a meta-analysis), hostile attitudes toward women and hostile masculinity (Abbey, McAuslan, Zawacki, Clinton, & Buck, 2001; Abbey & Jacques-Tiura, 2011; Calhoun, Bernat, Clum, & Frame, 1997; Malamuth, 1986; Malamuth et al., 1991; Nguyen & Parkhill, 2014; Widman, Olson, & Bolen, 2013; Zawacki, Abbey, Buck, McAuslan, & Clinton-Sherrod, 2003), traditional gender norms and ideologies (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993b; Eaton & Matamala, 2014; Locke & Mahalik, 2005), and acceptance of SV and interpersonal violence (Abbey et al., 2001; DeGue & DiLillo, 2004; Tyler, Hoyt, & Whitbeck, 1998).

c) Personality characteristics, such as aggressive, antisocial, manipulative, impulsive, erratic, dominant, low emotionality, sexual narcissistic, and generalized psychopathic personality traits (Abbey & Jacques-Tiura, 2011; DeGue & DiLillo, 2004; Hersh & Gray-Little, 1998; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013; Mouilso, Calhoun, & Rosenbloom, 2013; Widman & McNulty, 2010; Zawacki et al., 2003).
d) Behavioral tendencies, including generalized aggression and verbally and physically aggressive conflict resolution (DeGue & DiLillo, 2004; DeGue, DiLillo, & Scalora, 2010; Loh & Gidycz, 2006), previous SV perpetration (Brousseau, Hébert, & Bergeron, 2012; Loh & Gidycz, 2006; Hall, DeGarmo, Eap, Teten, & Sue, 2006; White & Smith, 2004), pornography consumption (Bonino, Ciairano, Rabaglietti, & Cattelino, 2006; Koss & Dinero, 1988; Simons, Simons, Lei, & Sutton, 2012; Vega & Malamuth, 2007; Williams, Cooper, Howell, Yuille, & Paulhus, 2009), and frequent or problematic alcohol use (Abbey et al., 1998; Abbey et al., 2006; Abbey & Jacques-Tiura, 2011; Calzada et al., 2011; Kingree & Thompson, 2013; Koss & Gaines, 1993; Tuliao & McChargue, 2014; Ullman, Karabatsos, & Koss, 1999).

Some of the predictors above (e.g., rape myth acceptance and traditional gender norms) certainly have sociocultural components and are often theorized as part of a broader social patriarchal ideology (Burt, 1998; Edwards, Turchik, Dardis, Reynolds, & Gidycz, 2011; Ryan, 2011). Thus, they allow for social influence. However, researchers—especially psychology researchers and those using quantitative surveys to identify predictors of men’s SV—tend to measure these myths and norms as cognitions, attitudes, and beliefs that are internalized or learned over time and, thus, assume that they reside within the individual (Smiler, 2004).

### 3.2.1.1 Committed Versus Casual Relationship Individual-Level Contributors

Shotland (1985, 1992) theorized that, whereas acquaintance rape involves perpetrators with psychopathic personality traits who target multiple women, intimate relationship rape involves perpetrators with high expectations for sex who feel entitled and believe that their partner is obligated to have sex with them after sexual precedence has been established.
However, this theory is outdated in that it assumed that sex generally only occurs in committed relationships and that perpetrators in casual relationships would score high on psychopathic personality traits because it would be unreasonable to expect sex in such a relationship (Wegner et al., 2014). Wegner et al. (2014) conducted the only empirical comparison to my knowledge of SV perpetrators in casual and committed relationships. They found that these perpetrators from a U.S. community sample did not differ with respect to psychopathic personality traits but did differ on other traits. Compared to perpetrators in committed relationships, those in casual relationships were more sexually dominant, had more positive attitudes about and more experience with casual sex, and more frequently drank heavily.

3.2.2 Peer-Level Contributors

The focus on individual-level risk factors, particularly personality characteristics and attitudes, has been criticized for ignoring the sociocultural context in which such characteristics and coercive behaviors occurred (Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004; Pease & Flood, 2008). Research on peer-level factors has begun to fill this gap by looking at men’s social circles for possible SV risk factors. Those that have been associated with men’s general SV perpetration (not specific to IPSV) include:

a) Sports participation, especially aggressive sports such as football, basketball, wrestling, and soccer (Calzada et al., 2011; Forbes, Adams-Curtis, Pakalka, & White, 2006; Humphrey & Kahn, 2000; Koss & Gaines, 1993; McCauley et al., 2014; see Murnen & Kohlman, 2007 for a meta-analysis).

b) Fraternity membership (see Murnen & Kohlman, 2007 for a meta-analysis), though this association may be mediated by high-risk alcohol use (Kingree & Thompson, 2013).
Peer-group attitudes and behaviors such as peer pressure for sex, and peer approval of hostile talk about women, forcing sex on women, using coercion to gain sex, or using drugs or alcohol to undermine women’s resistance to sex (Abbey et al., 2001; Abbey et al., 2006; DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993b; 1995; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013; Franklin, Bouffard, & Pratt, 2012; Humphrey & Kahn, 2000; Kanin, 1985; Kingree & Thompson, 2013; Koss & Dinero, 1988; Malamuth, Linz, Heavey, Barnes, & Acker, 1995; Schwartz & Nogrady, 1996; Strang & Peterson, 2013).

3.2.3 Broader Social-Level Contributors

The research on individual- and peer-level contributors of SV, although important, has revealed little about the broader social forces and discourses that construct and support SV. Although peer-level contributors answer some questions about the social contributors of men’s SV, it has not come far enough. Likewise, most North American prevention efforts with men have focused on changing individuals’ knowledge, attitudes, and, less frequently, behaviors and have had little effect on the occurrence of SV (Anderson & Whiston, 2005; Casey & Lindhorst, 2009; DeGue et al., 2014; Tharp et al., 2011). Focus on individual predictors and individual attitudinal change may be futile without addressing the broader sociocultural milieu in which SV occurs.

Some empirical work has noted the links between sociocultural norms and SV but has used individualistic measures (albeit aggregated by geographical site; e.g., Baron, Straus, & Jaffee, 1988; Hines, 2007). For example, Hines (2007) examined IPSV victimization rates among women from universities in Asia, Australia/New Zealand, Canada, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, and the United States and found that mean site-level scores of hostility
toward women predicted IPSV against women. Specifically, hostile thoughts or beliefs about women (e.g., “I often feel resentful of women”) significantly predicted forced sex: every one point increase in hostility increased the likelihood of forced sex by 57% and verbal IPSV by 22%.

Other limited work has examined the shared cultural discourses that construct and support men’s SV against women. Western culturally shared discourses about the meanings and practices of normative heterosexuality hold that: men are biologically driven to persistently desire (hetero)sex, women are gatekeepers who are responsible for controlling men’s sexual drive and determining when to engage in sex, heterosex is natural or biological, and men and women communicate differently which leads to misunderstandings (see also Chapter 3.3: Heterosexual Consent and Communication; Frith & Kitzinger, 1997; Gavey, 1989, 2005; Gavey, McPhillips, & Doherty, 2001; Hollway, 1989, 2005; Waldby, Kippax, & Crawford, 1993). Although I refer to heterosexual discourses, sexuality has also long been critiqued as a site of power and subordination for social groups other than heterosexual women and men, including lesbian women and gay men (Gavey, 2005). The male sexual drive discourse noted above, for example, constructs a need and persistent pursuit of sex among “all healthy normal men” (Gavey, 2005, p. 104; Hollway, 1989, 2005) and has been linked to the construction of sexuality and SV among gay men as well (e.g., Braun, Schmidt, Gavey & Fenaughty, 2009). Applied to heterosexual sex and relationships, however, this discourse works in conjunction with the others (and especially the female sexual gatekeeping discourse) to construct a particular male-centered and violent version of heterosexuality in which men are sexual agents and women are only objects of men’s sexual desire (Gavey, 2005; Hollway, 1989, 2005).
Western culturally shared discourses about SV hold that rape is committed “by a stranger who uses a weapon—an assault done at night, outside (in a dark alley), with a lot of violence, resistance by the victim, and hence severe wounds and signs of struggle” (Burt, 1998, p. 130). As a result, SV that does not meet this definition is not seen as “real” rape and often becomes invisible. Similarly, dominant discourses about SV tend to: blame the victim (e.g., “women often provoke rape through their appearance or behaviour”), suggest that only certain types of women are sexually assaulted (e.g., “usually it is women who do things like hang out in bars and sleep around that are raped”), and exonerate the perpetrator (e.g., “rape happens when a man’s sex drive gets out of control” – related to dominant constructions of male heterosexuality; Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler, & Viki, 2013, p. 19).

Western research finds that women and men continue to rely on these dominant discourses about heterosexuality (Allen, 2003; Cense, Bay-Cheng, & van Dijk, 2018; Crawford, Kippax, & Waldby, 1994; Hird & Jackson, 2001; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003; Waldby et al., 1993) and about SV (Hayes, Abbott, & Cook, 2016; Littleton, Tabernik, Canales, & Backstrom, 2009). Moreover, men and women often use these dominant discourses to normalize SV. For example, men and adolescent boys described SV as resulting from men’s physiological needs or “frustrated sexual energy” (Hird & Jackson, 2001; Romero-Sánchez & Megías, 2013, p. 9). Most of the past discursive research has examined the dominant heterosexuality discourses that women and men support. Very limited research has examined how women and men do this; that is, the rhetorical strategies and specific language that they use. Relevant to the current dissertation, boys in Hird and Jackson’s (2001) studies used inherent,
biological sexual differences to support higher male sex drive and SV. Much of this past work on women and men’s talk is also quite dated.

The few studies that have examined the talk of men who have actually perpetrated SV have found similar support for the use of dominant discourses about heterosexuality and SV. Scully (1990) reported on various experiences and discourses of convicted rapists in the U.S. and found two types of rapists based on the ways that they talked about their rapes. First, *admitters* “used excuses in an attempt to explain why their behavior was rape but they were not rapists” (p.98). These men understood their behavior as wrong and blamed themselves but used excuses to explain themselves in socially acceptable terms. Most notably, they appealed to forces beyond their control, including (a) alcohol and drugs, (b) emotional/psychological problems/sickness, and (c) being an otherwise “nice guy.” Second, *deniers* “acknowledged that rape is generally impermissible, but used justifications to show how, in their situation, the behavior was appropriate even if not quite right” (p. 98). These men drew on dominant discourses that allowed them to justify their behavior and blame their female victims, including: “(1) women as seductresses, (2) women mean yes when they say no, (3) women eventually ‘relax and enjoy it,’ (4) nice girls don’t get raped, (5) guilty of a minor wrongdoing, and (6) macho man” who does not need to rape to get women and who has superior sexual technique (p. 102).

Lea and Auburn (2001) similarly found that a convicted rapist attending a treatment program in Britain drew on dominant understandings of both SV and heterosex. For example, he drew on myths about rape by drawing attention to (and thereby blaming) the victim’s risky behavior: walking alone at night in an isolated area. He also suggested that, because he was not going to harm her, she would have found the experience pleasurable; thus, drawing on myths
about women exaggerating rape claims. He also used “a vocabulary consistent with a relationship between consenting adults” (p. 20). For example, he used language of mutuality by describing: laying his jacket down for the victim to lie on; protecting the victim from the violence of his accomplice; and “a scene of mutual intimacy in which he apologized to her and she reveals her own distress at ending her relationship with her boyfriend” (p. 21).

More recently, Hipp et al. (2017) examined the anonymous justifications of self-identified SV perpetrators on Reddit.com, a popular online community. Perpetrators (gender could not always be determined) often justified their SV based on men’s higher sex drive, hormones, and women’s gatekeeping role. They also referred to discourses about women meaning “yes” when they say “no” and blamed victims for drinking too much, not giving a clear refusal or not physically resisting, or being “overly sexual” during the incident (p. 85).

Other Western research from New Zealand and the U.K. has similarly examined how men’s talk supports their use of intimate partner violence (though not necessarily SV). For example, men who had recently or were soon to begin perpetrator programs used rhetorical devices such as metaphors about men as “king of the castle” and global assertions about women and men’s roles (Adams, Towns, & Gavey, 1995). Hearn (1998) and Kelly and Westmarland (2016) similarly examined how men—most of whom had been recruited from perpetrator programs or the legal system—talked about their violence against known women and especially intimate partners. Men in these studies used the word “just” to minimize their behavior; they referred to specific incidents of violence and rarely acknowledged violence as part of a recurring pattern of behavior; they shifted responsibility (e.g., blamed their partner’s behavior); they compared their own violence with that of other, more violent men; and they claimed not to
remember violence they had inflicted (Hearn, 1998; Kelly & Westmarland, 2016). Most of this existing research on perpetrators’ talk about their own SV and other forms of violence against known women is dated and has been conducted with convicted rapists or men in contact with the legal system or perpetrator programs.

### 3.3 Heterosexual Consent and Communication

SV is most often defined as sexual activity that occurs without the victim’s consent (though see Chapter 2.2: Defining Sexual Violence above for some critique about this). Thus, a discussion about heterosexual consent and communication is paramount to any discussion about SV. What constitutes consent, however, is not straightforward:

Consent can be conceptualized in numerous ways: as a feeling or decision, as an explicit agreement, or as behavior indicative of willingness; as something that can be assumed or as something that must be given explicitly; and as a discrete event or as an ongoing, continuous process. All this is further complicated by numerous factors: Individuals are often ambivalent or uncertain about what they want or are willing to do. Gendered expectations and sexual double standards create unequal environments for women and men. […] Even expressions of agreement can be questioned under certain conditions (e.g., if the individual was intoxicated or was being pressured or threatened); determining whether these conditions exist often involves judgment calls (e.g., how intoxicated is too intoxicated to consent, or what types of pressure or threats are serious enough to preclude meaningful consent). (Muehlenhard, Humphreys, Jozkowski, & Peterson, 2016, p. 482)
I discuss some of these issues in greater detail in Chapter 2.2: Defining Sexual Violence and Chapter 7: General Discussion. These issues notwithstanding, the absence of consent is consistently used to define SV in research (as in the quantitative Sexual Experiences Survey-Short Form Perpetration by Koss et al., 2006 that I used in Study 1). Thus, I turn now to research about how men and women communicate (non)consent in heterosexual encounters.

Studies find that Western university women and men report more commonly communicating sexual consent to a partner nonverbally compared to verbally, including touching their partner, undressing themselves or their partner, engaging in kissing or other sexual touching, and reciprocating or not resisting their partners’ advances (see Muehlenhard et al., 2016 for a review). Nonverbal consent appears especially common among women and men in romantic/intimate relationships (Jozkowski & Wiersma, 2015). In contrast, most report that they communicate nonconsent (i.e., refusals) verbally; however, women often report using “softening techniques” such as pauses, hedges, excuses, apologies, and compliments (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999; Muehlenhard et al., 2016, p. 470). Kitzinger and Frith (1999) highlighted that these indirect sexual refusals are consistent with “culturally normative ways of indicating refusal” in a variety of social interactions (p. 293).

Research on university women and men’s interpretations of a partner’s (non)consent is more complicated. Most university women and men report that direct verbal consent is most indicative of consent but that these expressions are not the norm or necessary to understand a partner’s interest (Beres, 2010; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999). With respect to nonconsent, university women and men often report that “women need to be clear; unless women’s refusals are clear and direct, miscommunication is likely” (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Muehlenhard et
al., 2016, p. 472; O’Byrne, Hansen, & Rapley, 2008; O’Byrne, Rapley, & Hansen, 2006; Starfelt, Young, Palk, & White, 2015). However, further examination has suggested that men report understanding women’s nonverbal and indirect verbal refusals, except in the context of attributing blame for rape (see Muehlenhard et al., 2016 for a review).

For example, Australian university men in O’Byrne et al.’s focus group studies noted many nonverbal and indirect verbal refusals that women use to decline sex, suggesting that they understand these types of refusals (O’Byrne et al., 2008; O’Byrne et al., 2006). However, when specifically discussing rape, some men claimed *not* to understand women’s refusals (O’Byrne et al., 2008; O’Byrne et al., 2006). In other words, in discussions about rape, men worked “to undo the displays of shared knowledge” about women’s sexual refusals that they had indicated in earlier conversations (O’Byrne et al., 2008, p. 178). This and other Western discursive research has demonstrated that miscommunication arguments likely do not accurately reflect heterosexual experiences, but rather are used as a rhetorical “resource” to explain or justify SV (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Ehrlich, 1998; Frith & Kitzinger, 1997, p. 523; O’Byrne et al., 2008). Further research on SV has also pointed to instances in which men understood women’s refusals but persisted or tried to change women’s minds (e.g., Jozkowski, Marcantonio, & Hunt, 2017). University men in Jozkowski et al.’s (2017) interview study reported that they specifically used women’s more ambiguous nonconsent cues to try to convince women to have sex; for example, by “[trying] again” or using verbal persuasion to “wear her down” (p. 241).

Some Western research has found reported differences in women and men’s understandings of consent in intimate relationships compared to more casual ones. For example, university women and men have often reported that, especially in intimate relationships,
affirmative verbal consent would be awkward and disrupt the natural progression of sex and that
couples “can tell” if their partner desires sex (Humphreys, 2007; Humphreys & Herold, 2003;
Shumlich & Fisher, 2018, p. 255). In Humphreys’ (2007) study, Canadian university women and
men read a vignette depicting a heterosexual couple watching a movie after dinner. The man in
the scenario begins touching the woman sexually and the woman, who “didn’t really feel like
starting anything sexual,” “moved his hand away gently.” When the man makes further sexual
advances, the woman “kissed back, though not very enthusiastically” and eventually they end up
“having sex” (p. 310). The couple was described as (a) being on their first date and not having
been sexual before; (b) celebrating 3 months of dating and having been sexual a few times; or (c)
celebrating 2 years of marriage and having been sexual fairly regularly. Compared to students
who read the first-date scenario, those who read the three-month and two-year relationship
scenarios rated the actions as more acceptable and less in need of explicit verbal consent
(Humphreys, 2007). For example, they agreed less with statements such as “[the man] should
have asked for consent verbally” and they agreed more with statements such as “verbally asking
for consent would have wrecked the mood,” “sexual consent is okay to assume,” and “if [the
woman] really didn’t want to have sexual relations, she would have stopped [the man]” (p. 310).

In general, women agreed more than men that explicit consent is necessary.

Qualitative and discursive work has examined some of these issues further. Young adults
from Canada and New Zealand in Beres’ (2014) interview study similarly reported that “consent
does not factor into their own on-going relationships” (p. 383). However, participants in
relationships did discuss instances in which they successfully communicated and negotiated
about sex and differing desires, including “a free willingness to participate in sex” (p. 384).
Thus, it appeared that it was the language of consent itself that did not resonate with participants in ongoing relationships. Frith and Kitzinger (2001) highlighted how young women in the U.K. referenced predictable stages of sexual activities “as though there is a pre-given sequence” (p. 218; emphasis added). Rather than necessarily straightforwardly reflecting heterosexual practices, Frith and Kitzinger argued that these script formulations functioned rhetorically to normalize claims about women’s inability to say “no” (i.e., all women have difficulty because it goes against the shared sexual script). This study was specific to women’s verbal refusals and not necessarily in the context of intimate relationships; however, it may have implications for the alleged disruptiveness of men’s verbal requests (especially in intimate relationships) noted above.

Aside from Humphreys’ (2007) and Beres’ (2014) studies, most of the research on how women and men communicate consent in heterosexual encounters (realist) and how women and men talk about these issues (discursive) has either not distinguished between relationship type or has focused specifically on more casual relationships. Thus, less is known about consent and communication, and the social constructions thereof, in university intimate relationships. The above section in particular also highlights the importance of discursive and poststructuralist research that has expanded more realist understandings of consent and communication (see also Chapter 2.2: Defining Sexual Violence).

3.4 Summary of the Literature and Rationale for the Current Research

Research has established men’s high rates of SV perpetration against women in the West, particularly in intimate relationships (Smith et al., 2017; Wegner et al., 2014). However, because the research on SV and intimate partner violence has developed largely independently (especially
among university samples), IPSV has often been overlooked in research (Bagwell-Gray, Messing, & Baldwin-White, 2015). In particular, no studies to date have examined a detailed and separated breakdown of university men’s IPSV tactics and sexual acts. Thus, we know little about what university IPSV actually looks like (main gap 1).

The comparatively little research that has examined SV based on men’s reports has focused predominantly on individual and peer contributors of SV perpetration, with little focus on broader social contributors. The existing research on women and men’s use of heterosexuality and SV discourses (e.g., Allen, 2003; Cense et al., 2018; Crawford et al., 1994; Hayes et al., 2016; Hird & Jackson, 2001; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013; Littleton et al., 2009 Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003; Waldby et al., 1993) is mostly dated and has mostly examined the content of these discourses with little focus on how men rhetorically support these constructions. Most of the existing research on perpetrators’ talk about their own SV and other forms of violence against known women is also dated and has been conducted mostly with convicted rapists or men in contact with the legal system or perpetrator programs (e.g., Adams et al., 1995; Hearn, 1998; Kelly & Westmarland, 2016; Lea & Auburn, 2001; Scully, 1990). This constitutes only a minority of men who perpetrate and who likely perpetrate the most physically violent forms of violence against women. Thus, less is known about the broader social forces and discourses that construct and support university men’s SV, especially IPSV and nonphysical SV (main gap 2). The limited existing work on the social contributors of SV suggests that targeting individuals’ attitudes and beliefs may be insufficient for fully understanding and preventing men’s SV against women. Thus, further examination of the broader social forces and discourses that support SV in the first place and how men take up and resist dominant discourses is pertinent.
The three studies presented in this dissertation fill both of the above main gaps in the literature. Broadly speaking, I demonstrate with this research (a) what IPSV looked like among the university men in my sample and (b) how university men in my sample socially constructed and supported IPSV. Specifically, I used surveys, interviews, and focus groups to examine incidence rates and contextual features of IPSV in my sample, perpetrators’ perceptions of the effects of their IPSV, and university men’s talk about heterosexuality and their use of IPSV. Based on the survey data collected in Study 1, I mainly highlight the scope and range of IPSV among university men in my sample. In Studies 2 and 3 (interviews and focus groups, respectively), I mainly highlight how men talked about IPSV and heterosexuality and how discourses about SV and normative heterosexuality may work to construct and support versions of heterosexuality that are male-centered and violent, thus, maintaining gendered power relations between men and women.
4 Study 1 (Surveys): University Men’s Self-Reported Intimate Partner Sexual Violence: Incidence, Context, and Men’s Perceptions

4.1 Abstract

Men’s sexual violence against women is pervasive and is especially common in university populations and heterosexual intimate relationships. Nevertheless, little research has specifically examined rates of university men’s self-reported intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV), and especially not their rates of specific IPSV tactics and sexual acts. Using online surveys with 441 Canadian university men, we examined men’s self-reported: (a) IPSV perpetration incidence rates in their most recent intimate relationship in the past year, including rates of specific tactics and sexual acts; (b) contextual features of IPSV incidents; and (c) perceptions of the effects of IPSV incidents. Seventy (15.87%) men reported at least one instance of using sexual violence in their most recent heterosexual relationship in the past year. The most common tactic was verbal coercion and the most common sexual act was oral sex. Perpetrators’ most memorable IPSV incidents often occurred either in their own or their partner’s home and involved alcohol consumption. Most perpetrators reported no effects of their IPSV on their relationships. We briefly discuss the implications of our results for future research and interventions.

As of September 2019, a version of this manuscript with minor differences is under review for publication.
4.2 Introduction and Literature Review

Despite increased attention to the issue of men’s sexual violence (SV) against women over the past 30 years, several important gaps remain in the literature. First, compared to research on women’s self-reported victimization, research on men’s self-reported perpetration has been scarce. Second, despite mounting evidence that SV is particularly common in heterosexual intimate relationships (e.g., Smith et al., 2017), little research has examined occurrence rates of intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV), specifically. This is partly because the intimate partner violence and SV research have developed largely independently. As a result, IPSV, which occurs at the intersection, is often overlooked (Bagwell-Gray, Messing, & Baldwin-White, 2015). This is especially true for research among university samples. The research on intimate partner and dating violence among university students has tended to examine SV only in the context of otherwise violent relationships, thus overlooking at least some forms of IPSV that occur in otherwise nonviolent relationships. In contrast, the research on SV among university students has tended to examine lifetime types and rates of SV against any woman in any relational context, thus overlooking SV specifically in intimate relationships.

Third, the limited research that has specifically examined university men’s self-reported IPSV perpetration has examined mostly overall occurrence rates with little to no breakdown across different tactics and sexual acts. Finally, no studies to date have examined contextual characteristics of IPSV incidents such as location and alcohol use or men’s perceptions of the effects of IPSV. This study fills each of these gaps by examining university men’s self-reported: (a) IPSV perpetration incidence rates by tactic and sexual act; (b) IPSV contextual features (alcohol use, location, how long ago it occurred); and (c) perceptions of the effects of their IPSV.
We understand (IP)SV as reflecting and maintaining gendered power relations between women and men. It is committed most often by men toward women (Black et al., 2011; Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008) and has been consistently associated with a range of lasting negative consequences for women such as depression, suicidal ideation and behavior, self-blame, and restricted sexual decision-making (Breitenbecher, 2006; Katz & Tirone, 2010; Stepakoff, 1998; Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 1997). Regardless of its negative impacts, SV violates women’s right to make free and autonomous decisions about their bodies.

In this study, we defined SV according to the Sexual Experiences Survey-Short Form Perpetration (SES-SFP; Koss et al., 2006) and generally took men’s self-reports as straightforward reflection of actual IPSV incidents. The purpose of this manuscript in the context of the dissertation is to provide some grounding in the scope and range of men’s IPSV. Nevertheless, our findings here should be taken in the context of the body of work on both women and men’s reports of IPSV occurrence—especially given past findings that men, in particular, may not always disclose SV perpetration (Kolivas & Gross, 2007; Koss, Gidycz, &Wisniewski, 1987; Strang et al., 2013).

4.2.1 Sexual Violence Occurrence Rates and Contexts

While not all previous studies have clearly made the distinction, we label previous rates of lifetime or since age 14 (a common timeframe in the SV literature) SV as “prevalence” and rates of new occurrences during a specified time period (e.g., past year or month) as “incidence.” We use the term “occurrence” to refer more broadly to either type of rate. Research has consistently found significantly higher perpetration rates of both physical and nonphysical (i.e., verbally or psychologically coercive) SV among men and higher victimization rates among
women (Gámez-Guadix, Straus, & Hershberger, 2011; Hartwick, Desmarais, & Hennig, 2007; VanderLaan & Vasey, 2009). There is also evidence that SV is particularly common among university populations (Kilpatrick, Resnick, Ruggiero, Conoscenti, & McCauley, 2007), making this an important group to focus on. Most university occurrence research has examined women’s self-reported victimization; see Fedina, Holmes, and Backes’ (2016) review of U.S. women’s reported SV victimization during college.

Examination of university men’s self-reported perpetration has been comparatively scarce. However, it has found: (a) prevalence rates of 5% to 35% of university men who reported having committed some form of SV since age 14 (most studies finding 15-18%; Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Abbey, McAuslan, & Ross, 1998; Abbey, McAuslan, Zawacki, Clinton, & Buck, 2001; Anderson, Cahill, & Delahanty, 2017; Gidycz et al., 2011; Johnson, Murphy, & Gidycz, 2017; McDaniel & Rodriguez, 2017; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013; Mouilso, Calhoun, & Rosenbloom, 2013; Nguyen & Parkhill, 2014; Widman & McNulty, 2010); and (b) incidence rates of 11% to 19% who reported SV in the past year alone (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Anderson et al., 2017; Calzada, Brown, & Doyle, 2011; Johnson et al., 2017). Two existing national studies of U.S. university men found that about 15% to 25% reported having committed some form of SV against someone ever or since age 14 (Koss et al., 1987; Sutherland, Amar, & Sutherland, 2014). While these rates are often assumed to comprise largely of acquaintance SV, less work has distinguished between relationship type.

Nevertheless, there is mounting evidence that SV is especially common in heterosexual intimate relationships. The most recent U.S. national prevalence rates suggest that 16.4% of U.S. women have experienced SV by an intimate partner during their lifetime (Smith et al., 2017).
Similarly, 45.1% of U.S. women victims of SV reported that the perpetrator was a current or former intimate partner (Smith et al., 2017). Studies specifically with university men have found that more than half of their reported SV occurred within a steady or casual dating relationship (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Abbey et al., 1998; Gidycz, Warkentin, & Orchowski, 2007; Gidycz et al., 2011). Most of these studies combined steady and casual dating relationships or did not clearly define “dating relationship.” However, subsequent research (with a community sample) indicated that SV perpetrators were more commonly in a committed relationship with the victim compared to a casual relationship (Wegner, Pierce, & Abbey, 2014).

4.2.2 Sexual Violence in Intimate Relationships

Studies specifically in the context of intimate or committed relationships (e.g., in relationship at least one or three months, in committed and sexual relationship, living together and parenting a child) suggest that roughly 27% to 47% of college and community men reported using SV against their current partner (Brousseau, Bergeron, Hébert, & McDuff, 2011; Goetz & Shackelford, 2009; Rapoza & Drake, 2008; Salwen & O’Leary, 2013; Starratt, Goetz, Shackelford, McKibbin, & Stewart-Williams, 2008). Only two of these studies were specific to university men and found that roughly 27% to 36% reported SV against their current partner (Brousseau et al., 2011; Rapoza & Drake, 2008). The only Canadian national representative study with university men, to our knowledge, found that 11% of men reported having used some form of SV against a female dating partner in the past year (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993). We contribute a fourth examination of university men’s self-reported occurrence rate of IPSV. We

7 Both studies included both members of each couple in their sample. In Brousseau et al. (2011), only one member of each couple was required to be a university student. In Rapoza and Drake (2008), most participants were students.
use a larger sample of men than Brousseau et al. (2011) and Rapoza and Drake (2008)\(^8\) and provide newer (but not nationally representative) data compared to DeKeseredy and Kelly (1993).

DeKeseredy and Kelly (1993) and Brousseau et al. (2011) conducted the only studies to our knowledge to have examined a more detailed breakdown of university men’s IPSV. Brousseau et al. (2011) found that the most common events reported by men were: (a) unwanted kissing and touching because of verbal pressure/arguments and (b) unwanted sexual intercourse because the perpetrator was too excited to stop. They also reported the following rates using the categories recommended by the creators of the Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss & Gidycz, 1985; Koss et al., 1987): 21.2% reported sexual coercion (i.e., intercourse through verbal pressure or misuse of authority); 15.8% reported unwanted sexual contact (i.e., kissing or sexual touching through verbal pressure, misuse of authority, or threatened or actual physical force); 3.2% reported attempted rape (i.e., attempted intercourse through use of drugs/alcohol or threatened or actual physical force); and 1.8% reported rape (i.e., completed intercourse through use of drugs/alcohol or threatened or actual physical force). DeKeseredy and Kelly (1993) reported incidence rates across the ten Sexual Experiences Survey (Koss et al., 1987) items. They similarly found that the most commonly reported events were sexual contact or intercourse through continual arguments or pressure.

Neither of these studies, however, separated IPSV occurrence rates by tactic and sexual act. This means that we do not yet know university men’s self-reported IPSV rates for each tactic and each sexual act alone or for each combination of tactic and sexual act. Although Brousseau

\(^8\) Brousseau et al.’s (2011) sample included 222 men; Rapoza and Drake’s (2008) sample included 164 men.
et al. (2011) extended earlier research by modifying the original Sexual Experiences Survey to measure oral and anal SV separately, they still only reported the rates that occurred through threatened/actual physical force: 0.5% of men reported each. To our knowledge, we are the first to provide a detailed and separated breakdown of university men’s IPSV tactics (i.e., verbal coercion, intoxication, threatened/actual physical force) and sexual acts (i.e., kissing/sexual contact; oral, vaginal, and anal penetration). Our reporting of IPSV for oral and anal penetration separately was possible because we are also the first to use the Sexual Experiences Survey-Short Form Perpetration (SES-SFP; Koss et al., 2006)—which includes anal and oral penetration as separate items—in this particular sample and context (i.e., university men and intimate relationships). These rates are key to understanding what university men’s IPSV actually looks like, at least in our sample and according to men’s own self-reports.

4.2.3 Contextual Features of Sexual Violence Incidents

Various contextual features have been identified as common in incidents of SV. First, alcohol use is quite common: at least one-third of university men’s most serious reported sexual assaults involved alcohol consumption, most commonly by both victim and perpetrator (Abbey et al., 1998; Abbey et al., 2001; Lyndon, White, & Kadlec, 2007). Second, over two-thirds of university men’s most serious reported SV was committed in the home of either the perpetrator or victim (Abbey et al., 1998; Abbey et al., 2001). Abbey et al. (1998) found that 36% of men reported that it occurred in the perpetrator/man’s home and 42% reported that it occurred in the victim/woman’s home. However, all of this research examined university men’s SV against any woman since age 14; no research to our knowledge has examined alcohol use and location specifically in university men’s IPSV incidents.
4.2.4 Men’s Perceptions of Sexual Violence

Men often do not rate scenarios as constituting sexual violence or assault and often (and to a greater degree than women) exonerate perpetrators and assign at least some guilt or blame to victims (Grubb & Harrower, 2009; Munsch & Willer, 2012; Russell, Oswald, & Kraus, 2011). This past research has relied predominantly on participants’ interpretations of vignettes depicting sexual violence scenarios rather than men’s actual experiences. It also has not specifically examined men’s perceptions of the effects of their own IPSV. Abbey and McAuslan (2004) did use open-ended survey questions to examine how university men felt about their most severe SV perpetration (not specific to intimate relationships) and in what ways their perceptions of the incident changed since it happened. They found that some participants felt remorse and learned from the experience (past assaulters more so than repeat assaulters).

4.2.5 Current Study

Our study fills a number of gaps in the literature with respect to university men’s self-reported IPSV. Specifically, we used online surveys with a large sample of Canadian university men and examined their self-reported: (a) IPSV perpetration incidence rates in their most recent intimate relationship in the past year, including their rates of specific tactics (i.e., verbal coercion, intoxication, threatened/actual physical force) and sexual acts (i.e., kissing/sexual contact; oral, vaginal, and anal penetration); (b) contextual features (location, alcohol use, how long ago it occurred) of most memorable IPSV incidents; and (c) perceptions of the effects of most memorable IPSV incidents on their relationships and partners.
4.3 Method

4.3.1 Procedure

Upon approval by an institutional research ethics board, we recruited Canadian university men between September 2016 and October 2017 to complete an online survey through the Psychology Department Participant Pool and advertisements posted around campus. We advertised the study as being about men’s experiences in dating relationships with women, including sexual behavior that they may have engaged in without consent. Participants must have: identified as male, been aged 18 to 24, and their most recent dating relationship must have: (a) been with a woman, (b) been exclusive/monogamous, (c) occurred at least partially within the past year, and (d) lasted at least 3 months. We used the terms “exclusive/monogamous” to indicate that we were not looking for men in casual relationships (see also Chapter 4.5.1: Limitations and Implications). Advertisements variously indicated that participants must “identify as male” or be “male or male-identified.” We did not exclude trans men but, because we did not ask about gender in the demographics section of the survey, we cannot confirm whether participants identified as cis men or trans men.

After viewing a consent form, agreeing to participate, and self-identifying as meeting the eligibility criteria, participants were directed to the main survey (see Appendix A). Instructions twice reminded participants to answer relationship and SV questions only about their most recent past or present relationship that was with a woman, was exclusive/monogamous, occurred at least partially within the past year, and lasted at least three months. Participants who participated through the Psychology Department Participant Pool received 0.5 bonus grade toward an eligible
Psychology course and participants who responded via email to our advertisements posted around campus were placed in one of two draws for a $40 gift card.

4.3.2 Measures

The survey included: (a) background questions about age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and dating information; (b) the Sexual Experiences Survey-Short Form Perpetration (SES-SFP; Koss et al., 2006) with minor wording changes to assess use of SV in their most recent heterosexual relationship (i.e., “someone” changed to “my partner” and gender neutral pronouns changed to “she” and “her”; M. Koss, personal communication, July, 2015); and (c) questions developed for this study to assess contextual features of their most memorable IPSV incident (how long ago the experience occurred, where the experience occurred, how much alcohol they and their partner consumed during the experience or within one hour prior) and perpetrators’ perceptions of the incident’s effects on their relationship.

4.3.2.1 Sexual Experiences Survey

The SES-SFP contains seven root items with a description of a sexual act that may have occurred without consent (sexual touching/kissing and attempted and completed oral sex, vaginal penetration, and anal penetration). Each root item is followed by five possible tactics that may have been used to obtain the sexual act (verbal coercion, intoxication, threatened physical force, actual physical force). The SES-SFP uses a 4-point scale (0 to 3+) to measure how many times each tactic was used to obtain each sexual act in the past year (35 total combinations/items). The design of the SES is valuable because items are behaviorally-worded and most men appear to respond honestly (Gavey, 1991; Koss et al. 1987; Strang, Peterson, Hill, & Heiman, 2013). The SES-SFP has recently been found to have good internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = .99),
two-week test-retest reliability (91% had an exact match for SV perpetration over the past year),
and predictive validity, and to demonstrate comparable results when used in-person and online
(Johnson et al., 2017). In our sample, the SES-SFP (with minor wording changes) had good
internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = .95).

There are many ways to score the SES (see Koss et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2014). Because
we were most interested in understanding rates of different types of IPSV, we opted to separate
both tactics and sexual acts. We also report rates for each combination of tactic and sexual act
and, to allow for comparability across other studies, provide rates of the categories recommended
by Koss and the SES Collaboration (2008): sexual contact (fondling or kissing through verbal
pressure, taking advantage when drunk, or threatened or actual physical force), attempted
coercion (attempted oral, vaginal, or anal penetration through verbal pressure), coercion (oral,
vaginal, or anal penetration through verbal pressure), attempted rape (attempted oral, vaginal, or
anal penetration through taking advantage when drunk, or threatened or actual physical force),
and rape (oral, vaginal, or anal penetration through taking advantage when drunk, or threatened
or actual physical force).

We calculated all incidence rates based on the number of participants who responded
positively (i.e., reported one or more incidents) to one or more of the relevant SES items. We
treated missing values on the SES-SFP as nonendorsement of SV (only 18 participants were
missing values, and all completed at least 85%). Because the SES-SFP is a behavioral sampling
measure and does not produce a total summed or averaged score, replacing missing values with
mean values would have been inappropriate (Strang & Peterson, 2013). We report incidence
rates as percentages of perpetrators in the sample and percentages of the total sample. The former
approach (i.e., reporting percentages of perpetrators in the sample) allows for a clearer comparison of the different tactics and sexual acts used by perpetrators in this sample. The latter approach (i.e., reporting percentages of the total sample) is more commonly used in the literature; thus, these rates can be compared to previous research.

4.3.2.2 Contextual Features of IPSV Incident and Men’s Perceptions

We asked that participants who had answered one or more to any item on the previous set of questions (SES-SFP) answer follow-up questions about their most memorable experience. These included the following closed-ended questions: how long ago did the experience occur?, where did the experience occur?, how much alcohol did you consume during the experience or within one hour prior?, and how much alcohol did your partner consume during the experience or within one hour prior?. The final open-ended question stated: “please describe, using the text box below, how this experience affected your relationship with your partner. If it did not affect it at all, please describe. Consider, for example, whether the experience affected: (a) your sexual relationship with her; (b) how you feel/felt about her or how she feels/felt about you; (c) how you and/or she feel(s)/felt about the relationship itself; (d) your commitment to her or hers to you”.

4.3.3 Participants

We received a total of 597 surveys. After deleting the surveys of 41 participants who withdrew or did not consent, as well as repeats, surveys with no responses, and surveys of ineligible participants (based either on their response to the eligibility page or responses to later
demographics questions\textsuperscript{9}, we were left with a final sample of 441 men who met the inclusion criteria. Thirty-two participants completed the survey to be placed in the $40 gift card draws and 409 completed it for course credit\textsuperscript{10}.

Participants were aged 18 to 24 ($M = 18.98$; $SD = 1.26$). Most identified as heterosexual or attracted to women (n = 328; 74.4%; most others responded “male”) and as White/European (n = 344; 78.0%). Twenty-four (5.4%) identified as Southeast Asian; 21 (4.8%) as South Asian; 19 (4.3%) as Black, African, or Caribbean; 8 (1.8%) as Latin American; 5 (1.1%) as Arab; 4 (0.9%) as West Asian; 3 (0.7%) as Aboriginal, First Nations, or Métis; and 13 (3.0%) as another ethnicity. Most (n = 294; 66.7%) were first-year university students. All 441 participants reported being in an exclusive, committed intimate/romantic relationship with their most recent partner (none reported that they were married or engaged). Most (n = 414; 93.9%) reported that they were not living with this partner. Two-hundred fifty six men (58.1%) reported that they were no longer in a relationship with their most recent partner at the time of the survey. One-hundred eighty (40.8%) reported that they were still in a relationship and five (1.1%) reported “other.” Participants reported having been in a relationship with their most recent partner for 3 to 120 months ($M = 14.89$; $SD = 14.32$); most reported 3 to 24 months (n = 371; 84.1%). A majority of participants reported having engaged in kissing (n = 419; 95.0%), sexual touching (n = 403; 91.4%), oral sex (n = 364; 82.5%), and vaginal sex (n = 349; 79.1%) with their partner, with fewer reporting anal sex (n = 59; 13.4%).

\textsuperscript{9} We removed the surveys of 23 participants who had first indicated on the eligibility page that they were ineligible and then accessed the survey a second (or third) time, this time indicating that they were eligible and completing the survey.

\textsuperscript{10} We deleted participants’ identifying information within several months of their participation in order to help protect confidentiality. Although it is unlikely that men who completed the survey for credit completed it a second time for payment, we were unable to fully prevent this.
4.3.4 Data Analysis

We analyzed descriptive statistics of the background, SES, and closed-ended contextual features questions using Microsoft Excel. We calculated Cronbach’s alpha for the SES (reported above) using SPSS version 25. We conducted a quantitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; Weber, 1990) on the final open-ended question that asked participants to describe how the most memorable experience affected their relationship with their partner. Of the 70 participants who reported some type of SV on the SES, 57 (81.4%) responded to the open-ended question (we excluded 45 participants who responded to the open-ended question but did not report any SV on the SES)\(^\text{11}\).

To develop the initial coding scheme, the first author repeatedly read the data and used an inductive approach to identify the types of effects that participants reported that their most memorable SV incident had. Together, both authors examined the data and refined the coding method and scheme. We defined the different types of effects according to the following mutually exclusive categories: (a) positive effects (participant reported that there were positive effects of his SV on his relationship and/or on his partner); (b) negative effects (participant reported that there were negative effects of his SV on his relationship and/or on his partner); (c) no effects (participant reported that there were no effects of his SV on his relationship and/or on his partner); (d) effects on self (participant reported that there was any type of effect of his SV on himself); and (e) unclear/irrelevant (participant’s response was unclear regarding effects of his SV on his relationship or partner or response was not relevant to

\(^{11}\) Most of these 45 simply answered that this question was not applicable to them, but some answered as if some event had or had not impacted their relationship (possibly unreported SV).
the question). Positive and negative effects were sometimes based on our own interpretations; that is, not all participants explicitly labeled or described certain effects as positive or negative.

During this process, we also divided each participant’s response every time they reported a new type of effect so that each segment could be coded separately (i.e., coding units; Krippendorff, 2004). The complete, intact participant responses were still visible during the coding process to provide context (i.e., context units; Krippendorff, 2004); that is, sometimes it was necessary to see a full response to understand the meaning of one of its segments/coding units. Next, both authors independently coded the coding units into one of the five categories and then came to a final consensus by resolving disagreements. We then further clarified definitions and added examples to the coding scheme to maximize mutual exclusiveness of the categories.

Below we report frequencies of participants who reported each type of effect at least once based on our coding consensus. We report frequencies of our own (i.e., the authors’) coding because we have a level of expertise about men’s SV that independent coders would not have and because we carefully discussed the data that were less clear. However, a second aim of this analysis was to test whether the coding scheme could reliably be used in the future. To this end, two undergraduate research assistants independently coded the pre-divided coding units using our coding scheme. In following Krippendorff (2004), we tested interrater reliability with this new set of coders who had not been intimately involved in developing the coding scheme and thus had not formed an implicit consensus or understanding of the codes that other researchers would not be able to replicate. We analyzed interrater reliability using Krippendorff’s alpha in SPSS version 25 (using a macro developed by Hayes and Krippendorff; De Swert, 2012; Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). Interrater reliability was good (Krippendorff’s alpha = 0.90). Moreover,
the research assistants’ coding results were very similar to ours, with only 14% of the coding units coded differently from our results by one or both of the research assistants.

4.4 Results

4.4.1 Intimate Partner Sexual Violence Perpetration

Seventy (15.87%) participants reported at least one instance of using IPSV in their most recent relationship in the past year. We report detailed incidence rates in Table 4.1. The most common tactic was verbal coercion (72.9% of perpetrators, 11.6% of sample), followed by use of intoxication, and then threatened or actual physical force. Sixteen (22.9% of perpetrators, 3.6% of sample) reported having used more than one type of tactic. The most common sexual act was oral sex (62.9% of perpetrators, 10.0% of sample), followed by sexual contact (kissing, fondling), vaginal penetration, and anal penetration. Of the SES perpetrator categories, sexual contact was the most common (51.4% of perpetrators, 8.2% of sample), followed by attempted coercion, attempted rape, rape, and coercion (see Table 4.2).

4.4.2 Contextual Features of the Most Memorable Incident

The vast majority of perpetrators reported that the most memorable IPSV incident occurred either in their own home or dorm room (n = 32; 45.7%) or in their partner’s home or dorm room (n = 22; 31.4%). Others reported that it occurred in a car (n = 5; 7.1%), in a bar or at a party (not including at their own or their partner’s home/dorm; n = 3; 4.3%), at a hotel/motel (n = 2; 2.9%), or outside (n = 1; 1.4%); the remainder did not respond (n = 5; 7.1%). More than half of perpetrators reported that the most memorable event involved alcohol consumption by the perpetrator (n = 39; 55.7%) or victim (n = 37; 52.9%), and usually both (n = 35; 50.0%). Of those 39 who reported that they had consumed alcohol, 12 reported 1 to 2 drinks, 9 reported 3 to
4, 8 reported 5 to 6, and 10 reported 7 or more. Of those 37 who reported that their partner had consumed alcohol, 14 reported 1 to 2 drinks, 10 reported 3 to 4, 9 reported 5 to 6, and 4 reported 7 or more. Ten perpetrators (14.3%) reported that the most memorable event occurred 1 to 2 months ago, 17 (24.3%) reported 3 to 5, 15 (21.4%) reported 6 to 8, 13 (18.6%) reported 9 to 12, and 15 (21.4%) either did not answer or selected “don’t know/prefer not to answer.”

4.4.3 Effects of the Most Memorable Incident

Of the 57 perpetrators who responded to the question about the effects of the most memorable incident, more than half (n = 34) made at least one statement explicitly reporting that the incident had no effects on their relationship and/or their partner, or that their relationship went on as usual or did not change. We provide illustrative quotes in Table 4.3. Nine participants reported at least one effect on their relationship and/or their partner that was negative—for example, it led to an argument; it negatively impacted commitment or his partner’s feelings or trust toward him; it “hurt” the relationship; or, as a result, his partner felt upset, uncomfortable, insecure, or awkward. Eight participants reported at least one effect on their relationship and/or their partner that was positive—for example, it led to a conversation or better/more sexual interactions; it increased their commitment; or, as a result, they “set the boundaries of consent” or learned how to treat one another or communicate. Nine participants reported at least one effect of any kind (positive, negative, neutral, or unclear direction) on themselves—for example, they felt bad, guilty, ashamed, upset with themselves, or regretful; they learned something (such as “to accept when the other doesn’t want sex”); or they started drinking less around their partner. Finally, thirty-two participants made at least one statement that was unclear as to whether or what kind of effect his SV had on his relationship and/or his partner (e.g., ambiguous statements
about moving on or no serious effects) or that was irrelevant or did not appear to be about his SV or effects on his relationship, his partner, or himself (e.g., he was describing: the experience/incident itself, his immediate reactions to or what he thought/felt about her refusals, the state of the relationship but not as a result of the incident, why he was sexually violent).

Many reported multiple types of effects. Some reported a negative effect on one part of their relationship but a positive effect on another part; for example: “our sexual relationship had a break […] improved ability to talk things through.” Others reported that they did not think the incident affected their relationship but then went on to explain a positive or negative effect; for example: “I don’t think it affected any of […] these things listed. We just realized that we should not take advantage of one another when we have had too many drinks.” Perceived effects (both within and across our five coding categories) may have varied depending on IPSV tactic and sexual act, but we did not examine these differences in the current analysis.

4.5 Discussion

The high rates of SV on contemporary university campuses are well known. While these rates are often assumed to comprise largely of acquaintance SV, our results demonstrate high incidence rates in established intimate relationships. Thus, this study adds a layer of complexity to existing general rates of SV on university campuses. Our rate (15.87%) was low compared to the two recent past studies that examined university men’s IPSV against a current partner (roughly 27-36%; Brousseau et al., 2011; Rapoza & Drake, 2008). This may be due to sample and measurement differences. Both past studies examined IPSV at any time throughout the relationship whereas we asked about the past year. Rapoza and Drake (2008) included those in a relationship for at least 1 month, whereas our cut off was 3 months (like Brousseau et al., 2011).
Participants in Brousseau et al.’s study were in a relationship for an average of 32 months, whereas participants in our study were in a relationship for only an average of 14.89 months—more similar to Rapoza and Drake’s (2008) sample for which the average relationship length was 9.78 months. Moreover, neither study restricted to exclusive/monogamous relationships and both included a wider age range. Whereas Brousseau et al. (2011) used an early version of the SES (Koss & Gidycz, 1985; Koss et al., 1987), Rapoza and Drake (2008), who found the upper IPSV rate, used the Conflict Tactic Scale (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). Our rate was more similar to DeKeseredy and Kelly’s (1993) Canadian nationally representative sample using an early version of the SES (Koss et al., 1987): they found that 11% of university men reported having used SV against a female dating partner in the past year but it is unclear if and how they defined dating partner (except that they excluded SV in marriage).

Our rate was fairly high considering university men’s prevalence rates against any woman since age 14 (often around 15% to 18%) and incidence rates in the past year against any woman (11% to 19%; Anderson et al., 2017; Calzada, Brown, & Doyle, 2011; Gidycz et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2017; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013; Mouilso et al., 2013; Nguyen & Parkhill, 2014). It is possible that men interpret “without consent” on SV surveys like the SES differently when asked about intimate partners versus any woman. Indeed, there is evidence that less explicit consent negotiations are perceived by women and men as more acceptable (Humphreys, 2007); that women and men report that, especially in intimate relationships, verbal consent would be awkward and disrupt the natural progression of sex and that couples “can tell” if their partner desires sex (Humphreys, 2007; Humphreys & Herold, 2003; Shumlich & Fisher, 2018, p. 255; see also Study 3 of this dissertation); and that the language of consent may not resonate
with women and men in ongoing relationships (Beres, 2014). Nevertheless, this evidence would suggest that men in intimate relationships might be more likely than men answering about any woman or about more casual relationships to underreport SV on measures that use “without consent” language.

Our study is the first to provide a detailed and separated breakdown of university men’s IPSV tactics and sexual acts. We found that verbal coercion was the most common tactic across all sexual acts except for anal penetration. Although most other studies (university and community samples) have not examined tactics separately from sexual acts, most have noted that men more commonly use verbal and psychological pressure to acquire sex in established intimate relationships compared to threatened or actual physical force (Brousseau et al., 2011; DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993; Salwen & O’Leary, 2013; Wegner et al., 2014). While this is true for men in more casual relationships as well, Wegner et al. (2014) found that committed-relationship perpetrators in a community sample were more likely than casual-relationship perpetrators to use verbal pressure. This may be because partners can obtain sex from an unwilling partner without using more forceful tactics (Abbey, BeShears, Clinton-Sherrod, & McAuslan, 2004). Additionally, previous consensual sex among intimate partners may create assumptions of future consent or of obligation to continue to engage in further sexual relations (Ewoldt, Monson, & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2000; Shotland & Goodstein, 1992; Wegner et al., 2014).

Unlike the more commonly used original SES (Koss & Oros 1982), the SES-SFP also allowed us to examine oral and anal penetration separately. This was important because oral sex was the most commonly reported sexual act in our sample and anal penetration—although the
least commonly reported—was not trivial (18.6% of perpetrators, 2.9% of sample). This is the first study to our knowledge to report the rate of university men’s IPSV for anal penetration in their current or recent relationship. Brousseau et al. (2011), however, did report on men’s forced anal sex in their current relationship (where at least one member of the couple was a university student). Despite the higher overall rate of IPSV perpetration in their study compared to ours (27% vs. 16%), the rate of anal penetration by force was much higher in our study (7.1% of perpetrators vs. 1.7%). Although our rate is not directly comparable since they did not include attempted anal penetration and did not restrict the timeframe to the past year of the relationship, our findings may suggest that IPSV for anal penetration is on the rise.

Anal sex is commonly portrayed in pornography and increasingly so since the late 1980s (Jensen & Dines, 1998; Sun, Bridges, Wosnitzer, Scharrer, & Liberman, 2008). Moreover, pornography consumption has been linked with both men’s SV (Koss & Dinero, 1988; Simons, Simons, Lei, & Sutton, 2012; Vega & Malamuth, 2007) and young men and women’s experiences of anal sex (Johansson & Hammarén, 2007; Rogala & Tydén, 2003). Qualitative research has also found that young men and women commonly reported experiences with anal sex—usually in dating relationships—because “men wanted to copy what they saw in pornography” and because men coerced and persuaded (Marston & Lewis, 2014, p. 3). The rates of IPSV for anal penetration found in our study are especially concerning given the evidence that anal rape has negative consequences—such as anxiety, depressive symptoms, and negative effects on sex life—above and beyond those of vaginal rape (Pinsky et al., 2017). In their study with imprisoned rapists, Neuwirth and Eher (2003) also found that anal rapists were more violent than vaginal rapists during their crime.
Past research among university men has found that SV incidents often involve alcohol use by the perpetrator and/or the victim; however, this work has either focused on casual relationships or has not distinguished between relationship type (Abbey et al., 1998; Abbey et al., 2001; Lyndon et al., 2007). One study with community men found that, compared to perpetrators of committed relationship SV, perpetrators of casual relationship SV drank more alcohol during the incident and were with women who drank more alcohol (Wegner et al., 2014). This may be because perpetrators who do not know their victims well “encourage them to drink heavily because intoxicated victims are less likely to notice danger cues, are more likely to agree to be alone, and to engage in some consensual sexual activities” (Wegner et al., 2014, p. 1363). We found that more than half of men’s most memorable IPSV incidents involved alcohol consumption. Because we only examined men’s most memorable incidents, our findings might not fully capture the extent of alcohol usage during university IPSV incidents (or might overestimate if alcohol-involved incidents are more memorable for men). While most previous research analyzed alcohol use in men’s most severe SV incident, we opted for most memorable since we were also asking men to describe the effects of this particular incident in detail and wanted to increase their recall of the incident. Regardless, the high rates of alcohol involvement in university IPSV incidents in our sample may suggest that men use intoxication to coerce sexual acts that they already know their partner might not otherwise engage in. Unlike all other sexual acts in our study (for which most men used verbal coercion), intoxication was most commonly used for anal sex.

Past research among university men—that has, again, not distinguished between relationship type—has found that most of men’s SV occurred in the home of either the victim or
perpetrator (Abbey et al., 1998; Abbey et al., 2001). Our study extends this finding to university men’s IPSV. This makes sense given that men in committed relationships would have frequent opportunities for both consensual and nonconsensual sex in private spaces like their own homes. Again, our study may under- or over-estimate the extent of in-home university IPSV given that we only examined men’s most memorable incidents.

Finally, ours is the first study to our knowledge to have examined men’s self-reported effects of their own IPSV on their relationships or partners. Most men in our study made at least one statement suggesting that their most memorable IPSV event did not affect their relationship or partner. Although 32 participants provided responses that were unclear or irrelevant with respect to effects on their relationships or partners (the purpose of our content analysis), it is worth noting that many of these responses worked to minimize and normalize IPSV (as did explicitly reporting no effects). Men’s minimizing language here was very similar to that used by a subset of perpetrators in our follow-up interview study (Study 2 of this dissertation). For example, men in the current study: (a) explicitly minimized (“not serious”, “not a crime”, “not THAT big of a problem”; emphasis original); (b) blamed their partner (“she was stubborn”); (c) claimed not to remember the incident; and (d) contrasted to more extreme SV (“It was gentle urging. Not full physical force.”). Although many women also minimize and justify their partners’ SV and report neutral effects, other women (or the same women concurrently) report negative effects on their relationships including: arguments; altered views of their partner (e.g., seeing him as immature, not caring about her feelings, or as enjoying being in control); diminished romantic feelings or commitment; and ending the relationship (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017; Livingston, Buddie, Testa, & VanZile-Tamsen, 2004). Men’s reported negative effects in
the current study were similar (e.g., decreasing partner’s trust in him, leading to an argument, hurting the relationship), but uncommon. Our findings are also consistent with previous research with women showing that a small subset report positive effects of SV on their relationships, often because of a conversation that resolved the issue (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017; Livingston et al., 2004). Some university men in Abbey and McAuslan’s (2004) study also similarly reported having learned from a past instance of using SV.

4.5.1 Limitations and Implications

Our findings should be taken in light of several limitations. First, we used a convenience sample of men who volunteered to participate. The two recent studies that examined university men’s self-reported IPSV (Brousseau et al., 2011; Rapoza & Drake, 2008) also used convenience samples. While our sample was larger than these, future research that uses large representative samples is needed. Second, 40 participants explicitly withdrew their participation after accessing the survey. However, only three did so after seeing or responding to the survey page with the SES questions. This suggests that most withdrawals were not because participants wanted to deny SV but may still have been because of the personal nature of the early survey questions (e.g., number of intercourse partners, types of sexual activity engaged in). Third, we did not include a comparison group of men who perpetrated SV in nonintimate relationships (e.g., against strangers, friends, casual dates). Future research is needed that compares university men’s tactics and sexual acts separately and in different relational contexts.

Fourth, several participants clearly misunderstood the open-ended question about IPSV effects and did not appear to be answering about an incident of SV. Although we did not include these in our counts of positive, negative, and no effects, it is possible that other responses that
were included also did not pertain to incidents of SV. Moreover, many provided answers that were unclear/irrelevant with respect to perceived effects. Nevertheless, our difficulty recruiting men for our follow-up interview study (Study 2 of this dissertation) suggests that open-ended, anonymized survey questions might be one of the only ways to hear from many perpetrators. A series of direct open-ended questions, rather than one lengthy open-ended question with examples of considerations (our open-ended question said: “consider, for example, whether the experience affected [a], [b], [c]…”), might work better for future research.

Fifth, our definition of an intimate relationship included those who had been in a relationship for a minimum of three months, which may not be considered by some to be very longstanding and the violence might look more like acquaintance SV. It also meant that some responding to the SES would have been responding about less than a full past year. However, the mean relationship length in our sample was over one year, which may be fairly high for this age group. Relatedly, our eligibility criteria excluded men in nonexclusive or nonmonogamous relationships. While we recognize that these relationships can be equally intimate, committed, and longstanding, we used the terms “exclusive/monogamous” as a way to help potential participants understand that we were not looking for those in casual relationships.

Finally, we focused on the contextual features of men’s most memorable SV incident unlike past research that has focused on men’s most severe SV incident (Abbey et al., 1998; Abbey et al., 2001). This means that we are unable to make clear comparisons regarding alcohol use and location between IPSV incidents in our sample and SV against any woman since age 14 in previous research (Abbey et al., 1998; Abbey et al., 2001). Nevertheless, we used this language to help increase recall since we were asking men to provide open-ended detail about
their perceptions of the effects of this incident. This language has been used in at least one past study asking men to describe and answer follow-up questions about the most memorable instance in which they had been tempted to use force in a sexual relationship (Schewe, Adam, & Ryan, 2009).

Despite these limitations, our findings fill a number of gaps in the literature and have important implications. They describe the extent of the range of IPSV that university men in our sample perpetrated and the tactics and sexual acts that may be more common in these contexts. The surprisingly high incidence rates of IPSV for anal penetration and involvement of alcohol and intoxication tactics suggest potentially important sites of intervention for university men in intimate relationships. Finally, our findings here and elsewhere (Study 2 of this dissertation) suggest that many men do not perceive their IPSV to be harmful and normalize their behavior. This too is an important site of intervention and suggests that we must encourage men to critically reflect on their own behavior and how even seemingly mild IPSV may harm women. Future research should more systematically examine perpetrators’ perceptions of the effects of their SV (across different tactics and sexual acts) on their relationship, partner, and self. This research should critically examine these perceptions in relation to normative discourses about SV and heterosexuality (similar to Studies 2 and 3 in this dissertation). Our findings about men’s perceptions also speak to the importance of research on women’s perceptions of their IPSV experiences. Future research might examine both partners’ talk and interpretations about the same IPSV incidents.
REFERENCES

12 This list includes references cited in Chapter 4 (Study 1 manuscript).


Table 4.1: Incidence of Men’s Intimate Partner Sexual Violence in the Past Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Act</th>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Verbal coercion</th>
<th>Intoxication</th>
<th>Physical force&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Total (any tactic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Contact</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total n (441)</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of perpetrators (70)</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral sex&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total n (441)</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of perpetrators (70)</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>62.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaginal penetration&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total n (441)</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of perpetrators (70)</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anal penetration&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total n (441)</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of perpetrators (70)</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (any sexual act)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total n (441)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of perpetrators (70)</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Attempted or completed.

<sup>b</sup> Threatened or actual.
Table 4.2: Incidence of Men’s Intimate Partner Sexual Violence in the Past Year Using SES-SFP Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perpetrator Category</th>
<th># SES-SFP items</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of total n (441)</th>
<th>% of perpetrators (70)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-perpetrator</td>
<td></td>
<td>371</td>
<td>84.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual contact</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted coercion</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coercion</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted rape</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Effect</td>
<td># Participants</td>
<td>Illustrative Quotes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No effects on relationship or partner</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>“it had no bearing on our relationship going forward.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“No change in the relationship and how each other viewed the other. Full commitment remains.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“This activity did not effect my relationship as we were both drinking.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative effects on relationship or partner</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>“It changed how I felt about my relationship with her and my commitment to her in a negative way. It almost certainly affected how she felt about me too.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“After that incident, our sexual relationship had a break.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“This experience had definitely affected how she saw me as a partner and where our relationship was heading. It also made me rethink how I saw her as a person. Our relationship, both sexually and romantically, started to die down after that point until she broke it off.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“She became immediately upset as anyone would and proceeded to talk to me about how uncomfortable she was at that time.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It made her feel insecure as if I only wanted to be with her for her body, and also affected her trust in me.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive effects on relationship or partner</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>“We just realized that we should not take advantage of one of another when we have had too many drinks.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The experience set the boundaries of consent for further down the road.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“In my opinion our commitment grew.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Our relationship was still just as strong as before, if not stronger due to experience and our improved ability to talk things through.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Effects on self (Positive, negative, neutral, or unclear direction) | 9 | “Never happened again. Learned to accept when the other doesn’t want sex.”
“I still feel uncomfortable about it and I don’t drink as much around her anymore.”
“I immediately felt ashamed and apologized.”
“The experience caused me to feel extremely upset and frustrated with myself for around 1-2 weeks. After talking it over and listening to her side of the story, I was extremely ashamed of myself for attempting to do something that in my mind I knew was wrong.” |
|---|---|
| Unclear/irrelevant | 32 | “it was not THAT big of a problem to me.”
“I didn’t remember what I did, but when we woke up she told me I was very adamant about making her have oral sex with me. She kept telling me we were both too drunk (we were) and gave in after a little while of trying. It didn’t last long and the morning after I apologized to her.”
“our relationship gets better every day, we’re moving on.”
“I got mad because she hadn’t given me a blowjob in 2 months but she was stubborn and didn’t agree to it anyways.”
“It was not serious. It was gentle urging. Not full physical force.”
“Due to the fact that my partner and I were very close she knew that I was very intoxicated. In the morning I did not remember the events but, she told me and I apologized for the incident and we moved on. Neither of us really thought much of the situation and we continued to date.”
“Being honest with one another is not a crime. We didn’t actually engage in any sexual behaviour following my criticism, nor would I have expected it, but I felt relieved disclosing.” |
5 Study 2 (Interviews): “She Didn’t Want to…and I’d Obviously Insist”: Canadian University Men’s Normalization of their Sexual Violence Against Intimate Partners

5.1 Abstract

Men’s sexual violence against women is pervasive and is especially common in heterosexual intimate relationships. Little research has examined sexual violence in this relational context and from men’s perspectives, including how they talk about and frame their behavior. The current research examined how men’s sexual violence and accounts thereof reflected and enacted the normalization of violent heterosexuality. We used online surveys with 441 Canadian university men to screen for men who had used sexual violence in their most recent past or present relationship with a woman. Of these men, 70 (15.87%) reported at least one experience using sexual violence and 10 of these men participated in an in-depth interview to elaborate on their experiences. We used a feminist poststructuralist form of discourse analysis to analyze the interview transcripts. Results suggested that men often used language that helped them to position themselves and their sexual violence as normal and expected. However, they also often used alternative discourses and accounts about sexual violence, heterosexuality, and consent. We briefly discuss the implications of our results for educational campaigns and interventions.

13 The Version of Record of this manuscript has been published and is available in Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma (2019), https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2018.1500406. The version included in this dissertation is the Accepted Manuscript with minor differences.
5.2 Introduction and Literature Review

Men’s sexual violence (SV) against women is pervasive and is especially common in heterosexual intimate relationships (Basile, Chen, Black, & Saltzman, 2007; Black et al., 2011; Gidycz, Warkentin, Orchowski, & Edwards, 2011); yet little research has specifically examined it in this relational context (gap 1). Most research has focused on more casual relationships or has not distinguished between relationship type. Moreover, while feminist scholars have long since conceptualized SV on a continuum (e.g., Koss & Oros, 1982)—where some acts are common and viewed as socially acceptable—most empirical research has focused on the most physically violent forms. Thus, little is known about less violent and more normalized forms, such as verbal pressure (gap 2).

Finally, much of the existing research has collected reports from female victims rather than male perpetrators (gap 3). While these reports have been valuable in foregrounding women’s marginalized voices, continued focus on women might place unwarranted attention on their role in such encounters (O’Sullivan, 2005). The research that has used male participants has focused on individual- and peer-level predictors of SV perpetration. Although this has increased our understanding of the etiology of SV, it has revealed little about men’s perspectives on their own use of SV (gap 4). The current research fills each of these four gaps by examining Canadian university men’s own descriptions of their use of a range of sexually violent or coercive tactics (with focus on verbal and other less physically violent tactics) in intimate relationships.

We understand (IP)SV as reflecting and maintaining gendered power relations between women and men. It is committed most often by men toward women (Black et al., 2011; Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008) and has been consistently associated with a range of lasting negative
consequences for women (Breitenbecher, 2006; Katz & Tirone, 2010; Stepakoff, 1998; Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 1997).

In this study, we deliberately used two contradictory approaches to defining SV and reading men’s accounts. We believe that both approaches were needed to critique, unpack, and combat SV. First, we used a realist understanding, whereby certain acts straightforwardly and objectively constitute SV. In this way, we defined SV as use of verbal or physical tactics—such as verbal pressure or manipulation, use of intoxicants or taking advantage of an intoxicated person, and threatened or actual physical force—to engage in sexual activity (from kissing to anal or vaginal penetration) with a person who is unwilling, who has not consented, or who has already declined an initial advance (Faulkner, Kolts, & Hicks, 2008; Raghavan, Cohen, & Tamborra, 2014). We also took at least some of men’s accounts as straightforward description of actual IPSV incidents, albeit partial. This offered us something to ground our analysis in and to critique and aided in participant recruitment.

However, we also drew on poststructuralist approaches to defining SV and reading men’s accounts (e.g., Gavey, 2005). In particular, we read men’s accounts as constitutive and destabilized the term SV by examining how it is socially constructed through discourse; that is, we unpacked the discourses that normalize SV and that produce forms of heterosex that construct or create space for SV in the first place (Gavey, 2005; MacKinnon, 1987). See Chapter 5.4: Theory and Analysis below for more information.

5.2.1 Sexual Violence in Intimate Relationships

Men more commonly use verbal and psychological pressure to acquire sex in established intimate relationships compared to threatened or actual physical force and compared to
perpetrators in more casual relationships (Salwen & O’Leary, 2013; Wegner, Pierce, & Abbey, 2014). This may be because partners can obtain sex from an unwilling partner without using more forceful tactics (Abbey, BeShears, Clinton-Sherrod, & McAuslan, 2004). Additionally, previous consensual sex among intimate partners may create assumptions of future consent or of obligation to continue to engage in further sexual relations (Ewoldt, Monson, & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2000; Lazar, 2010; Shotland & Goodstein, 1992). Perpetrators in committed relationships compared to those in casual relationships, and with sexual precedence compared to those without, were more likely to have started the coercive interaction with greater expectations of having sex (Wegner et al., 2014). Perpetrators with sexual precedence were also more likely to feel that the woman owed them sex (Wegner et al., 2014). There is also some evidence that, as the intimacy of relationships increases, men’s violations of sexual refusal become viewed as less coercive and more acceptable, and women’s rights to refuse sexual activity become viewed as less acceptable (Margolin, Moran, & Miller, 1989; Tamborra, Dutton, & Terry, 2014).

5.2.2 Sexual Violence Research with Men

The research that has used male participants has focused predominantly on individual- and peer-level predictors of SV perpetration and has found support for factors like childhood abuse, hostile attitudes toward women, stereotyped beliefs about SV, generalized aggression, problematic alcohol use, and peer approval of SV (Abbey & Jacques-Tiura, 2011; Strang & Peterson, 2013; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). The limited qualitative work that has examined perpetrators’ experiences has generally been done with convicted rapists and has examined behaviors, incident characteristics, motives, denial, treatment experiences, and desistance (e.g., Blagden, Winder, Gregson, & Thorne, 2014; Collins, Brown, & Lennings, 2010; Harris, 2014).
Very few studies have examined the ways that men talk about their use of SV. One relevant study by Scully (1990) reported on various experiences and discourses of convicted rapists and found two types of rapists based on the ways that they talked about their rapes. First, *admitters* “used excuses in an attempt to explain why their behavior was rape but they were not rapists” (p.98); that is, they regarded their behavior as wrong and blamed themselves, but used excuses to explain themselves in socially acceptable terms (e.g., appealed to forces beyond their control, including alcohol, drugs, and psychological issues). Second, *deniers* “acknowledged that rape is generally impermissible, but used justifications to show how, in their situation, the behavior was appropriate even if not quite right” (p. 98); that is, they drew on dominant discourses that allowed them to justify their behavior and blame their female victims (e.g., women as seductresses, women mean yes when they say no, they were only guilty of a minor wrongdoing).

Lea and Auburn (2001) similarly found that a convicted rapist attending a treatment program drew on dominant understandings of (a) rape, including victim blaming rape myths about women’s risky behavior and women’s exaggerated claims about rape; and (b) sex, including language “consistent with a relationship between consenting adults” (p. 20). More recently, Hipp et al. (2017) examined the anonymous justifications of self-identified perpetrators of SV on Reddit.com, a popular online community. Perpetrators (gender could not always be determined) justified their SV based on men’s higher sex drive, hormones, and women’s gatekeeping role. They also referred to discourses about women meaning “yes” when they say “no” and blamed victims for drinking too much, not giving a clear refusal or not physically resisting, and being “overly sexual” during the incident (p. 85).
Other research has similarly examined how men’s talk supports their use of intimate partner violence (though not necessarily SV) through use of rhetorical devices (e.g., metaphors about men as “king of the castle” and global assertions about men’s roles; Adams, Towns, & Gavey, 1995) and minimizing language such as use of the word “just”; incident talk suggesting the behavior was a one-off; shifting responsibility; comparisons with other, more violent men; and claiming not to remember violence they have inflicted (Hearn, 1998; Kelly & Westmarland, 2016). Most of this research on perpetrator’s talk is dated and has focused on convicted rapists or men attending perpetrator programs.

The above review demonstrates the need for a better understanding of SV in less forceful forms, in the context of intimate relationships, and from men’s perspectives. The purpose of the present study was to examine how a sample of Canadian university men talked about their use of SV against intimate partners and how this talk both reflects and enacts the normalization of violent heterosexuality, and, ultimately, acts to maintain gendered power relations.

5.3 Method

5.3.1 Procedure

Upon approval by the University of Guelph’s institutional research ethics board (approval date: March 7, 2016), we used an online screening survey to identify university men who had at least one experience using SV in their most recent relationship to participate in interviews. We recruited through the Psychology Department Participant Pool and advertisements posted around campus. The study was advertised as being about men’s experiences in dating relationships with women, including sexual behavior that they may have engaged in without consent. To participate, participants must have: identified as male, been aged 18 to 24, and their most recent
dating relationship must have: (a) been with a woman, (b) been exclusive/monogamous, (c) occurred at least partially within the past year, and (d) lasted at least 3 months. The screening survey comprised of: (a) background questions developed for this study to determine age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and dating information; (b) the Sexual Experiences Survey-Short Form Perpetration (SES-SFP; Koss et al., 2006) with minor wording changes to assess use of SV in their most recent heterosexual relationship (i.e., “someone” changed to “my partner” and gender neutral pronouns changed to “she” and “her”; M. Koss, personal communication, July, 2015); and (c) questions developed for this study to assess contextual factors of their most memorable sexually violent incident (not reported in this manuscript). The SES uses a 4-point scale (0 to 3+) to measure how many times each act (sexual touching/kissing, and [attempted] oral, vaginal, and anal penetration) occurred without consent through different coercive tactics in the past year.

We invited men who reported any use of SV on the SES to participate in an individual, in-depth interview. We gave participants the option to be interviewed by a man or woman. Four were interviewed by a man (an undergraduate research assistant) and 6 were interviewed by a woman (the first author, a doctoral student). Each participant was asked to describe: (a) himself; (b) his relationship with his partner; (c) incidents of SV (i.e., times when he wanted to engage in sexual activity with his partner when she did not want to, or when he kept trying)—with specific reference to his SES responses in some cases; and (d) how the incident(s) of SV affected his relationship with his partner (see Appendix B). All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.
5.3.2 Participants

Four hundred forty-one men completed the screening survey and 70 (15.87%) reported at least one use of SV in their most recent relationship in the past year. We invited 58 of these men to participate in an interview. Fourteen were ultimately interviewed (the remainder declined or did not respond to our contact attempts) and 10 were included in this analysis (four were excluded because they did not describe clearly coercive incidents). Interview participants were aged 18 to 22 ($M = 19.1$), 8 identified as heterosexual (1 as pansexual and 1 responded “male”), and 7 identified as White/European (2 as Southeast Asian and 1 as Caribbean/White). They had been with their partner for 4 to 35 months ($M = 12.1$) and two were still in the relationship at the time of the interview. Five reported verbal coercion on the SES, 4 reported taking advantage while their partner was intoxicated, and 1 reported using force (each only reported one type of tactic).\(^{14}\)

5.4 Theory and Analysis

The first author coded the interview transcripts in NVivo (a qualitative analysis software) into broad categories reflecting men’s experiences using SV (e.g., tactics, interpretations, effects). These codes were used as a basis for a preliminary analysis that offered us grounding in men’s experiences and stories. This analysis was insufficient, however, for highlighting the conditions and discourses that appeared to constrain men’s experiences and discussions thereof. Thus, the first author then used material compiled in codes dealing with interpretations and effects to conduct a feminist poststructuralist form of discourse analysis that examined men’s

\(^{14}\) Although outside the scope of this paper, interview descriptions sometimes did not match SES responses or were more varied.
accounts of their use of SV in relation to gendered discourses and how men positioned themselves and their behavior within these discourses. In particular, she compiled transcript extracts that were patterned mainly by dominant discourses previously identified in the literature about (a) normative heterosexuality (e.g., the male sexual drive discourse; Gavey, 1989; Hollway, 1989, 2005) and (b) SV (e.g., discourses about “real” SV as only physically violent; Burt, 1998). Throughout this process, she also identified instances in which men resisted these dominant discourses or provided alternatives. After writing an initial draft of this analysis, the first author then went back to the transcripts to ensure that the analysis still fit the data and to find additional exemplifying excerpts.

Feminist poststructuralism assumes that knowledge, experience, and subjectivity are produced through discourse and, therefore, have “no inherent essential meaning” (Gavey, 1989; Hollway, 2005; Weedon, 1997, p. 33). Because discourses are multiple, they allow individuals to take up multiple, dynamic, and sometimes contradictory subjectivities (i.e., “subject positions”), or ways of being in or understanding the world (Gavey, 1989, 2005; Hollway, 2005; Weedon, 1997). However, these subject positions “vary in terms of the power they offer” (Gavey, 2005, p. 85). Discourses that are widely shared (i.e., dominant discourses) are the most powerful in constituting subjectivity but often appear natural and support and perpetuate existing power relations (Gavey, 1989, 2005). Alternative discourses that offer new cultural ideals, in contrast, can support resistant subject positions. We examined men’s talk for dominant and alternative discourses and how men’s subject positions were produced therein.

However, drawing mainly on Nicola Gavey’s work, our approach departs from traditional, purely linguistic approaches to feminist poststructuralism and discourse analysis
(e.g., Gavey 2005, Gavey, McPhillips, & Doherty, 2001). Because we understand discourse as both language and social practices, and are interested in the relationship between the two, we combined both a discursive and realist reading of men’s accounts (Gavey 2005, Gavey et al., 2001). That is, we read men’s accounts as both discursive productions and descriptions of their actual experiences. Although this approach uses contradictory understandings of language (one as constitutive and one as straightforward description), each fills gaps in using either one on its own. While the former is crucial for identifying and subverting the discursive productions of men’s subjectivities and experiences, the latter provides grounding in men’s actual practices. As Gavey et al. (2001) explain, our analysis “[relies] on knowing something about the dynamics of heterosex in at least some instances, that is, who does what to whom, and how?” (p. 919).

Together, these two approaches allowed us to examine how both men’s practices (use of SV) and their talk about their SV acted to maintain gendered power relations.

Our analysis is divided into three main sections. First, we provide a brief description of men’s SV in order to provide context and grounding in their actual practices. Second, we examine how men’s SV and accounts thereof both reflected and enacted the normalization of violent heterosexuality; that is, how men positioned themselves and their behavior in relation to dominant discourses about heterosexuality and SV and used various minimizing strategies (dominant subject positions). In the final section, we examine how men’s accounts sometimes challenged dominant discourses (resistant subject positions). We identify participant quotes using pseudonyms that participants self-selected.
5.5 Results and Discussion

5.5.1 Men’s Use of Sexual Violence

Participants described violent and coercive tactics ranging from verbal pressure and persistence to physical force (see Table 5.1). Although some descriptions of SV were unclear and difficult for us as researchers to label, we tried to include only men’s sexual acts or advances that occurred without consent or that followed a partner’s initial refusal. The men reported that these tactics were generally an attempt to acquire intercourse, but were sometimes used for other sexual activities, such as those the couple had not done together before (e.g., anal penetration).

5.5.2 Normalization of Violent Heterosexuality: Dominant Subject Positions

Here we examine how men’s use of SV and their descriptions thereof both reflected and enacted the normalization of violent heterosexuality; that is, how men positioned themselves in relation to dominant discourses about heterosexuality and SV (dominant subject positions). We divide this section into two subsections based on how dominant discourses were drawn upon, both of which had the effect of allowing participants to paint themselves and their behavior as normal; we name these two overarching positions (a) the “I’d obviously insist” and (b) the “I would never force her” positions. The analyses in each are different in their focus on language and discourse. In the first, we focused more on the content of discourse (what they did and what they said). In the second, we focused more on form (how they said it). Nevertheless, both analyses demonstrate how dominant discourses allowed participants to position themselves in a certain way, that is, to normalize themselves and their behavior.
5.5.2.1 “I’d Obviously Insist”: Self and Behavior as Normal

Men’s SV tactics and accounts thereof were patterned by dominant discourses about heterosexuality—namely, the male sexual drive discourse and the have/hold discourse—and, together, these discourses allowed men to position themselves and their behavior as normal. The male sexual drive discourse holds that men are biologically driven to (perpetually) seek out (heterosexual) sex and, as a result, men cannot control themselves and need to be satisfied by orgasm once sexually stimulated, and women are the object of and take responsibility for responding to men’s sexuality and natural sexual urges (Gavey, 1989; Gavey et al., 2001; Hollway, 1989, 2005). This discourse positions men as the subjects of heterosex and, therefore, privileges their sexual needs above women’s.

Some of the men explicitly linked their use of SV—their insistence or expressions of frustration following a refusal, or ignoring signs of nonconsent—with the male sexual drive discourse and biologically driven causes. Specifically, they attributed these behaviors with sex being pleasurable or not wanting or being able to stop. CP and Samuel described instances in which they insisted or expressed frustration when their partner did not want sex, or wanted to stop, because “it [was] nice” or “[felt] good” for him. CP said: “there were a lot of times where it was just like obviously she didn’t want to do it, or something like that, and I’d obviously insist, because it’s nice”. That a woman “didn’t want to” and a man would insist after a refusal (and because sex is nice for him) is only “obvious” within the male sexual drive discourse, which suggests that the male sexual drive take precedence and that it is natural that a woman might not want sex. Others linked their expressions of frustration or ignoring signs of nonconsent to male sexual needs and expectations of finishing sex (i.e., men reaching orgasm). For example, Carlos
and CP described expecting that their partners finish sex, even if they did not want to or were not
enjoying it, once they started or once they (men) were turned on:

She was just kind of running her hands down, down on me. [...] she ended up
stopping and I got so frustrated and I said, “[...] why would you start something
and then not keep going with it? [...] you’re teasing me and [...] not following
through with that.” (Carlos)

We had done it once [...] I was still excited and wanted to do it again, and when
she said “no” [...] I was just kind of like “Whoa. Like, shit, what do you want me
to do?” (CP)

These SV tactics and accounts thereof suggest that men’s (sexual) needs and desires are more
important than women’s and that it is not “right or fair for a woman to stop sex before male
orgasm” (Gavey et al., 2001, p. 922).

Rick similarly invoked the male sexual drive discourse when he suggested that he
sometimes pushed his partner or ignored her signs of nonconsent or displeasure because, if “[he]
really had sexual tension going on, then [he] would need to do something” and “having to stop
instantly [is] very difficult to do”. This suggests that men must be satisfied by orgasm once
turned on and that they cannot control their (biological) sexual urges. He also said that
sometimes he “would push” (i.e., insist) but that when he saw that his partner was getting
frustrated, “something would click in [his] mind to let go”—possibly suggesting that men are
incapable of being attentive to their partners’ feelings when sexually aroused. By invoking the
male sexual drive discourse, the men were able to frame their SV (and, in some cases, their
partner’s lack of sexual desire) as normal, expected, and reasonable.
Some men similarly relied on related discourses pertaining to women’s sexual gatekeeping functionality (Gavey, 2005), which suggest that women are responsible for controlling the male sexual drive and determining when to engage in sex. For example, the men sometimes implied that it is natural that a woman might not want sex (as in CP’s use of the word “obviously” above) and that it is a woman’s responsibility to communicate and stop unwanted sex: “I’ll start grabbing her butt or I’ll get her closer towards me. And then she’ll just stop it right away […] she’s pretty good at that” (Rick). This led Carlos and Samuel to shift responsibility by suggesting that their partners were providing “cloudy” answers or should have “just [told him] to get off”. Again, their behavior appeared reasonable within these dominant discourses.

Though less frequent, an additional dominant discourse may have also been at work in men’s accounts: the have/hold discourse, which is associated with Christian ideals of monogamy and partnership and holds that “sex should take place within the framework of a lasting relationship” (Hollway, 1989, p. 55). The combination of the male sexual drive discourse and the have/hold discourse implies that sex is an assumed or expected part of heterosexual intimate relationships and that women’s role in these relationships is to satisfy the male sexual drive. This was especially apparent in men’s accounts of insisting on sex because they had not seen or had sex with their partner in a while: “I just kept asking, like ‘come on,’ like, ‘I haven’t seen you in a week,’ […] like insisting upon it” (CP). Rick explicitly invoked these discourses when he attributed both his verbal pressure and his partner’s compliance with constant messages from friends: “you’re in a relationship–sex is in a relationship. You’ve got to do it.”

These dominant discourses about heterosexuality allowed men, intentionally or not, to position themselves and their SV as normal, thus reproducing existing gender relations (Gavey,
In these cases, the men did not need to deny and minimize their behaviors (as below) because dominant discourses about heterosexuality worked to justify and normalize their behavior and render the violence and unjustness invisible.

5.5.2.2 “I Would Never Force Her”: Self and Behavior as Not Abnormal/Violent

Men’s accounts of their SV were patterned by dominant discourses about SV and utilized minimizing strategies. This allowed them to position themselves and their behavior as not abnormal or violent; that is, they distanced themselves and their behavior from more violent and extreme men and behavior. First, almost all participants used qualifications and “just-” statements that minimized their behaviors and distanced them from something more severe (often from physical force); for example: “not yelling, but disgruntled. But still very calm” (Carlos), “I was just like pushing it a bit […] I wouldn’t say physically […] just asking her” (Bob).

In the same way, some men distanced their behavior from rape by emphasizing that the act was not physically forceful or completed:

[...] we didn’t end up having sex […] I never forced myself really onto her […] in terms of actual sexual intercourse, there was no pushing to initiate it, like physical um tying down or anything like that, which […] I’m fairly happy about myself for not doing, because I don’t think that’s legal. (Carlos)

I see it now as like, it’s really not that big of a deal, because it is just trying something and if it’s a “no” it’s a “no” […] if it didn’t succeed without their consent then it wouldn’t have affected them […] I think that typically someone wouldn’t feel violated if somebody tried something and they said “no” […] I
don’t think words are always necessary. An action can speak a lot as well, right? And if it’s a simple action, like something that takes like one second, and they’re like “no,” you get the point and it’s over. It’s no different from saying, “Can I do this?” “No.” I would say it’s like equal, violation. (Connor)

Both Carlos and Connor distanced their SV from rape and Connor went further by aligning his SV (a case where he attempted anal penetration without asking) with something that is clearly consensual (asking and then accepting a decline). Rick and Bob similarly distinguished their behavior from going against clear nonconsent: “[if] she’s like kind of borderline yes or no […] it wouldn’t be ‘No,’ but it would be like ‘Not now’ or like ‘Later’ […] And then that’s when I would just try to push it a bit” (Bob). Rick explained that he sometimes kept trying or ignored his partner’s signs of displeasure (including pushing his chest away) and would “grab onto her […] pull her closer” but that when she verbally told him to stop, he would “know instantly to stop.” He also suggested that there is a point at which ignoring refusals becomes “wrong”—a point that he emphasized he does not pass. To some extent, all of these examples of distancing relied on dominant discourses about rape and SV as physically violent, completed acts that (according to some men’s accounts) disregard clear verbal nonconsent (Burt, 1998). Rather than denying the extremity of SV, the men positioned their own acts as distinct from dominant conceptions of SV.

Some claimed to have incorrectly responded to a question on the SES but admitted to other, less severe instances of SV:

I probably answered the question wrong. […] the whole “not consent, shoved my fingers in her vagina” thing, seems a little extreme. And I have never done
anything like that in my life. [I: But the one before?] The kissing when angry, yeah, I’ve done that. (Kevin)

Regardless of whether or not he really did incorrectly respond to the survey question, Kevin positioned the one act that he did admit to in the interview as less “extreme.” Rick said that he would “never force her in saying that [he] would end the relationship” (an item on the survey) but admitted to other instances of SV: “kissing and rubbing towards her, I guarantee I’ve done that before.” Some similarly explained that, while they knew they had been persistent in the past, they could not remember a specific instance because “it was so casual” and “not really a memorable thing for [them]” (Connor).

Others did not deny any experiences but positioned their SV as a one-off and out of character. Often this was done by emphasizing that sex was “usually […] mutual” (Bob) or that an incident of SV was “the only time that [he] went past consent” (Samuel). Kevin emphasized that all of his sexual experiences with his partner were consensual: “Don’t get me wrong though, consensual sex all around.” By doing this, they were able to position themselves as good men who obtain consent. In the instance above where Kevin claimed to have incorrectly responded to a question on the survey, he explicitly positioned himself as a good man: “I feel like I wouldn’t have put that. Because I was grown up in a Roman Catholic, full hard-core, [inaudible] and I wouldn’t do that.” Two participants also blamed alcohol and suggested that such instances only happened when they were intoxicated, again making these “one-off,” out of character instances.

Finally, participants’ talk worked to deny or minimize any consequences of their SV. This included: (a) denying or minimizing how their partner felt (e.g., “I do think she felt bad after, but not like super bad” [CP], “it probably made her feel, uh, upset […] I don’t think she
ever felt at all scared or anything” [Samuel]); (b) denying any consequences on their relationship or her feelings toward him (e.g., “it didn't make a big impact at all” [Abe], “nothing changed in terms of her personality or her feelings towards me” [Kevin]); or (c) denying or not acknowledging the pressure or obligation their partner may have experienced because of their SV (e.g., “maybe it was just her feelings changed and she wanted to have sex” [Kevin]). In sum, participants’ reliance on dominant discourses about SV and use of minimizing strategies allowed them, intentionally or not, to position themselves and their behavior as not abnormal or violent, again reproducing existing gender relations (Gavey, 1989; Hollway, 2005). In these cases, they denied and minimized, setting their actions and selves apart from SV and perpetrators, respectively.

5.5.3 Challenging Violent Heterosexuality: Resistant (But Contradictory) Subject Positions

In this final section, we examine how men’s accounts also sometimes challenged dominant discourses, allowing them to take up resistant subject positions. This was exemplified in (a) men’s negative accounts of their SV, (b) their alternative accounts or discourses about heterosexuality, and (c) their focus on consent and communication. These alternative discourses may have still helped the men position themselves in a certain way: as modern and good men. However, we also highlight how these types of accounts often contained contradictions or occurred in conjunction with normalizing discourses and positioning, highlighting an active struggle to “produce new versions of meaning from the conflicts and contradictions between existing discourses” (Weedon, 1997, p. 102).

First, most participants described at least some of their SV (even nonphysical tactics) as bad, wrong, or selfish, or described feeling bad, guilty, disappointed in themselves, or even
abusive. Rick, for instance, reflected on how the survey asked about experiences that occurred “without consent” and said: “it has happened plenty of times. And, it made me think of it a lot while I was doing this survey for sure […] ‘What did you do wrong?’ and ‘Why did you do it?’”.

In contrast to (or in addition to) denying the negative consequences of their behavior (as noted above), some men did speak about the negative consequences of their SV on their partner, such as making her feel uncomfortable, upset, or guilty. In contrast to some of the examples above, some men also noted how their SV might have pressured their partner:

I still kind of counted it as verbally pressuring, because saying like “Okay, this is like kind of what people do […] Let’s just try it out” […] we both agreed on it at the end. If I didn’t say that, then it would have not happened. (Rick)

These accounts suggest that men’s accounts and experiences were not constituted solely by their positioning in the dominant and normalizing discourses about SV noted above. Rather, they sometimes positioned their behavior as wrong and consequential. Nevertheless, these accounts often contained contradictions as they occurred in conjunction with the accounts in the section above. In one explicit example of this struggle, Carlos said of the instance in which his partner was touching him sexually and then stopped:

I felt it was really unfair […] it was promiscuous […] And, I’d say maybe a little selfish. Um, because she might not have been thinking about the other. But then that can also be interpreted as me being selfish, because I’m not thinking about her. So that dichotomy was going on in my head as well.

While he relied on dominant discourses about the male sex drive (as noted above), he also positioned his own behavior (his reaction to her stopping) as selfish.
Second, some provided alternative accounts or discourses about heterosexuality, including sex as an assumed part of relationships and the male sexual drive discourse. With respect to the former, Kevin described that he and his partner did not have sex until months after they started dating and, while friends told him that was a long time to wait, he did not mind and “was willing to be patient.” With respect to the latter, some men challenged discourses suggesting that men have higher sexual drives than women or that it is natural or assumed that women will not want sex. This was exemplified when some men explained that: (a) their partners sometimes wanted sex more than them or had a “[higher] sex drive” (Samuel); (b) they “have sex more than [they] would like to” in their relationship (John); (c) there were also instances where their partners wanted sex and they did not, or where their partners pressured them or insisted after a refusal; and (d) they and their partners initiated sex evenly in frequency. Although he was referring partly to an instance where his partner tried to pressure him to have sex when he did not want to, Kevin contradicted notions of sex as an assumed part of relationships, that either partner’s sexual desires are more important than the other’s, and that men always want sex more:

I shouldn’t feel obligated to have sex with somebody, just even if I’m dating them. […] when I was put in that situation, I was like, “[…] we shouldn’t be doing this anymore.” Like the whole one partner doesn’t really want to have sex as much as the other.

Likewise, some challenged the privileging of men’s sexual desires over women’s that results from the male sexual drive discourse:

I tried my best obviously to make sure she was satisfied as well […] I wanted to make sure that she was […] happy and content with the experience […] if she
wasn’t, then I’d ask her, “Okay, like what can I do next time or do you want me to
do now?” and then she would kind of like coach me through it and whatnot. (Abe)

These accounts, too, however, contained contradictions. For example, even though Rick
said that he and his partner did not have sex that often and that they wanted to make sure it was
not as if they “had to” have sex because they were dating, he still was not at first satisfied with
his sex life with his partner because of “the image of what you believe in how much sex you
should have” in a relationship. But he also said that “you understand that it’s not always just
about that and you start to get to know the person a little bit more and kind of what she wants to
do as well, and not just you,” which challenges both assumptions about sex in relationships and
about the privileging of men’s sexual desires over women’s. John and Samuel struggled between
the male sexual drive discourse and their own contradicting experiences:

She’s kind of the driving factor. I’ve always been the limiting factor […] I’m not
really as sexually aroused as I’ve heard other guys are. Um, although I still do
have sex pretty much every day that I see her. Um, but I think a lot of that is
because she wants it. (John)

I’d say 50-50. Yeah. (I: So you were kind of equally initiating sex?) Yeah. […]
obviously like being a guy […] we want it more. But um, or sorry, not necessarily
we want it more […] We like, a lot of times, like she-she would kind of push my
buttons. (Samuel)

Although Carlos described a time where his partner insisted after his refusal, he attributed his
refusal to having too much work to do rather than a lack of desire, emphasizing that he would
have otherwise “really [loved] to have sex with [her…] and throw all [his] stuff away from [his]
desk.” Finally, while Kevin questioned his partner’s pressure and his resulting feelings of obligation to have sex with her, he was less critical of his own identical behavior:

[I: Do you think she felt the same, like, obligation, like you felt?] Uh, I don’t know what it was particularly [...]. It could have just been the party feel. She uh, she was a good girl, so. I mean maybe it was just her feelings changed and she wanted to have sex. I don’t know in particular. But for me personally, I-I was pretty aggravated.

Moreover, these descriptions of instances where their partners pressured them or insisted after a refusal may have worked to deflect and minimize their own SV.

Third, many of the interviews were characterized by new and emerging discourses around consent and communication. These alternative discourses, in particular, may have helped the men position themselves as modern and good men. Specifically, many of the men described (a) their relationship with their partner as respectful, “communicative,” having “a lot of consent,” and “mutual”; (b) the importance of communicating sexual wants (sometimes including descriptions of times they did this) and ensuring that both partners are “safe” and “okay in the bedroom”; or (c) learning from their use of SV to respect or take at “face value” their partners’ refusals. For example, Connor said:

I would say overall for our relationship a lot of the fact that we consented to everything is because we have such good communication. I think that, uh, if we weren’t to constantly be so open with each other about what we do and don’t like and what we are and aren’t ready for, then there would be more issues with um,
with like consent and like trying to like force things […] without knowing that the other person doesn’t want it.

Some men also challenged problematic assumptions about consent (e.g., “I felt bad […] because […] I kind of initiated um with my body instead of with my words” [Connor]) or described the importance of consent campaigns and messages on campus:

I remember […] orientation week […] we went to a like “Just Ask” presentation […] I was so happy that the, uh, university was displaying something like that. Showing that they really care about the relationships and sexual experiences of the students. (Abe)

In first year, consent was everything. We had like presentations about it […] I truly believe that like those are necessary, but like I crossed a boundary personally. (Samuel)

Again, participants talk here contained many contradictions. Most notably, despite their emphasis on consent and communication, few men spoke meaningfully about what this looked like in their relationship (though this may have been due, in part, to the nature of the interview questions) and many provided contradictory accounts. For example, Rick said that he is “very for talking and seeing how the other person feels” but admitted that “when it’s in the moment, [he and his partner] do not talk at all” and that “if [his partner] doesn’t disengage, then [he’ll] continue.” In another instance, Abe explained that sex was “consented obviously” but that they did not always need to ask, “do you want to still keep on going?” and that “it would just be initiated by feeling.” Some men discussed consent and mutuality but also described circumstances in which they tried to see how far they could push it (e.g., when they did not get a
clear refusal). Carlos’ account of his SV struggled between blaming his partner for her “cloudy” responses to his advances and consent messages he heard on campus:

I also told her to maybe be a bit more direct when it comes to “Yes” and “No,” because she was providing answers that were a little cloudy. Which I know with all the consent stuff up on the walls here it’s, you know, “Only—only yes means yes,” so. […] having that around you really puts that into perspective as well.

This message allowed him to highlight that he should have listened to his partner’s decline while simultaneously blaming her. Finally, many men emphasized the importance of consent and communication but also talked about how sex in their relationship often naturally “evolved” from kissing or foreplay without verbal communication, especially in longer-term relationships:

I think you get too comfortable in your relationship […] if you’re dating for a while, you kind of don’t think of “Okay, should I ask her what’s going on?” It’s just you think “We’re comfortable, we’ve been dating for this long” […] you kind of think you’re just fine with it, without having to ask. (Rick)

5.6 General Discussion

The current research examined how men’s SV and accounts thereof reflected and enacted the normalization of violent heterosexuality, and, ultimately, acted to maintain gendered power relations. Men often used language that helped them to position themselves and their SV as normal and expected. However, they also often used alternative discourses and accounts about SV, heterosexuality, and consent. These accounts also helped the men to position themselves as good and modern men who seek consent and who reflect on the negative aspects of their SV. That they often moved between dominant normalizing accounts and alternative accounts
highlighted an active struggle to produce new versions of reality or ways of being in heterosexual intimate relationships.

Although some researchers have suggested that the cultural gender script is beginning to value greater sexual agency for women in mixed-sex relationships (Dworkin & O’Sullivan, 2005; McCormick, 2010), results from our screening survey show that many men still use SV (and men’s reports likely underestimate the scope of the problem; Kolivas & Gross, 2007; Strang, Peterson, Hill, & Heiman, 2013). Our qualitative analysis supports the body of literature suggesting that both men and women’s descriptions of SV are constrained by dominant discourses that act to reinforce gendered power relations and that SV exists on a continuum of normative heterosexuality defined by patriarchal ideologies (Gavey, 2005; Jeffrey & Barata, 2017; MacKinnon, 1987; Weiss, 2009). In other words, men normalize partly because this is the language available to them and notions of normal heterosex foster or create space for SV. In order to move forward, new ways of talking about and understanding heterosexuality are needed. As our results suggest, however, such new discourses must be accompanied by explicitly challenging old ones.

Results from our interviews with university men who engaged in mostly verbal SV were strikingly similar to past research more than 15 years old with convicted rapists. Like Scully’s (1990) and Lea and Auburn’s (2001) participants, men in our study drew on dominant discourses and language that allowed them to frame themselves and their SV a certain way. Our participants often (a) did not deny their SV but rather positioned it as normal and expected by relying on dominant discourses about heterosexuality (similar to Scully’s admitters who appealed to forces beyond their control) and/or (b) denied and minimized their SV by relying on discourses about
rape and consent (similar to Scully’s *deniers*). The latter also often involved minimizing language very similar to that found in research with perpetrators of intimate partner violence such as qualifications distinguishing their SV from other more violent forms; shifting responsibility; claiming not to remember SV; and incident talk suggesting the behavior was “a one-off, something ‘out of character’, and thus not part of a pattern of behavior” (Hearn, 1998; Kelly & Westmarland, 2016, p. 120).

We believe that these similarities with past research with convicted rapists support feminist conceptualizations of SV on a continuum where some acts are common and viewed as socially acceptable (e.g., Koss & Oros, 1982). They also suggest that traditional discourses about heterosexuality and SV continue to dominate, though perhaps in less explicit forms. For example, our participants used less explicit victim blaming discourses compared to some past research but still blamed women for “cloudy” refusals or framed their partners as “promiscuous” for turning them on and not continuing with sex. Moreover, while our participants, for the most part, did not explicitly frame the male sexual drive as biological and men as needing sex more than women, they did still draw on the male sexual drive discourse in more subtle ways (e.g., expecting that their partners finish sex, stopping sex being difficult for men).

The current study extends previous research by examining men’s use of alternative discourses. Men’s focus on consent, communication, and mutuality, in particular, has rarely been reported on in past research about men’s SV and may reflect emerging understandings about SV and heterosexuality. University campuses are increasingly engaged in educational campaigns about SV and consent and several of our participants discussed these explicitly and recited messages heard on campus (e.g., “only yes means yes”). However, our participants often drew
on these discourses in conjunction with other, more problematic discourses, and gave little
indication of applying these messages to their relationships in any meaningful way. For example,
many still spoke about not needing to communicate verbally with their partner or described sex
as starting naturally without clear or verbal communication. Despite emphasizing the importance
of consent, they often did not critically reflect on how their experiences might have been
nonconsensual or how their SV might have pressured their partner into consenting. Instead, their
talk about consent and communication appeared mainly as a way to continue to normalize their
SV or position it as one-off (that is, they usually seek consent), or to position themselves as good
and modern men, without having to make meaningful changes to their behavior.

While this uptake of consent and communication discourse is promising, our results
suggest that there is still work to be done. Future educational and intervention campaigns should
foster men’s critical engagement with alternative discourses on consent and communication.
While some men appear to be taking these messages up, our results suggest that they are often
used to minimize one-off SV or to continue to shift responsibility to their partners. Just as earlier
“just say no” and “no means no” campaigns, while well-intentioned, put the onus on women to
say “no” and “[implied] that other ways of doing refusals…are open to reasonable doubt”
(Kitzinger & Frith, 1999, p. 293), current “yes means yes” campaigns may allow men to (a)
blame their partners for not communicating verbally; (b) uncritically accept “yes” as unfettered
consent (despite previous research suggesting that women say “yes” for many reasons, including
previous SV; Jeffrey & Barata, 2017); or (c) understand consent as something to be achieved
(including through SV). In other words, our results suggest that men sometimes work to
incorporate new consent messages into old ways of doing heterosex.
Campaigns should go further than simple messages about the importance of consent by teaching men (and women) how to navigate mutually consensual, pleasurable, and respectful relationships. Mutual respect and pleasure (variously defined) are important here because, for the reasons listed above, consent alone may be an “[inadequate] criterion for ethical sexual relations” (Gavey, 2005, p. 143). Ultimately, we must work to reframe heterosexuality and create hegemony for discourses that privilege both women and men’s desires and open possibilities for nonandrocentric ways of doing heterosex. Men should also be challenged to reframe their own behavior, including less forceful forms of SV, as problematic, and to understand the ways that discourses around normative heterosexuality and men’s sexual drive support SV.
REFERENCES


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15 This list includes references cited in Chapter 5 (Study 2 manuscript).


Table 5.1: Interview Participants’ Sexually Violent and Coercive Tactics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of SV</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Continually asking or trying to convince</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I suggested it a third time […] I said, ‘Hey, are you sure you don’t want to?’” (Carlos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I told her, ‘Can we go have some sex?’ And she was like, ‘No, no.’ And I’m like, ‘Come on, it’s a good party, let’s make it a little bit more fun.’” (Kevin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“She said ‘No’ and so it was like ‘Awe man, like please? Like it’s my birthday.’” (Abe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expressing frustration or disappointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“she ended up stopping and I got so frustrated and I said […] ‘why would you start something and then not keep going with it?’” (Carlos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It was never angry, but like, you know disappointment at least […] it’s like, ‘Okay fine, now what?’” (CP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I just kept asking, like ‘Come on,’ like, ‘I haven’t seen you in a week.’” (CP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I said, “I really think you should keep going if you’re going to start it and I would really appreciate it if you did.” (Carlos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Initiating (new) sexual activity without asking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I was doing, you know, finger play with her, and then I tried to […] add another one into a different location and then she said like, ‘No, that’s um, I’m not comfortable with that.’” (Connor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I think what I did was I started putting my penis in and then I asked her if that was okay and she said ‘No,’ so I didn’t.” (John)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disregarding refusal or signs of nonconsent and initiating/continuing sexual activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“not very long in, she said, ‘I want to stop,’ and we, maybe after the second time she said that, I did. […]After the first time I kept going” (Samuel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using physical pressure or force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“she said, ‘No’ and rolled over and tried to fall back asleep. And […] I basically got on top of her, um naked, and um, like-like started to force myself on her – or, um, orally at least” (Samuel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“[…] we had to go somewhere, but I wanted to continue kissing, so I just kind of like held her down a bit […] I just kind of shifted my body weight kind of like on top of hers. And, just like held her” (Dominik)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Categories are not all mutually exclusive. For example, continually asking often involved using guilt tactics.*
6 Study 3 (Focus Groups): Sexual Violence and Normal Heterosexuality – Two Sides of the Same Coin? University Men’s Talk about Heterosexuality in Intimate Relationships\textsuperscript{16}

6.1 Abstract

Men’s sexual violence (SV) against women remains pervasive despite increased attention to the issue. Research on men’s SV has focused on individual- and peer-level predictors of SV, with comparatively little focus on the broader social forces and discourses that support SV. Using four focus groups with a total of 29 Canadian university men, we examined the ways that heterosexual men talked and negotiated conversations about heterosexuality in intimate relationships. In particular, we used a feminist poststructuralist form of discourse analysis to examine how men both legitimized and challenged dominant versions of heterosexuality that are male-centered and that foster men’s sexual violence (SV) against women. We examined the dominant discourses that men supported and challenged and the rhetorical strategies that they used to do so. We found that men legitimized a dominant version of heterosexuality whereby: men have higher sex drives and uncontrollable sexual urges; heterosexual starts naturally and men do not need to communicate; and men misinterpret women’s ineffective communication and this miscommunication causes SV. They did this mainly by using essentializing language; that is, they positioned heterosexuality as natural and scripted. This essentializing allowed men to further legitimize the dominant version of heterosexuality by then marginalizing heterosexuality practices that do not fit the alleged norm. Each of these rhetorical strategies were often difficult to challenge within the focus group conversations. Nevertheless, some men did challenge

\textsuperscript{16} As of September 2019, a version of this manuscript with minor differences is under review for publication.
dominant discourses with varying degrees of success. We briefly discuss the implications of our results for efforts to improve heterosexual experiences for women and prevent SV.
6.2 Introduction and Literature Review

Constructions of heterosexuality remain male-centered and foster men’s sexual violence (SV) against women (Hird & Jackson, 2001; Study 2 of this dissertation). Culturally shared discourses about the meanings and practices of “normal” heterosexuality hold that: men are biologically driven to persistently desire (hetero)sex, women are gatekeepers who are responsible for controlling men’s sexual drive and determining when to engage in sex, heterosex is natural or biological, and women and men communicate differently which leads to misunderstandings (Frith & Kitzinger, 1997; Gavey, 1989, 2005; Gavey, McPhillips, & Doherty, 2001; Hollway, 1989, 2005; Waldby, Kippax, & Crawford, 1993). Together, these and other discourses pattern heterosexuality in ways that privilege men’s desires and foster violent practices. Indeed, men’s SV against women remains pervasive, especially among university populations and in intimate relationships (Fedina, Holmes, & Backes, 2016; Kilpatrick, Resnick, Ruggiero, Conoscenti, & McCauley, 2007; Smith et al., 2017). SV is often nonphysically violent (i.e., verbally or psychologically coercive), especially in intimate relationships (Salwen & O’Leary, 2013; Smith et al., 2017; Wegner, Pierce, & Abbey, 2014). Such forms of SV may be particularly intersected with constructions of “normal” heterosexuality.

Research on men’s SV against women has focused predominantly on individual- and peer-level predictors of SV perpetration such as negative attitudes toward women, stereotyped beliefs about SV, exposure to family violence, problematic alcohol use, and peer approval of SV (see Tharp et al., 2013 for a review). This work, although important, has revealed little about the broader social forces and discourses that support SV. Likewise, most prevention efforts with men have focused on changing individuals’ knowledge, attitudes, and, less frequently, behaviors and
have had little effect on the occurrence of SV (Anderson & Whiston, 2005; Casey & Lindhorst, 2009; DeGue et al., 2014; Tharp et al., 2011). Focus on individual predictors and attitudinal change may be futile without addressing the broader sociocultural milieu in which SV occurs.

6.2.1 The Social Construction of Heterosexuality

Men and women continue to rely on traditional, male-centered discourses about heterosexuality, including those about men as initiators with stronger and biologically driven sexuality and women as gatekeepers (Allen, 2003; Cense, Bay-Cheng, & van Dijk, 2018; Crawford, Kippax, & Waldby, 1994; Hird & Jackson, 2001; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003; Waldby, Kippax, & Crawford, 1993). For example, U.S. university men in Jozkowski and Peterson’s (2013) study who responded to open-ended survey questions about consent “endorsed their role as sexual initiator” and sometimes reported that they “always want [sex]” (p. 519). Young Aotearoa/New Zealand men in a recent focus group study were ambivalent about women’s pleasure and reinforced discourses privileging men’s pleasure (Brown, Schmidt, & Robertson, 2018). Similarly, British and New Zealander adolescent boys in Hird and Jackson’s (2001) focus groups reported that boys have a stronger sex drive than girls, referring to biology, chemistry, and hormones to describe boys’ sexual drive and attraction. They also described girls as “responsible for both stimulating and satisfying men’s sexual urges” (p. 34). These discourses position men as the agents of heterosexuality and women as the objects.

Male-centered constructions of heterosexuality also work to foster men’s sexually violent and coercive practices. Research has demonstrated the link between SV and some of the normative heterosexuality discourses noted above. Men and women use dominant discourses to describe and explain SV as a normal and expected part of heterosexuality (Hird & Jackson, 2001;
Jeffrey & Barata, 2017; Romero-Sánchez & Megías, 2013; Study 2 of this dissertation). For example, men and adolescent boys described SV as resulting from men’s physiological needs, “frustrated sexual energy,” or men not wanting or being able to stop sex once started (Hird & Jackson, 2001; Romero-Sánchez and Megías, 2013, p. 9; Study 2 of this dissertation).

Dominant discourses about consent and communication also work to construct male-centered and violent versions of heterosexuality and support SV. For example, dominant theories and discourses hold that SV is often the result of miscommunication between sexual partners, whereby women fail to effectively communicate, and men misinterpret women’s communication (see Frith & Kitzinger, 1997 for a review). Some academic literature and lay women and men have and continue to rely on these discourses about miscommunication to explain men’s SV against women (see Frith & Kitzinger, 1997 for a review). However, qualitative and discursive researchers have demonstrated that these discourses do not accurately reflect heterosexual experiences, but rather are used as a rhetorical “resource” to explain or justify SV (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Ehrlich, 1998; Frith & Kitzinger, 1997, p. 523; O’Byrne, Hansen, & Rapley, 2008).

For example, Frith and Kitzinger (1997) demonstrated that miscommunication theory was “useful for women attempting to sustain heterosexual relationships” because it helped them avoid blaming men and gave them a greater sense of control (i.e., they can prevent future SV if they improve their own communication; p. 524). Researchers have also demonstrated that women have a sophisticated understanding of the “culturally normative ways of indicating refusal” in a variety of social interactions (i.e., indirectly with pauses, hedges, apologies, compliments, etc.; Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). Kitzinger and Frith (1999) argued that men who
claim misunderstanding of such indirect refusals “are claiming to be cultural dopes,” ignorant of “how refusals are usually done and understood to be done” (p. 310). Indeed, follow-up research demonstrated that men, too, have a sophisticated understanding of these normative, indirect refusals but draw on miscommunication arguments to justify SV (O’Byrne, Hansen, & Rapley, 2008; O’Byrne, Rapley, & Hansen, 2006).

Some research has begun to examine how women and men resist or challenge dominant discourses about heterosexuality, formulating new cultural ideals. Often, this research has highlighted new discourses constructing women as active sexual subjects with their own sexual desires and autonomy (Allen, 2003; Brown et al., 2018; Cense et al., 2018; Jackson & Cram, 2003). The few studies that have examined men’s alternative discourses suggested that men sometimes resist notions of sex as the most important part of relationships (Allen, 2003) and women as passive recipients of sex (Brown et al., 2018; Crawford et al., 1994; Waldby et al., 1993). However, this resistance is often mixed. For example, men’s talk in Crawford et al. (1994) suggested that women are allowed to be initiators with their own desires, but only in terms of male-centered sex (i.e., penetration) and that “negotiation is typically about whether to have sex or not; not what kind of sex” (p. 582). Similarly, men in Brown et al.’s (2018) study talked about women as active agents of heterosex, but only to the extent that this improved men’s pleasure.

Most of the past discursive research is dated and has examined the dominant heterosexuality discourses that women and men support and, to a lesser extent, resist. Very limited research has examined how women and men do this; that is, the rhetorical strategies and language that they use. Relevant to the current study, boys in Hird and Jackson’s (2001) studies
used inherent, biological sexual differences to support higher male sex drive and SV. Frith and Kitzinger (2001) highlighted the scripted quality of women’s descriptions of heterosex and how these formulations worked to normalize claims about women’s inability to say “no” (i.e., all women have difficulty because it goes against the shared sexual script). Specifically, women worked up heterosex to be scripted by referencing (among others): (a) predictable stages of sexual activities, “as though there is a pre-given sequence” (p. 218) and (b) widely shared knowledge about heterosex (e.g., “what most people think/what everyone knows”; using a “generalized ‘you’”; p. 219-220). No studies, to our knowledge, have looked at how university men rhetorically support and resist dominant heterosexuality constructions or how they negotiate these constructions.

6.2.2 Current Study

The aim of the current study was to examine how university men talked and negotiated conversations about heterosexuality in intimate relationships in focus groups with other men, both legitimizing and challenging dominant, male-centered and violent versions of heterosexuality. This study fills a number of gaps in the literature. It expands on limited past research that has examined the broader social forces and discourses that support SV, which are crucial for fully understanding and preventing men’s SV. We focused on men’s discussions about heterosexuality in intimate relationships given that SV is especially common in this relational context (Smith et al., 2017; Wegner, Pierce, & Abbey, 2014). Although some results applied broadly to any heterosexual relationships, we highlight some key findings specific to intimate relationships. Our study also expands limited previous research that has examined not only men’s support of dominant heterosexuality constructions, but also their resistance. Finally,
ours is the first study to examine how men talked and negotiated these conversations and the rhetorical strategies that often bolstered claims and made them difficult to challenge within the immediate conversation.

As in the other studies in this dissertation, here we understand (IP)SV as reflecting and maintaining gendered power relations between women and men. The purpose of this manuscript in the context of the dissertation is mainly to examine men’s social construction of (IP)SV. Thus, we drew mainly on feminist poststructuralism (e.g., Gavey, 2005) in defining SV and reading men’s conversations. We read men’s talk predominantly as constitutive and destabilized the term SV by examining how it is socially constructed through discourse; that is, we unpacked the discourses that normalize SV and that produce forms of heterosex that construct or create space for SV in the first place (Gavey, 2005; MacKinnon, 1987). Nevertheless, we did not completely reject realist interpretations. We sometimes took men’s accounts as straightforward reflection so that we could, at times, speak to material heterosexual practices and dynamics. See Chapter 6.4: Theory and Analysis below for more information.

6.3 Method
6.3.1 Procedure

Upon approval by our university’s institutional research ethics board, we recruited Canadian university men to participate in one of four focus groups. We recruited 21 men through the Psychology Department Participant Pool and eight through advertisements posted around campus. All advertisements informed potential participants about the purpose of the research: to participate in a focus group about sex, dating, and sexual pressures for men and women in relationships, including instances where men might pressure women into sex. They also
indicated that participants must identify as male and heterosexual and be aged 18 to 24. Advertisements variously indicated that participants must “identify as male” or be “male or male-identified.” We did not exclude trans men but, because we did not ask about gender in the demographics survey, we cannot confirm whether participants identified as cis men or trans men.

A male undergraduate research assistant of similar age to participants facilitated the focus groups, which took about two hours each (see Appendix C for the complete focus group guide). After the informed consent process and a discussion about the importance of maintaining other participants’ confidentiality, participants responded individually to a demographics survey (see Appendix D). Next, the facilitator introduced participants to the purpose and format of the focus group, discussed ground rules, and led an icebreaker activity. The facilitator instructed participants to think about steady dating relationships between men and women rather than more casual relationships, like hookups, and to focus on couples aged 18 to 24. He also explained that they were not expected to speak about their own experiences. The focus groups were semistructured and the facilitator asked participants the following main questions (with minor wording differences between groups): (a) what do you think most men expect out of a steady relationship with a woman? (b) what do you think most men consider to be a good sexual relationship with a steady partner?; (c) what do you think a typical sexual encounter between steady dating partners looks like?; (d) what do you think about communication of sexual intention between steady dating partners?; (e) how do you think sexual relationships and communication between steady partners change over time?; (f) what are some of the pressures that men experience in steady relationships with respect to sexual activity; (g) what are some of the pressures that women experience in steady relationships with respect to sexual activity?; and
(h) given some of the pressures that women experience in steady relationships with respect to sexual activity, why do you think women sometimes end up having sex when they do not really want to? The facilitator also asked follow-up questions, clarification questions, for elaboration, and for additional comments/opinions and these questions/requests varied more widely across the groups than the main questions. After each focus group, the facilitator gave participants a list of available community resources. Men who participated through the Psychology Department Participant Pool received two bonus grades toward an eligible Psychology course and men who we recruited via advertisements posted around campus received $20 CAD.

6.3.2 Participants

Twenty-nine men participated in one of four focus groups with eight, eight, six, and seven men, respectively. The men were aged 18 to 23 (M = 19.1) and 25 identified as heterosexual (the remaining four responded “male”). All reported having had at least one exclusive, committed intimate relationship and 23 reported that they had previously engaged in sexual intercourse. We report additional demographic and dating/sexual information in Table 6.1.

6.4 Theory and Analysis

We examined how men talked and negotiated conversations about heterosexuality in intimate relationships in focus group conversations with other men—at times supporting and at times challenging dominant constructions of “normal” heterosexuality that are violent and male-centered. Our analysis drew on the principles of feminist poststructuralism and discourse analysis (Gavey, 1989, 2005; Hollway, 2005; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Weedon, 1997). Feminist poststructuralist forms of discourse analysis assume that knowledge, experience, and
subjectivity are produced through discourse and, thus, analyze text for what it accomplishes socially and how it “constructs a specific reality” (Gavey, 1989; Hollway, 2005; Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 2; Weedon, 1997). Dominant discourses are patterned, widely shared ways of talking about the world and often appear natural and “support and perpetuate existing power relations” (Gavey, 1989, p. 464). Alternative discourses challenge dominant ones by offering new cultural ideals as people actively struggle to “produce new versions of meaning” (Weedon, 1997, p. 102).

Feminist poststructuralism and discourse analysis typically approach participant narratives “in their own right and not as a secondary route to things ‘beyond’ the text like attitudes, events or cognitive processes” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 160, emphasis original). However, our approach departed from this purely linguistic approach in that we read men’s accounts as both discursive productions and descriptions (albeit partial) of actual heterosexual dynamics (Gavey, 2005; Gavey et al., 2001). These opposing understandings of language (as constitutive and as straightforward description) allowed us to identify and subvert the discursive productions of men’s talk while still, at times, speaking to material heterosexual practices.

An undergraduate research assistant transcribed the focus group recordings verbatim and the first author read and re-read the transcripts. We examined men’s talk at multiple levels. First, we examined men’s talk in relation to broader discourses about heterosexuality and how it reflected and constructed particular discursive and material versions of heterosexuality. The first author used NVivo 12 to locate and code instances in which men supported and challenged the following dominant discourses that have previously been discussed in the literature: men’s sexual drive, women’s sexual gatekeeping, heterosex as natural, and sexual miscommunication
Second, we examined the immediate interactional function of men’s talk to identify how men actively worked up these particular constructions in ways that strengthened their claims and often made them credible or difficult to challenge (Edwards, 1994, 1995; Frith & Kitzinger, 2001). Here, the first author identified various rhetorical strategies that worked to strengthen men’s claims, and the extent to which they directed the conversations. The second author provided feedback on initial drafts of the written analysis and identified additional rhetorical strategies. The first author then went back to the transcripts to ensure that the analysis still fit the data and to find additional exemplifying excerpts.

We divided the results according to the following three conversation topics: (a) sexual drive, (b) sexual initiation and progression, and (c) sexual (mis)communication. The conversations sometimes veered toward casual relationships and some accounts applied to both casual and intimate relationships; however, we tried to highlight some key findings about heterosexuality within intimate relationships. We selected transcript excerpts not necessarily because they were representative of the data as a whole, but because they pointed to the continued patterning of heterosexuality as male-centered and violent. Where possible, we also selected excerpts that demonstrated tensions between participants and between dominant and alternative accounts. In order to keep the negotiation between participants and shifts in conversation intact (including agreements and disagreements), we present some lengthy extracts and we mostly discuss resistance strategies within sections on how men legitimized dominant discourses. For clarity, we also repeat some sections of the lengthy extracts in relevant parts of the analysis. We identify participant quotes using pseudonyms that we created for this paper.
6.5 Results and Discussion

Participants legitimized a dominant, male-centered and violent version of heterosexuality mainly by using essentializing language that worked up specific heterosexual dynamics and practices as pre-given and part of a regular, recognizable pattern. Specifically, they worked up particular heterosexual dynamics and practices to be (a) natural and biological (i.e., biologically essential) and (b) scripted (i.e., socially essential). In general, biologically essentialist language characterized heterosexuality as predetermined, immutable, and stable fact. Socially essentialist language (script formulations) characterized heterosexuality as “having a recurring, predictable, [and, sometimes,] sequential pattern” (Edwards, 1995, p. 319). This essentializing language and positioning then allowed men to further legitimize a dominant version of heterosexuality by marginalizing heterosexuality practices that do not fit the alleged norm. Each of these strategies were rhetorically useful because they strengthened men’s claims and were often difficult to challenge within the focus group conversations. Nevertheless, some men did challenge dominant discourses with varying degrees of success at shifting the conversation.

6.5.1 Men’s Talk and Negotiation about Heterosexual Drive

Participants used essentializing and marginalizing language to legitimize a particular, dominant version of heterosexuality whereby men want sex more than women and have biological urges that need to be satisfied (previously labeled the male sexual drive discourse; Gavey, 1989; Gavey et al., 2001; Hollway, 1989, 2005). We expand on this essentializing and marginalizing language below.
6.5.1.1 Essentializing Men’s Sex Drive

Participants essentialized the male sexual drive (and, at times, justified SV) by positioning men’s higher sex drive and uncontrollable urges as (a) natural and biologically determined and (b) scripted. First, they referred to biology/chemistry, hormones, and men’s physiological needs and “natural higher sex drives” (Warren, Group 1). For example, two men in Group 3 repeatedly used language about men’s physiological need in a conversation about sexual pressure in relationships. They explained that some women end up having sex when they do not want to because “it takes less […] for a guy to be more sexually aroused” (Frank) and because women might feel pressure to “relieve” their partner when he is “really pent up” (Samuel). And they explained that “a lot of sexual frustration” (Samuel) and “withdrawal from sex” (Frank) might lead men to pressure or force their partner into sex.

In a discussion about why some men try to have sex with many women and might intentionally ignore signs that a woman does not want to have sex, Damian suggested that one reason is because it is “the way that they’re wired” and others soon continued with a focus on hormones and biology/chemistry:

**Extract 1 (Group 1)**

Warren: Like a higher sex drive would obviously lead you to that if something was – (Todd: Testosterone) – Testosterone, yeah testosterone is obviously a huge factor.

Damian: If you play sports, like contact sports you tend to be generally more –

(Warren: Amped up) – Amped up.
Warren: So, for you to get your work out [...] you get a natural start [...] It seems to be like if your physical desire outweighs your like rationale or like your, yeah.

Simon: Does testosterone really affect like…? (murmurs of affirmation of testosterone’s effect) Because I don’t work out at all [...] but like everyone says that testosterone – but like how, though?

Damian: It’s […] like a chemical reaction in your brain, like literally you feel elevated.

Warren: It’s the same way dopamine can make you feel better like any drug or like alcohol changes your brain.

Damian: It’s like when you have a Red Bull and you’re like really low on energy and then you feel it – that’s what it does.

Warren: You’re amped.

Damian: You’re amped.

Warren: You’re ready to go.

This conversation demonstrates how biologically essentialist language appeared as stable fact and strengthened men’s claims such that they were difficult to challenge. Indeed, other men were unable to effectively challenge such appeals, especially without contrary scientific evidence.

Simon (midway through Extract 1) challenged this conversation by simply questioning testosterone’s effects: “Does testosterone really affect […]”? However, his questioning was quickly shut down by further biologically-framed affirmations from Damian and Warren.

Second, participants legitimized the male sexual drive discourse by characterizing it as scripted or socially essential—in this case, as generally the same across occasions and people. In
Extracts 1 to 3, they referred to a general “you,” “he,” and “she” in place of all men or all women and used continuous present tense to identify these dynamics as part of a typical pattern among all people (“testosterone is”; “your physical desire outweighs”; Edwards, 1995; Frith & Kitzinger, 2001). In Extracts 2 and 3, they also used generalizing language to more explicitly emphasize that most men have a higher sex drive. Part of this generalizing involved drawing on alleged personal observation or opinion to emphasize universality (“I feel like,” “from what I’ve seen,” “I find”):

**Extract 2 (Group 2)**

Bernard: I feel like there are more occasions where she doesn’t feel like doing it, then… *(murmurs of agreement)*

Doug: It depends on the girl. Yeah, I think it depends on the person.

Int.: Okay.

Doug: I don’t think that men are biologically more – like have higher libidos or anything, it just depends on the person.

Int.: So, you think there’s more – um some of you might think there’s more just personality differences? Just depending on the person? *(murmurs of agreement)*

Collin: Yeah, I think it is depends on the person, but I also do think that men do – I don’t know if it’s backed by science, but I feel like from the majority, from what I’ve seen men do have higher libidos than women. And you can meet like the odd woman who is like, has a very high libido, so it all depends on the person.

[...]
Oliver: I think it’s common perception that men typically have, uh, higher sex drives. But um, as he was saying (gesturing at Doug), I think it depends on the person. I’ve heard of people […] their female partner, would be more – have a higher libido than them.

Extract 3 (Group 4)

Mathias: […] Obviously it’s the same for girls. If a girl wants to try something new and the guy is like, for some reason, “No” or something, he doesn’t want you to and then it should stop as well. It’s same on the both sides, you have to know when to stop […]

Abdul: I find guys would be less likely to stop (Mathias: Oh yeah, yeah) like to not want to do this.

Mathias: Yeah, generally guys would like not stop the girl, obviously, but like there might be the odd guy who’s like, “I don’t know how I feel about that,” and like obviously a lot of guys are just like “ehh, go for it.”

Each of these generalized script formulations helped strengthen men’s claims because they appeared “as part of a regular pattern […] a recognizable external world rather than a product of wrong or biased reporting,” especially in the face of doubt (Edwards, 1995, p. 325). Indeed, as one example, Collin (midway through Extract 2) used script formulations and alleged personal observation (“the majority, from what I’ve seen men do have higher libidos than women”) in the face of Doug’s challenge (“I don’t think that men are biologically more – like have higher libidos”).
6.5.1.2 Marginalizing Women’s High Sex Drive and Men’s Low Sex Drive

Essentializing language allowed men to then further legitimize men’s higher sex drive by marginalizing and abnormalizing heterosexuality practices that do not fit the established, recognized norm. Collin’s “odd woman who […] has a very high libido” (midway through Extract 2) stressed that it would be rare and abnormal for a woman to have a high sex drive. Likewise, Mathias’ comments in Extract 3 stressed that it would be rare and abnormal for a man to decline sex: “If […] the guy is like, *for some reason*, ‘No’”; “generally guys would like not stop the girl, *obviously*, but like there might be the *odd* guy […].” As a result, they positioned any case where sex drive “depends on the person” as an “odd” exception to the rule.

This language, especially, may have worked to prevent any disputes because such a dispute might identify a man in the group as abnormal. Indeed, when Oliver resisted *after* Collin’s marginalizing language midway through Extract 2 (Collin: “you can meet like the odd woman who is like, has a very high libido”), he did not use personal observations or opinions that would identify him as odd. Instead, Oliver spoke abstractly about how he has “heard of” women with higher sex drives. This contrasted with men’s use of personal observation and opinion to support the dominant discourse. It also contrasted with Doug’s stronger resistance (Doug: “I don’t think that men are biologically more – like have higher libidos or anything”) *before* Collin’s marginalizing language. Oliver’s comment also still implied that couples among whom the woman has a higher sex drive are rarer and do not fit the norm.

6.5.2 Men’s Talk and Negotiation about Heterosexual Initiation and Progression

Participants used similar essentializing and marginalizing language to legitimize a particular, dominant version of heterosexual initiation and progression whereby heterosex is and
starts naturally and men do not need to communicate. This construction was related to a number of dominant discourses previously identified in the literature, including those that hold that heterosex is natural and “already mapped out,” that men are the subjects of sex, and that women are sexual gatekeepers responsible for controlling men’s sexuality (Gavey, 1989; Gavey et al., 2001; Hollway, 1989, 2005; Walby et al., 1993, p. 246). We expand on this essentializing and marginalizing language below.

6.5.2.1 Essentializing (Men’s) Noncommunication

Participants essentialized noncommunicative heterosexual initiation and progression (and, at times, justified SV) mainly by variously characterizing them as if they were scripted. Some referred to heterosex within intimate relationships, specifically, as if it were scripted or predetermined by suggesting that partners “already know what [each other] likes and doesn’t like” (Moe, Group 4), “each other’s intentions in sex” (Rick, Group 2), and “how to initiate” (Damian, Group 1).

In other instances, script formulations negated the need for verbal initiation on the basis that heterosexual (a) gendered initiation roles and (b) progression are “already mapped out” (Waldby et al., 1993, p. 246). Participants used several strategies to work up these dynamics as scripted. First, they often used continuous present (and sometimes future) tense to identify these dynamics as part of a typical pattern (Edwards, 1995; Frith & Kitzinger, 2001). As in Extracts 4 and 5, they set up gendered initiation roles as consistently the way it is—“it [is…] body language” for men (men are actors only) and “it [is] a preference for the girl” who “[will] say […] ‘Yes/No’” (women are gatekeepers responsible for verbal communication):
Extract 4 (Group 2)

Roy: [...] I don’t think many guys, especially in a relationship, ask after a while. Because like you’ve been with each other for a long time, so it’s probably just mostly body language.

[...]

Doug: Yeah, like you don’t verbally say, “Okay, can we have sex?” (murmurs of agreement) I feel like [...] it’s like body language until if they don’t want it, then they’ll say “No,” as opposed to “Can we have sex?” “Yes/No”, you know?

Oliver: I feel like a lot of people would feel like that would just kill the mood if like in the middle of building up to that you’re like “Can we have sex?”

Arie: Unless they’re into that (laughter).

Oliver: Unless they’re into that.

Extract 5 (Group 4)

Liam: Limits, yeah, are definitely like a big part of it [...] if you try to, whatever, take her shirt off and then whatever she like (mimics having his hand slapped away) or whatever it is, then you just – you stop there, and you don’t keep doing it. But at the same time, you kind of have to try to push the boundaries with each time going forward and then seeing where her comfort level is at [...]

[...]

Int.: So, um, do you think that’s kind of a typical way of going about exploring boundaries, or do you think that there’s any – what other ways do you think, um…?
Mathias: I mean, obviously there’s the way of like, the consent thing that we had, like that we talked about like…

Jerry: You can ask.

Mathias: You can ask. Um, a lot of people I feel like again, people are like “Oh, it’s not awkward, you can just ask and be really sexy about it.” It’s like, but like, really? (murmurs of agreement) Like some girls have legit told me like if a guy asks me, I will immediately just walk away. I’m just like, “Well, alright then. So, don’t ask.”

Liam: Like that would be weird. If you’re just making out and you’re just like “Oh, can you give me a blowjob?” That would be really weird to ask (laughter and agreement).

Mathias: Yeah, it’s like – it’s like, “No, not anymore.” But like if you’re like in a steady relationship, […] you’ve probably done some other stuff before […] If you’re going to like initiate it, you want to like, you already know like she kind of like is okay with it. Then like, don’t push boundaries, like don’t go from like oh, like we’re making out, to oh, I’m about to like shove my hand up you (laughter). Oh, like… (cut off by laughter).

Liam: Like hand moving up the leg and then if she pulls the hand off the leg (shrugs).

Mathias: Yeah, like push boundaries, but don’t push them super hard. Like again, like it’s a preference for the girl, like, obviously you want to push your boundary, but don’t keep pushing that boundary afterwards.
Liam: Yeah, like it can sort of seem like coercion, and that’s like, whatever, bad, like to keep insisting and forcing yourself upon somebody, but I think there is a line before, whatever, coercion, where whatever, you can try without asking. I think there’s like a line between going too far and just seeing what you can do.

Mathias: And I feel like for guys and girls, like a lot of them are like – they enjoy the buildup of like not asking, they enjoy like silence *(murmurs that it’s more natural)* […] like building up the tension, like you like breaking past that barrier or something.

[…] Abdul: Yeah, like, I just find like asking for it verbally just kind of kills the mood, so like you ask in a non-verbal way.

Mathias: Yeah, like obviously the guy, the consent thing, he brought that up [referring to Mike Domitrz’s Can I Kiss You? program], it’s-it’s “if you ask, it’s not going to be awkward, it’s not going to kill the mood.” But, like, it does. Like people like, guys and females both agree like, oh there might be like the odd guy will ask, there might be the odd girl who wants the guy to ask, but like, I feel like generally a lot of people are just like, “Don’t ask. Try and if I don’t like it, stop.” […]

[…] Abdul: I think it depends on how you ask. Because if you’re just sitting there like, “Hey, you want to have sex?” *(murmurs of agreement)*

Mathias: There’s no mood to kill – you’re just killing any opportunity you had.
Abdul: But it’s like you stop kissing and then, um, touching and whatever, and then you say it in a kind of sentimental or sexual way. I think that more likely go in your favor, then just straight up, you’re not doing anything and just asking.

Wesley: Like giving them a consensual form, like you know? *(holds up consent form).*

Mathias: Yeah, can you sign this? Imagine walking up to a girl: “Can you sign this?” *(holds up consent form, everybody laughs).*

Moe: […] I think asking specifics definitely kills the mood, but […] just like pushing the boundaries, I think saying “Is this okay?” Like that doesn’t feel weird – or like, “Do you like this?” Like, that doesn’t kill the mood, but it gives them a way out if they want it.

Liam: Yeah, I guess that’s more subtle.

Mathias: Yeah, and you feel like asking for specifics, it’s like […] if you say that verbally, like “Oh, do you want to give me a blowjob?” it’s like, well, you’ve said that, it doesn’t exactly sound like the cleanest thing to do. But like, asking is an option, and saying “Do you like that? Is this okay?” I feel like that’s a good thing, it’s just if you are asking like specifics and stuff it’s a risk to take it. Who knows, the risk might become a reward, but you’re not, you’re taking a risk for sure doing that.

Similarly, they set up a particular sequence of sexual activity progression as the way heterosex routinely or consistently plays out. Men in all four groups outlined a very similar, formulaic “one thing leads to another” *(Liam, Group 4)* progression from kissing or sexual
touching to intercourse as the ultimate goal or endpoint. And they used continuous present tense to do so, suggesting that foreplay regularly “turns into that [sex]” (Liam, Group 4) and “clothes start coming off” (Abdul, Group 4). In this case, they also essentialized by referring to the way in which sex “just happens naturally” (Damian, Group 1); that is, they often described actions without a clear subject, as in Liam and Abdul’s comments directly above. This worked to further script heterosex and emphasize that there is no room or need for verbal requests or communication (and that some men might even need to “push boundaries,” as Liam and Mathias noted in Extract 5).

The second way that men worked up heterosexual initiation roles and progression as scripted and, thus, part of a typical pattern was by using generalizing language. Specifically, they emphasized universality by (a) referring to a general “you” in place of all men; (b) more explicitly emphasizing that many or most people conform to this natural progression and agree that men do not or should not ask for sex; and (c) using “you know?” to identify that these are shared, recognizable norms (Edwards, 1994). Each can be seen in Extracts 4 and 5 above; for example: “you don’t verbally say, ‘Okay, can we have sex?’ […] you know?”; “guys and girls, like a lot of them”. As in conversations about sexual drive, part of this generalizing also involved drawing on alleged personal observation or opinion (“I think/I don’t think,” “I feel like”) to provide concrete evidence and emphasize universality. Their experiences with some people were used rhetorically as a stand-in for all or most people, like in Mathias’ (Extract 5) claim that “some girls have legit told [him]” that men should not ask.
6.5.2.2 Marginalizing (Men’s) Verbal Initiation

The above essentializing language set the stage for men to further legitimize dominant discourses by marginalizing and abnoramlizing heterosexuality practices that do not fit the alleged norm. As in Extracts 4 and 5, men did this in several related ways. Some built on the script formulations noted above to position verbal requests as disruptive of the natural/typical progression of heterosex. They emphasized that it is “awkward,” “weird,” and “kills the mood” when a man asks for sex. The disruptiveness was clearly ascribed to the asking itself rather than the expectation or desire. For example, as in Liam and Mathias’ exchange in Extract 5, it is only weird to ask for oral sex while kissing:

Liam: Like that would be weird. If you’re just making out and you’re just like

“Oh, can you give me a blowjob?” That would be really weird to ask (laughter and agreement).

Mathias: Yeah, it’s like – it’s like, “No, not anymore.”

The sexual script sets up oral sex after kissing as a typical progression and Mathias explicitly suggested that a hypothetical woman in this scenario no longer wants to engage in oral sex after the verbal request, specifically.

Relatedly, participants built on the generalizing language noted above to then position men and women who act against these patterns as abnormal exceptions. For example, Mathias (Extract 5) emphasized that only the “odd guy will ask” and “odd girl who wants the guy to ask”. Arie and Oliver (end of Extract 4) suggested that only people who are “into” verbal requests (i.e., exceptions to the rule) would be okay with this:
Oliver: I feel like a lot of people would feel like that would just kill the mood if like in the middle of building up to that you’re like “Can we have sex?”

Arie: Unless they’re into that (laughter).

Oliver: Unless they’re into that.

In other words, men and women who go against the natural and agreed-upon sexual progression are not only in the minority (generalizing language) but are also strange (abnormalizing language). These two related ways of marginalizing may have been particularly strong and difficult to challenge because doing so would identify a man in the group as the “odd guy” or as okay with being awkward or “killing the mood”. Few men resisted, especially by refuting the awkwardness of asking (though some offered potentially less disruptive alternatives—more on this below).

Finally, men built on the typical sexual progression that they had previously mapped out and used extreme or exaggerated examples and language to marginalize asking for sex as clearly undesirable. For example, in Extract 5 above, Liam and later Mathias emphasized the undesirability of asking for sex by using the example of suddenly asking for a “blowjob”:

Liam: Like that would be weird. If you’re just making out and you’re just like “Oh, can you give me a blowjob?” That would be really weird to ask (laughter and agreement).

[…]

Mathias: […] if you say that verbally, like “Oh, do you want to give me a blowjob?” it’s like, well, you’ve said that, it doesn’t exactly sound like the cleanest thing to do.
Wesley and Mathias (Extract 5) likened asking for sex with using a “consensual form”:

Wesley: Like giving them a consensual form, like you know? *(holds up consent form).*

Mathias: Yeah, can you sign this? Imagine walking up to a girl: “Can you sign this?” *(holds up consent form, everybody laughs).*

In other cases, men started by marginalizing extreme or exaggerated ways of not asking for sex so that, in comparison, milder ways of not asking appeared normal and reasonable. For example, Mathias (midway through Extract 5) argued that men cannot go from “making out” to “[shoving their] hand up [her].” The extreme and graphic language emphasized that this is clearly bad. However, Liam and Mathias then used this to position other, less extreme ways of not asking as normal and reasonable *in comparison*:

Liam: Like hand moving up the leg and then if she pulls the hand off the leg *(shrugs).*

Mathias: Yeah, like push boundaries, but don’t push them super hard. Like again, like it’s a preference for the girl, like, obviously you want to push your boundary, but don’t keep pushing that boundary afterwards.

Some used a similar strategy to differentiate milder versions of pressure and boundary pushing from clear or extreme SV (i.e., using physical force or going against a clear/strong refusal). For example, Liam (Extract 5) said: “it can sort of seem like coercion, and that’s like, whatever, bad, like to keep insisting and forcing yourself upon somebody, but I think there is a line before, whatever, coercion, where whatever, you can try without asking.”
Using extreme or exaggerated examples to marginalize asking for sex had varying degrees of success in the focus group conversations. Most of the instances above elicited laughter from the group, presumably demonstrating men’s agreement (and discomfort) with the extremity and disruptiveness of the behaviors. Perhaps further evidence of the strength of this strategy, men who did resist did so by first agreeing with the extremity. Presumably referring to Wesley and Mathias’ “consensual form” example, Moe (toward the end of Extract 5) first agreed that “asking specifics definitely kills the mood.” The extremity was likely such that Moe had to agree (see Chapter 6.5.4: More on Men’s Resistance below). However, it was also the extremity that actually allowed Moe to resist by introducing alternative ways of asking that, *in comparison*, were read by the other men as reasonable: “asking specifics definitely kills the mood, but […] saying ‘Is this okay?’ Like that doesn’t feel weird – or like, ‘Do you like this?’ Like, that doesn’t kill the mood, but it gives them a way out if they want it.” Indeed, in this case, Liam and Mathias responded with partial agreement and toned down their original claims about the disruptiveness of not asking:

Liam: Yeah, I guess that’s more subtle.

Mathias: Yeah […] asking is an option, and saying “Do you like that? Is this okay?” I feel like that’s a good thing, it’s just if you are asking like specifics and stuff it’s a risk to take it.

In another example, Frank likened asking for sex with a “legal agreement” and Samuel resisted by first agreeing with the extremity:
Extract 6 (Group 3)

Frank: […] in a steady relationship, I can’t imagine it would be like “Do you want to do it?” It’s kind of crazy, it’s like a legal agreement kind of thing.

Samuel: I know, and this – this is just me, okay? I prefer a clear-cut concise, okay. I hate ambiguity […] Yes, no sane person or not many people are going to be okay with that clear-cut box […] being Mister Roboto with being exact may kill one mood, but at least you know that ahead of time so you can use that information to, later on in a relationship or in another encounter. But that’s just me.

Int.: What do you guys think? We’re talking about sexual communication […]

Darius: I feel like if you’ve been in a relationship a while like you’re more likely to have like more explicit uh communication. […] you know this person […] you can almost guarantee that you’ve talked about pretty much everything. So, I don’t see why your sexual preferences or just communicating in general during sex would be any different.

Daniel: Yeah, I agree with him. I feel like in a steady relationship after a long time […] like […] “I’m curious about this, I want to try this.” […] It’s clear and concise, really.

Like above, the extremity of the preceding example (in this case, Frank’s “legal agreement”) was likely such that Samuel had to agree (“I know […] Yes, no sane person or not many people are going to be okay with that”). However, unlike Moe above, Samuel then abnormalized himself along with the extreme (it is “just him”). In this way, he left space for others to disagree.
and continue abnormalizing verbal requests. Nevertheless, Darius and Daniel did not explicitly disagree; they partially agreed by claiming that long-term couples have clear and explicit communication. However, they referred more to communicating sexual preferences and, therefore, did not as fully or clearly resist dominant discourses negating verbal initiation and progression as compared to Samuel.

6.5.3 Men’s Talk and Negotiation about Sexual (Mis)Communication

Relying on similar essentializing strategies as above, participants legitimized particular, dominant versions of heterosexuality and SV whereby women alone are responsible for clear communication and whereby miscommunication causes SV (related to the previously identified miscommunication argument; Frith & Kitzinger, 1997). We expand on this essentializing language below.

6.5.3.1 Essentializing Women and Men’s (Mis)Communication

Participants essentialized heterosexual (mis)communication by again using continuous present tense and generalizing language. This language worked to script women and men’s communication roles and practices as taken-for-granted, agreed upon knowledge. They often began conversations about sexual communication by emphasizing that it “is” (present tense) very important and that “you” (i.e., everyone) “[needs] to communicate.” However, as in Samuel and Daniel’s comments below, they then specified that the general “you” for whom communication is important is women, specifically:

**Extract 7 (Group 3)**

Samuel: […] there has to be that line of communication. You’re not, if you really don’t want the guy to bring those, um, I’m just – handcuffs or whatever, and you
don’t say that you don’t like them, how’s he necessarily supposed to know, aside from maybe picking up body language? […] it streamlines the process to use your words […]

Eric: Communication is really important. Like obviously, like you need to communicate with your partner, like “Okay, this kind of thing” […] If she likes this, then do this […]

Int.: I see.

Daniel: Yeah, I agree. Communication is definitely important and also, I guess, in general, guys tend to be a bit more stupid in the sense that, like, we – we don’t get cues from the girls. So, like, we just tend to go along with it, even though the girls are intending to give us a cue, like hey we cannot do this, but we tend to do it anyways. But like, so talking it out, is a lot more important than giving out cues or body language […]

[…]

Samuel: Well, if you’re talking about the whole, like signals. One: it’s cryptic as hell – sorry about the language, but how are you supposed to know that twirling the uh hand at a one-half degree angle means that she wants you to take her on a dinner date at the pub in Brisband at this point in time. […] We’re supposed to be the ones who make the first move. […] if she gives a signal, guy pursues. But at the same time, if the guy’s wrong, he can end up in a lot of trouble, so you would tend to play cautiously. So, with the issue of not picking it up, it’s, okay, one
party is not being verbal enough, the other party has a lot of legal repercussions to, uh, pursuing a wrong cue, and it’s just a mess.

Frank: I feel like […] women and girls in general, […] they play mind games a lot more. […] you can’t always tell, like ‘cause some girls like to like play with you, mess with you. I don’t know, just I feel like that itself makes guys a lot more hesitant […] I would always second doubt or like myself, “Does it really – does it really mean anything?” […]

Eric: A sign from one girl is different from a sign from another girl. […] So, it’s – it’s really complicated too. It kind of goes both ways though, obviously a guy kind of does the same thing. The guy has to be forthcoming, like it can go out of his way sometimes, so kind of like the guy has more responsibility, I want to say.

Samuel: Um, to go off of what he said (gesturing at Frank) about again the girls and their play or maybe getting a bit of contact as a signal […] signals can easily, easily backfire.

Thus, much like in other conversations noted above, they characterized the specific parts to be played by men and women as already set—men are responsible for acting and women are responsible for reacting and communicating.

However, they expanded this argument in conversations that were more specific to SV, like that in Extract 7 (subtly referred to: “he can end up in a lot of trouble”; “legal repercussions”). They added—again using continuous present tense and generalizing language—that (a) women and men communicate differently; (b) men do not understand women’s communication; and (c) although women are responsible for communication, they are generally
ineffective communicators. Each worked to stress women’s need to improve by communicating clearly and effectively and to blame SV on miscommunication. For example, in Group 1, Warren said that “there is a difference in how […] females and males communicate”; that, “in general, a lot of guys are […] straight to the point” and women “are much more subtle.” Daniel (Extract 7) suggested that men in general “tend to be […] stupid” at understanding women’s communication. Samuel and Eric’s comments (throughout Extract 7) suggested that women in general communicate unclearly and unpredictably and that this can lead to men’s misunderstandings; for example: “one party is not being verbal enough, the other party has a lot of legal repercussions to, uh, pursuing a wrong cue” (Samuel); “A sign from one girl is different from a sign from another girl” (Eric); “girls and […] a bit of contact as a signal […] signals can easily, easily backfire” (Samuel). These script formulations worked to position women as responsible for predicting and improving their own ineffective communication and preventing men’s misunderstandings (because both are routine and predictable and are part of women’s communication role).

In conversations about (mis)communication, men also used exaggerated examples and language similar to those used in the marginalizing sections above. However, in this case, they were not marginalizing communication practices that do not fit the norm. Instead, they were adding a layer of denigration to their arguments about women’s ineffective (but typical) communication. Specifically, they used exaggerated language and examples to emphasize that women’s communication is clearly and problematically ineffective: “cryptic as hell”; “twirling the hand at a one-half degree angle”; “play mind games” (Extract 7). Together with the script formulations, this denigrating language worked to position men’s misunderstanding and resulting
SV as reasonable and expected outcomes of women’s clearly ineffective communication. Like above, the strength of exaggerated examples may have meant that Eric (Extract 7) had to resist dominant discourses about (mis)communication by first agreeing with the extremity of some of Samuel and Frank’s claims: “A sign from one girl is different from a sign from another girl […] It kind of goes both ways though […] the guy has more responsibility, I want to say” (Eric).

Men’s miscommunication arguments in this section contrasted their conversations in other sections about the normalcy of nonverbal communication and the disruptiveness of men’s verbal communication. In other conversations they also reported that men understand women’s communication. For example, when asked explicitly whether men know when their partners do not want sex, most men in one group responded simultaneously, “yes.” In other groups, they described how men “can tell” when women are uncomfortable or do not want sex. Some argued that men do not need to communicate because women will indicate (nonverbally) when they do not want sex, thereby implying that men often recognize and understand these types of refusals. It was in conversations more specific to SV (like Extract 7) that men claimed not to understand women’s refusals. This pattern is similar to that found in O’Byrne et al. (2008) and further supports the rhetorical function of the miscommunication argument; that is, it likely does not straightforwardly reflect heterosexual experiences but rather is used as a resource to justify SV and absolve men of their responsibility for (mis)understanding women. The findings here also extend past research by highlighting how men rhetorically work up the miscommunication argument in ways that are difficult to resist.
6.5.4 More on Men’s Resistance

Men often resisted dominant discourses in ways that are typical of disagreements done in everyday interactions: indirectly; likely in an effort to minimize their force, preserve consensus, and avoid conflict (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Pomerantz, 1984). Indirect disagreements tend not to be as strong as direct ones (Pomerantz, 1984) and, indeed, they rarely successfully shifted the conversations in this study. For example, some hedged or qualified their resistance and this left space for others to disagree or return to the preceding dominant claim. Mathias’ hedged resistance at the beginning of Extract 3 (men and women should know when to stop but men would only “for some reason” want to stop) allowed Abdul to interject and agree with the latter (“I find guys would be less likely to stop”). Similarly, soon after Extract 4, Bernard challenged the awkwardness of asking for sex by abnormalizing and hedging his own counter position. He said that it is “a little bit funky to not say anything at all” because a woman might not feel able to decline if she is not asked directly, “but [that he didn’t] know how often that happens […] because […] there are a lot of opportunities from the Netflix to like penetration […] to like opt-out, physically.” This created the space for two men to disagree with his resistance: they continued with his hedging and claimed that women would indeed stop unwanted sex.

Although indirect disagreements are typical of everyday interactions (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Pomerantz, 1984), in the current study, they may also speak to the degree and strength of the dominant discourses and legitimizing strategies. For example, Mathias and Bernard (directly above) may have softened their resistance so as not to strongly oppose most of the other men in the group. Other men prefaced their disagreement by first (partially) agreeing. While a typical form of disagreement (Pomerantz, 1984), in the current study this strategy tended mostly to be
used following extreme examples. For example, in response to a comparison of asking for sex with a consent form, Moe resisted by first agreeing that “asking specifics definitely kills the mood” (Extract 5). In response to a comparison of asking for sex with a legal agreement, Samuel resisted by first agreeing: “I know […] Yes, no sane person or not many people are going to be okay with that” (Extract 6). In response to comments about women playing “mind games,” Eric resisted by first agreeing that “a sign from one girl is different from a sign from another girl” (Extract 7). It appeared that, in response to extreme examples, resistors had to start by agreeing to avoid being seen as extremely opposed to the group. The extremity may also have been such that resistors actually did agree with the extreme version of the argument but not a milder version. Finally, the conversation in Extract 1 was replete with biologically and scientifically-framed arguments about the effects of testosterone that appeared as stable fact. Possibly because he did not have equally strong scientifically-framed evidence to the contrary, Simon challenged the conversation by simply questioning the other men’s claims about testosterone’s effects (“Does testosterone really affect […]?”). His indirect disagreement/resistance was not effective in changing the conversation; instead, it invited the other men to provide further evidence of their claims.

Some men did resist using more direct disagreement strategies. Although these tend to be considered stronger than indirect disagreements (Pomerantz, 1984), they were similarly ineffective at shifting the conversations in the current study. Again, this may speak to the degree and strength of the dominant discourses and legitimizing strategies. For example, Doug’s strong and abrupt resistance early in Extract 2 (“it depends on the person […] I don’t think that men are biologically more – like have higher libidos or anything”) elicited only quickly hedged
agreement from Collin that returned the conversation to the male sex drive (“depends on the person, but…”). Jerry resisted early on in Extract 5 by suddenly stating, “you can ask” and was immediately silenced by language about the awkwardness of asking and use of extreme examples. Similarly, although Eric began by agreeing with an extreme example in Extract 7, his proceeding abrupt and perhaps unexpected resistance (“the guy has more responsibility” and “has to be forthcoming”) did not gain any traction among the others and Samuel quickly silenced it by returning the conversation to Frank’s extreme mind game example. Ultimately, almost all examples of resistance were unsuccessful in the context of the dominant discourses and legitimizing strategies that dominated the conversations.

6.6 Conclusion

The current research examined how university men talked and negotiated focus group conversations about sexual drive, initiation and progression, and (mis)communication in heterosexual intimate relationships. Participants legitimized a dominant, male-centered and violent version of heterosexuality whereby: men have higher sex drives and uncontrollable sexual urges; heterosex is and starts naturally and men do not need to communicate; and men misinterpret women’s ineffective communication and this miscommunication causes SV. These constructions were related to heterosexuality discourses that have been discussed in the literature for over 30 years (Frith & Kitzinger, 1997; Gavey, 1989; Hollway, 1989; Waldby et al., 1993). Participants legitimized these constructions mainly by essentializing heterosexuality and marginalizing practices that do not fit the alleged norm. Like boys in Hird and Jackson’s (2001) studies, men in the current study relied on biologically essentialist language to support the higher male sex drive (and SV). They also relied on socially essentialist language. For example, like
women in Frith and Kitzinger’s (2001) study, men in the current study talked about heterosex as if it were scripted with predictable gendered roles and stages and used generalizing language to refer to widely shared knowledge about heterosex.

Essentializing and, especially, marginalizing rhetorical strategies were often difficult to challenge in the focus group conversations. Nevertheless, some men did challenge dominant discourses, though often with little success at shifting the conversation. In one of the only instances of effective resistance, Moe (Extract 5) used another man’s extreme example so that his alternative appeared reasonable in comparison. In general, men who resisted used indirect but typical disagreement strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Pomerantz, 1984). Although they tended to be ineffective at shifting the conversations, they may have allowed men to acceptably introduce alternatives while maintaining sociability and avoiding conflict (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Pomerantz, 1984).

Our findings should be considered in light of several limitations. First, participants’ talk was produced in the context of research focus groups with other Canadian men on the topic of heterosexual intimate relationships. Accounts produced in different contexts may be very different. For example, men may have engaged in particular (masculine) reputation management strategies given that they were in conversation with a group of only men. However, because these conversations took place in a research context and the facilitator often asked for other opinions, alternative discourses may have been more common than in more lay conversations (and, yet, they were still rare). The language of the focus group questions and the fact that we encouraged participants not to discuss personal experiences may have also influenced men’s talk. For example, some questions began: “what do you think most men…” and “what do you think a
*typical* sexual encounter…”. This language may have facilitated the scripted and generalized formulations. However, these strategies were fairly extensive in the conversations and are similar to those in the two previous studies that examined women and men’s language in legitimizing heterosexuality discourses (Frith & Kitzinger, 2001; Hird & Jackson, 2001).

Nevertheless, our results have important implications. It is possible that encouraging men to discuss and reflect on their own personal experiences (e.g., in which they effectively asked for sex or a woman had a higher sex drive or actively desired sex) might help normalize these types of experiences. Our results also suggest that new and alternative discourses about heterosexuality must include or be accompanied by an explicit challenging of old ones. For example, we argue as others have for the development of alternative and positive discourses around women as desiring agents of sex, in which women’s desire is understood in its own right and not merely as a response to men’s desire (e.g., Hird & Jackson, 2001). We also argue for the need for men to take responsibility for communicating verbally and problematizing arguments about disruptiveness. However, our results suggest that when men do introduce new and alternative discourses about sexual drive and communication, they easily get shut down by essentialist claims and marginalizing rhetoric. Thus, it is not only the male-centered content of dominant discourses that must be challenged, but also the underlying rhetoric that supports them. Men should be educated to understand and think critically about how their talk supports a male-centered and violent form of heterosexuality. Early comprehensive sex education should counter purely biological approaches to human sexuality, emphasize the diversity of human sexuality and preferences, and disrupt the scripting of heterosexuality.


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17 This list includes references cited in Chapter 6 (Study 3 manuscript).


Table 6.1: Focus Group Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic background</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>White/European</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African/Caribbean</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Indian/Punjabi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European/Southeast Asian biracial</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year of study</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First year</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second year</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Third year</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth year</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (second-year Master)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of exclusive, committed intimate relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to 4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual activities ever engaged in (non-mutually exclusive)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kissing</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual touching</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral sex</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaginal sex/penetration</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anal sex/penetration</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None, no response, or unclear response</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of different intercourse partners</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>0</td>
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</tr>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 to 3</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 to 5</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 or more</td>
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7 General Discussion

With this dissertation, I sought to answer two key questions regarding university men’s IPSV in my sample: what did IPSV look like and how did men socially construct and support IPSV? I have begun to answer these questions to varying degrees in the three manuscripts. In this section, I bring together the findings from all three studies to more fully and explicitly answer these questions. I also bring in past literature and, in particular, make connections with my own previous research on university women’s experiences of IPSV (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017). Where possible, I draw possible conclusions about SV specifically in intimate relationships—one of the unique contributions of this work. My findings underscore that IPSV may often look similar to SV in other relational contexts and may be socially constructed and supported in many of the same ways. Below I discuss these similarities and highlight some findings that may be distinct to IPSV.

7.1 What Did University Men’s Intimate Partner Sexual Violence Look Like?

This dissertation demonstrates high incidence rates of SV in one sample of university intimate relationships, adding a layer of complexity to existing general rates of SV on university campuses. In Study 1, I found that 15.87% of my sample of university men reported at least one instance of using SV in their most recent heterosexual intimate relationship in the past year. This rate was about half the rate of women’s self-reported IPSV in their most recent relationship in the past year found in my previous work (32.2%; Jeffrey & Barata, 2017). Some have suggested that disparities between women’s victimization rates and men’s perpetration rates are likely due to differences in perspective and perceptions and, thus, men’s unintentional nondisclosure rather
than dishonesty or intentional nondisclosure (Kolivas & Gross, 2007; Koss et al., 1987; Strang, Peterson, Hill, & Heiman, 2013). For example, men may view some of their past experiences as consensual even if coerced (the SES-SFP asks specifically about sexual acts that occurred or were attempted “without her consent”; see Appendix A).

In contrast, the incidence rate that I found in Study 1 was fairly high considering university men’s prevalence rates against any woman since age 14 (often around 15% to 18%) and incidence rates in the past year against any woman (11% to 19%; Anderson et al., 2017; Calzada et al., 2011; Gidycz et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2017; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013; Mouilso et al., 2013; Nguyen & Parkhill, 2014). As noted in manuscript 1, it is possible that men interpret “without consent” on SV surveys like the SES differently when asked about intimate partners versus any woman. There is evidence that less explicit consent negotiations are perceived by women and men as more acceptable (Humphreys, 2007) and that the language of consent may not resonate with women and men in ongoing relationships (Beres, 2014).

Moreover, I found evidence in Study 3 of this dissertation for dominant discourses about (a) the disruptiveness of verbal requests on the natural progression of sex and (b) couples already knowing what their partner wants and is okay with—similar to findings from Humphreys (2007), Humphreys and Herold (2003), and Shumlich and Fisher (2018). Nevertheless, this evidence would suggest that men in intimate relationships might be more likely than men answering about any woman or about more casual relationships to underreport SV on measures that use “without consent” language.

This dissertation also demonstrates what specific IPSV incidents looked like in my sample. My findings suggest that university IPSV may often look similar to SV in other
relational contexts. Much like previous research on SV more generally (that has often not distinguished between relationship type), university men’s IPSV in my sample commonly: (a) was nonphysically violent; (b) involved oral sex, sexual contact, and vaginal sex (but SV for anal sex may be on the rise); (c) involved alcohol consumption by the perpetrator and/or victim; and (d) was committed in private indoor spaces. Nevertheless, my studies also highlighted some potentially unique IPSV patterns within some of these broad similarities. I will discuss these unique patterns within the sections below.

7.1.1 University Men’s IPSV was Commonly Nonphysically Violent

First, IPSV in my survey study (Study 1) was most commonly nonphysically violent.\textsuperscript{18} Most men reported verbal coercion on the SES-SFP, including the following two sets of tactics to obtain different sexual acts: (a) telling lies, threatening to end the relationship, threatening to spread rumors about her, making promises about the future he knew were untrue, or continually verbally pressuring her after she said she didn’t want to; and (b) showing displeasure, criticizing her sexuality or attractiveness, getting angry but not using physical force after she said she didn’t want to. This more frequent use of verbal SV is not surprising but may still speak to the nature of SV in this relational context.

My interviews with men who described instances of IPSV (Study 2) provided additional insight into what some of men’s tactics looked like. Examples of verbal tactics included: continually asking or trying to convince their partner; expressing frustration or disappointment following a refusal or when their partner stopped sex; and using guilt, such as emphasizing that

\textsuperscript{18} As noted in Chapter 2.2: Defining Sexual Violence, I use the term nonphysical violence to differentiate verbal and psychological pressure or coercion from physical tactics/violence, not to make claims about severity or harmfulness.
they had not had sex in a while. Women in my previous research reported similar and additional relational guilt tactics that may be particularly relevant to intimate relationships: threatening to break up, implying he could get sex elsewhere, implying that she must not love him, comparing their frequency of sex with other couples, and telling her she does not fulfill his sexual needs (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017).

My findings also highlight the intersections between SV and normative heterosex. Even some of the physical SV tactics that men described in my interviews were not *assaultive* per se and *looked* much like normative and even consensual sex. For example, some men described initiating sexual activity without asking, and disregarding a refusal and initiating or continuing with sex. Without physical resistance from a partner, these acts likely would not escalate to a physical struggle or injury. Ignoring or disregarding a refusal and initiating sex might not include any additional force than some men use during consensual sex. That these SV acts might not look vastly different from normative and even consensual heterosex may help to obscure and normalize SV (more on this below). It also means that quantitative SV surveys that ask about physical force (e.g., in the SES-SFP: “using force, for example holding her down with my body weight, pinning her arms, or having a weapon”) may not capture behaviors such as these because men might not interpret them as physically violent or forceful. Moreover, some of these tactics, while not unique to intimate relationships, may play out differently in this context. For example, initiating sexual activity without asking among men in my sample sometimes involved a new sexual activity, such as anal sex. Thus, it is possible that men use SV in intimate relationships to obtain sexual acts that they know that their partners would not otherwise agree to.
Although men in more casual relationships also more commonly use nonphysical compared to physical forms of SV, the pattern appears more pronounced in intimate relationships. Wegner et al. (2014) found that committed-relationship perpetrators were more likely than casual-relationship perpetrators to use verbal pressure. My interview study (Study 2) offers potential explanations and supports previous contentions that men can obtain sex from an unwilling partner without using more forceful tactics (Abbey, BeShears, Clinton-Sherrod, & McAuslan, 2004) and that previous consensual sex among intimate partners may create assumptions of future consent or expectations of sex (Ewoldt, Monson, & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2000; Lazar, 2010; Shotland & Goodstein, 1992; Wegner et al., 2014). For example, men sometimes discussed sex as an assumed or expected part of relationships. Their insistence on sex because they had not seen or had sex with their partner in a while (described in manuscript 2) was also related to this expectation. My previous research with women further suggested that men may not need to escalate to physical force or violence in intimate relationships because women already often feel guilty, like a “bad girlfriend,” or like they are not “sexually pleasing” their partner when they decline sex, especially over time (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017, p. 921).

7.1.2 University Men’s IPSV Commonly Involved Oral Sex, Sexual Contact, and Vaginal Sex (but IPSV for Anal Sex May be on the Rise)

Based on the surveys in Study 1, the most common sexual act in men’s IPSV incidents was oral sex, followed by sexual contact, and vaginal sex. Although IPSV for anal sex was the least common in my sample, the rate was not trivial. Mine was the first study to my knowledge to examine a detailed breakdown of university men’s IPSV separated by tactic and sexual act. Prevalence research of university men’s SV against any woman also has not separated by tactic
and sexual act. Thus, comparisons with previous research are difficult. Brousseau et al. (2011), however, did report on men’s forced oral and anal sex in their current relationship (where at least one member of the couple was a university student). Despite the higher overall rate of IPSV perpetration in their study compared to mine (27% vs. 16%), the rates of both oral and anal sex by force were much higher in my study. Brousseau et al. found that only 1.7% of perpetrators reported oral sex using force and 1.7% of perpetrators reported anal sex using force. In contrast, I found that 17.1% of perpetrators reported oral sex using force and 7.1% of perpetrators reported anal sex using force. As I noted in manuscript 1, my rates are not directly comparable to Brousseau et al.’s since they did not include attempted anal penetration and did not restrict the timeframe to the past year of the relationship. Nevertheless, my findings may suggest that IPSV for oral and anal penetration are on the rise.

It is not clear if most of men’s IPSV in my sample was to perform oral sex on their partner or to have their partner perform oral sex on them (see also Chapter 7.3: Implications for Research below). However, given current dominant male-centered versions of heterosexuality, the latter is more likely. Though not separated by relationship type, cunnilingus was much less common than fellatio in young adults’ recent sexual experiences, especially when not accompanied with fellatio or intercourse (Vannier & O’Sullivan, 2012). Over 90% of reported sexual experiences in the previous 30 days involved fellatio whereas only 46% involved cunnilingus. Most (91.7%) unidirectional sexual experiences (i.e., when one partner performs oral sex without also receiving oral sex or engaging in intercourse) involved fellatio and very few (8.3%) involved cunnilingus. Moreover, men may assume women’s responsibility for performing oral sex. For example, Jozkowski and Peterson (2013) asked university men and
women how they would indicate consent to oral sex (not necessarily in the context of intimate relationships). Although the question did not specify performing or receiving oral sex (much like the SES-SFP), most men (62.4%) interpreted the question as asking about receiving oral sex. The authors concluded that men “seemed to assume that women perform oral sex on men and not the reverse” (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013, p. 520).

My incidence rates in conjunction with previous research on SV and young people’s general sexual experiences may also suggest that SV for oral and anal sex are more common in committed than casual relationships. One past study found that married women were more commonly forced to engage in oral and anal sex compared to those raped by acquaintances (Peacock, 1995). Vannier and O’Sullivan (2012) reported that most of young adults’ (aged 18-24) oral sex experiences occurred with a committed romantic partner (82.6% of oral sex experiences in the previous 30 days occurred with a committed partner). Young people’s (aged 16-18) anal sex experiences also usually occurred in dating (“boyfriend/girlfriend”) relationships (Marston & Lewis, 2014; p. 2).

It may be more acceptable for men to request, expect, or coerce women into oral and anal sex in intimate relationships compared to casual relationships. In my interview study, one man described initiating anal sex without asking but, because his partner stopped him before he “succeeded,” he said that this was no more a violation than asking first and then getting a “no.” This talk suggests that it was reasonable (and not violent) for him try anal sex without asking. The behavior itself may also suggest that he did not ask because he knew this was an act that his partner would not otherwise agree to. Given that intimate partners often engage in other sexual activities together, it may appear more reasonable for them (compared to casual partners) to
proceed to other acts without asking. This may also be one unique way that IPSV is constructed and obscured.

7.1.3 University IPSV Commonly Involved Alcohol Consumption

Consistent with past perpetration research across a range of relationship types (Abbey et al., 1998; Abbey et al., 2001; Lydon, White, & Kadlec, 2007), IPSV in Study 1 often involved alcohol use by the perpetrator, the victim, or both. Victimization research across a range of relationship types also finds that much of university SV involves alcohol (Cantor et al., 2015; Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2009; Testa & Livingston, 2009). However, one study with community men found that, compared to perpetrators of committed relationship SV, perpetrators of casual relationship SV drank more alcohol during the incident and were with women who drank more alcohol (Wegner et al., 2014). Another study with community women similarly found that women’s heavy episodic drinking predicted sexual victimization from nonintimate perpetrators, but not intimate partners (Testa, VanZile-Tamsen, & Livingston, 2007). In more casual or stranger relational contexts, SV and aggression perpetrators appear to often intentionally target intoxicated women (Graham et al., 2014). Some have argued that perpetrators who do not know their victims well may target intoxicated women or encourage women to drink because they perceive that “intoxicated victims are less likely to notice danger cues, are more likely to agree to be alone, and to engage in some consensual sexual activities” (Testa et al., 2007; Wegner et al., 2014, p. 1363).

The high rates of alcohol involvement in IPSV incidents in my sample may be due to the high rates of alcohol consumption in general in early university (e.g., Neighbors et al., 2011; Riordan, Scarf, & Conner, 2015). Alternatively (or in conjunction), the high rates in my sample
may suggest that men use intoxication to coerce sexual acts that they already know their partner might not otherwise engage in. As I noted in manuscript 1, intoxication was the most commonly used tactic for anal sex, in contrast to all other sexual acts, for which verbal coercion was most common. Past research has also noted the “excuse-giving properties” of alcohol, whereby men attribute responsibility for SV to their own and the woman’s alcohol consumption (Abbey et al., 2001; Wegner, Abbey, Pierce, Pegram, Woerner, 2015, p. 1022). Indeed, in Study 2 of the current dissertation, some men blamed alcohol and used it to position SV as “one-off,” out of character instances (more on this below).

7.1.4 University IPSV was Commonly Committed in Private Indoor Spaces

Finally, again consistent with past research across a range of relationship types (Abbey et al., 1998; Abbey et al., 2001), IPSV in Study 1 most commonly occurred in the home of either the perpetrator or victim. It rarely occurred in more public settings such as in cars, at bars or parties, or outside. While this is not necessarily surprising, it does support the private nature of intimate partner violence and has important implications for prevention (see Chapter 7.4: Implications for Practice below). IPSV most commonly occurred in men’s own home or dorm room. This may suggest that men feel an even greater sense of control or entitlement in their own spaces (or that more sexual encounters in general occur there).

7.2 How did University Men Socially Construct and Support Intimate Partner Sexual Violence?

The three studies in this dissertation also demonstrate how university men in my samples socially constructed and supported IPSV. In particular, men used dominant discourses about (a) sexual violence and (b) normative heterosexuality to construct IPSV as normal and expected.
They also used specific rhetorical strategies that worked to further legitimize dominant discourses and SV. As noted in Chapter 2.3: Situating Myself and the Research Context, I understand men’s talk on multiple levels. Thus, I speak here to what participants’ talk might have been doing in the immediate context of the research as well as on a broader social level. In the latter sense, my work highlights the “cultural scaffolding” or building blocks of SV; that is, the “everyday taken-for-granted normative” discourses about heterosexuality, gender, and SV “that set up the preconditions” for SV (Gavey, 2005, p. 2-3). In particular, this work highlights how dominant discourses and talk work to support men’s IPSV against women in ways that make it invisible.

7.2.1 Dominant Discourses about Sexual Violence

Men in the current dissertation commonly relied on dominant discourses about SV in ways that worked to normalize and obscure (IP)SV. These discourses mainly allowed men to distance their own behaviors from SV or “real” rape. That is, they used dominant SV discourses to position their behavior as something other than SV. They did this in several ways, some of which were similar to women in my previous research (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017). For example, dominant discourses hold that “real” rape is physically violent (Burt, 1998) and men and women often positioned their behaviors or experiences as not physically forceful (see Chapters 4 and 5 above and Jeffrey & Barata, 2017). Men and women often made this contrast explicitly: “It was gentle urging. Not full physical force” (man in Study 1 open-ended survey question); “I was just like pushing it a bit […] I wouldn’t say physically […] just asking her” (man in Study 2 interview); “It’s not like he hit me or did anything physical. He just would kind of express it in words” (woman in Jeffrey & Barata, 2017, p. 919). Given that most IPSV is nonphysically
violent, this contrasting and use of discourses about “real” rape as physically violent may be a key way that IPSV is normalized and obscured.

Dominant discourses about “real” rape also hold that SV incidents involve clear and often physical resistance by the victim (Burt, 1998). Some men in Study 2 distinguished their behavior from going against a clear refusal. For example, one participant suggested that he would only “push it” when his partner said, “not now” or “later,” not when she clearly and unambiguously said “no.” Although not as strongly or directly linked with dominant discourses about SV, some men in Study 2 distinguished their behavior from SV or a violation on the basis that the act was not completed.

Another way that men positioned their behavior as something other than SV was by denying its consequences. Dominant discourses hold that rape is violent and results in “severe wounds and signs of struggle” (Burt, 1998, p. 130). According to perpetrators in Study 1 (open ended survey question) and Study 2 (interviews), their behavior had few, if any, consequences on their partners or relationships (let alone physical injury). Denial of consequences is likely not unique to IPSV; however, denial of consequences on the intimate relationship itself is unique. Although largely a reflection of the open-ended survey question in Study 1, many men specifically reported that there were no negative impacts on their relationship or their partners’ commitment. This denial of consequences may help men to maintain intimate relationships and continue to use SV and other male-centered practices over time in a relationship.

Men’s denial of consequences contrasts countless previous studies supporting the negative consequences of SV on women including depression, suicidal ideation and behavior, self-blame, and restricted sexual decision-making (Breitenbecher, 2006; Katz & Tirone, 2010;
Stepakoff, 1998; Zweig et al., 1997). Women in my own previous IPSV research highlighted that “words hurt”; their partners did not need to be physically violent for experiences of IPSV to be harmful (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017, p. 918). Experiences of verbal pressure made some women upset or angry, they felt guilty for saying no, they felt hurt, and sometimes they felt that they had to give in to unwanted sex because, as one woman said, it was easier to just have sex with her partner than to “fight him off all night” (p. 922). Regardless of whether men’s SV did or did not have consequences for their partners or relationships, this talk worked to position their behavior as normal and not sexually violent. Moreover, I argue that even seemingly inconsequential SV violates women’s right to make free and autonomous decisions about when to engage in sexual activity—a choice that appears to be already imbued with guilt and internal pressure to please their partners and to put their partners’ wishes and pleasure above their own (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017).

Dominant discourses also hold that SV is women’s fault—for the clothes they wear and the way they behave (Bohner et al., 2013). Although less explicitly than the discourses noted above, victim blaming discourses in the current dissertation still worked to suggest that men’s behavior was not clearly rape. Like all the other dominant SV discourses, victim blaming ones do not deny the violence of SV. They instead appear to separate most real-world instances of SV from “real” rape. In Study 2, one man framed his partner as “promiscuous” for turning him on but not continuing with sex. His resulting expression of frustration was, thus, framed as something less nefarious than rape—it was just a reasonable response to promiscuity (he invoked the male sexual drive discourse here as well; more on this below). Women in my previous research sometimes blamed themselves for their partner’s SV, for example, for being drunk.
(Jeffrey & Barata, 2017). This worked to shift responsibility away from male perpetrators and to, again, frame incidents as something other than rape or SV—as reasonable and expected outcomes of women’s intoxication.

### 7.2.2 Dominant Discourses about Heterosexuality

Men in the current dissertation also commonly relied on dominant discourses about heterosexuality in ways that worked to normalize and obscure (IP)SV. In contrast to above, these discourses mainly allowed men to *align* their own and other men’s SV with normative heterosexuality; that is, to position their SV as just normal heterosexuality. Often, men relied on the male sexual drive discourse, which holds that men are biologically driven to persistently seek out (heterosexual) sex and cannot control their natural sexual urges (Gavey, 1989; Gavey et al., 2001; Hollway, 1989, 2005). Discursively, the male sexual drive discourse in my interview study worked to suggest that men had a *reasonable* expectation of finishing sex or that it is *obvious* that a man would insist after a woman’s refusal. Likewise, some women in my previous research used the male sexual drive discourse to justify their partners’ SV, saying things like: “he’s a guy […] he has his needs” (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017, p. 919).

Men in my focus group study (Study 3) suggested that some men try to have sex with many women and might intentionally ignore signs that a woman does not want to have sex because of testosterone and because it is “the way that they’re wired.” In these ways, it appeared normal, expected, and reasonable for men to pressure their partners or get frustrated when their partners stop sex: because men cannot help it and because their sexual needs are biologically imperative. My analysis in Study 3 further highlighted how language about nature and biology strengthened men’s claims about the male sexual drive because it characterized heterosexuality
as predetermined, immutable, and stable fact. This language was difficult for men to challenge likely because they did not have contradictory scientific and stable fact appearing evidence. This naturalizing also set the stage for men to further legitimize dominant discourses by marginalizing and abnormalizing the possibility of women having a higher sex drive or men not wanting sex. Marginalizing language was particularly difficult for men to challenge, likely because doing so would have identified them in the group as abnormal.

My dissertation studies also highlight how the male sexual drive discourse may shape men’s material IPSV practices. For example, some perpetrators in my interview study (Study 2) described expecting that their partner finish sex once they started, even if she did not want to or was not enjoying it. And they described getting frustrated at their partner when she did stop. One man similarly suggested that he sometimes pushed his partner or ignored her signs of nonconsent or displeasure because he needed to do something when he had “sexual tension” and “having to stop instantly [is] very difficult to do.” One of the tactics noted by women in my previous research similarly involved a male partner telling them that they do not fulfill his sexual needs (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017). These tactics rely on notions that men (physiologically) require sex, that men’s sexual needs and desires are more important than women’s, and that it is not “right or fair for a woman to stop sex before male orgasm” (i.e., the male sexual drive discourse; Gavey et al., 2001, p. 922). As noted above, these tactics and experiences may highlight some of the intersections between SV and normative heterosex that help to obscure and normalize SV. Some of these types of tactics may also be particularly relevant to intimate relationships because men have the opportunity to argue that their physiological needs have not been met over time and, in some cases, women might perceive that their partner has a higher sex drive. This perception
(accurate or not) might create pressure on women even in the absence of immediate SV and might enhance men’s specific SV tactics around the male sexual drive.

Men also sometimes relied on dominant discourses about women’s gatekeeping functionality. For example, in Study 2, some men implied that it is obvious (i.e., natural or essential) that a woman would not want sex. In conjunction with the male sexual drive discourse, this helped men to position their SV as reasonable. Men in Studies 2 and 3 also suggested that it is a woman’s responsibility to communicate and stop unwanted sex. In Study 3, men used script formulations to further legitimize that women’s role as gatekeeper and communicator and men’s role as initiator is set or pre-given. This worked to shift responsibility for SV onto women (more on this in Chapter 7.2.3: Dominant Discourses about [Mis]Communication below).

Finally, men in Studies 2 and 3 relied on discourses about heterosex as being natural and, thus, starting naturally. They described heterosex as evolving naturally without the need for (men’s) verbal communication and requests. Using script formulations, men in Study 3 further legitimized discourses about heterosex as natural and negated the need for men’s verbal communication. For example, they referred to predictable stages of heterosex and argued that it would be disruptive for men to stop and ask. Some referred to heterosex within intimate relationships, specifically, as if it were scripted or predetermined by suggesting that partners “already know what [each other] likes and doesn’t like,” “each other’s intentions in sex,” and “how to initiate.” This worked to normalize men’s noncommunicative initiation in intimate relationships. These script formulations also set the stage for men to further legitimize dominant discourses by marginalizing and abnormalizing the idea of men stopping to ask for sex.
Marginalizing language was also difficult for men to challenge, again likely because doing so would have identified them as abnormal in the group.

My analysis in Study 3 also provides a new lens with which to understand previous research about women and men’s reported (a) disruptiveness of a verbal consent process in intimate relationships (Humphreys, 2007; Humphreys & Herold, 2003) and (b) knowing of their intimate partners’ desires (Shumlich & Fisher, 2018). My analysis suggests that these ideas do not necessarily straightforwardly reflect actual heterosexual practices and dynamics. Instead, the scripting of heterosexual practices—including predictable sexual progression stages and partners already knowing what each other want—appears to function rhetorically. It appears to function rhetorically to negate men’s need to communicate and, in some cases, to obscure SV. Materially, it may also allow the typical sexual progression (kissing/touching to eventual intercourse) to continue unquestioned and, therefore, for men’s needs to prevail.

7.2.3 Dominant Discourses about (Mis)Communication

Dominant discourses hold that SV is often the result of miscommunication between sexual partners, whereby women fail to effectively communicate, and men misinterpret women’s communication (see Frith & Kitzinger, 1997 for a review). This miscommunication argument pulls from dominant discourses about heterosexuality (women are responsible for sexual communication but are ineffective communicators) and SV (women’s behavior—in this case unclear communication—is to blame for SV). Similar to women in Jeffrey and Barata (2017), men in Study 2 sometimes blamed SV on women’s unclear refusals. Men in Study 3 more expressly worked up the miscommunication argument. They argued that communication is important but women’s role. Then they further argued that women are ineffective
communicators, that men often misinterpret women, and that this is what causes SV. Much like dominant discourses about SV, this miscommunication argument worked to separate typical SV from “real” rape. That is, men’s misunderstandings and, thus most instances of SV, are reasonable outcomes of women’s unclear communication (unlike “real” rape scenarios in which there is clear resistance).

My research also highlights the potential rhetorical functionality of the miscommunication argument. Similar to other research (O’Byrne et al., 2008; O’Byrne et al., 2006), men in my focus group study (Study 3) noted many nonverbal and indirect verbal refusals that women use to decline sex, suggesting that they understand these types of refusals. Some more explicitly described that men know or “can tell” when women are uncomfortable or do not want sex. However, in discussions more specifically pertaining to SV, men invoked miscommunication arguments and claimed not to understand women’s refusals (much like men in O’Byrne et al., 2008 and O’Byrne et al., 2006). One woman in Jeffrey and Barata (2017) similarly explained that she “[didn’t think [her partner] was really like listening” but then went on to blame her partner’s (mis)interpretation and the rape on her inability to clearly “say ‘no’” (p. 922). These results provide further evidence that the miscommunication argument is used rhetorically to support SV and exonerate perpetrators rather than straightforwardly reflecting women and men’s heterosexual experiences. I discuss further communication and consent related implications in Chapter 7.4: Implications for Practice below.

7.2.4 More on Language and Rhetoric

Above I highlighted some of the ways that language and rhetoric worked to further legitimize dominant discourses and normalize male-centered and violent heterosexual practices
(and, thus, SV). This adds an additional layer of complexity to our understanding of the cultural scaffolding of SV (Gavey, 2005). Much of this came from Study 3 because my focus there was more on how men talked; that is, the rhetorical strategies that men used to legitimize dominant discourses rather than the content of the dominant discourses itself. In this section, I pull together some of the rhetorical strategies used in Study 2 (where men spoke about their own SV) and Study 3 (where men spoke more broadly about heterosexuality) to make a final note about language. In particular, I note that—similar to event descriptions found in Edwards’ (1995) study of couples’ talk about relationship difficulties—men in the current studies often described events as (a) “particular, one-off occurrences” or (b) “instances of more generalized pattern” (p. 319). Both types of event descriptions worked to support SV in different ways.

Men in Study 2 sometimes positioned their own SV as a one-off; for example, by emphasizing that they usually seek consent or that this behavior only occurred when they were drunk. Much like men’s use of dominant SV discourses noted above, this talk did not necessarily deny the violence or unacceptability of SV but, rather, positioned men’s own SV or selves as something not quite the same as SV (in this case, a more acceptable or less nefarious one-time mistake). In contrast, men in Study 3 often used script formulations to characterize heterosexuality “as having a recurring, predictable, sequential pattern” (Edwards, 1995, p. 319). For example, they: referred to all or most people as sharing norms (though, again, this might partly reflect the question wording); and emphasized that partners already know what the other wants, that gendered initiation roles are set, that heterosexual activity progresses according to a consistent routine, and that men’s needs are biologically determined. Much like men’s use of dominant heterosexuality discourses noted above, this talk set up a particular version of
heterosexuality—one that is male-centered and supports violent practices—as typical or normative.

In sum, dominant discourses about SV (i.e., “real” rape discourses) and descriptions of one-off occurrences were used to position specific SV incidents as something other than SV. In contrast, dominant discourses about heterosexuality and descriptions of occurrences as part of a more generalized pattern among women and men were used to position SV (and other male-centered practices supportive of SV) as normative heterosexuality. Ultimately, each of these discourses and strategies worked to normalize, support, and obscure (IP)SV.

7.3 Implications for Research

My results and research process have important implications and suggest potentially productive directions for future research. First, the SES-SFP uses a single item root to assess oral sex: “I had oral sex with my partner or had my partner perform oral sex on me without her consent by…” Thus, it is not clear if most of men’s IPSV in Study 1 was to perform oral sex on their partner or to have their partner perform oral sex on them. Given current dominant male-centered versions of heterosexuality, the latter is more likely. However, future research should examine this further by using separate items on quantitative surveys or probing further in qualitative interviews.

Second, my current interview research with men and my past interview research with women (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017) suggests that men in intimate relationships sometimes simply ignore or disregard a refusal and initiate sexual activity. However, some men and women may not view this tactic as forceful if the man does not use any additional force than he would during consensual sex. Thus, as noted above, surveys that ask only about physical force (e.g., in the
SES-SFP: “using force, for example holding her down with my body weight, pinning her arms, or having a weapon”) may not capture women and men with certain *ignoring a refusal* types of experiences. Future iterations of these surveys should consider adding items that might capture less forceful or violent, but nevertheless physical, forms of SV.

Third, men in Studies 2 and 3 frequently used language emphasizing the importance of consent, communication, and mutuality. Some explicitly discussed positive messages about consent that they had heard on campus. Indeed, as noted in [Chapter 2.3: Situating Myself and the Research Context](#) above, I conducted this research during a time when issues of SV were widespread in politics and the media and several campaigns and programs about consent existed on the University of Guelph campus. This might suggest that men now have a more sophisticated understanding of the social unacceptability of engaging in sexual activity without consent than in the past. This might mean that men are responding to the SES-SFP—which uses the language “without [her] consent”—in more socially desirable ways than in the past. Moreover, as noted above, I excluded some men from my interview analysis who described experiences that were not clearly coercive, such as requesting sex but not persisting when their partner declined. Unfortunately, we did not always ask these men to elaborate on whether these were the same experiences reported on the SES-SFP or whether they thought these experiences were still nonconsensual or problematic. Thus, it is not clear if some men: (a) were interpreting certain experiences as nonconsensual that most researchers would not; (b) were denying nonconsensual experiences in the face-to-face interview that they reported on the online SES-SFP survey; or (c) had mis-answered the SES-SFP.
Thus, future qualitative research should examine men’s interpretations of the SES-SFP items that they reported having and having not engaged in. Although in my interviews we sometimes asked men specifically about certain SES-SFP items, future research should more systematically examine men’s open-ended descriptions (e.g., in interviews or open-ended survey questions) of specific SES-SFP items that they reported having engaged in. Future theoretical and qualitative empirical work might also examine men’s definitions and understandings of SV, in relation to their own behavior and in comparison to researchers’ definitions. Given the broader sociopolitical context during which I conducted this research, it is possible that men’s definitions are changing. It is also possible that, in my attempts to put some limits on the definition of SV, I may have lost some of the nuance of men’s own understandings of SV (though this was not exactly my focus).

Given the current broader sociopolitical context and that SV is no longer overtly acceptable, language may be contributing to the cultural scaffolding of SV (Gavey, 2005) in new and subtle ways. Many of the discourses that men in my studies drew on were similar to past research. However, men in my studies sometimes specifically used new and alternative discourses about consent and mutuality—sometimes to further normalize SV and to position themselves as good and modern men. Future qualitative research might specifically examine the influence of the “me too” movement (which resurfaced at the tail end of my data collection) and other sociopolitical events on men’s talk about SV and consent.

At the outset of this research, I had planned to examine men’s subjective experiences perpetrating IPSV in Study 2. This would have included men’s reasons for using IPSV, their interpretations of their SV, their thoughts and emotions during the SV incidents, and patterns of
men’s use of IPSV (e.g., what it looks like when physical and nonphysical forms are used concurrently versus when men proceed to more forceful forms after verbal pressure and manipulation are unsuccessful). However, men’s stories and descriptions of SV incidents in the interviews were vague, scattered, and sometimes were not as clearly coercive as compared to women’s stories in my past interview study (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017). As such, these interviews were less conducive to an analysis about subjective experience. Such an analysis also would not have been as effective at subverting the discursive productions of men’s talk and the ways they worked to normalize SV. Nevertheless, knowledge about men’s motivations, perceptions, and patterns of IPSV usage is lacking in the literature and may still be useful for understanding and disrupting men’s SV. Future qualitative research might endeavor to examine these topics. We did sometimes ask in the interviews what men were thinking and feeling during the incidents and why they kept trying (see Appendix B); however, we tended to focus more on having men describe the incidents. Future interview research might place more emphasis on questions about men’s subjective experience and motivations, perhaps with less or no focus on having men describe the incidents.

Finally, below (and in the three manuscripts above) I offer several recommendations based on my research for future education and prevention efforts. However, most are not empirically tested. Future research should examine these strategies further and test their effectiveness at reducing men’s SV. For example, I argue that prevention efforts must foster men’s critical engagement with alternative discourses about SV and heterosexuality. As a first step, future qualitative research should further examine how to foster such critical engagement and where and how men take these up in their daily lives. In Study 3, few men successfully
challenged dominant discourses and shifted the focus group conversations. Future research might observe men’s everyday interactions to identify ways that men do sometimes successfully challenge dominant discourses about SV and heterosexuality. From there, research can examine how prevention efforts and campaigns might disrupt old discourses and promote new ones.

7.4 Implications for Practice

The current research has several important implications for future education and prevention efforts, some of which are noted in the manuscripts above. First, in Study 1, I found surprisingly high incidence rates of IPSV for anal penetration and involvement of alcohol and intoxication tactics. Education and prevention efforts should target these issues. For example, prevention and/or healthy sexuality education efforts might challenge men and boys to think critically about pornography and portrayals of anal sex. Campaigns, especially for first-year university students, might target the culture of heavy alcohol consumption on university campuses and link this with the issue of SV. Given previous work suggesting that perpetrators often intentionally target intoxicated women (Graham et al., 2014), these campaigns must work to disrupt the “excuse-giving properties” of alcohol (Wegner et al., 2015, p. 1022). This would also be important specifically for IPSV involving alcohol, given my findings that men sometimes use alcohol to excuse their behavior and may use it to coerce sexual acts that they know their partner would not otherwise engage in. In other words, campaigns cannot send the simple message that alcohol causes SV.

Given the relational context of the men in this study, bystander interventions should incorporate education to help reduce unique barriers to intervening in potential sexual assault scenarios between intimate partners. Nevertheless, I also found that men’s IPSV was most
commonly committed in private indoor spaces. Thus, bystander interventions may be less
effective at preventing this type of SV, unless interventions are carried out in advance of a
couple entering a private space. My findings also demonstrate that men in intimate relationships
most commonly use nonphysical forms of SV and often talk about their IPSV as harmless and
normalize their behavior. This too is an important site of intervention and suggests that we must
courage men to critically reflect on their own behavior and how even seemingly mild IPSV
can harm women.

As I noted several times throughout this dissertation, a focus on individual attitudinal
change may be futile without addressing the broader sociocultural milieu in which SV occurs.
My findings suggest a need for campaigns that work to disrupt dominant discourses about SV
and heterosexuality and create hegemony for new alternative discourses. However, my findings
also highlight the strength of dominant discourses as well as the underlying rhetoric that supports
them. This strength means that individual men are easily allowed to continue to support
dominant discourses (and possibly hold related cognitions, attitudes, and beliefs), even in the
face of challenge. Thus, education campaigns might teach men concrete strategies for
challenging these discourses; for example, by providing men with evidence countering biological
claims about the male sexual drive.

7.4.1 Implications for (Hetero)Sexual Consent and Communication

In recent years, consent-focused SV prevention policies and campaigns have proliferated
on university campuses in the U.S., Canada, and elsewhere. Affirmative consent policies and
related “yes mean yes” campaigns have been especially popular as of late. These hold that
“nonconsent must be assumed until consent is actively communicated” (i.e., silence does not
mean consent; Muehlenhard et al., 2016). These approaches have moved beyond earlier “just say no” and “no means no” campaigns which, while well-intentioned, put the onus on women to say “no” and “[implied] that other ways of doing refusals…are open to reasonable doubt” (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999, p. 293). Affirmative consent approaches, in theory, “address situations in which the woman is unable to say no” and place more responsibility on the initiator to seek consent (Muehlenhard et al., 2016, p 465).

Although an improvement on earlier models, I argue that these changes are not enough. My findings here and elsewhere (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017) raise serious doubts about the usefulness of maintaining consent in general (i.e., affirmative or otherwise) as the “standard for ethical sexual engagement” and SV prevention (Gavey, 2005, p. 139; Beres, 2018). Below, I begin by highlighting some of the issues associated with a consent-focused model of ethical sex and SV prevention based on my research. I then argue that, to prevent SV and promote ethical (hetero)sexual practice, we must move toward a view of (hetero)sexuality that includes mutuality, ongoing communication and attention, care, and empathy.

Beres (2018) noted that a consent-focused model “is inadequate not only because it is too low a standard of consent, but also because it fails to address the ways in which sexual behaviour is socially constructed” (p. 703). My research supports this. I found that some men are now using consent messages, likely attributable to the increased focus on SV and consent on university campuses noted in Chapter 2.3: Situating Myself and the Research Context. However, rather than expanding men’s understandings of SV and ethical sexual practice, these messages were mostly used to justify or further obscure SV. This is partly because men tended still to defer to traditional dominant discourses about SV and heterosexuality. But I argue that it is also because
of the shortcomings inherent to a consent-focused model. In particular, my results suggest that a consent-focused model still allows men to (a) blame their partners for ineffective communication; (b) understand consent as something to be achieved; (c) uncritically accept “yes” as unfettered consent; and (c) minimize SV.

First, a consent-focused model does not adequately disrupt dominant discourses about women as gatekeepers or about miscommunication as the cause of SV. The very premise of a consent-focused model of SV prevention implies that miscommunication causes SV (i.e., SV can be prevented if we just teach women and men the importance of articulating and understanding consent; Beres, 2018). Indeed, even men in Studies 2 and 3 who spoke about the importance of consent continued to place the onus on women to communication (clearly) and to blame SV or unwanted sex on women’s ineffective communication. One man’s recital of the affirmative “only yes means yes” message that he had heard on campus worked, in part, to blame his partner’s “cloudy” responses because she did not give a clear “yes” or “no.” Men in Study 3 commonly emphasized the importance of consent, but then went on to criticize women’s ineffective communication as the cause of SV. Moreover, consent-focused messages tend to imply that the consent process is a quick and/or one-time event and the miscommunication argument relies on this assumption. That is, men can only claim misunderstanding if they are not held responsible for continuously checking-in and/or clarifying.

Second, a consent-focused model (especially a “yes means yes” model) allows men to understand consent as something to be achieved, even if through coercion. In the current context of male-centered versions of heterosexuality, a consent-focused model is unlikely to disrupt the violent and coercive ways that men seek to obtain “yes” (or other indications of consent). Men in
the current studies and women in Jeffrey and Barata (2017) described instances in which men tried to push their partners into consenting. Like men in Jozkowski et al.’s (2017) study, some men in Study 2 reported trying to persuade their partner specifically following ambiguous nonconsent. For example, one man claimed that he would only push his partner when she said, “not now” or “later,” not when she gave an unequivocal “no.” This suggests that men may indeed have adopted “no means no” and “yes means yes” consent models but highlights why these models are insufficient: they imply that it is acceptable to continue trying if one has not received a clear verbal “yes” or “no.”

Relatedly, a consent-focused model, and especially an affirmative “yes means yes” model, allows men to uncritically accept a “yes” as unfettered consent, denying the various reasons women might agree to unwanted sex (even in the absence of immediate SV). Indeed, in the context of intimate relationships, women sometimes agree to unwanted sex out of fear of hurting a partner’s feelings or losing a partner, to avoid an argument or “[fighting their partner] off all night,” because they wish to satisfy a partner, or because of previous SV (Jeffrey & Barata, 2017, p. 922). A consent-focused model, especially in the form of simple messages that many university students receive, does not do enough to challenge the social context in which women often feel pressured to agree to unwanted sex. It also does not place enough responsibility on men to understand this context or to communicate about it with their partners.

Finally, and related to the above shortcomings, my research demonstrates how consent-focused messages are used by men to minimize and obscure SV. As noted above, some men in Study 2 used consent-related discourses to blame a partner for not giving a clear “yes” or “no,” or to distinguish (and, thus minimize) their persistence in response to ambiguous refusals from
persistence to a clear “no.” Other men used consent-related discourses to minimize one-off SV; that is, to emphasize that they *usually* seek consent. In these ways, men used consent discourses to position themselves as good and modern men without appearing to make meaningful changes to their male-centered and violent behavior. These results suggest that consent discourses are easily co-opted and have become part of the vocabulary used to construct SV in socially acceptable terms.

7.4.1.1 Toward Mutuality, Ongoing Communication, Care, and Empathy in (Hetero)Sexuality

Given these issues, a consent-focused model is inadequate (and sometimes problematic) for preventing SV and promoting ethical sexual engagement. Based on my research, I argue that we must create hegemony for versions of (hetero)sexuality that include mutuality, ongoing negotiation and communication, care, and empathy. As noted in manuscripts 2 and 3, my findings suggest that any attempt to foster new and alternative discourses about heterosexuality should include or be accompanied by an explicit challenging of old ones. A focus on care and empathy in heterosex, on its own, challenges dominant notions of heterosex that are violent and male-centered (and, thus, not caring of women). It also has the potential to enhance the notions of mutuality and ongoing communication and negotiation noted below.

In support of promoting mutuality in heterosex, I argue for the development of alternative and positive discourses around women as active desiring agents of sex, in which women’s desire is understood in its own right and not merely as a response to men’s desire (e.g., Hird & Jackson, 2001). However, my findings in Study 2 suggest that men who discuss the importance of mutuality (and consent) often do so in conjunction with old dominant discourses about SV and heterosexuality (e.g., trying to see how far they can push their partner). My findings in Study 3
further demonstrate that when men do introduce new and alternative discourses about women’s sexual drive and desire, they easily get shut down by biologically essentialist claims and marginalizing rhetoric. Thus, promotion of alternative discourses about mutuality and women as equal and active agents of (hetero)sex must be accompanied by disrupting the male-centered content of current dominant discourses as well as the underlying rhetoric that supports them. Early comprehensive sex education and other sexuality programs should counter purely biological approaches to human sexuality, emphasize the diversity of human sexuality and preferences, and disrupt the scripting of heterosexuality. Promoting mutuality might also include teaching women and men increased awareness of their own feelings and sexual desire as part of the communication and consent process (Walsh, Honickman, Valdespino-Hayden, & Lowe, 2019).

Although affirmative consent definitions sometimes include ongoing consent, future campaigns might instead focus on ongoing communication, negotiation, and attention. This more clearly moves beyond the simple need to obtain a “yes” and might foster increased attention to a partner’s ongoing desire and wellbeing. Nevertheless, this too must be accompanied by challenging old discourses. My results in Studies 2 and 3 highlighted discourses about sex starting naturally and progressing through predictable stages from kissing to intercourse, as well as men’s role as initiator and women’s as gatekeeper. These discourses worked, especially in Study 3, to negate the need for (men’s) communication. Men used these script formulations to argue that most women and men agree that it is awkward to ask for sex. This marginalizing language made these discourses particularly difficult to challenge. Education campaigns must challenge the idea that heterosex always does or should play out according to predictable stages,
that women and men’s roles are set as initiators and gatekeepers, and that all or most women and
men believe that verbal communication “kills the mood.” Again, education campaigns might
emphasize the diversity of human sexuality and disrupt the scripting of heterosexuality.

Nevertheless, a focus on ongoing communication and attention in itself might help to
disrupt old discourses. A consent-focused model tends to invoke, as my results suggest, notions
of a one-time abrupt request. Although the awkwardness of this type of request should still be
problematical, it does make some sense that women and men might find this unappealing.
Ongoing communication and attention instead invoke a more continuous process built
thoroughly into heterosexuality. The notion of ongoing communication and attention itself might
help to disrupt the scripting of heterosex according to predictable stages. That is, rather than
abruptly interrupting sexual progression to get a simple “yes” or “no” (as is invoked by a consent
model), communication, negotiation, and attention become integral parts of the progression of
heterosex and are much more than seeking a simple “yes” or “no.”

In the context of intimate relationships, a focus on communication and attention might
also help disrupt discourses about partners already knowing what each other want in a way that
consent messages do not. This focus might also better disrupt miscommunication arguments that
only work if one assumes that it is solely women’s responsibility to communicate and that the
consent process is a quick and/or one-time check-in. Ongoing communication and negotiation
necessitate a more thoroughly mutually engaged process.

Consent-focused models are often based on the assumptions that “sex is either wanted or
unwanted” and that “individuals know in advance what they will be willing to do during a […]
sexual encounter” (Muehlenhard et al., 2016, p. 463, 464). In addition to the benefits noted
above, a focus on ongoing communication, care, and empathy may offer more space for discussion and (self)reflection in instances in which women and men feel ambivalent or uncertain about sex. This approach also does not require that all communication be verbal—it requires that men and women pay attention to and take each other’s desires, pleasure, and wellbeing seriously. It helps disrupt the current “cultural scaffolding” that supports SV and the primacy of male sexuality (Gavey, 2005) in a way that I am not convinced a consent-focused model can.

7.5 Strengths and Limitations

The current research fills a number of important gaps in the literature. In particular, it provides a deeper understanding of the scope and normalization of men’s SV, particularly in less physically violent forms and in intimate relationships. My balance of realist and poststructuralist approaches offered a unique perspective on men’s SV against women and allowed me to fill important gaps in using either approach on its own. I was able to critically examine men’s talk and the social construction of heterosexuality and SV (and the link between the two), while maintaining grounding in the scope of the issue and men’s material practices and violence. Both are important objectives in the same fight against men’s SV against women (Gavey, 2005).

Men’s reports of SV may be considered less accurate than women’s reports. Some researchers have suggested that men, in particular, may not always disclose SV perpetration (Kolivas & Gross, 2007; Koss et al., 1987; Strang et al., 2013). However, they suggest that unintentional nondisclosure may be much more common than dishonesty or intentional nondisclosure; for example, men denying or not recognizing all of their behaviors as sexually coercive, or providing second-hand information about their partner’s lack of consent (Kolivas &
Gross, 2007; Koss et al., 1987; Strang et al., 2013). In Studies 2 and 3, in particular, I often read men’s reports and talk as discursive productions and, thus, made few assumptions about their “accuracy” in reflecting actual events. Where I did make certain positivist and realist claims about actual events and practices, I read men’s accounts as partial and fluid. My survey findings, in particular, should be taken in the context of the body of work on both women and men’s reports of IPSV occurrence.

Regardless of the accuracy of men’s reports in reflecting actual experiences, examining men’s self-reports of IPSV helped to take the common onus off of women to speak about their (potentially harmful) experiences and may be useful for future comparisons with women’s self-reports of IPSV. Studying men’s discursive productions was also key to understanding how men, in particular, worked to normalize SV. Scully (1990) concluded that “an important part of learning to rape includes the mastery of a vocabulary that can be used to explain sexual violence against women in socially acceptable terms” and that rapists’ talk is reflective of “how sexual violence is made possible in our rape-prone society” (p. 98).

Participants in this research were predominantly young, white, heterosexual, and likely middle class and cis-gendered, university men. I deliberately sampled university men aged 18 to 24 (and heterosexual men in the case of Study 3) given that I was specifically interested in this sample. Nevertheless, my results may not apply to more diverse samples. Because of the homogenous sample and scope of this dissertation, I also was unable examine the influence of race, class, ethnicity, or other social locations and intersectionalities on men’s talk and subject positions.
Finally, the methods I used in this research may have influenced the findings. As noted above, men in Study 1 may have been prone to socially desirable responding on the SES-SFP. In Studies 2 and 3, men’s talk was produced in certain contexts. Men in Study 2 were given the option to be interviewed by a man or woman. It is possible that men responded to interview questions differently in the interviews with the male interviewer compared to the female interviewer. For example, it is possible that men wanted to present themselves in a more positive light in the interviews with the female interviewer. And it is possible that men wanted to present themselves in a more masculine light in the interviews with the male interviewer. It was not within the scope of this research to examine these potential differences. Similarly, men in Study 3 were in conversation with other men and, thus, may have engaged in particular (masculine) reputation management strategies. Accounts produced in different contexts may be very different.

7.6 Conclusion

University men’s IPSV against women remains prevalent. In this dissertation, I have highlighted what this violence looked like and how it was socially constructed and supported in a sample of Canadian university men. Men used dominant discourses about SV and heterosexuality to normalize SV. I have also highlighted some of the ways that some of these dominant discourses may work uniquely in intimate relationships. The majority of SV prevention strategies have focused on changing individuals’ knowledge and attitudes and have had little effect on reducing sexually violent behavior. My research adds to the limited body of work about the social forces and discourses that support SV and how at least some men negotiate
conversations about heterosexuality and SV that may be crucial for disrupting and reducing men’s sexually violent behavior against women.
REFERENCES


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19 This list includes references cited in Chapter 1: Introduction, Chapter 2: Theoretical and Analytical Frameworks, Chapter 3: Literature Review, and Chapter 7: General Discussion. References cited in each of the three manuscripts are listed at the end of each respective manuscript above.
https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20107


https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926595006003006

https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460703006002004

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2005.00237.x

https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2017.1330296

https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.14.1.55


202


203


207


Testa, M., & Livingston, J. A. (2009). Alcohol consumption and women’s vulnerability to sexual

Testa, M., VanZile-Tamsen, C., & Livingston, J. A. (2007). Prospective prediction of women’s


APPENDICES

Appendix A: Online Survey (Study 1)

Eligibility Page

Note: This question will appear first on the online survey. Only those participants who choose “yes” will be permitted to view the remainder of the online survey. Those who choose “no” will be directed to the following message:

Sorry, you do not meet the requirements for participation in this study. You will not be permitted to continue with the survey. Please contact the researcher, Nicole Jeffrey (email address), if you have any questions.

Are ALL of the following statements TRUE?

(select “yes” only if ALL of the statements are true; select “no” if one or more of the statements are false)

- I am a male University of Guelph student.
- I am aged 18 to 24.
- My most recent dating relationship was with a woman.
- My most recent dating relationship was exclusive/monogamous.
- My most recent dating relationship occurred at least partially within the past year.
- My most recent dating relationship lasted (or has lasted) at least 3 months.

☐ Yes
☐ No

[Consent Form]

Demographics

You will not be able to save and continue the survey later; the survey must be completed in one sitting or you will have to start over.

How old are you? (in years)

______________

What sexual orientation do you most identify with?

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

220
Which of the following BEST describes your ethnic background?

☐ Aboriginal/First Nations/Métis
☐ White/European
☐ Black/African/Caribbean
☐ Southeast Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Filipino, etc.)
☐ Arab (Saudi Arabian, Palestinian, Iraqi, etc.)
☐ South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Sri Lankan, etc.)
☐ Latin American (e.g., Costa Rican, Guatemalan, Brazilian, Columbian, etc.)
☐ West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghani, etc.)
☐ Other (please specify your ethnic background):

___________________________________

What is your current year of study?

☐ First year
☐ Second year
☐ Third year
☐ Fourth year
☐ Other (please specify your current year of study):

______________________________

Are you a:

☐ Part-time student?
☐ Full-time student?

How many exclusive (dating only one person at a time), committed intimate/romantic relationships have you been in?

☐ 1 to 2
☐ 3 to 4
☐ 5 to 6
☐ 7 or more

Which of the following sexual activities have you ever engaged in? (choose all that apply)

☐ Kissing
☐ Sexual touching
☐ Oral sex
☐ Anal sex/penetration
☐ Vaginal sex/penetration

With how many different women have you ever had sexual intercourse (vaginal-penile penetration)? ____________________________

221
Dating and Sexual Experiences Questions

Please answer the following questions about your **most recent past or present relationship** that was:

- With a woman
- Exclusive/Monogamous
- Occurred at least partially within the past year
- Lasted at least 3 months

For the purposes of this survey, a “relationship” is considered a committed/steady, intimate/romantic relationship with only one person. It is not necessary that you still be in a relationship with this woman, as long as you were in the PAST YEAR and the relationship lasted at least 3 months.

Length of the relationship with this partner (in months):

_____________

Were you living with this partner?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Other (please specify your living arrangements with this partner): ________________

What was the status of your relationship with this partner?

☐ In a committed intimate/romantic relationship with only this person (but not married or engaged)
☐ Married
☐ Engaged

Which of the following sexual activities have you ever engaged in with this partner? (choose all that apply)

☐ Kissing
☐ Sexual touching
☐ Oral sex
☐ Anal sex/penetration
☐ Vaginal sex/penetration

Are you still in a relationship with this partner?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Other (please specify your current relationship status with this partner): ____________
The following questions concern sexual experiences. If you feel uncomfortable answering these questions at any time, you may click “withdraw from study” at the bottom of the page.

*IMPORTANT*: Please answer only about the same relationship/partner that you answered the previous questions about. That is, your most recent past or present relationship that was:
- With a woman
- Exclusive/Monogamous
- Occurred at least partially within the past year
- Lasted at least 3 months

Click the circle showing the number of times each experience has happened with your partner. If several experiences occurred on the same occasion—for example, if one night you told some lies and had sex with your partner who was drunk, you would select 1 or more for both a and c. The past 12 months refers to the past year going back from today.

I fondled, kissed, or rubbed up against the private areas of my partner’s body (lips, breast/chest, crotch or butt) or removed some of her clothes without her consent (but did not attempt sexual penetration) by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Telling lies, threatening to end the relationship, threatening to spread rumors about her, making promises about the future I knew were untrue, or continually verbally pressuring her after she said she didn’t want to.</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Showing displeasure, criticizing her sexuality or attractiveness, getting angry but not using physical force after she said she didn’t want to.</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Taking advantage when she was too drunk or out of it to stop what was happening.</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Threatening to physically harm her or someone close to her.</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Using force, for example holding her down with my body weight, pinning her arms, or having a weapon.</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I had oral sex with my partner or had my partner perform oral sex on me without her consent by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Telling lies, threatening to end the relationship, threatening to spread rumors about her, making promises about the future I knew were untrue, or continually verbally pressuring her after she said she didn’t want to.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Showing displeasure, criticizing her sexuality or attractiveness, getting angry but not using physical force after she said she didn’t want to.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Taking advantage when she was too drunk or out of it to stop what was happening.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Threatening to physically harm her or someone close to her.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Using force, for example holding her down with my body weight, pinning her arms, or having a weapon.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I put my penis, fingers, or objects into my partner’s vagina without her consent by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Telling lies, threatening to end the relationship, threatening to spread rumors about her, making promises about the future I knew were untrue, or continually verbally pressuring her after she said she didn’t want to.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Taking advantage when she was too drunk or out of it to stop what was happening.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Threatening to physically harm her or someone close to her.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Using force, for example holding her down with my body weight, pinning her arms, or having a weapon.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I put my penis, fingers, or objects into my partner’s butt without her consent by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clauses</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Telling lies, threatening to end the relationship, threatening to spread rumors about her, making promises about the future I knew were untrue, or continually verbally pressuring her after she said she didn’t want to.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Showing displeasure, criticizing her sexuality or attractiveness, getting angry but not using physical force after she said she didn’t want to.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Taking advantage when she was too drunk or out of it to stop what was happening.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Threatening to physically harm her or someone close to her.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Using force, for example holding her down with my body weight, pinning her arms, or having a weapon.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though it did not happen, I TRIED to have oral sex with my partner or make her have oral sex with me without her consent by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clauses</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Telling lies, threatening to end the relationship, threatening to spread rumors about her, making promises about the future I knew were untrue, or continually verbally pressuring her after she said she didn’t want to.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Showing displeasure, criticizing her sexuality or attractiveness, getting angry but not using physical force after she said she didn’t want to.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Taking advantage when she was too drunk or out of it to stop what was happening.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Threatening to physically harm her or someone close to her.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Using force, for example holding her down with my body weight, pinning her arms, or having a weapon.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even though it did not happen, I TRIED to put my penis, fingers, or objects into my partner’s vagina without her consent by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Showing displeasure, criticizing her sexuality or attractiveness, getting angry but not using physical force after she said she didn’t want to.</td>
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<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Taking advantage when she was too drunk or out of it to stop what was happening.</td>
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<td>○</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Using force, for example holding her down with my body weight, pinning her arms, or having a weapon.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though it did not happen, I TRIED to put my penis, fingers, or objects into my partner’s butt without her consent by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Telling lies, threatening to end the relationship, threatening to spread rumors about her, making promises about the future I knew were untrue, or continually verbally pressuring her after she said she didn’t want to.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Showing displeasure, criticizing her sexuality or attractiveness, getting angry but not using physical force after she said she didn’t want to.</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Taking advantage when she was too drunk or out of it to stop what was happening.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Threatening to physically harm her or someone close to her.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Using force, for example holding her down with my body weight, pinning her arms, or having a weapon.</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you answered 1 or more to any of the above, please think about your **most memorable** experience from the previous set of questions and answer the following questions:

How long ago did the experience occur?

- ☐ 1-2 months ago
- ☐ 3-5 months ago
- ☐ 6-8 months ago
- ☐ 9-12 months ago
- ☐ Don’t know/prefer not to answer

Where did the experience occur?

- ☐ In my home (including dorm room)
  
  (if selected): Was your home on or off campus?
  
  - ☐ On campus
  
  - ☐ Off campus
- ☐ In my partner’s home (including dorm room)
  
  (if selected): Was your partner’s home on or off campus?
  
  - ☐ On campus
  
  - ☐ Off campus
- ☐ In a bar or at a party (not including at your or your partner’s home/dorm room)
- ☐ In a car
- ☐ In a restaurant
- ☐ At a movie theatre
- ☐ On campus (not including your or your partner’s dorm room)
- ☐ At a hotel/motel
- ☐ Outside (e.g., outdoor sporting event)
- ☐ Other (please specify where the experience occurred): ____________________________

How much alcohol did you consume during the experience or within one hour prior?

- ☐ 0 drinks
- ☐ 1-2 drinks
- ☐ 3-4 drinks
- ☐ 5-6 drinks
- ☐ 7 or more drinks

How much alcohol did your partner consume during the experience or within one hour prior?

- ☐ 0 drinks
- ☐ 1-2 drinks
- ☐ 3-4 drinks
- ☐ 5-6 drinks
☐ 7 or more drinks

Please describe, using the text box below, how this experience affected your relationship with your partner. If it did not affect it at all, please describe. Consider, for example, whether the experience affected: (a) your sexual relationship with her; (b) how you feel/felt about her or how she feels/felt about you; (c) how you and/or she feel(s)/felt about the relationship itself; (d) your commitment to her or hers to you.
Appendix B: Interview Guide (Study 2)

*Note.* This was used as a general guide and it evolved slightly over time as we changed some of the language and added new probes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer:</th>
<th>Date &amp; Time:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant ID Code:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participant Pseudonym:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Materials and Supplies**

- Cellphone
- Consent Forms (two for participant)
- Community resource sheet (for participant to take with them)
- Participant’s SES responses
- Two audio recorders
- Copy of Interview Guide
- Record of dispersal of funds and pen
- Money for participant payment

**Introduction**

1. Introduce yourself

2. Consent Process

3. Begin audio recorders

**Initial Instructions**

This interview will be focused on your most recent past or present relationship with a woman that lasted at least 3 months that occurred within the past year. This should be the same woman you answered the online survey about earlier and I am interested in both positive and negative experiences. Please answer as openly and honestly as possible and feel free to ask to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. And when I ask about specific experiences, try to think about those that occurred within the past year.
I might take a few notes here and there, but there is no need to be alarmed by this. It is mostly to remind myself of follow-up questions.

**Questions**

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? Maybe things about your personality, your hobbies, and your friends. But please try to avoid giving any information that might identify you, such as names of sports teams you might be on or friends’ names.

2. Can you please describe your relationship with your current or ex-partner in detail? Probes:
   a. Are you still in a romantic relationship with her?
   b. What is/was your partner like?
   c. How did/do you feel about her?
   d. What is/was the relationship like?
   e. How did/does she treat you?
   f. How serious of a relationship is/was it?
   g. What is/was your sex life like with her?
      i. Do you have/have you had intercourse?
      ii. How often do you engage in sexual activity?
      iii. How is sexual activity usually initiated in your relationship?
      iv. Can you tell me a bit about how satisfied you are with your sex life together?

3. In relationships, it is common for partners to desire different levels of sexual intimacy. Can you describe a time when you wanted to engage in sexual activity with your partner but she did not want to or did not feel like it?

   Also ask question again differently: Was there a time when you kept trying even though your partner did not want to?

   Also refer participant to one of his SES responses: If you don’t mind, I’d like to ask you about some of your survey responses. You answered that you had:

   Can you elaborate on that experience? (OR: Is that the experience you were just referring to?)

   230
If needed:
Part of the purpose of this interview is to better understand how participants are understanding and interpreting the survey. Can you tell me a bit about how you understood that question?

If needed:
The survey says, “without consent”. Can you elaborate on how you interpreted that when answering about your own experience?

General Probes for question 3:
  a. Can you describe the interaction in detail?
  b. What was happening prior to the experience?
  c. What were you doing/what was your partner doing?
  d. How did you let your partner know you wanted to engage in sexual activity?
  e. How did you know your partner wanted/didn’t want to engage in sexual activity?
  f. Can you tell me a bit about why you kept trying/going?
  g. What were you thinking and feeling at the time? Now?
  h. How do you think your partner was feeling?

(4) Can you describe any other times when you wanted to engage in sexual activity with your partner but she did not want to or did not feel like it? (have them describe as many instances as they can)

Also ask question again differently: Was there a time when you kept trying even though your partner did not want to?

Also refer participant to one of his SES responses: If you don’t mind, I’d like to ask you about some of your survey responses. You answered that you had:

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

Can you elaborate on that experience? (OR: Is that the experience you were just referring to?).

If needed:
Part of the purpose of this interview is to better understand how participants are understanding and interpreting the survey. Can you tell me a bit about how you understood that question?
If needed:
The survey says, “without consent”. Can you elaborate on how you interpreted that when answering about your own experience?

General Probes for question 4:
   a. Can you describe the interaction in detail?
   b. What was happening prior to the experience?
   c. What were you doing/what was your partner doing?
   d. How did you let your partner know you wanted to engage in sexual activity?
   e. How did you know your partner wanted/didn’t want to engage in sexual activity?
   f. Can you tell me a bit about why you kept trying/going?
   g. What were you thinking and feeling at the time? Now?
   h. How do you think your partner was feeling?

(5) Did this/these experience(s) affect your relationship with your partner at all?
Probes:
   a. Did this/these experience(s) affect your sexual relationship with her?
   b. Did this/these experience(s) affect how you feel/felt about her?
   c. Did this/these experience(s) affect how you feel/felt about the relationship itself?
   d. Did this/these experience(s) affect your commitment to her?
   e. Do you think these experiences affected your partner?

(6) This concludes the questions that I have for you, but I would like to give you the chance to discuss anything you think this interview might have missed or anything else you would like me to know.
Also: How did the interview go for you? Was there anything you wanted or expected to talk about that we didn’t get to?

Conclusion

1. This concludes the interview. Thank you very much for participating.

2. I am going to give you this list of community resources. If this interview sparked any negative feelings or you just feel you need to talk to someone, this list provides various community and counselling services.

3. [Give participant option of 2.0 Participant Pool bonus points or $20].

4. [Stop audio recorders].
Appendix C: Focus Group Guide (Study 3)

*Note.* This was used as a general guide and it evolved slightly over time as we changed some of the language and added new probes.

**Materials and Supplies**

- Cellphone
- List of participants and their ID codes
- Focus Group Map
- Consent Forms (two per participant)
- Demographics Questionnaires (one for each participant)
- Community resource sheets (one for each participant to take with them)
- Flip board paper for consent process, ground rules, and ice breaker
- Several sharpies and pens
- Blank nametags (one for each participant)
- Recording equipment

**Introduction (~20 minutes)**

1. Welcome
2. Consent Process
3. Demographics
   - [Hand out demographic questionnaires]
4. Begin audio and video recorders
5. Explanation of the focus group process
6. Ground Rules
   - [Group discussion with flip-board paper]
7. Does anyone have any questions before we get started?
8. Participant Introductions / Icebreaker
   - Add participant pseudonyms to focus group map.
Introduction
As I said earlier, this study is mainly about men’s experiences in dating relationships. We would like to know about your perceptions and ideas about sex, dating, and sexual pressures for men and women in relationships. Throughout our discussion, I’d like for you to focus on steady dating relationships between men and women, rather than more casual relationships like hookups. So, relationships where men and women are in a relationship or dating more exclusively. It doesn’t have to be a long-term relationship, but more than a few dates, let’s say. You do not have to talk about your own experiences. We are more interested in your thoughts on men’s general perceptions on sex, dating, and sexual pressures. I’d also like for you to focus mostly on men your age, so the 18-24 age range. While I have some specific questions for you, I would like this to be more of a free-flowing discussion. I encourage you to respond to other participants’ comments. You do not have to wait for me to ask questions. The more I can sit back and let you talk, the better. I will try to just guide the conversation where needed.

1. What do you think most men expect out of a steady relationship with a woman?
2. What do you think most men consider to be a good sexual relationship with a steady partner?
3. What do you think a typical sexual encounter between steady dating partners looks like?
4. What do you think about communication of sexual intention between steady dating partners?
5. How do you think sexual relationships and communication between steady partners change over time?
6. What are some of the pressures that men experience in steady relationships with respect to sexual activity?
7. What are some of the pressures that women experience in steady relationships with respect to sexual activity?
8. Given some of the pressures that women experience in steady relationships with respect to sexual activity, why do you think women sometimes end up having sex when they do not really want to?
9. I’d now like to give you all a chance to discuss anything you think we might have missed. Does anyone have anything that they feel was missed in this discussion or that you want to add?
Conclusions (~10 minutes)

1. Thank participants.

2. Reminder about the importance of maintaining other participants’ privacy and confidentiality after leaving.

3. [Give all participants list of community resources].

4. Participant payment

5. Stop recorders
Appendix D: Focus Group Demographic Survey (Study 3)

1. How old are you?
   I am _____________ years old.

2. What sexual orientation do you most identify with?
   ______________________________________

3. Which of the following BEST describes your ethnic background?
   ☐ Aboriginal/First Nations/Métis
   ☐ White/European
   ☐ Black/African/Caribbean
   ☐ Southeast Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Filipino, etc.)
   ☐ Arab (Saudi Arabian, Palestinian, Iraqi, etc.)
   ☐ South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Sri Lankan, etc.)
   ☐ Latin American (e.g., Costa Rican, Guatemalan, Brazilian, Columbian, etc.)
   ☐ West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghani, etc.)
   ☐ Other (please specify): ________________________________

4. What is your current year of study?
   ☐ First year
   ☐ Second year
   ☐ Third year
   ☐ Fourth year
   ☐ Other (please specify): ____________________________

5. Are you a:
   ☐ Part-time student
   ☐ Full-time student

6. How many exclusive (dating only one person at a time), committed intimate/romantic relationships have you been in?
   ☐ 1 to 2
   ☐ 3 to 4
   ☐ 5 to 6
   ☐ 7 or more

7. Which of the following sexual activities have you ever engaged in? (choose all that apply)
   ☐ Kissing
   ☐ Sexual touching
☐ Oral sex
☐ Anal sex/penetration
☐ Vaginal sex/penetration

8. With how many different women have you ever had sexual intercourse (vaginal-penile penetration)? ____________________________