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**Victim Perpetrator Relationship Characteristics and Perceptions of Personal Sexual
Assault and Coercion Experiences**

By

Frasia Margaret Morrison

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Psychology
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2021

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**Victim Perpetrator Relationship Characteristics and Perceptions of Personal Sexual
Assault and Coercion Experiences**

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September 21st, 2021

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has indicated that victim-perpetrator relationship characteristics may be a significant factor in how experiences of sexual assault and coercion are perceived. However, very little research has investigated how victim-perpetrator characteristics may affect how survivors perceive their own experience of sexual assault and coercion. To explore this, the current study sought to identify how facets of women's relationships with their perpetrators may influence their perceptions of sexual violence that has occurred within these relationships. A sample of 136 undergraduate students from the University of Windsor and 51 individuals recruited from social media completed measures assessing sexual assault and coercion, blame allocation, emotions relating to the event, relationship investment, and closeness to the perpetrator, as well as qualitative questions. Bivariate correlations, t-tests, Chi-square tests of independence, and logistic regressions were conducted to examine various aspects of the possible relationship between victim-perpetrator relationship characteristics and survivor perceptions. Participants who reported feeling closer to their perpetrator were significantly more likely to report both more positive and more negative emotions related to assaultive/coercive experiences. Furthermore, those who had been in serious romantic relationships with their perpetrators reported blaming their perpetrator less and experiencing more positively-valenced emotions relating to the event than those who had been in casual romantic relationships. Those who reported feeling more satisfied also reported more positive emotions, whereas those who were most satisfied and committed reported less self-blame. However, perceptions were not significantly affected by length of relationship, type of relationship, or maintained contact with the perpetrator. Limitations, such as sample size, characteristics, and variable operationalization are discussed, as are possible future directions.

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Victim-Perpetrator Relationship Characteristics and Perceptions of Personal Sexual Assault and Coercion Experiences

Sexual assault and sexual coercion remain significant social issues that result in an array of serious consequences for survivors. The term sexual coercion represents the act of being physically, psychologically, financially, or otherwise forced or tricked into engaging in sexual activity (Rao et al., 2013; World Health Organization [WHO], 2002). Sexual assault can be defined as forced sexual acts, including forced touching or kissing, verbally coerced intercourse, and physically forced vaginal, oral, and anal penetration (Abbey, 2002; WHO, 2002). Survivors of sexual assault and coercion often sustain physical injuries and/or experience chronic pain and sexually transmitted infections (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2018; Stockman, et al., 2010; WHO, 2013). In addition, mental health conditions such as depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and anxiety are also common deleterious consequences of sexual violence (Langdon et al., 2014; Norwood & Murphy, 2012; Salwen, et al., 2015). Other negative effects reliably linked to sexual assault and coercion include increased likelihood of problematic substance use, riskier sexual practices, and lowered self-esteem (Martin & Macy, 2009). Thus, sexual assault and coercion pose serious public health concerns.

Unfortunately, sexual assault and coercion are also quite prevalent. Specifically, experiences of sexual violence plague as many as 50% of women within their lifetimes (Breiding, 2014). In 2018, 30% of Canadian women reported having been sexually assaulted by the time they turned 15 years old (Statistics Canada, 2018). Davis and colleagues (2015), using a sample of 436 women and 313 men living in North America, reported that 58% of their participants had experienced unwanted sexual contact by coercion, 55% had faced attempted rape by coercion, and 46% had been subjected to completed rape by coercion. Worldwide

estimates suggest that over 220 million individuals experience forced sexual or other forms of sexual violence before the age of 18 per year (International Center for Assault Prevention, n.d.). Thus, both sexual coercion and sexual assault affect millions of individuals every year.

Although sexual assault and sexual coercion occur among both men and women, women are disproportionately affected. By the age of fifteen, 8% of Canadian men have experienced sexual assault whereas 30% of Canadian women have (Statistics Canada, 2018). In other words, women in Canada are almost five times more likely than men to be subjected to sexually assaultive experiences. Hines and colleagues (2016) investigated the sexual assault experiences of 1,916 college students in a university in the US Northeast during the first two months of the academic school year. Within this period of time, nearly 7% of women in the sample had been sexually assaulted whereas only 3% of men had, meaning that over twice as many women as men had been victimized. This disparity may be due in part to gendered expectations that may exist within college parties. For example, Armstrong and colleagues (2006) note that men (more specifically fraternities) hold parties and provide alcohol more commonly than women do, placing men in the powerful position of the ‘host’ whereas women are relegated to the position of ‘guest.’ These positions can reinforce pre-existing expectations for women to be “nice” and deferential and to take a more submissive role in interactions with men (Armstrong et al., 2006). Additionally, it has been previously noted that women were more severely impacted by sexually aggressive experiences in that they were more likely to alter their daily routines and experience deleterious emotional reactions after their assaults (Statistics Canada, 2018). Further, the likelihood of having repeated experiences of sexual assault and coercion is higher for women than for men (Aosved et al., 2011; Messman-Moore & Long, 2002).

Although sexual assault and sexual coercion are highly related, they are distinct concepts. Sexual assaults take place when sexual activity occurs in the absence of consent. The WHO defines sexual assault or rape as “physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration—even if slight” (WHO, 2002, p. 149). However, it should be noted that Canada has an especially inclusive definition of sexual assault, stating that sexual assault is “Any unwanted sexual activity involving physical contact (including kissing, fondling, and sexual intercourse)” (Gender-based violence glossary, Government of Canada). Sexual coercion, on the other hand, occurs when any possible “consent” that is given has been garnered through manipulative techniques such as bullying, intimidation, guilt, blackmailing or harassment (and thus should not be considered as valid, freely-given consent; WHO, 2002). Sexual coercion is normally treated as a collection of acts along a continuum whereas sexual assault is sometimes classified by laws or researchers dichotomously as either completed or attempted (Blackburn et al., 2008; Sinozich & Langton, 2014; Planty et al., 2013, WHO, 2002), though this dichotomization may not be theoretically sound. On the contrary, it is believed that sexual assault and sexual coercion are part of the same continuum (Kelly, 1987). Although sexual assault normally refers to more clear-cut experiences of forced nonconsensual activity, sexual coercion takes into account situations that have not traditionally been included in sexual assault discourses. For example, sexual coercion can include experiences like threats to end one’s relationship if sex is not given or the use of guilt to garner sexual favours. These experiences are less easily recognized as experiences of sexual assault because of their subtle nuances and the use of manipulation, making these acts inherently covert in nature. This reduced ability to recognize such experiences as acts of sexual violence may be partially due to the fact that sexual coercion has only recently begun to be studied. Sexual assault has been the subject of research for a much longer period of time, with studies

dating back before the start of the 20th century. In contrast, the term sexual coercion has only been in existence for approximately four decades, and a term of earnest scientific interest for much less time (Thornhill & Palmer, 2000).

Though sexual violence has become a more popular topic of research, there are significant divides within the field. Many researchers do not attempt to study both sexual assault and sexual coercion at the same time. Instead, they tend to focus on one form of sexual violence only. However, research has shown that survivors of sexual assault are likely to have experienced sexual coercion as well (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Aosved & Long, 2005; Farris et. al, 2008). In addition, sexual coercion and sexual assault are thought of as belonging to the same continuum of sexual violence (Kelly, 1987; WHO, 2002). This arbitrary divide between sexual assault and coercion causes some difficulty when attempting to develop a cohesive picture of all forms of sexual violence. When these expressions of sexual violence are not studied together, the ability to identify and understand the nature of this continuum is hampered.

A second division that often exists within sexual violence literature involves research examining sexual violence in the context of a romantic relationship versus sexual violence that occurs outside of such relationships. This separation based on victim-perpetrator relationship is notable in both research and practical settings. For instance, sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual assault are frequently funded by different organizations, sectors of government, and/or grant funding agencies. Furthermore, depending on the relationship the sexual assault survivor has with the perpetrator, the survivor may be directed to different places for services and support. That is, women who experience stranger and acquaintance sexual assaults are typically directed to sexual assault clinics whereas those with partners as perpetrators are more likely to be directed to battered women support services. Though this is a generalization that may

not apply in all circumstances, this rift may be preventing researchers and service providers from understanding how sexual violence functions within different victim-perpetrator relationship contexts. In fact, very few researchers focus on the significance of the victim-perpetrator relationship, perhaps in part because of this divide. From the few studies that do examine victim-perpetrator relationships, there is some evidence that perpetrators' relationships with their victims may have notable influence on the function and impact of sexual violence (Bowie et al., 1990; Harned, 2005; Logan et al., 2007; Stermac et al., 1998).

A third division within the literature exists between sexual IPV and other forms of IPV. More specifically, less is known about sexual IPV than psychological or physical IPV. For instance, although researchers have examined the link between some relationship characteristics and perceptions of psychological and/or physical IPV, these same associations have not been explored for sexual IPV. Research on nonsexual IPV has shown that the longer someone is in a relationship, the less objectionable violence is perceived to be. Specifically, verbal violence has been found to be most prevalent and more tolerable six months to one year into a couple's relationship; before this point, verbal abuse was less accepted (Ray & Gold, 1996; Wong & Matthies, 2010). Participants who had been together with their partner for over ten years reported some of the highest levels of verbal abuse and were some of the most tolerant of the abuse (Wong & Matthies, 2010). This may indicate that an ability to accept verbal abuse influences whether or not a relationship will be able to persist long-term. As well, women in long-term relationships with perpetrators of physical violence have been found to be unrealistically optimistic about the intentions of their partners and of the possibility of their partners' behavioural improvement (Gondolf, 1998). It is therefore important to investigate whether or not

relationship length also affects how victims/survivors of sexual IPV perceive the violence and/or their relationships.

Impact of Rape Myths

This dearth of research is further accentuated by the great number of papers dedicated to studying how relationship characteristics affect the perceptions of individuals not directly involved in the sexual violence (but who are instead responding to hypothetical scenarios). When responding to such scenarios, individuals consistently perceive sexual violence severity as inversely related to the length and seriousness of the relationship between perpetrators and survivors (Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Rebeiz & Harb, 2010). These studies demonstrate the stigma and the effects stigma may have on the outcome of sexual assault trials based on jury member preconceptions. Perceptions likely vary based on perpetrator-victim relationship because harmful preconceptions of what constitutes “real” rape are ingrained in the collective consciousness of Western society. Frequently, this “real” rape myth casts a stranger in the role of the perpetrator and pictures the setting as an outdoor location (Bondurant, 2001; Horvath & Brown, 2009; Temkin & Krahe, 2008). It stipulates that assailants use violent threats and force and that women should actively fight, thus sustaining injuries from these attacks (Temkin & Krahe, 2008).

These assumptions have been documented as actively undermining survivors’ beliefs that their own experiences qualify for the label of “rape” or “sexual assault.” Further, it is myths such as these that may decrease the likelihood that experiences of sexual coercion are considered sexual violence, as frequently sexual coercion does not fit this “real” rape scenario. Police officers have been found to ascribe to these myths. When asked to rate characteristics of assaults as making the story sound more or less likely to be true, police rated women who reported

having been sexually assaulted by someone they knew or by someone they had previously had sexual contact with as less reliable (Brown et al., 2007; Jordan, 2004).

Women who have experienced sexual violence have also been found to be influenced by such rape myths. Though their experiences would meet the legal definitions of rape or sexual assault, when interviewed, some women dismiss the label because their experience did not meet any number of the criteria mentioned by Temkin and Krahe (2008), including the fact that the perpetrator was not a stranger but instead a friend, partner, or acquaintance (Johnstone, 2012; Littleton et al., 2007; Rousseau et al., 2020). Unacknowledged rape is the term used to describe sexual experiences that meet the legal definition of rape but are not labeled by the experiencer as rape or sexual assault (Koss, 1985). In an effort to make hypothetical scenarios more personal to participants, Faulkner and colleagues (2008) asked 114 female undergraduates to listen to audio scenarios of sexual coercion and to imagine that the scenarios were happening to them. The women were instructed to turn off the recording when the recording reached a point when they personally would end the interaction. Participants were also provided with some information about the perpetrator, including their relationship to them. The perpetrator was said to either be a first date, a graduate teaching assistant from one of their classes, or a boyfriend that they had been seriously dating for six months. Women who has been assigned to the long-term boyfriend condition tolerated the sexually coercion situation to go on for over one minute longer than participants in the other two conditions (Faulkner et al., 2008). The authors suggested that this result may be due to current sexual scripts in heterosexual dating relationships or to greater investment in the relationship (see Relevant Theories section for more information).

Unacknowledged rapes are more likely to have a perpetrator who is more highly acquainted or romantically involved with the survivor as well as one who has engaged in consensual sexual

behaviour with the survivor prior to the incident (Littleton et al., 2007). In a metasynthesis of qualitative studies related to women's labelling of sexually assaultive and coercive experiences, sexual violence within the context of a heterosexual relationship was labelled as "normal" by many participants (Rousseau et al., 2020). In other words, women whose personal experiences did not match up with the rape script that society has prescribed to them were less likely to label what occurred as rape.

Sexual Violence within Romantic Relationships

However, research has consistently shown that these assumptions, apart from being harmfully stigmatizing, are also highly inaccurate. The most commonly reported type of rape involves a perpetrator who knows the victim to some degree and a victim that, due to fear, does not fight back and thus does not sustain physical injuries (Black et al., 2011; Temkin & Krahe, 2008). This directly contradicts the stereotypical assumptions of what a rape will consist of. Many studies suggest that the consequences and mechanisms of sexual assault and coercion vary based on the nature of the perpetrator-victim relationship. Specifically, evidence indicates that sexual violence with a perpetrator who is a romantic partner is more severe than that of other perpetrators in several significant ways. For example, Stermac and colleagues (1998) found that, of women presenting for assessment and treatment and a hospital-based sexual assault care center, those who had been attacked by boyfriends or spouses reported more severe forms of force being used than those attacked by strangers or acquaintances. Perhaps consequently, soft-tissue injuries, lacerations, and nongenital injuries have been documented as being more severe and more common when the perpetrator was a partner instead of an acquaintance or a stranger (Logan et al., 2007; Stermac et al., 1998).

Apart from physical severity, the mental ramifications of experiencing sexual assault at the hands of a partner appear to be more serious as well. Researchers who examined the effects of intimate partner versus nonpartner sexual assault on psychological wellbeing found that sexual assault by a current partner (as opposed to a past partner or nonpartner assailant) was the strongest predictor of PTSD, stress, and dissociation in women (Temple et al., 2007). Though sexual assault by a past partner was also a significant predictor for all of these psychological variables, sexual assault by a nonpartner was only a significant predictor of PTSD. Temple and colleagues (2007) surmised that this may be, in part, due to the recurrent nature of sexual assault by a partner. Further, women who experience sexual assault within a current relationship must not only attempt to deal with the sexual assault but also the perpetrator themselves (Temple et al., 2007). Similarly, Ullman and Siegel (1993) found that women who had been sexually assaulted by strangers or intimate partners reported higher levels of psychological distress than those who had been raped by acquaintances. Moreover, sexual distress (defined as having decreased sexual interest and sexual pleasure and developing a fear of sex) was most common among women who had been sexually assaulted by partners (Ullman & Siegel, 1993).

The increased severity of psychological consequences relating to sexual violence in romantic relationships may be due to the fact that this is considered a complex trauma. Complex trauma, which is a term that only came into being within the last three decades (Herman, 1992), refers to trauma that is likely chronic and occurs within specific relationships and contexts, including relationships in which the perpetrator is someone who has been afforded great trust. This is commonly found in the form of childhood abuse but can also be experienced by adults within the context of romantic relationships with abusive partners (Courtois, 2008). The need for this distinction became clear when it was realized by researchers and service providers that the types

of traumas outlined above frequently resulted in more severe and chronic psychological outcomes (Herman, 1992). Complex trauma may result in complex posttraumatic stress disorder (CPTSD), which includes the classic symptom profile of PTSD as well as the added component of disturbances to self-organization (this consists of emotional dysregulation, negative self-concept, and interpersonal problems). Among individuals who have experienced sexual violence in the context of a relationship, approximately one third to half of survivors meet the diagnostic criteria associated with CPTSD (Hyland et al., 2016; Karatzias et al., 2017; Nickerson et al., 2016), indicating that these experiences are particularly deleterious.

A possible connection between relationship and perpetrator characteristics to IPV perceptions has thus been substantiated in several different manners. Survivors of nonsexual IPV appear to potentially perceive the abuse they sustain differently depending on the relationship they have with their perpetrator. Further, the perceptions of participants responding to hypothetical scenarios of sexual IPV in research studies also have consistently been shown to be affected by relationship characteristics (Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Faulkner et al., 2008; Rebeiz & Harb, 2010). However, to date, no known published study has investigated how survivors' perceptions of sexually violent experiences may be influenced by characteristics of their relationship to the perpetrator. To conceptually establish the possible link between relationship characteristics and survivors' perceptions of their own sexual assault and coercion experiences, there are two theories in particular that can be called upon.

Relevant Theories

The investment theory states that the more invested an individual is in a relationship (romantic or otherwise), the more likely they are to remain in the relationship and focus on the positive aspects of the other person (Rusbult, 2011). Investment can take many forms. For

example, time spent with the person, resources shared, and emotional connection are all forms of investment. It is believed that being with your partner for a longer time and characterizing your relationship as more serious is associated with increased investment (Rusbult et al., 1998). Thus, individuals who experience abuse in longer, more serious relationships have been observed as being less likely to cut ties and leave the relationship than women in shorter, less serious relationships who also experience abuse (Anderson & Saunders, 2003).

The theory of cognitive dissonance, on the other hand, posits that if an individual's beliefs and actions are in contention with one another, the individual will feel cognitive dissonance and seek to resolve it (Festinger, 1957). More often than not, individuals seek to bring their beliefs in line with actions, as beliefs are changeable whereas actions are unchangeable after they have been executed (Festinger, 1964). This has been demonstrated time and time again, but perhaps never as famously as it was in the classic experiment by Festinger and Carlsmith (1959). In this experiment, participants were asked to partake in a purposeless task. They were offered a larger or smaller sum of money as compensation and then asked to tell other participants how enjoyable the task was. Those paid the smaller amount of money consistently rated the task as more interesting and fun than those who were given the larger sum of money (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) concluded that the small monetary compensation was not sufficient reason to lie and thus these participants experienced more cognitive dissonance. To resolve this dissonance, they could not change their action, so they resorted to altering their beliefs about the task. In contrast, those paid more money to participate saw this compensation as a reasonable reason why they participated and thus did not experience dissonance. Remaining in a relationship with an abusive partner, having invested great amounts of time and effort into an abusive relationship, or still actively loving someone who has been abusive are all actions that

are not easily reversible and would likely result in high levels of cognitive dissonance.

Theoretically, most understand that abuse is not to be tolerated or condoned. However, when an abuser is someone the individual has invested emotional, material, and temporal resources into, feelings of personal commitment and affection create a discomforting juxtaposition when paired with the objective knowledge that abuse is unacceptable. Resolving the dissonance that results from being in an abusive relationship would require (in simplified terms) (a) removing this person from one's life or (b) minimizing or justifying the experience of sexual assault or coercion.

Previous research has shown that women frequently minimize or justify the abusive actions of people in their lives, whether consciously or unconsciously (Goodfriend & Arriaga, 2018; Helm, et al., 2017). This could reflect a desire or need to reduce cognitive dissonance. Indeed, some research has found that women are more likely to focus on positive relationship aspects and minimize abuse when confronted with these contrasted ideas (Rosen, 1996). Some women also seem to minimize their partner's responsibility for the abuse by shouldering the blame of the violence themselves (Whiting, 2012). These phenomena may be a product of what is referred to as "spreading of the alternatives," in which individuals seek to make a chosen option more attractive and a rejected option less attractive (Greenwald, 1969). This happens when both options are equally attractive or equally unattractive. In this case, it would be highly unattractive for a person to both leave the abusive partner whom they still love and in whom they have invested heavily as well as to continue to endure the abuse. Viewing the chosen option as more attractive than it truly is allows the decision-maker to resolve their cognitive dissonance over having to choose between two similarly unappealing choices.

Moreover, certain relationship characteristics may influence the likelihood of an abused partner allocating such minimizations to their abuser. Goodfriend and Arriaga (2018) found that women were more likely to use minimization and justification techniques if they were in a current romantic relationship with the perpetrator. The authors described this response as a coping strategy, given that holding the two arguably incongruent beliefs that (a) their partner loves them and (b) their partner is abusive would cause great inner turmoil. In another study, Edwards, Kearns, Gidycz, and Calhoun (2015) found that women were significantly more likely to maintain a relationship with the perpetrator of a sexual assault experience if they were a serious dating partner instead of a casual dating partner or a friend. Though perceptions were not directly measured in this study, the observed differences in rates of relationship maintenance based on victim-perpetrator relationship type likely resulted from differences in the women's appraisals. Women who were in serious relationships with their perpetrator likely had more invested in their relationships, which would have resulted in greater cognitive dissonance. It is possible that the amount of investment and subsequent cognitive dissonance affected the decision to either continue or discontinue their relationship with the perpetrator.

This is further complicated by rape myths that dictate what acts count as "real" rapes (Temkin & Krahe, 2008) and societal expectations for sexual compliance from women depending on their relationship to the man in question (Brown et al., 2007; Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Jordan, 2004; Rebeiz & Harb, 2010). Both of these factors undermine the legitimacy of women's experiences and may make women more likely to justify or minimize such experiences. It also should be acknowledged that Western society has fostered an environment that is more concerned with protecting men from false rape accusations than seeking justice for women who have been subjected to acts of sexual violence (Gavey, 2019). As

Gavey (2019) notes, from a legal perspective, rape has been acknowledged as a serious crime for hundreds of years, but always with the caveat that it is difficult to prove. Therefore, men should be concerned about false accusation. Society also places significant worth on a woman's sexual purity, so accused men are able to cite this as a reason why a woman may be dishonest about the consensual nature of the incident (Gavey, 2019). Because the legal system has always favoured accused men over accusing women, this may also deter women from conceptualizing their experiences as legitimate instances of sexual violence; the existing legal and societal systems offer little incentive to do so.

Perceptions of Sexual Assault/Acts of Coercion

Perceptions of Blame

As previously mentioned, assignment of blame can be a particularly complex issue when it comes to experiences of sexual assault and coercion. Many women experience feelings of self-blame, which researchers have argued may be an adaptive response but also a result of society's dominant discourse on heterosexuality (Brown, 2013; Jeffrey & Barata, 2016). Self-blame, though correlated with several negative mental health consequences (Breitenbecher, 2006), may be an adaptive short-term strategy for those who remain in the abusive relationships (Brown, 2013; Herman, 1992). For instance, taking ownership of blame allows survivors to maintain a more positive view of their abuser, which may be advantageous at the time for survivors who are dependent on their abusers financially or otherwise (Brown, 2013). This willingness to forgive or reinterpret sexual assault and coercion may be a result of one's investment in their relationship; women may lose emotional support, shelter, financial backing, and much more if they end their relationship with the perpetrator. These resources collectively may consciously or unconsciously make remaining in a sexually abusive relationship more tolerable. It also may allow the sufferer

to maintain a comforting sense of control over an uncontrollable situation (Brown, 2013). For example, if a woman prescribes abuse to their inability to please their abuser, a woman may feel she has active agency over stopping the IPV she experiences, even though in reality the abuse is not under her control and likely completely unrelated to her actions (Brown, 2013; Chaudhury et al., 2017). Women are also frequently forced into the role of the ‘gate keeper,’ and therefore given most, if not all, of the responsibility of allowing or halting sexual activity (Temkin & Krahe, 2008). This same sexual script casts men as sexual initiators who will always want and pursue sex. This implies that women are required to explicitly communicate nonconsent, as men are responsible only for initiating sex and are arguably expected to be persistent even after their advances are rejected (Jozkowski et al., 2014). In one study by Jozkowski and Peterson (2013), it was found that nearly half of all women mentioned in qualitative responses that they would offer consent after being propositioned by their partner, as opposed to initiating themselves. This seems to indicate some endorsement of being placed in the role of gatekeeper during sexual encounters. Thus, when sexual activity occurs regardless of their efforts to thwart or stop it, some women may interpret it as a failing on their part.

Because of these factors, women have frequently been found to blame themselves or to direct blame away from the perpetrator through other means (such as citing external influences like alcohol consumption or natural “male sexual urges” as the cause; Brown, 2013, Jeffrey & Barata, 2016). Women who had internalized these pressures or felt as if they were required to engage in sexual activity occasionally reported “understanding” why their partner had pressured them and thus did not fault them for it (Jeffrey & Barata, 2016). Women may also differentially experience self-blame depending on their relationship with the perpetrator. Using a sample of 58 undergraduate women from a university in the United States who reported experiences that met a

legal definition of rape, Frazier and Seales (1997) found that women who experienced acquaintance rape (which was defined as having any kind of contact with the perpetrator prior to the rape) were more likely to display self-blame than women who experienced stranger rape.

Contrary to these findings, some researchers have found that some women do indeed attribute sexual assault to the perpetrator (Frazier, 2003). However, the research done by Frazier (2003) does not take into account the possibility that sufferers may assign blame to outside sources such as intoxicants. The research done by Brown (2013) and Jeffrey and Barata (2016), though illuminating, is also limited in some ways. For example, these two studies only included women who experienced sexual assault or coercion within the context of romantic relationships. Moreover, although Frazier and Seales (1997) demonstrated that the type of relationship seems to have an effect on the likelihood that a survivor will experience self-blame, they grouped acquaintances, dates, significant others, and family members all under the title of ‘acquaintance,’ likely missing possible differences between these groups. The current research seeks to expand the literature base by allowing participants to assign blame to as many parties/factors as appropriate. We also are including participants who may have experienced sexually violent events with assailants who were not romantic partners. Given the influence of forms of blame on outcomes of sexual assault/coercion survivors (Breitenbecher, 2006; Frazier & Seales, 1997) as well as the possible influence of relationship characteristics (Brown, 2013; Frazier & Seales, 1997; Herman, 1992), it is important to investigate the construct of blame with a variety of perpetrators, not just romantic partners.

Perceptions of Emotional Impact

Emotional reactions to sexual assault or coercion experiences can be just as multifaceted as assignment of blame is. As described above, Jeffrey and Barata (2016) examined women’s

responses and interpretations of their own sexual coercion experiences with men with whom they were romantically involved. Nearly all twelve of the university women they interviewed reported negatively-valenced emotions relating to their experiences. These negative emotions ranged from irritation to anger to fear. However, most women also found their experiences of sexual coercion “mostly unproblematic” and reported being “not particularly troubled by it,” falling more within the bounds of what could be labelled a ‘neutrally-valenced’ emotional response (Jeffrey & Barata, 2016). Some women even reported more positive emotional reactions to their experiences of sexual coercion. For example, some women believed the coercive actions of their partner to be “attractive” or “complimenting.” Not only does this study show that reactions to sexual coercion and assault can be variable but, perhaps most significantly, these emotions can coexist within the same woman about the same events.

These seemingly conflicting emotions have been found to extend to sexual assault experiences outside of romantic relationships. Scerri (2015) devised a qualitative study looking at a sample of 15 women who had been subjected to sexual, physical, and/or emotional abuse during their childhoods by their fathers. The participating women were interviewed about their experiences and their emotions relating to the events and the perpetrator. Women reported seeing the perpetrator dichotomously, both as an abuser and as a parental figure, and they struggled with the different emotions these two opposing roles evoked within them. They cited strong positive feelings of love but also strong negative feelings of fear, terror, and sadness, which were difficult to reconcile with one another.

This research highlights how complicated one’s relationship and resulting emotions towards a perpetrator of abuse can be. However, no studies on emotional reaction to sexually assaultive or coercive experiences could be found with victims whose perpetrators were not

romantic partners or family members. The current study will expand the present literature by seeking to include an array of perpetrator-victim relationships. This will inform us of possible differences in survivors' emotional reactions to their sexually violent experiences based on their relationship with the perpetrator.

Perceptions of Label Validity

There has been consistent evidence that women who endure experiences that would meet the definitional criteria of sexual assault or sexual coercion are not necessarily able or willing to label these experiences as such. For example, Jeffrey and Barata (2016) found many women in their study would describe instances of sexual assault and sexual coercion but would resist labelling these instances as such. To circumvent the label, they would frequently minimize the seriousness of the event or resort to placing blame away from the perpetrator, as previously discussed. This happened more commonly when the sexually assaultive/coercive events were less forceful, in part because the use of force is a criteria for "real" rape in popular culture (Temkin & Krahe, 2008), and women's experiences did not meet this requirement in these cases. However, it also occurred in response to events that would meet the definitional criteria of rape (Jeffrey & Barata, 2016).

Other research has shown that the process of labelling is not cut and dry. In a qualitative study with 13 women attending a Canadian university, Glos (2019) found that women struggled to acknowledge their experiences of sexual assault in the wake of the #MeToo Movement (a social movement, initially created by Tarana Burke to raise awareness of sexual harassment and domestic violence against women and girls, that inspired survivors to publicly disclose their experiences of sexual violence; Nigro et al., 2019). Though the #MeToo Movement seemed to generally reinforce the rightful belief that participants' experiences were problematic by

validating experiences that do not fit the mould of the stereotypical “real rape,” women in this study struggled to define their experiences. They struggled to assign labels and to assign blame. Some women outright refused such labels. However, frequently, women expressed confusion or vacillated between different positions within their narratives (Glos, 2019). This suggests that dichotomizing the act of labelling may limit understanding of survivors’ internal processes.

Supporting this possibility, Johnstone (2012) has documented the existence of a spectrum of acceptance and denial of labels, something she referred to as the ambivalent voice. Survivors who speak in the ambivalent voice are those who have experienced definitional sexual assault/coercion and seem to acknowledge these labels while concurrently rejecting them during the same account (Johnstone, 2012). As with all other perceptions discussed previously, there is a need to allow for and explore multiple perceptions that could exist simultaneously in participants’ accounts in the current study. There are no known studies that examine how different perpetrator-victim relationships (or relationship characteristics) may influence the degree to which women struggle with the task of assigning a label to the assaultive or coercive event they experienced.

The Current Study

Because of these gaps in the literature, the present study aimed to investigate the ways in which aspects of women’s relationships with their perpetrators may influence their perceptions of sexual violence that has occurred within these relationships with a sample of self-identified women who have experienced a range of sexually coercive and/or assaultive experiences. Specifically, relationship characteristics such as the length, seriousness, and type of relationship, participants’ general closeness to the other person, whether participants were still in contact with the perpetrator, and participants’ satisfaction with and commitment to the relationship were

examined. Investigated perceptions included designation of blame for the incident's occurrence, affective reactions to the incident, and whether participants acknowledge their experience as sexual assault or coercion. Previous research has investigated similar perceptions but without relating them to relationship characteristics. For example, Jeffrey and Barata (2016) studied perceptions among 12 university-attending women. Three themes were analyzed using content analysis: (a) Subjective Reactions and Emotional Responses to Sexual Coercion, (b) Interpretations of Sexual Coercion, and (c) Effects of Sexual Coercion. The authors found notable variability in the valence of the women's perceptions in all three themes. However, they did not attempt to attribute this variability to any specific differences that may exist from survivor to survivor. In the current study, I further this work by investigating perceptions as a function of perpetrator-victim relationship characteristics.

This research therefore addressed a major gap in the literature regarding sexual violence perceptions as related to relationship characteristics. Although past research has focused on individuals' perceptions of sexual violence based on hypothetical scenarios (Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Rebeiz & Harb, 2010), this was the first known study to elucidate how survivors' perceptions of their own experiences may be affected by the characteristics of their relationship with the perpetrator. The study also established if being in a longer and more serious relationship was associated with perceiving sexual violence as more tolerable, as has been shown with nonsexual violence. This study sought to identify relationship characteristics that may have a significant effect on survivors' perceptions of their experiences by looking at a variety of different victim-perpetrator relationships, something that had yet to be investigated in relation to perceptions. This may, in turn, better inform clinicians about the prognosis of survivors of a

range of sexual assault/coercion experiences. All told, this information serves to better advise the formulation of theories and illuminates the inner workings of sexually violent relationships.

Hypotheses

Generally, the purpose of this study was to ascertain how certain victim-perpetrator characteristics affect survivors' interpretations of experiences of sexual assault or coercion. However, because this study investigated subject matter that has not previously been examined, it was primarily exploratory. To allow for more nuanced information, I included a qualitative portion within the study to better inform final conclusions. Within this general objective, there were six more specific hypotheses that were investigated. Both qualitative and quantitative data were used to confirm or disconfirm the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1. I expected individuals in romantic relationships versus non-romantic relationships (i.e., friendships/working relationships/acquaintanceships) would be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator (H1a) and onto the self or external influences (H1b), to report more positive emotions (H1c) and fewer negative emotions (H1d), and to be less likely to label their experience as sexual assault (H1e).

Hypothesis 2. Additionally, I anticipated that individuals who rated themselves as feeling closer to the perpetrator would be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator (H2a) and onto the self or external influences (H2b), to report more positive emotions (H2c) and fewer negative emotions (H2d), and to be less likely to label their experience as sexual assault (H2e).

Hypothesis 3. I also hypothesized that individuals who were still in contact with the perpetrator would be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator (H3a) and onto the self or external influences (H3b), to report more positive emotions (H3c) and fewer negative emotions (H3d), and to be less likely to label their experience as sexual assault (H3e).

Because romantic partners historically have made up a large proportion of women's sexual assault experiences (Culbertson et al, 2001), one hypothesis (hypothesis 4) specifically concerning this subset of victim-perpetrator relationships was developed.

Hypothesis 4. I expected that individuals who were in serious romantic relationships versus casual romantic relationships with their perpetrators would be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator (H4a) and onto the self or external influences (H4b), to report more positive emotions (H4c) and fewer negative emotions (H4d), and to be less likely to label their experience as sexual assault (H4e).

Hypothesis 5. In addition, I hypothesized that individuals who were more satisfied with and more committed to their relationships with their perpetrators would be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator (H5a) and onto the self or external influences (H5b), to report more positive emotions (H5c) and fewer negative emotions (H5d), and to be less likely to label their experience as sexual assault (H5e).

Hypothesis 6. Finally, I hypothesized that individuals who had known their perpetrators for longer periods of time prior to the sexually assaultive/coercive event would be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator (H6a) and onto the self or external influences (H6b), to report more positive emotions (H6c) and fewer negative emotions (H6d), and to be less likely to label their experience as sexual assault (H6e).

Methods

Participants

Participants consisted of 390 self-identified women, age 17 to 56 ($M = 23.99$, $SD = 7.49$), who had experienced sexual coercion and/or assault with a male perpetrator. Because a substantial number of women (between 20% and 29%) experience rape or attempted rape while

attending university (Muelenhard et al., 2017; Rennison & Addington, 2014), participants were primarily recruited from the University of Windsor using the Psychology Department Participant Pool ($n = 311$). However, to gain a more diverse sample overall, social media posts on Kijiji and Facebook were created to recruit participants from the general Windsor, Ontario community and other Canadian cities. They included information about the study, the compensation, who would be eligible to participate, and how to contact the primary investigator (Appendix O).

Furthermore, the study was posted on the Canadian Psychological Association's Recruit Research Participants Portal (R2P2). In total, nonparticipant pool recruitment methods resulted in the recruitment of 79 more participants. It should be noted that there were slight differences between the wording of the advertisements for the community and university samples because of different methods of compensation. Specifically, because of limited funding for this study, the ad for community participants included the question "Have you experienced an unwanted sexual experience that you would be willing to answer questions about?" This question was included on the community ad to try to screen out women who had not experienced an unwanted sexual experience in the past (and to reduce the number of participants who would need to be paid for their time for completing the initial screening questions). Because university students recruited through the participant pool were compensated with bonus points in courses they were currently enrolled in (which did not require funding), the ad did not specifically mention that the study was for women who had experienced an unwanted sexual experience. Instead, participants' eligibility for the main study was determined by a set of screening questions. Those who did not meet the criteria, were exited out of the survey after completing the screening questions and compensated with the appropriate bonus points. Those who met study eligibility criteria were presented with the full online survey (and compensated with the appropriate bonus points). This may explain

why a larger proportion of participants from the university sample were removed due to not meeting inclusion criteria.

Because sexual assault and sexual coercion disproportionately affect women (Hines et al., 2016; Statistics Canada, 2018), only individuals who identified as female were recruited. All reported being cisgender females. Female participants were able to respond to the online survey regarding experiences they have had with perpetrators they knew prior to the incident who identify as male. Stranger perpetrators were not included. The participants were also instructed to only include experiences they have had after the age of 14 years to ensure that no experiences of child sexual abuse (a construct that is outside of the current study's field of focus) were reported. Reportedly, men make up 98% of the individuals arrested for sexual assaults in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017), and thus the choice to include only incidents with a male perpetrator was made because (1) there would be a large pool of incidents to draw from, and (2) we would likely not have the statistical power to analyze incidents involving perpetrators who identify as female. Other inclusion criteria were that the participants had to be at least 17 years old and they had to be able to read and write in English. The age 17 was chosen because it is the standard age for research on sexual coercion (C. Senn, 01-25-2021, personal communication; Rueff & Gross, 2017; Senn et al., 2000). Furthermore, given that the age of consent is 16 years in Ontario, instances of sexual assault and coercion are not considered sexual abuse (a construct outside the scope of the current study) if they occur at the age of 16 years or older.

One hundred eighty-nine cases were excluded from the main analyses because their screening data indicated that they did not meet the inclusion criteria. That is, most of those who were excluded did not report any sexually assaultive or coercive events ($n = 183$), four cases were not deemed to have had a sexually coercive or assaultive target experience based on their

responses to qualitative questions, and 10 cases had a sizable amount of missing data. Four other cases (n for Community = 1, n for University sample = 3) were removed because they indicated that the nature of their relationship to the perpetrator was outside the prevue of the current study (i.e., the perpetrators were family members or strangers). None of the participants were believed to be bots. This resulted in a total sample size of 193 participants (52 from the community and 141 from the University of Windsor's Participant Pool).

Independent samples t tests and Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted to assess whether there were significant demographic differences between cases that were kept and cases that were removed. Cases that were retained differed from cases that were removed on all variables, apart from current employment and romantic relationship status. Retained participants were significantly older than removed participants ($M = 24.94$, $SD = 7.90$ versus $M = 23.04$, $SD = 6.95$, respectively), $t(372) = 2.47$, $p = .014$, and had lower yearly income ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 3.91$ versus $M = 4.18$, $SD = 4.79$ respectively), $t(373) = -0.83$, $p = .002$. Participants that were retained were more likely to identify as a sexuality other than heterosexual than participants who were removed ($Rank = 198.40$, $n = 187$ versus $Rank = 177.66$, $n = 188$ respectively), $U = 14557.00$, $p = .003$, and to hold university degrees, ($Rank = 198.40$, $n = 187$ versus $Rank = 177.66$, $n = 188$ respectively), $U = 14557.00$, $p = .003$. Furthermore, retained participants were more likely to be white than their removed counterparts, ($Rank = 198.40$, $n = 187$ versus $Rank = 177.66$, $n = 188$ respectively), $U = 14557.00$, $p = .003$. Based on the number of demographic characteristics that differed between retained and removed participants, it is presumed that these two groups are qualitatively different than one another. More specifically, retained participants were, on average, older, had lower yearly income, and were more likely to be nonheterosexual, White, and hold a university degree.

Descriptive statistics (see Table 1) indicated that the average age of a participant from the community was 30 years old whereas the average age of a participant from the university sample was 23 years old. The majority of participants from both the community and the university sample reported their sexuality as heterosexual (72% and 69%, respectively). Almost half of the university participants indicated that they had some post-secondary education (42%) whereas participants recruited from the community primarily reported a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education (44%). Most participants from both samples were White (60% and 63%, respectively). Furthermore, the majority of community participants worked full-time (42%) whereas the university student sample primarily worked part-time (53%). Income varied greatly in the community sample, with most people reporting making \$20,000 to \$29,999 (17%) or \$60,000 to \$69,999 (12%) or preferring not to disclose their yearly income (12%). In contrast, nearly half of the participants from the participant pool reported making less than \$10,000 a year (48%).

Independent samples *t* tests and Mann-Whitney *U* tests were conducted to assess whether participants recruited from the community differed significantly from those recruited from the university pool on any demographic variables. Participants from the two samples did not differ significantly in terms of their race, sexuality, or employment status. However, results showed that community participants ($M = 29.88$, $SD = 8.43$) differed from those from the university sample ($M = 23.09$, $SD = 6.85$) when their age was compared, with community participants being significantly older, $t(185) = -5.66$, $p = .025$. Community participants also had significantly higher incomes ($M = 5.96$, $SD = 3.98$ versus $M = 3.00$, $SD = 3.58$, respectively), $t(185) = -4.89$, $p = .023$; were less likely to be single ($Rank = 107.75$, $n = 51$ versus $Rank = 88.84$, $n = 136$), $U = 4169.50$, $p = .014$; and more likely to hold a university degree than their university participant

counterparts ($Rank = 137.24, n = 51$ versus $Rank = 77.78, n = 136$, respectively), $U = 5674.00, p < .001$. Based on these meaningful demographic differences, it can be asserted that the current study's sample was successfully diversified by including the two different recruitment methods.

I conducted several a priori power analyses using G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009) to help determine the proposed sample size for the current study. The suggested sample sizes varied greatly, from a estimated N of 111 (suggested for correlations of a medium effect size using $|p| = 0.3$ [Cohen, 1988], $\alpha = 0.05$, power $[1 - \beta] = 0.95$) to an N of 642 (suggested for chi-square tests using $\varphi = 0.3$ [medium effect size; Cohen, 1988], $\alpha = 0.05$, power $[1 - \beta] = 0.80$). Most, however, did suggest sample sizes between $N = 111$ (for correlations) and 176 (for t tests).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for the University Student Sample and Community Sample

Demographic characteristic	University (<i>N</i> = 141)		Community (<i>N</i> = 52)		<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%		
Racial/Ethnic identity					3687.00	.435
Arab/Middle Eastern	12	8.50	4	7.70		
Black/African Canadian/American; Caribbean Canadian/American	8	5.70	3	5.80		
East Asian/Pacific Islander	8	5.70	3	5.80		
Indigenous/First Nations/Metis	3	2.10	0	0.00		
South Asian/Indian Pakistani	8	5.70	3	5.80		
White/Caucasian/European-Canadian	89	63.10	31	59.60		
Latin/Hispanic/South American	0	0.00	3	5.80		
Biracial/Multiethnic	10	7.10	5	9.60		
An ethnicity not listed here	3	2.10	0	0.00		
Sexual orientation					3579.00	.668
Heterosexual/Straight	102	72.30	36	69.20		
Lesbian/Gay	2	1.40	1	1.90		
Bisexual	23	16.30	10	19.20		
Pansexual	6	4.30	4	7.70		

Same-gender loving	1	0.70	0	0.00		
Queer	2	1.40	1	1.90		
A sexuality not listed here	1	0.70	0	0.00		
Unknown	3	2.10	0	0.00		
Prefer not to answer	1	0.70	0	0.00		
Relationship status					4169.50	.014*
Single	62	44.00	13	25.00		
Dating (Casual)	5	3.50	6	11.50		
Dating (Serious)	56	39.70	15	28.80		
Cohabiting	5	3.50	3	5.80		
Married	9	6.40	8	15.40		
Engaged	0	0.00	2	3.80		
Common law married	1	0.70	2	3.80		
Divorced	2	1.40	2	3.80		
Separated	0	0.70	1	1.90		
Prefer not to answer	1	0.70	0	0.00		
Employment status						
Working full-time	30	21.30	22	42.30		
Working part-time	75	53.20	15	28.80		
Unemployed	31	22.00	9	17.30		
An employment status not listed	5	3.50	6	11.50		
Educational background					5574.00	<.001

High school diploma or equivalent (GED)	55	39.0	5	9.6		
Vocational / Technical School	1	0.7	1	1.9		
Some post-secondary education	59	41.8	3	5.8		
College degree	14	9.9	8	15.4		
Bachelor's degree	11	7.8	23	44.2		
Master's degree	1	0.7	11	21.2		
Prefer not to answer	55	39.0	1	1.9		
	University (<i>N</i> = 141)		Community (<i>N</i> = 52)			
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Yearly income					-4.89	.023
Under \$10,000	67	47.50	5	9.60		
\$10,000 to \$19,999	30	21.30	5	9.60		
\$20,000 to \$29,999	14	9.90	9	17.30		
\$30,000 to \$39,999	9	6.40	5	9.60		
\$40,000 to \$49,999	5	3.50	3	5.80		
\$50,000 to \$59,999	1	0.70	2	3.80		
\$60,000 to \$69,999	1	0.70	6	11.50		
\$70,000 to \$79,999	1	0.70	4	7.70		
\$80,000 to \$89,999	0	0.00	4	7.70		
\$90,000 to \$99,999	1	.70	2	3.80		
\$100,000 to \$124,999	0	0.00	1	1.90		
\$150,000 or higher	1	.70	0	0.00		

Prefer not to say	11	7.80	6	11.50
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Design

Due to the novelty of this research, a convergent parallel mixed-methods design was used (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). It was believed that including both quantitative and qualitative features would illuminate survivors' perceptions and offer more context about participants' experiences of sexual coercion and/or assault than if only one approach was employed. Including a qualitative aspect to the study was deemed particularly important as this study focuses on an understudied topic. However, given the scope of the current study, only the quantitative results of the study have been presented.

Procedure

After receiving clearance from the Research Ethics Board and the Psychology Department Participant Pool, an advertisement (Appendix J) was posted on the Participant Pool's online system, inviting participant to take part in the study. Postings were also placed on Instagram, Kijiji, and the Canadian Psychological Association's research recruitment page to recruit individuals who may not be students at the University of Windsor (Appendix O). Participants completed all parts of the study online. When the participants signed up to participate on the Participant Pool's online system, they were given a link to the online survey. Individuals recruited through community postings emailed the primary investigator to express interest in the study. The primary investigator then responded by emailing them a short description of the study as well as a link that would lead them first to the letter of information and then to the study's questionnaires (Appendix K). Once the participant had opened the link, they were first directed to a consent form that described the purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits of the study as well as their rights as participants, compensation, and confidentiality (Appendix L and M). Once informed consent has been acquired, the participants

were directed to complete measures assessing participants' demographic characteristics (Appendix A), sexual coercion and assault experience (Appendix B), perpetrator characteristics (Appendix C), and a romantic relationships questionnaire (Appendix E) if they report that the perpetrator was a current or past significant other. Each participant was assigned a unique numerical ID to deidentify their data.

If participants did not report any experiences of sexual assault or coercion, they were presented with a mood neutralizing task (Appendix I) before being informed that the study had been completed. They then were offered a downloadable list of resources (Appendix N) and awarded 0.5 bonus points or a \$5.00 Tim Horton's e-gift card for their participation. If they did report one or more experiences of sexual assault or coercion, they were brought to a page asking them to specify (a) when their last sexually assaultive or coercive experience was (by month and year), (b) who the perpetrator was (i.e., acquaintance, friend, dating partner, co-worker, neighbour, or someone other than the relationships listed), and (c) whether or not they were still in contact with the perpetrator (*yes* or *no*). They were also asked to confirm that the perpetrator identified as male. If they noted that the perpetrator was a dating partner, they were asked to answer three more questions: (a) how they would describe their relationship with the perpetrator (*serious* or *casual*), (b) whether or not they were still romantically involved with the perpetrator (*yes* or *no*), and (c) how long they had known the perpetrator prior to the occurrence of the target event (in years, weeks, and months). All participants were also told that the perpetrator of the target event would be referred to as Person X from that point forward. Person X was chosen because it is applicable to all possible relationships that participants may have had with their perpetrators and to keep the wording similar throughout the study. Participants then completed the Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale (URCS; Dibble et al., 2012; Appendix D), the

Rape Attribution Questionnaire RAQ; Frazier, 2003; Appendix F), the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988; Appendix G), and several open-ended questions meant to qualitatively assess the participant's emotions, allocation of blame, and labelling perceptions in relation to their most recent event of sexual assault or coercion (Appendix H). These questionnaires were administered in a randomized order to reduce the possibility of any order effects. The labelling questions used in this study were originally developed for another study seeking to understand women's labelling choices after the #MeToo Movement (Glos, 2019). The URCS was used to assess the participant's subjective closeness to their perpetrator, the RAQ was used to measure how the participant attributes blame for the sexually coercive event, and the PANAS was used to assess the participant's emotions relating to the event. Afterwards, they were presented with a mood neutralizing task (Appendix I), given a list of resources, and provided with 1.5 bonus points or a \$20.00 e-gift card.

Measures

Demographic Information

The participants were given a demographic questionnaire that captured standard characteristics such as age, race, ethnicity, education, and gender identity as well as participants' current relationship status. If participants indicated that the perpetrator was or is a romantic partner, they were then directed to a relationship history questionnaire assessing the length and seriousness of the participant's relationship, their satisfaction with and commitment to the relationship, among other things. If the participant was not in a relationship, the relationship history questionnaire was not presented.

Sexual Coercion and Assault and Labelling Perceptions

The Sexual Experiences Survey-Short Form Victimization (SES-SFV; Koss et al., 2007; Appendix B) was used to ascertain participants' experiences with forms of sexual violence. With the permission of the SES-SFV's author, the instructions were altered, asking participants to only report incidents that occurred with male perpetrators that were known to the participant prior to the incident (M. Koss, personal communication, 2020-11-01). Participants were asked to only report incidents that occurred since they were over fourteen years of age to ensure that no child sexual abuse was reported. This questionnaire had eight sets of questions in total. Five sets of questions captured a comprehensive range of sexual assault and coercion experiences without labelling them as such. This was of great importance, as it has been found in past research that not all individuals who meet the definitional criteria of having experienced sexual assault or coercion label it in this way (Glos, 2019; Johnstone, 2012; Koss, 1985). Avoiding labels allowed questions to remain accessible to all participants, regardless of whether or not they saw their experience as an act of sexual assault or coercion. Participants rated how frequently they had experienced the five coercive acts since turning 14 years of age under a range of coercive circumstances on the following response scale: *0 times, 1 time, 2 times, or 3+ times*. Three other questions on the SES-SFV asked about whether the acts had occurred one or more times (*yes/no*), the gender of the perpetrator(s) (*female only, male only, both females and males*), and whether the participants believed they had been raped or not (*yes/no*). A fourth question asking whether the participant believed they had been sexually assaulted (*yes/no*) was added because Canadian legislation primarily refers to sexual assault as opposed to rape. The final question was used to quantify whether participants ultimately acknowledge their experiences as rape or sexual assault and served as the variable measuring perceptions of labeling.

Using a sample of 433 women, Johnson and colleagues (2017) succeeded in validating the SES-SFV as a measure of sexual victimization. Johnson and colleagues (2017) also established that rates of sexual assault and coercion reported by survivors were comparable both when the SES-SFV was administered in person and when it was completed online. The SES-SFV demonstrated good predictive validity and good internal consistency with an estimate of .92. In the current study, the SES-SFV demonstrated excellent internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .93

Experiences of Consent

Because the SES-SFV uses the verbiage “without my consent” in its instructions, a measure meant to capture participants' experiences with consent was included (Appendix Q). This was done because, as previously outlined, the current study does not require a lack of verbal consent for incidents to be labelled as sexual assault and coercion. Participants were asked to endorse items aimed at explaining elements of consent in their target experience. It included 17 possible options, including one in which participants could write a description of their experience if the other 16 items did not capture an important element of their target experience. These items attempted to capture elements of verbal and non-verbal consent (or lack thereof), as well as situational reasons why women may have been unable to consent. This questionnaire was intended to identify whether the current sample's experiences of consent aligned with the wide and inclusive definition of sexual assault and coercion I used in this study (i.e., lack of consent does not require a verbal rejection of the perpetrator's advances).

Closeness to Perpetrator

To gain a sense of how close participants were to their perpetrators, the Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale was used (URCS; Dibble et al., 2012). The URCS is a self-report

measure consisting of 12 items that intend to measure the closeness of social and personal relationships. Every item was rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*). The resulting scores from all 12 items were then averaged to create an overall score of closeness. Originally, the items left a blank space in which the participant was supposed to imagine the title of the person they were being asked about (friend, boyfriend, brother, etc.). However, to remain consistent throughout the survey, the title “Person X” was inserted instead of the blank space.

Many measures of closeness are specifically intended for individuals in romantic relationships, which made them inappropriate for the current study, as I included a variety of perpetrator-victim relationship types. In comparison, the URCS has been found to apply to dating couples ($N = 192$), female friends and strangers ($N = 330$), friends ($N = 170$), and family members ($N = 155$) with high reliability across relationship types (mean $\alpha = .96$; Dibble et al., 2012). Each separate sample also offered results that were unidimensional and internally consistent. Furthermore, when using confirmatory factor analysis, URCS items were found to load on the same factor as the Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (IOS) item, another measure of relational closeness. In contrast, measures of satisfaction (which can be thought of as a related but distinct concept) loaded on a different factor. This indicates the URCS has convergent and discriminant validity (Dibble et al., 2012). Further research by Kimbler and colleagues (2015) confirmed that the URCS was an appropriate measure to use of when assessing same-age and intergenerational relationships while using a sample that was diverse in age. In the current study, the URCS was shown to have excellent internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .98$).

Measure of Investment

The Investment Model Scale (Rusbult, et al., 1998; Appendix P) was used to measure the constructs of satisfaction and commitment. The measure consists of four subscales meant to measure how invested an individual is in their relationship. It measures an individual's commitment (seven items), their satisfaction (five items), the quality of their alternatives (six items), and the investment they have made in that relationship (six items). The first item of the satisfaction, quality of alternatives and investment subscales are rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Do Not Agree At All*, 4 = *Agree Completely*). All other items are rated on an 8-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Do Not Agree At All*, 8 = *Agree Completely*). The original measure was slightly altered so that items apply to all types of relationships instead of to romantic relationships only. For the purposes of this study, only the satisfaction and commitment subscales was in statistical analyses. However, in an attempt to keep the measure as close to its original form as possible for the purposes of validity, the other two subscales were also included. Internal consistency was found to be good for the commitment subscale, with an Cronbach's alpha of .86.

Due to a manual entry error that occurred when developing the online questionnaire for this study, one of the five items meant to measure satisfaction was not included. Because of this accidental omission, the validity or reliability of this portion of the measure may have been reduced. However, one of the Investment Model's authors indicated that it was very common for a number of items to be reduced by researchers (C. R. Agnew, personal communication, 2020-08-16). Despite the missing item, Cronbach's alpha was .83 in the current sample, indicating that the reliability of the four-item scale was good.

Perceptions of Blame

The Rape Attribution Questionnaire (RAQ; Frazier, 2003), a 25-item self-report measure, was used to measure participants' perceptions of blame, either towards oneself or towards the perpetrator. Both blame designations had five items dedicated to its measurement. There were 15 other items that measure the participant's present control, future control, and the perceived likelihood of future assaults, but they were not used in analyses for the current study. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Never*, 5 = *Very Often*) using the prompt "How often have you thought: This happened to me because...". This was an alteration of the original prompt ("How often have you thought: I was assaulted because..."). The alteration was made so as not to influence participants' labelling perceptions with the consent of the RAQ's author (P. Frazier, personal communication, 2020-11-01). The original prompt assumed that the participant sees their experience as assault, which some may not. In the perpetrator blame questions, the term "the rapist" was replaced with *Person X*, which the participants were previously told would be used to refer to their perpetrator. Items that measured self-blame and perpetrator-blame were averaged separately to create two composite scores representing how much they blamed themselves and how much they blamed the perpetrator. Frazier (2003) found in her original study, using a sample of 171 women, that the RAQ had good internal consistency and test-retest reliability. Both the self-blame and perpetrator-blame subtests were found to have good internal consistency, with estimates of .88 and .84, respectively.

Perceptions of Emotion

To measure the participants' emotional state during the event, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988) was used. The PANAS includes twenty items, all single-word emotions that capture either a positive or negative feeling. These items were rated

on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Very slightly or not at all*, 5 = *Extremely*). Ten of these items represented positively-valenced emotions whereas the remaining ten represented negatively-valenced emotions. Scores on the items of the PANAS were added together to create two composite scores, one representing positive emotionality and the other representing negative emotionality. The final composite scores could both range from 10-50. With the permission of the authors, the wording of the instructions was changed from "Indicate the extent you have felt this way in the past week" to "Indicate the extent you have felt this way about the target experience" to ascertain the participant's feelings about the sexually assaultive or coercive event in question (D. Watson, personal communication, 2020-12-29).

Watson, Clark, and Tellegan (1988) demonstrated that the PANAS was highly internally consistent and uncorrelated as well as stable for up to a 2-month time period. Crawford and Henry (2004) later confirmed the PANAS' reliability and validity with a nonclinical sample of 1,003 adults. The PANAS also displayed measurement invariance across demographic subgroups. They did, however, note that positive affect and negative affect subscales were not completely independent from one another (Crawford & Henry, 2004). In the current study, the PANAS displayed good internal consistency, with an estimate of .84. Individually, the scales also displayed very high levels of internal consistency, with the positive emotions scale having an estimate of .88 and the negative emotions scale having an estimate of .91.

Validity Questions

To help assess whether or not participants were appropriately attending to the online survey and to fend against bots (i.e., automated form fillers), one validity question was embedded in each of the above described quantitative questionnaires (e.g., "Please select [insert

response option] as your response to this question”). I also included a captcha question after the consent form to deter and/or to help identify bots.

Mood Neutralizing Task

Due to the sensitive content examined in the current study, participants were asked to provide responses to two mood neutralizing questions before completing or withdrawing from the study. The two final qualitative, open-ended items asked participants to write about their happiest childhood memory and about an activity they do for fun in unlimited character text boxes (see Appendix I). Given that this study focused on events that may be stressful for participants to think and answer questions about, these questions were used to mitigate any possible emotional distress participants may experience during the course of the study. Positive mood induction tasks such as these have previously been found to be an effective method for reducing emotional distress (Siedlecka & Denson, 2019; Westermann et al., 1996).

Data Analyses

This study used a convergent parallel design, a mixed methods design in which quantitative and qualitative information will be gathered separately but simultaneously in the hopes of garnering a more holistic picture of the issue (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). However, as mentioned above, the current manuscript will only be reporting on the quantitative results of the current study.

Quantitative data were inspected for missingness, outliers, and various assumptions (normality, linearity, multicollinearity etc.) prior to running the primary analyses. I also ran descriptive statistics for all variables of interest. Primary analyses consisted of bivariate correlations, *t* tests, chi-square tests of independence, and regression analyses based on the characteristics of the data (see Table 6 for specifics).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Data Cleaning and Missing Data

I conducted data analyses using SPSS (Version 27). I confirmed that responses were within appropriate ranges and verified that no abnormal response patterns were obvious (i.e., short testing duration).

There were five questions created as validity checks to ascertain whether participants had maintained their focus during the study. None of the remaining participants failed more than two out of the five validity checks, with 21% of the sample failing at least one of the validity checks. Specifically, of the people who did fail at least one validity checks, 90% failed a single validity check ($n = 35$). The remaining 10% failed two of the five validity checks ($n = 4$). Because no participant failed more than half of the validity checks, all participants were retained.

Next, I investigated whether remaining cases were missing data in a random or nonrandom pattern. Nonrandom missing values are thought of as a threat to generalizability; if researchers remove all missing values, they are likely removing participants who are significantly different than those who were not missing data (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2012). Because of this, it is unwise to remove cases with missing data, and a method of estimation is required to replace missing values. After excluding one variable with high levels of expected missingness (because it was only answered by a subset of participants due to branching rules created in the online questionnaire [i.e., who indicated that Person X was a romantic partner]), Little's MCAR Test was found to be nonsignificant, $\chi^2(35) = 38.83$, $p = .301$. Thus, the missingness of data can be assumed to be random.

I ran separate t tests for variables that were missing over 5% of data (the amount of time participants had known Person X prior to the target incident, which was missing 9.5% of its data and the level of commitment participants reported, which was missing 5.8%). It was found that the missingness in these two variables was unrelated to all other variables of interest. Deletion of cases with missing values was not considered for this data set as it appeared that missingness was scattered throughout many cases and deleting all cases with any missingness would incur a significant loss in sample size. Furthermore, because it was found that data were randomly missing and because most variables were missing less than 1% of their data, it was decided that missing values would not be estimated.

Sample Size

After missing data were addressed, sample size was assessed. I had previously conducted several a priori power analyses using G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009) to help determine appropriate sample sizes for the current study. The suggested sample sizes varied greatly from an estimated N of 111 (suggested for correlations of a medium effect size using $|p| = 0.3$ [Cohen, 1988], $\alpha = 0.05$, power $[1 - \beta] = 0.95$) to an N of 642 (suggested for chi-square tests using $\phi = 0.3$ [medium effect size; Cohen, 1988], $\alpha = 0.05$, power $[1 - \beta] = 0.80$). This large variation was mainly due to the results of the chi-square power analysis (i.e., analyses based on two dichotomous variables). This sample size exceeded the suggested sample size for the correlations, t tests, and multiple regression I intended to run. However, the current sample size did not meet the suggested requirements for chi-square tests. Thus, for the chi-square test analyses, bootstrapping (and Fischer exact tests) were used to help mitigate any issues that may result from low statistical power. However, results from chi-square tests should be interpreted with caution.

Assumptions

I then ran tests of assumptions to identify whether they had been violated. First, outliers were identified using Cook's Distance, Leverage, and standardized residuals to identify possible univariate and multivariate outliers. Leverage values did not exceed the cut-off value of 0.13 ($4 * [1 + 7/189]$), indicating that there were no significant outliers on independent variables. Standardized residuals, which are thought to be notable outliers if values exceed $|3|$, showed that most dependent variables did not have any significant outliers. However, on the composite score of positive emotions (as measured by the PANAS), two cases with z scores exceeding $|3|$ were identified, meaning that two outliers existed within this dependent variable. I conducted one Cook's Distance test for each dependent variable (self-blame, perpetrator blame, positive emotions, negative emotions, label acceptance of "rape" and label acceptance of "sexual assault") using a cut-off value of 0.0212. This resulted in 34 cases being identified as multivariate outliers on at least one of the six dependent variables. These outliers were then examined closely to be certain there were no abnormalities or incorrectly entered data that may have been initially missed. It was found that two cases reported no target experience, and thus these cases were then removed, leaving a sample of 187 participants.

In research such as this, removing outliers is, in some respects, undesirable. The base rates for some experiences, especially the most severe experiences, are naturally low, so it stands to reason that a small number of cases may have more extreme values than the majority of the sample. Furthermore, merely because a data point is extreme does not inherently imply that it is invalid. Removing the most extreme experiences may hamper the ability to capture the complexities of survivor's perceptions and experiences. In situations such as these, it is recommended that main analyses be performed with and without outliers, to see if these cases

exert such undue influence that they change significant conclusions (Pituch & Stevens, 2016; see Appendix R). Thus, I kept the outliers within the dataset in an attempt to capture the richest information possible.

Normality was then assessed using values of skewness and kurtosis and by examining Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. Skewness and kurtosis values did not exceed the cut-offs of $|2|$ and $|3|$, respectively, except for one variable of interest. Specifically, the variable representing the amount of time participants knew Person X prior to the incident exceeded both cut-offs. However, underestimates of variances associated with positively kurtotic variables (of which this one was) disappear when samples are greater than 100 (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2012). Statistically significant kurtosis is also unlikely to significantly affect analyses in larger samples (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2012).

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests for most continuous variables of interest, however, were significant ($p < .001$). This indicates that the assumption of normality was violated for most continuous variables in the current study. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was nonsignificant for only the composite measure of positive emotions ($p = .07$). However, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is sensitive to large sample sizes. Thus, results of this analysis were interpreted with caution as the sample used in the current study was considered large. To combat any effects caused by non-normality in the data, nonparametric tests were used in primary analyses.

Because I wanted to conduct both bivariate correlations and regression, the assumptions of linearity was also assessed. Linearity was assessed by visually inspecting bivariate scatter plots for variables that would be included in bivariate correlations (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2012). Bivariate scatter plots indicated that variables were not linearly related, as the overall shape of bivariate scatter plots was not oval for all variables. The distribution was generally asymmetrical,

being heavily weighted towards zero. Correlations between variables also indicated that the assumption of linearity has been violated as they were all below $r = .30$ (Mayers, 2013). As was previously discussed, it is not uncommon for data such as this to be zero-inflated purely based off the nature of the phenomena being studied.

For variables intended to be analyzed using regression, linearity and homoscedasticity were assessed by graphing regression standardized residuals on the y axis (acceptance of rape label and sexual assault label, total score for positive and negative emotions, and average score for perpetrator- and self-blame) and regression standardized predicted values on the x axis (commitment and satisfaction total scores). Graphs were visually examined, and an even spread of data points was observed on either side of zero. Data points appeared to be randomly distributed, with no discernible curved or funnel-shape. This indicates that the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were not violated for these variables.

Finally, multicollinearity was also assessed for composite satisfaction and commitment scores, which were intended to be used as predictor variables in regression analyses. Collinearity diagnostics were performed, and tolerance values were found to be above 0.1 whereas VIF values were between 1 and 10 (Satisfaction Composite, *Tolerance* = .45, *VIF* = 2.20; Commitment Composite, *Tolerance* = .45, *VIF* = 2.20). According to Tabachnik and Fidell (2012), scores within this range indicate that variables are not concerningly correlated with one another. Thus, the assumption of multicollinearity was not assumed to be violated.

Descriptive Statistics

Initial analyses of descriptive and frequency statistics revealed several noteworthy findings (see Table 2). First, findings indicated that participants, on average, had known their perpetrator for approximately 2.5 years prior to the target incident's occurrence. However, given

that I only looked at the most recent experience of sexual assault or coercion for each participant, they may have experienced other, earlier instances of assault and/or coercion with the same perpetrator. Second, the standard deviation was large, which meant that the length of time the participant had known the perpetrator prior to the target experience was highly variable. Third, average self-blame and perpetrator-blame scores were both approximately a value of 3 on the 5-point Likert-type scale used by the RAQ (Frazier, 2003; see Table 2), with self-blame being slightly higher. This indicated that, overall, similar degrees of blame were being conferred by participants onto themselves and the perpetrator. Fourth, positive emotions measured by the PANAS (Watson et al., 1988) fell well below the midpoint of the scale, indicating that, on average, women held very few positive feelings relating to the assaultive or coercive event they had experienced. In contrast, the average number of negative emotions fell above the midpoint of the scale, indicating that most women experienced notable negative emotions in relation to their assaultive or coercive experiences. Fifth, in terms of labelling, approximately 30% of the current study's sample indicated that survivors believed they had been raped in their life whereas 68% indicated that they believed they had been sexually assaulted. Sixth, the victim-perpetrator relationships comprising the sample were primarily nonromantic in nature, with slightly over a third of participants indicating that their perpetrator had been a romantic partner. Interestingly, within romantic relationships, the vast majority (over 75%) of participants reported that they had been in a serious romantic relationship as opposed to a casual romantic relationship with their perpetrators. Finally, it should be mentioned that the data for some variables (length of relationship prior to incident and satisfaction) were over-dispersed, meaning that the standard deviation was larger than the mean. This indicates that there was a significant amount of variance

in scores and that the scores were non-normal in nature, which may have affected some of the results that are reported.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, Ranges, Percentages and Frequencies for Variables of Interest

Variable	Mean (SD)	Minimum	Maximum
Total weeks known before target experience	129.36(186.65)	0	1092
Commitment	2.25(2.24)	0	8
Satisfaction	2.11(2.24)	0	8
Perpetrator-blame	2.57(1.07)	1	5
Self-blame	3.08(1.11)	1	5
Closeness to perpetrator	2.24(1.83)	1	7
Positive emotionality	15.71(5.76)	10	35
Negative emotionality	28.93(10.22)	10	50
	Possible Responses	%	Frequencies
“Rape” label	Yes	30.48	57
	No	59.52	130
“Sexual assault” label	Yes	68.98	129
	No	31.02	57
Type of relationship	Romantic	36.31	65
	Nonromantic	63.69	114
	Friend	26.20	49
	Acquaintance	21.93	41
	Neighbour	0.53	1
	Coworker	5.35	10
	Other	7.00	13
Contact with perpetrator	Yes	16.39	30
	No	83.61	153
Seriousness of romantic relationship	Casual	23.33	14
	Serious	76.67	46

Note. The Investment Model (Rusbult et al., 1998) measures satisfaction and commitment; the Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale (URCS; Dibble et al., 2012) measures closeness; the Rape Attribution Questionnaire (RAQ; Frazier, 2003) measures perpetrator-blame and self-blame; the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Short Form (PANAS-SF; Watson et al., 1988) measures positive and negative emotionality and the Sexual Experiences Survey – Short Form Victimization (SES-SFV;) measures acceptance of “sexual assault” and “rape” labels.

Prevalence of Forms of Sexual Coercion and Sexual Assault

The SES-SFV (Koss et al., 2007) was used to screen participants who had experienced at least one sexually assaultive or coercive event. However, it also provided data on the prevalence rates of different forms of sexual violence, placing them into five separate categories of experience (sexual contact, attempted coercion, coercion, attempted rape, and rape; see Table 3). The most prevalent form of sexual violence was unwanted sexual contact, with most participants in the study having experienced unwanted sexual contact in their lifetime (93%). This was followed by attempted coercion (65%), coercion (62%), rape (61%) and finally attempted rape (59%). Thus, at least over half of the current study's sample experienced each type of sexual violence measured by the SES-SFV. In terms of rape and attempted rape specifically, perpetrators were most likely to take advantage of survivors when incapacitated, followed by using force. Making threats of physical harm was the least likely method of attempted or completed rape.

Frequency Data for Exploratory Measure of Consent

A measure of different consent experiences was included to gauge whether the sample attained by the current study represented a broader definition of consent, as was desired (i.e., not just verbally rejecting the perpetrator's advances). Based on frequency data, it seems as though the current study succeeded in this endeavour. All categories had some affirmative responses. Experiences with the lowest response rates included being unable to consent because an individual's mouth had been held shut (1.1%), because their mouth had been covered (4.3%), because they were unconscious (6.4%), or for reasons not listed (2.7%). The most common experiences, on the other hand, included showing disinterest by using body language (57.2%), showing verbal disinterest by saying phrase such as "I'm tired" or "I'm on my period" (52.4%),

and verbally saying no but having the perpetrator disregard their wishes and continue (50.3%). Interestingly, the list appeared quite exhaustive as only 2.7% of participants indicated that they experienced a consent experience not described in the consent questionnaire. For a more comprehensive break-down of frequency data, see Table 4.

Table 3

Frequency Data for Different Experiences Measured by the SES-SFV

		<i>n</i>	%
Unwanted sexual experience			
Sexual contact		174	93.01
	Lying, making nonphysical threats, or continually pressuring verbally	114	60.96
	Showing displeasure, anger, or criticism without physical force	115	61.49
	Taking advantage while incapacitated	107	57.22
	Threatening physical harm	36	19.25
	Using force	87	46.52
Attempted coercion		122	65.24
	Lying, making nonphysical threats, or continually pressuring verbally	101	54.01
	Showing displeasure, anger, or criticism without physical force	101	54.01
Coercion		116	62.03
	Oral: Lying, making nonphysical threats, or continually pressuring verbally	64	34.22
	Oral: Showing displeasure, anger, or criticism without physical force	66	35.29
	Vaginal: Lying, making nonphysical threats, or continually pressuring verbally	79	42.25
	Vaginal: Showing displeasure, anger, or criticism without physical force	67	35.83
	Anal: Lying, making nonphysical threats, or continually pressuring verbally	29	15.51
	Anal: Showing displeasure, anger, or criticism without physical force	35	18.71
Attempted rape		111	59.36
	Taking advantage when incapacitated	87	46.52
	Threatening physical harm	32	17.11
	Using force	69	36.90
Rape		114	60.96
	Oral: Taking advantage when incapacitated	53	28.34
	Oral: Threatening physical harm	19	10.16
	Oral: Using force	48	24.37
	Vaginal: Taking advantage when incapacitated	75	40.10
	Vaginal: Threatening physical harm	23	12.30
	Vaginal: Using force	63	33.69
	Anal: Taking advantage when incapacitated	31	16.58
	Anal: Threatening physical harm	14	7.49
	Anal: Using force	28	14.97

Table 4

Frequency Data for Experiences of Consent

Consent experience		<i>n</i>	%
I verbally gave my consent...	Even though I did not want to	64	34.20
	Because I felt I had no other choice	48	25.70
	After previously saying no even though I did not want to	64	34.20
	After previously saying no because I felt I had no other choice	45	24.10
	For specific sexual acts but Person X did things I did not consent to	28	15.00
I was physically unable to consent because...	I was unconscious	12	6.40
	I was drunk or high	66	35.30
	My mouth was covered	8	4.30
	My mouth was held shut	2	1.10
	I froze and could not respond	61	32.60
I did not verbally consent but I showed I wasn't interested in other ways...	My body language indicated that I was uninterested	108	57.80
	I had shown that I was uninterested verbally (i.e., by saying "I'm tired"; "I'm on my period"; "let's do this instead" or something similar)	98	52.40
	I did not say I was interested	66	35.30
Other possible descriptions...	I said no but Person X did not respect my wishes and continued	94	50.30
	I did not say anything at all	47	25.10
	I am not sure if I provided verbal consent because I cannot remember what happened	33	17.60
	Another experience not listed here	5	2.70

Primary Analyses

Hypothesis 1—Effects of Type of Relationship (Romantic versus Nonromantic) with Perpetrator

Because the current data were non-normal, I performed Mann-Whitney U tests in place of independent t tests for H1a through H1d. I ran Mann-Whitney U tests to explore whether relationship type significantly affected participants' blame attribution (measured by the RAQ) and their emotional reactions (measured by the PANAS). The Holm-Bonferroni correction was applied, given that several Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted, making the cut-off values from smallest p value to largest p value as follows: $\alpha/4 = .013$, $\alpha/3 = .017$, $\alpha/2 = .025$, and $\alpha/1 = .05$. Contrary to the first set of hypotheses, no differences were found between romantic and nonromantic perpetrator relationships on any of the outcome variables. Specifically, the degree to which participants blamed their perpetrator did not differ significantly between those who had romantic relationships with their perpetrator ($Rank = 98.67$, $n = 65$) and those who had nonromantic relationships with their perpetrators, ($Rank = 84.23$, $n = 113$), $U = 3026.5$, $p = .071$, $r = .13$. The amount of blame they ascribed to themselves was also not significantly different between participants who had romantic ($Rank = 86.62$, $n = 65$) versus nonromantic relationships with their perpetrators, ($Rank = 91.15$, $n = 113$), $U = 3859.5$, $p = .571$, $r = .04$. No significant difference was found in the amount of positive emotions reported between those whose perpetrators had been a romantic partner ($Rank = 95.02$, $n = 65$) and those whose perpetrator had not been a romantic partner, ($Rank = 87.14$, $n = 114$), $U = 3378.5$, $p = .325$, $r = .07$. Similarly, the degree to which participants experienced negative emotions was not influenced by whether the perpetrator was a romantic partner ($Rank = 92.44$, $n = 65$) or not, ($Rank = 88.61$, $n = 114$), $U = 3546.5$, $p = .634$, $r = .03$.

To assess the final set of perceptions, acceptance of labels (of rape or sexual assault), I conducted two chi-square tests using bootstrap sampling with 1,000 draws given the potentially insufficient sample size. Fisher's exact test was also used instead of Pearson's chi-square because of the small sample size. There was no significant difference between participants who were romantically involved with their perpetrator and those who were not in terms of accepting the label of "sexual assault" ($p = 0.354$, Fisher's exact test, $\Phi = 0.04$; 95% CI [-0.15, 0.14]) or the label of "rape," ($p = 0.561$, Fisher's exact test, $\Phi = 0.00$, 95% CI [-0.20, 0.12]). Thus, results of this study did not support the first set of hypotheses.

Hypothesis 2—Effects of Reported Closeness to the Perpetrator

To assess whether a survivor's reported closeness to their perpetrator influenced their blame attribution (measured by the RAQ), their emotional reactions (measured by the PANAS), or their labelling of the event (SES-SFV), bivariate correlations were calculated. Spearman's rank correlations were used because of the non-normality of the current data. Contrary to expectations, nonsignificant results were found for self-blame, perpetrator-blame, and labelling of their experience as sexual assault or rape (see Table 5). However, small but significant correlations were found between reported closeness to the perpetrator and positive emotion, $r_s(187) = .23, p = .002$, as well as negative emotion, $r_s(187) = .20, p = .006$. This indicates that individuals who reported feeling closer to their perpetrator experienced both more positive and more negative emotions related to their Target Event. Thus, partial support was found for Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3—Effects of Maintained Contact with the Perpetrator

H3a through H3d of the third hypothesis were assessed with Mann-Whitney U tests. Participants who reported still being in contact with their perpetrators were hypothesized to be

less likely to assign blame to the perpetrator or report negative emotions but more likely to report self-blame and positive emotions. Results did not support these hypotheses, with participants who were still in contact with perpetrators ($n = 30$) not differing from participants who were not in contact with their perpetrator ($n = 152$) on the degree of perpetrator-blame they reported ($Rank = 77.27$ versus $Rank = 94.31$, respectively; $U = 2707$, $p = .105$, $r = .03$), the degree of self-blame they reported ($Rank = 86.55$ versus $Rank = 92.48$, respectively; $U = 2428.5$, $p = .573$, $r = .12$), positive emotions experienced ($Rank = 87.32$ versus $Rank = 92.92$, respectively; $U = 2435.5$, $p = .595$, $r = .04$), and negative emotions experienced ($Rank = 92.15$ versus $Rank = 91.97$, respectively; $U = 2290.5$, $p = .986$, $r = .00$).

Finally, acceptance of labels (of either being rape or sexual assault), was measured using two separate chi-square tests with 1,000 bootstrap sampling. Fisher's exact test was also used instead of Pearson's chi-square because of the small sample size. Those in contact with their perpetrators were not found to be notably more or less likely to accept the labels of "sexual assault," ($p = 0.176$, Fisher's exact test, $\Phi = 0.09$, 95% CI [-0.25, 0.01]), or "rape" ($p = 0.051$, Fisher's exact test, $\Phi = 0.13$, 95% CI [-0.24, 0.07]) than those who were not in contact with their perpetrators.

Hypothesis 4—Effects of the Seriousness of Survivors' Relationships with the Perpetrator

Most of the fourth hypothesis, H4a to H4d, was tested using Mann-Whitney U tests. The Holm-Bonferroni correction was also applied such that the cut-off values from the smallest p value to the largest p value were: $\alpha/4 = .013$, $\alpha/3 = .017$, $\alpha/2 = .025$, and $\alpha/1 = .05$. It was hypothesized that those who reported having casual romantic relationships ($n = 46$) with their perpetrators, would be less likely to assign blame to the perpetrator or report negative emotions but more likely to report self-blame and positive emotions than those who were in

serious relationships with their perpetrators ($n = 14$). Partial support was found for this set of hypotheses. Participants who had been in serious romantic relationships with the perpetrator reported significantly lower perpetrator-blame scores, ($Rank = 20.75$ versus $Rank = 33.47$, respectively), $U = 458.5$, $p = .017$, $r = .18$, and significantly more positive emotions ($Rank = 41.79$ versus $Rank = 27.07$, respectively), $U = 164$, $p = .006$, $r = .20$ than those who had been in casual romantic relationships. However, they ($Rank = 24.43$) did not report significantly different levels of self-blame when compared to participants who had been in casual romantic relationships with the perpetrator, ($Rank = 32.35$), $U = 407$, $p = .136$, $r = .11$. The degree to which participants experienced negative emotions was similarly not significantly different between those whose romantic relationship with the perpetrator had been serious ($Rank = 30.04$) versus casual, ($Rank = 30.64$), $U = 328.5$, $p = .909$, $r = .01$.

The third perception, acceptance of labels (of rape or sexual assault), was assessed using two chi-square tests with bootstrapping with 1,000 draws and Fisher's exact tests. No significant differences between participants who had serious romantic relationships versus casual romantic relationships were found in terms of accepting the label of "sexual assault" ($p = 0.089$, Fisher's exact test, $\Phi = 0.22$, 95% CI [-0.48, 0.05]) or the label of "rape" ($p = 0.099$, Fisher's exact test, $\Phi = 0.21$, 95% CI [-0.39, 0.01]).

Hypothesis 5—Effects of Commitment to and Satisfaction with Relationships with Perpetrator

I intended to assess whether the degree to which a participant reported being satisfied with and committed to their perpetrator using multiple regression analysis. However, because the current data's distributions were nonnormal, this could not be done as there are no nonparametric regression analyses that fit the current data (all continuous variables). Furthermore, I performed square root, reciprocal, and log transformations on these variables of interest to see if

transforming the data would help with the non-normality, but results of normality tests showed that the variables remained significantly non-normal (all $ps < .001$). Because of this, I assessed whether a survivor's reported commitment to and satisfaction with their perpetrator influenced their blame attribution (as measured by the RAQ) and their emotional reactions (as measured by the PANAS) with bivariate Spearman's rank correlations (see Table 5). In terms of commitment, contrary to expectations, participants' reported commitment to their relationship with the perpetrator was not significantly associated with perpetrator-blame, positive emotions, or negative emotions. Similarly, participants' satisfaction with their relationship with the perpetrator was not significantly associated with perpetrator-blame nor negative emotions. That being said, counter to hypotheses, participants with higher levels of commitment and satisfaction reported feeling less self-blame than those with lower levels of commitment and satisfaction. Namely, small but significant correlations were found between reported self-blame and both commitment, $r_s(182) = -.16, p = .028$, and satisfaction, $r_s(183) = -.18, p = .017$. Participants who reported more satisfaction with their perpetrator also reported experiencing more positive emotions at the small effect level. $r_s(187) = .15, p = .044$. Thus, partial support was found for Hypothesis 5.

I conducted logistic regressions to assess whether or not the likelihood of labeling sexually assaultive or coercive experiences as rape or sexual assault was affected by survivors' commitment to and satisfaction with their relationships with the perpetrator. When the overall model was tested, participants' reported levels of satisfaction and commitment were not found to be significant predictors of whether participants labeled their target experience as "sexual assault," with the overall model not found to be significant, $\chi^2(2) = 2.22, p = .329$. Though logistic regression does not require normally distributed data, it does require the independent

variables be linearly related to the log odds. To ensure this assumption was met, I conducted a Box-Tidwell Transformation (Test) with bootstrap sampling 1,000 times. For sexual assault, the interaction terms for satisfaction (Satisfaction X Log of satisfaction scores; $p = .408$) and commitment (Commitment X the Log of commitment scores; $p = .168$) were nonsignificant, indicating that satisfaction and commitment scores were linearly related to their log odds. Therefore, the nonsignificant results of this model were assumed to be accurate.

When the overall model for “rape” was tested, participants’ reported levels of satisfaction and commitment were not significant predictors of whether participants labeled their target experiences as “rape” or not. As was the case previously, the overall model was nonsignificant, $\chi^2(2) = 2.95, p = .228$, with neither satisfaction nor commitment significantly predicting change in the outcome variable, “rape.” A Box-Tidwell’s transformation test was also conducted for this model, the results of which were also nonsignificant for satisfaction ($p = .167$) and commitment ($p = .708$) with acceptance of the label “rape” as the dependent variable. Therefore, independent variables were related linearly to their log odds, and the nonsignificant results of this model were believed to be accurate. Thus, across all outcome variables, participants’ levels of commitment to and satisfaction with their relationships were only associated with lower levels of self-blame (for both commitment and satisfaction) and a higher number of experienced positive emotions (for satisfaction only).

Hypothesis 6 – Effects of Length of Time Perpetrator was Known Prior to Target Event

To identify whether the amount of time in weeks the survivor had known the perpetrator influenced their blame attribution (measured by the RAQ), their emotional reactions (measured by the PANAS), or their labelling of the event (SES-SFV; i.e., to evaluate Hypothesis 6), I conducted a series of Spearman’s rank correlations. The amount of time the survivor knew the

perpetrator before the Target Experience was not shown to be related to how survivors assigned blame, the emotions they reported, or whether or not they accepted labels (see Table 5).

Table 5

Correlation Matrix of Variables of Interest

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Commitment	--								
2. Satisfaction	.49**	--							
3. Number of weeks known before target event	.04	.22**	--						
4. Closeness to perpetrator	.54**	.63**	.18	--					
5. Perpetrator-blame	.10	-.03	.06	.05	--				
6. Self-blame	-.11	-.15	-.06	.01	.33**	--			
7. Positive emotionality	.14	.15*	-.02	.23**	.16*	.05	--		
8. Negative emotionality	-.01	.04	.13	.20**	.41**	.53**	.17*	--	
9. Acceptance of “sexual assault” label	.03	.10	.00	.08	-.17*	-.03	.03	-.04	--
10. Acceptance of “rape” label	.01	.11	.08	.04	-.26**	-.21**	-.09	-.24**	.37**

Note. The Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale (URCS; Dibble et al., 2012) measures closeness; the Rape Attribution Questionnaire (RAQ; Frazier, 2003) measures perpetrator-blame and self-blame; the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Short Form (PANAS-SF; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988) measures positive and negative emotionality; and the Sexual Experiences Survey – Short Form Victimization (SES-SFV; Koss et al., 2007) measures acceptance of “sexual assault” and “rape” labels.

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed). ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

Discussion

The current study sought to better understand women's perceptions of their own sexually assaultive and coercive experiences. Specifically, perceived blame allocation, emotional reactions, and label acceptance were investigated in relation to a host of victim-perpetrator relationship characteristics. These characteristics included the following: type of relationship, reported closeness to the perpetrator, commitment to and satisfaction with their relationship with the perpetrator, whether they were still in contact with their perpetrator, the length of time they knew the perpetrator prior to the event and, specifically for those whose perpetrators had been romantic partners, whether they were in a serious or casual relationship.

Results confirmed some hypotheses whereas other hypotheses were not supported. Generally, labelling was not found to be influenced by any relationship characteristics, whereas facets of blame and emotionality were variably affected by some of the investigated characteristics. Hypothesis 2 (reported closeness to the perpetrator), 4 (seriousness of romantic relationship), and 5 (satisfaction and commitment to the relationship with the perpetrator) were partially supported. However, hypothesis 1 (type of victim-perpetrator relationship), 3 (whether the participant remained in contact with the perpetrator), and 6 (length of relationship prior to target experience), were not supported whatsoever (see Table 6 for summary).

Table 6

Study Variables, Data Analyses for the Main Hypotheses and Results

	Independent variable(s)	Dependent variable(s)	Prediction	Analysis	Results
Hypothesis 1	Victim-perpetrator relationship type	Perceptions of blame attribution (RAQ), emotional reaction (PANAS), and labelling (SES-SFV)	Individuals in romantic relationships versus non-romantic relationships (e.g., friendships/working relationships/acquaintanceships) will be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator, report more positive and fewer negative emotion, and be less likely to label their experience	<i>t</i> tests (H1a-H1d) and chi-square test (H1e)	Nonsignificant results for blame, emotional reaction, and labelling
Hypothesis 2	Survivor's closeness to perpetrator	Perceptions of blame attribution (RAQ), emotional reaction (PANAS), and labelling (SES-SFV)	Greater feelings of closeness to the perpetrator will be related to higher ratings of diverting blame from the perpetrator and positive emotion, lower ratings of negative emotion, and lower likelihood of labeling their experiences as sexual assault/coercion	Correlation	Greater closeness associated with more positive and negative emotions. Nonsignificant results for blame and labelling.
Hypothesis 3	Whether survivor maintains	Perceptions of blame attribution (RAQ), emotional	Individuals who are still in contact with the perpetrator will be more likely to divert	<i>t</i> tests (H3a-H3d) and	Nonsignificant results for blame, emotional reaction, and labelling.

	contact with perpetrator	reaction, and labelling (SES-SFV)	blame from the perpetrator, report more positive and fewer negative emotion, and be less likely to label their experience as sexual assault/coercion	chi-square test (H3e)	
Hypothesis 4	Seriousness of romantic relationship	Perceptions of blame attribution (RAQ), emotional reaction (PANAS), and labelling (SES-SFV)	Among individuals in romantic relationships with the perpetrators, individuals in more serious romantic relationships versus casual romantic relationships will be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator, report more positive and fewer negative emotion, and be less likely to label their experience as sexual assault/coercion	<i>t</i> tests (H4a-H4d) and chi-square test (H4e)	Seriousness associated with more positive emotions and lower perpetrator-blame. Nonsignificant results for negative emotion, self-blame, and labelling.
Hypothesis 5	Satisfaction and committment	Perceptions of blame attribution (RAQ), emotional reaction (PANAS), and labelling (SES-SFV)	Individuals who are more satisfied and more committed to their relationship will be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator, report more positive and fewer negative emotion, and be less likely to label their experience as sexual assault/coercion	Correlation (H5a-H5d) and logistic regression (H4e)	Higher levels of satisfaction associated with lower self-blame and more positive emotions. Greater commitment associated with lower self-blame. Nonsignificant results for perpetrator-blame, negative emotion, and labelling.

Hypothesis 6	Length of relationship prior to Target Event	Perceptions of blame attribution (RAQ), emotional reaction (PANAS), and labelling (SES-SFV)	Individuals who have had longer relationships with their perpetrators will be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator, report more positive and fewer negative emotion, and be less likely to label their experience as sexual assault/coercion	Correlation	Nonsignificant results for blame, emotional reaction, and labelling
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Labelling of the Experience

Though hypotheses will be discussed in detail below this section, the perception of labelling is being discussed as a whole. This is being done because possible explanations for these results apply to labelling comprehensively, and thus span all proposed hypotheses. It is noteworthy that labelling of the sexually coercive and/or assaultive experiences was not significantly affected by any of the relationship characteristic variables. One potential explanation for this may be because of how I measured label acceptance. After asking for count data relating to various experiences of sexual assault and coercion, the SES-SFV asks participants whether or not they believe they have been raped or sexually assaulted. However, these are general questions that refer to participants' lifetime's worth of experiences of sexual assault and rape since the age of 14 years. My research questions and all other measures used in this study, on the other hand, asked specifically about participants' most recent experiences of sexual assault and coercion and collected information only about the perpetrator of that "target event." For women who indicated that they had never experienced rape or sexual assault, it can be assumed that they did not label the target experience as being rape or sexual assault. However, for women who indicated that they had experienced rape or sexual assault in the past, it is not certain if they labeled the target experience as a rape or sexual assault. That is, there is no way of knowing whether a positive response to one or both of the final two questions of the SES-SFV related to the most recent event or to another event they had experienced in the past. If participants' answers did not pertain to the most recent event, it is possible that the perpetrator of the nontarget event was not the same perpetrator as the one for the target event. That would mean that the (target) perpetrator characteristic data collected in the present study would not accurately

reflect the characteristics of the perpetrators of the “rape” and/or “sexual assault” nontarget experiences.

A second explanation for why no significant effects for labeling of experiences were found could be due to a lack of statistical power. A priori power analyses indicated that a much larger sample size (i.e., nearly 650 participants) would likely have been needed to detect significant chi-square tests effects, which were used to assess most hypotheses related to labelling. Though I used bootstrapping to compensate for the smaller sample size, it may not have been sufficient given the sample requirements recommended for the present study. In short, my analyses may merely have lacked the power required to detect effects.

Perceptions of Blame

When considering possible explanations for the blame findings, it should be noted, as mentioned above, that participants generally tended to blame themselves and the perpetrator somewhat equally for the event’s occurrence. However, previous literature has indicated that self-blame is typically significantly lower than perpetrator-blame (Byers & Glen, 2011; Frazier, 2003). Therefore, the differences in participants’ ratings in the current sample as compared to those from previous sexual assault studies may be related to the wide range of sexually coercive/assaultive experiences that were included in the present research. Nevertheless, they need to be considered when comparing the blame findings from the current study with previous literature.

Type of Sexual Violence

The quantitative results of this study also should be interpreted with the following in mind: the specific type of sexually coercive or assaultive behaviour (i.e., sexual touching, attempted coercion, coercion, attempted rape, or rape) was not known for each participant’s

target experience. Though I do have prevalence rates of lifetime experiences since age 14 years (see Table 4), I do not know which sexually coercive/assaultive experience was each participant's most recent experience. It is important to note that the range of sexually coercive/assaultive experiences assessed in the present study may have played a role in the results this study produced. Most research has been conducted with participants who have experienced rape, for example, and not the full spectrum of sexually violent experiences. Looking at all degrees of sexual violence concurrently may have made effects of victim-perpetrator characteristics on perceptions difficult to discern if the effects were only present for certain types of sexual violence. Thus, type of sexually coercive/assaultive experience may have served as a potential confound within the current study and may explain why some results of the current study do not align with previous research.

Relationship Type

Contrary to expectations, being in a romantic versus nonromantic relationship did not affect female survivors' perceptions about who was to blame for their sexually coercive or assaultive experiences, their emotional reactions to the incidents, or how they labelled the experiences. It is possible that any potential differences between participants who reported being in romantic relationships with their perpetrator and those who were in nonromantic relationships with their perpetrators were obscured by reducing these categories to a binary. That is, participants who reported their perpetrator was a friend, coworker, neighbour, acquaintance, or other kind of relationship were all combined into the aggregatory category of "nonromantic." It may be that those who were sexually assaulted or coerced by friends may experience reactions and hold perceptions that differ from those for whom relationships with their perpetrators are less intimate (i.e., coworkers, neighbours, acquaintances). These groups were not assessed

individually because of a priori hypotheses and small *ns* in some of the categories. However, it is possible that separating the relationships into two groups may have masked effects that existed across various subgroups.

It is also possible that relationship type may not be as significant to survivors' perceptions as was anticipated. There are many factors that can influence how an individual perceives their own experiences. One such factor includes personal characteristics, which the current study did not capture. Previous research has shown that increased goal-directed energy and less rumination significantly affect how survivors interpret and form meaning around their experiences of assault and coercion (Stermac et al., 2014). Another study by Ullman (2014) found that demographic characteristics were significantly related to posttraumatic growth whereas assault characteristics, such as the use of alcohol and the perpetrator threatening the survivor's life, were not. Though Ullman (2014) did not investigate perpetrator characteristics, the nonsignificance of assault characteristics may indicate that other characteristics of the assault, such as the identity of the perpetrator, may also prove unimportant to survivor perceptions. Furthermore, social support has been found to be a significant contributor to various outcomes of sexual assault (Littleton, 2010; Littleton, & Radecki Breitkopf, 2006), such as perceived self-worth. This, in turn, likely affects survivors' outlooks on their experiences. Thus, it may be that in comparison to personal beliefs, personal characteristics, and social supports, relationship type may be less influential as a contributor.

Finally, it is possible that type of sexually coercive/assaultive experience may have been a potential confound within this hypothesis. It has been established that there are notable differences in aspects of sexual violence based on relationship type. Specifically, perpetrators who are romantic partners tend to use more severe forms of force during assaults than

perpetrators who are strangers or acquaintances (Stermac et al., 1998). In line with this, soft-tissue injuries, lacerations, and nongenital injuries tend to be more extreme and more frequent when perpetrators are romantic partners (Logan et al., 2007; Stermac et al., 1998). These possibly systematic differences in the type of sexual violence experienced based on relationship type may have affected the results that found in this study.

Relationship Closeness

Being closer to the perpetrator was not related to reported levels of self- or perpetrator-blame or to whether one was likely to accept or reject labels of “sexual assault” and/or “rape.” Participants who reported feeling closer to their perpetrators were, however, more likely to report a higher number of both negative and positive emotions (relatively speaking). However, it should be noted that the number of positive emotions experienced by those closer to their perpetrator was still quite low. There are a number of possible explanations for these significant results. Closeness to the perpetrator may result in more cognitive dissonance (i.e., why am I close to someone who has hurt me?), which may motivate participants to find positive outcomes from the event which, in turn, may lead to reports of positive emotionality. This is supported by previous research which has found that women in abusive relationships may focus on more positive relationship aspects or discount the severity of their experiences (Goodfriend & Arriaga, 2018; Helm, et al., 2017; Rosen, 1996). However, increased closeness may also lead to stronger feelings of betrayal or violation, which would likely result in stronger negative emotions. This possibility is related to some findings on complex trauma. Complex trauma, which often results in severe posttraumatic symptomology, including negative affect, commonly occurs when an individual is violated by someone in a position of trust, such as a family member or romantic partner (Courtois, 2008; Herman, 1992). Closeness could coincide with greater trust, and thus

betrayal may be more likely to result in negative emotionality. Finally, the finding that both negative and positive emotionality was elevated in those who were in serious romantic relationships adds weight to the assertion that emotionality experienced by survivors is multifaceted (Jeffrey & Barata, 2016; Scerri, 2015).

The finding that closeness did not affect blame allocation was unexpected, as it has been found that survivors often shoulder blame for abuse while minimizing their partner's responsibility (Whiting, 2012). However, Whiting (2012) specifically focused on women who had been abused in the context of a romantic relationship, and such results may not apply to other victim-perpetrator relationships. Increased self-blame may be more related to material investment than emotional investment, aspects of which the URSC likely captures. There is less material investment in nonromantic relationships than romantic relationships given that those in romantic relationships are more likely to share a house, a bank account, children, and so on than other categories of victim-perpetrator relationships included in this study. Therefore, the need to divert blame from the perpetrator could be heightened among those in romantic relationships, who may have more concrete barriers that stand in the way of disentangling themselves from their perpetrator. Rusbult and Martz (1995) demonstrated how these kinds of investment were significantly related to increased commitment which, in turn, was associated with a lower likelihood of leaving the relationship in women in abusive relationships. However, I could not discern these possible differences in the current study because participants with several types of victim-perpetrator relationships were analyzed together.

Sustained Contact with Perpetrator

Whether a participant remained in contact with their perpetrator did not affect participants' blame allocation, reported emotionality, or their likelihood of accepting labels. This

may be because of the lack of specificity in how I measured being “in contact.” There were no follow-up questions that quantified the degree to which participants who responded affirmatively were still in contact with their perpetrators. Therefore, the degree to which participants were in contact with their perpetrators may have varied greatly from person to person. Furthermore, there were very few participants who reported still being in contact with their perpetrator ($n = 30$; 16%), which may have limited its predictive power. Finally, the nature of one’s type of relationship with the perpetrator may not make discontinuing contact a possibility. If the perpetrators were significant others, participants may still have to see them, for example, because of shared custody of their children. If they were a friend or an acquaintance, survivors may still have to see their perpetrator in group outings. If they were a neighbour, they may have to still interact with or see their perpetrator in passing. If they were a coworker, they may have to remain in contact because their job requires that they share a work environment with their perpetrator. In summation, whether a survivor is still in contact with their perpetrator may be more a result of practicality or circumstance, and thus unrelated to perceptions the survivor may hold.

Relationship Seriousness

As was previously stated, seriousness of romantic relationship did not affect participants’ likelihood of accepting labels. Seriousness of romantic relationship did, however, affect facets of emotionality and blame. Though self-blame and reported negative emotionality did not differ between those who had been in serious versus casual relationships with their perpetrators, perpetrator-blame and positive emotionality did differ. Specifically, those who reported being in serious relationships also reported significantly less perpetrator-blame and significantly more positive emotionality (relative to those in casual relationships). Note that the number of positive

emotions experienced by those in serious relationships would still be considered low. These findings align with the current body of research. As was previously stated, women may focus on more positive relationship aspects or downplay the seriousness of what they have experienced, which likely allows for more positive feelings (Goodfriend & Arriaga, 2018; Helm, et al., 2017; Rosen, 1996). Edwards and colleagues (2015) also found that women were more likely to maintain a relationship with their perpetrator if they were a serious dating partner as opposed to a casual dating partner or friend, something that may be made possible by maintaining a positive view of a sexually assaultive event. Motivations for maintaining this positive view may be cultivated by the intersection of investment and cognitive dissonance. Those in more serious relationships are more likely to have higher levels of investment (Rusbult et al., 1998), which makes leaving the relationship more difficult. And, because leaving the relationship has become a more complicated or difficult option, remaining within the abusive relationship needs to be made more palatable by, for example, ascribing less fault to their partner and attributing more positive emotions to the event.

Reduced perpetrator blame may also be related to current day rape myths. Among other things, rape myths posit that perpetrators of rape are chiefly strangers (Bondurant, 2001; Horvath & Brown, 2009; Temkin & Krahe, 2008). Though this has been shown to be false, many individuals, including those who have experienced sexual assault and coercion, internalize these ideals (Johnstone, 2012; Littleton et al., 2007; Rousseau et al., 2020). Because of this, survivors of sexual assault and sexual coercion may doubt the validity of their experiences if the perpetrator is not a stranger. This may be especially true for individuals in serious romantic relationships; legally, rape was not recognized, for example, within the bounds of marriage until 1983 in Canada, and much later in other parts of the world (Koshan, 2017). Further, it has been

well documented that research participants and police officers are more likely to discount experienced of sexual assault and rape if the perpetrator is a serious romantic partner (Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Brown et al., 2007; Jordan, 2004; Rebeiz & Harb, 2010). Because of this, participants in serious romantic relationships may be less likely to attribute blame to the perpetrator.

It is difficult to discern why self-blame and negative emotions were not affected by seriousness of relationship in the same way. No research on this specific topic currently exists. It may be that sexual assault and coercion, generally, are equally upsetting regardless of the seriousness of one's relationships. However, those who are in serious, committed relationship may feel more pressure to "redeem" the experience by ascribing positive emotions to it as well. Similarly, those who are in committed relationships may feel less able to place blame on the perpetrator for reasons outlined above but not necessarily ascribe blame to themselves. They may, for example, attribute it to external factors, such as substance use. Unfortunately, however, quantitative data did not capture this possible source of blame.

Relationship Commitment and Satisfaction

Commitment and satisfaction were also not found to affect the likelihood of participants accepting labels of sexual assault or coercion. However, participants who were more satisfied with their relationship with the perpetrator reported experiencing more positive emotions (relative to less satisfied participants). The overall number of positive emotions experienced by those reporting more satisfaction would still be considered low, however. Given that satisfaction is a facet of investment (Rusbult, et al., 1998), it may be that those who are satisfied/invested in the relationship, may be less likely to want to end or leave the relationship. However, being satisfied with or wanting to stay in a relationship with someone who has perpetrated sexual

coercion and/or assault against them would likely result in cognitive dissonance. The survivor may therefore attempt to lessen the dissonance by ascribing positive emotions to the event. This process is consistent with both investment theory and cognitive dissonance theory and past research. For example, Rosen reported that women were more likely to focus on positive aspects to their relationships while also minimizing abuse if presented with these conflicting ideas (Rosen, 1996).

The findings that higher levels of commitment and satisfaction were associated with lower levels of self-blame also fit with the processes described above. That is, although I originally hypothesized the inverse of what was found, the finding could still be explained using the theoretical framework of the investment model and cognitive dissonance. It makes sense that survivors who are invested in their relationships with the perpetrators would not engage in self-blame because the mere act of ascribing blame would be admitting that something “bad” or “wrong” happened, causing dissonance. Self-blame would also likely be accompanied by negative emotions such as shame and guilt, which would also cause dissonance. Minimization or justification of abusive actions have been found to be common among women, whether consciously or unconsciously (Goodfriend & Arriaga, 2018; Helm, et al., 2017), and reduced self-blame may be another aspect of minimization. Greater satisfaction and commitment, which are forms of investment, may motivate survivors to protect their relationship as well, leading them to minimize any possible negative appraisals of their relationship, as Rusbult’s (1998) investment model asserts. As such, survivors in the study may have responded in an especially defensive manner on the self-blame items as a way of relieving or avoiding the dissonance caused by being highly satisfied with and committed to relationships with their sexual

perpetrators. Thus, these results lend support to investment theory and cognitive dissonance theory.

Length of Relationship Prior to Target Experience

The nonsignificant results of hypothesis 6 are perhaps one of the most surprising findings, with none of the three primary perceptions (emotionality, blame, and labelling) being significantly affected by the length of time participants had known their perpetrators prior to their assaultive/coercive experience. Previous research has indicated that length of relationship may contribute to how acceptable individuals in romantic relationships perceive nonsexual abuse to be (Gondolf, 1998; Ray & Gold, 1996; Wong & Matthies, 2010). Participants reading vignettes describing sexually assaultive events also consistently perceive assaults as less severe based on the amount of time one has been in a relationship with the perpetrator (Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Rebeiz & Harb, 2010). Based on this research, the relation between the length of relationship and survivors' perceptions may have differed by type or severity of the sexual aggression experienced, thus impacting the current results. However, vignette research has been conducted exclusively with those in romantic relationships, and research with participants who are actually in abusive relationships did not investigate sexual abuse. Therefore, the length of time a perpetrator is known may not affect perceptions of sexual assault/coercion for those with victim-perpetrator relationships of a nonromantic nature. It is also possible the length of time a perpetrator is known does not affect perceptions of sexual assault in the same way that it affects perceptions of nonsexual abuse.

Another possible explanation for the lack of significant findings may have been due to the distribution of scores. A large percentage (54%) of participants reported that they had known their perpetrators for between 0 and 64 weeks. The remaining 46% of participants reported that

they had known the perpetrator 75-1092 weeks. Thus, the zero-inflated, highly positively skewed (and over-dispersed [when a variable's $SD > M$]) distribution of the variable may have affected the results. Finally, it is possible that type of sexual violence was a confound that was not addressed, and this may have affected the results.

Consent Questionnaire

The consent questionnaire was developed to get a sense of the range of consent experiences women in the current study had during their target sexually coercive or assaultive event. There was some concern that the wording of the SES-SFV would discourage women who may not have verbally expressed their nonconsent (or who did not believe they had made their lack of consent clear) from participating. Results indicated that a wide variety of experiences with consent were had, with women expressing their nonconsent through various means or reporting being unable to consent whatsoever. Women reported expressing their lack of consent verbally both directly and indirectly, with the use of body language, with absence of any indication of consent, among others. In addition, some indicated that they were unable to consent because they froze, were incapacitated in some manner, could not physically speak. Thus, it is believed that a sample aligning with my inclusive definition of consent was successfully garnered, regardless of the SES-SFV's wording. Furthermore, only 2.7% of people expressed that none of the consent experience options contained in the questionnaire represented their experience. Therefore, the questionnaire itself was very successful at capturing the wide spectrum of consent experiences.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study was not without its limitations. One of the primary limitations of the current study was its sample size, which fell below the sample sizes required by some statistical tests used to assess the current hypotheses. Thus, some conclusions should be interpreted with caution. Specifically, the hypotheses that were assessed with chi-square analyses and the conclusions that related specifically to participants who indicated that their perpetrator was a romantic partner may have been affected by low statistical power. Future studies should seek to recruit a larger number of participants with sexually coercion or assaultive experiences to confirm conclusions made from the current study.

Though I did attempt to diversify the sample by recruiting from the community, the majority of this sample was comprised of students, most of whom were from a mid-sized Canadian city. This means that most of the people in our study were young, highly educated, and presumably high-functioning individuals. As such, the results from the current study may not apply to other populations. This study's participants may be less likely to have experienced more severe experiences of sexual assault or coercion. They also may have more mental, financial, or relational supports to rely upon than those who may not be attending university. For example, it has been found that there is a constant increase in the number of friends one has until the age of 25, at which time the number of friends one has decreases, which coincides generally with one's college and university school years (Bhattacharya et al., 2016). Further, individuals from high socioeconomic status families are more likely to attend university, with individuals whose parents make over \$100,000 per year making up the largest proportion of students in university in Canada (Corak, 2003).

Moreover, though I was able to assert that my sample was comprised of a wide array of consent experiences, some women may still have been discouraged by the wording of the SES-SFV and its emphasis on consent. Women doubting whether they gave consent may not have selected any items on the SES-SFV. If this were the case, these women would have been removed from my study because they did not report a sexually assaultive or coercive experience, even though they may have experienced a valid event. Thus, the current study may suffer from sampling bias. Future studies may seek to mitigate this possible sampling bias by not removing participants based on their answers to the SES-SFV. Rather, they could include follow-up questions as a safety net that focus less on the concept of consent. Thus, some of the women who may be discouraged by the phrasing of the SES-SFV might be retained with this revised method of recruitment.

Another perception which was not touched upon by the current study but may have been interesting to assess in relation to relationship characteristics, is perceived outcomes. This perception has been looked at previously within sexual assault survivors (Jeffrey & Barata, 2016) but its possible associations with victim-perpetrator relationship characteristics have not been. It is possible that investigating this perception will better inform our understand of other perceptions (for example, emotional reactions). This may also be a good way to contribute to existing literature on posttraumatic growth, or positive psychological changes initiated by experiencing extremely challenging life circumstances (Ullman, 2014), and meaning-making, or the restoration of life meaning after a traumatic event has disrupted this meaning (Park & Al, 2006).

Finally, as has been alluded to, some of the findings of my study may have been nonsignificant because I chose to look at each relationship characteristic individually. The

importance of relationship length, for example, may not transcend relationship type, and may only significantly affect survivor's perceptions for those in romantic relationships. This may be implied by the significant results found in other studies which looked solely at survivors who had sexually assaultive experiences with romantic partners (Gondolf, 1998; Ray & Gold, 1996; Wong & Matthies, 2010). This may be true for other relationship characteristics as well. As such, future studies may benefit from investigating the intersection of victim-perpetrator relationships to further delineate the intricacies of this research topic.

Conclusion

The present study helps address current literature gaps by looking at an array of various victim-perpetrator relationship characteristics in relation to survivors' perceptions. It offers unique information on how victim-perpetrator relationship characteristics can affect survivors' perceptions of their own experiences, a relationship that had previously only been assessed using hypothetical scenarios (Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Rebeiz & Harb, 2010). My findings suggest that how survivors feel and how they allocate blame is affected by specific relationship characteristics, namely closeness to the perpetrator, their satisfaction with and commitment to the perpetrator and, for romantic partners, the seriousness of their relationship. Furthermore, it reconfirms previous findings (Jeffrey Barata 2016; Scerri, 2015) that suggest emotionality experienced by survivors of sexual assault and coercion is complex and may involve both negative and positive feelings. These findings also do not support the idea that longer relationships are associated with survivors perceiving sexual violence as more tolerable, as has been suggested by research concerning nonsexual violence (Gondolf, 1998; Ray & Gold, 1996; Wong & Matthies, 2010). It also brought to light originally unexpected findings, such as

commitment and satisfaction being associated with decreased self-blame. Because many of these findings are unique, this area of research is rich with the potential for further exploration.

Results from this study, if replicated by future researchers, may better inform clinicians specializing in trauma on the complexities of survivors' perceptions so that services can meet the specific needs of survivors more quickly based on the context of their experiences. Further, results show how various theories may coalesce to create relationship-specific perceptions of sexual assault and coercion. If given further support by future research, results from the current study may offer direction to public health initiatives by using victim-perpetrator relationship characteristics to tailor approaches to specific survivors. Overall, these findings establish that the connection between victim-perpetrator characteristics and survivors' perceptions is one that bears further enquiry.

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Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?

- a. Cis woman/girl
- b. Trans woman/girl
- c. Cis man/boy
- d. Trans man/boy
- e. Indigenous or other cultural gender identity (e.g., two-spirit)
- f. Non-binary, genderqueer, agender, or a similar identity
- g. A gender not listed here (specify) _____
- h. Prefer not to answer

2. What is your age? _____

3. What is your sexuality?

- a. Heterosexual/straight
- b. Homosexual/gay/lesbian
- c. Bisexual
- d. Pansexual
- e. Asexual
- f. Same-gender loving
- g. Queer
- h. A sexuality not listed here (Please specify): _____
- i. Unknown
- j. Prefer not to answer

4. Please write “I am a participant” for this item: _____

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- a. High school diploma or equivalent (GED)
- b. Vocational / Technical School
- c. Some post-secondary education
- d. College degree
- e. Bachelor’s degree
- f. Master’s degree
- g. Doctorate degree
- h. Professional degree (e.g., M.D.)
- i. Prefer not to answer

6. What race do you identify as?

- a. Arab / Middle Eastern
- b. Black / African-Canadian / Caribbean-Canadian
- c. East Asian / Pacific Islander
- d. Indigenous / First Nations / Metis
- e. Latin / Hispanic / South American
- f. South Asian / Indian / Pakistani
- g. White / Caucasian / European-Canadian
- h. Biracial / Multiethnic (please specify)
- i. An ethnicity not listed here (specify)
- j. Prefer not to answer

7. What is your current relationship status?

- a. Single
 - b. Dating (Casual)
 - c. Dating (Serious)
 - d. Cohabiting
 - e. Married
 - f. Engaged
 - g. Common Law Married
 - h. Divorced
 - i. Separated
 - j. Widowed
 - k. Prefer not to answer
- 8. Are you currently enrolled as a student at the University of Windsor?**
- a. Yes (specify major)
 - b. No
 - c. Prefer not to say
- 9. What is your current employment situation?**
- a. Working full-time
 - b. Working part-time
 - c. Unemployed
 - d. An employment status not listed here (specify) _____
 - e. Prefer not to answer
- 10. What is your yearly income?**
- a. Under \$10,000

- b. \$10,000 to \$19,999
- c. \$20,000 to \$29,999
- d. \$30,000 to \$39,999
- e. \$40,000 to \$49,999
- f. \$50,000 to \$59,999
- g. \$60,000 to \$69,999
- h. \$70,000 to \$79,999
- i. \$80,000 to \$89,999
- j. \$90,000 to \$99,999
- k. \$100,000 to \$124,999
- l. \$125,000 to \$149,999
- m. \$150,000 or higher
- n. Prefer not to answer

Appendix B

The Sexual Experiences Survey-Short Form Victimization (SES-SFV)

(Koss et al., 2007)

The following questions concern sexual experiences that you may have had that were unwanted. In particular, when answering the following questions, please only consider experiences that:

- Occurred when you were 14 years or older,
- With someone who identified as male, and
- With someone you knew before the sexual experience occurred

We know that these are personal questions and appreciate your honesty. Please check the box showing the number of times each experience has happened to you. If several experiences happened on the same occasion--for example, if one night someone told you some lies and had sex with you while you were drunk, please indicate both.

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

	0 times	1 time	2 times	3 + times
Telling lies, threatening to end the relationship, threatening to spread rumours about me, making promises I knew were untrue, or continually verbally pressuring me after I said I didn't want to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Showing displeasure, criticizing my sexuality or attractiveness, getting angry but not using physical force, after I said I didn't want to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking advantage of me when I was too drunk or out of it to stop what was happening.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threatening to physically harm me or someone close to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using force, for example holding me down with their body weight, pinning my arms, or having a weapon.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Please select "1 time" as your response to this question	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Someone had oral sex with me or made me have oral sex with them without my consent by:

	0 times	1 time	2 times	3 + times
Telling lies, threatening to end the relationship, threatening to spread rumours about me, making promises I knew were untrue, or continually verbally pressuring me after I said I didn't want to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Showing displeasure, criticizing my sexuality or attractiveness, getting angry but not using physical force, after I said I didn't want to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking advantage of me when I was too drunk or out of it to stop what was happening.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threatening to physically harm me or someone close to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using force, for example holding me down with their body weight, pinning my arms, or having a weapon.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Someone put their penis, fingers, or other objects into my vagina without my consent by:

	0 times	1 time	2 times	3 + times
Telling lies, threatening to end the relationship, threatening to spread rumours about me, making promises I knew were untrue, or continually verbally pressuring me after I said I didn't want to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Showing displeasure, criticizing my sexuality or attractiveness, getting angry but not using physical force, after I said I didn't want to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking advantage of me when I was too drunk or out of it to stop what was happening.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threatening to physically harm me or someone close to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using force, for example holding me down with their body weight, pinning my arms, or having a weapon.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Someone put their penis, fingers, or other objects into my butt without my consent by:

	0 times	1 time	2 times	3 + times
Telling lies, threatening to end the relationship, threatening to spread rumours about me, making promises I knew were untrue, or continually verbally pressuring me after I said I didn't want to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Showing displeasure, criticizing my sexuality or attractiveness, getting angry but not using physical force, after I said I didn't want to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking advantage of me when I was too drunk or out of it to stop what was happening.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threatening to physically harm me or someone close to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using force, for example holding me down with their body weight, pinning my arms, or having a weapon.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Even though it didn't happen, someone TRIED to have oral, anal, or vaginal sex with me without my consent by:

	0 times	1 time	2 times	3 + times
Telling lies, threatening to end the relationship, threatening to spread rumours about me, making promises I knew were untrue, or continually verbally pressuring me after I said I didn't want to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Showing displeasure, criticizing my sexuality or attractiveness, getting angry but not using physical force, after I said I didn't want to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking advantage of me when I was too drunk or out of it to stop what was happening.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Threatening to physically harm me or someone close to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using force, for example holding me down with their body weight, pinning my arms, or having a weapon.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Did any of the experiences described in this survey happen to you 1 or more times?

- Yes
- No

What was the sex of the person or persons who did them to you?

- I reported no experiences
- Female only
- Male only
- Both females and males

Have you ever been raped?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever been sexually assaulted?

- Yes
- No

Appendix C

Perpetrator Characteristic Questions

Out of all the experiences you just reported on the last questionnaire, please think of the most recent experience you have had. We will refer to this experience as *the target experience* throughout the rest of the survey.

1. How long ago did this happen?

Months

Years

Prefer not to answer

Now please think of the person you had your most recent experience (i.e., the target experience) with. This person will be referred to as Person X throughout the rest of the study.

2. What was your relationship with Person X?

Romantic Partner

Friend

Coworker

Neighbour

Acquaintance

Other relationship not listed here (Please specify)

Prefer not to answer

3. Please select “yes” as your response to this question.

Yes

No

4. Are you still in contact with Person X?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

5. Do you still have some type of relationship with Person X?

Yes

No

Unsure

I never had a relationship with Person X

Prefer not to answer

6. *Those who answer yes, unsure, or prefer not to answer to #5, will be asked:* If you still have some type of relationship with Person X, what type of relationship do you have with him?

Romantic Partner

Friend

Coworker

- Neighbour
- Acquaintance
- Other relationship not listed here (Please specify)
- Prefer not to answer

7. Did/Does Person X identify as male?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- Prefer not to answer

8. How long had you known Person X before the target experience happened?

- Weeks
- Months
- Years
- Prefer not to answer

If the answer to Question 2 is “romantic partner”, branching rules will also bring them to the following questions:

1. How would you describe your relationship with Person X?

- Casual
- Serious
- Prefer not to answer

2. Are you still dating/romantically involved with Person X?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

Appendix D

The Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale (URCS) (Dibble et al., 2012)

Instructions:

The following questions refer to your relationship with Person X. Please think about your relationship with Person X when responding to the following questions. Please respond to the following statements using this scale:

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree Prefer not to answer

1. My relationship with Person X is close.
2. When we are apart, I miss Person X a great deal.
3. Person X and I disclose important personal things to each other.
4. Person X and I have a strong connection.
5. Person X and I want to spend time together.
6. I'm sure of my relationship with Person X .^a
7. Person X is a priority in my life.
8. Person X and I do a lot of things together.
9. When I have free time, I choose to spend it alone with Person X.
10. Please select "2" as your response to this question.
11. I think about Person X a lot.
12. My relationship with Person X is important in my life.
13. I consider Person X when making important decisions.

a. Item 6 can be omitted due to questionable discriminant validity with relationship satisfaction and relationship certainty.

Appendix E

Relationship Questionnaire

1. Are you currently in a romantic relationship?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to answer

For individuals who respond *yes*, *don't know*, *prefer not to answer* (in case they are able to answer the additional questions for the latter two responses) to Question 1, the following questions will be asked:

2. With which gender does your current romantic partner identify?

- Cis woman/girl
- Trans woman/girl
- Cis man/boy
- Trans man/boy
- Indigenous or other cultural gender identity (e.g., two-spirit)
- Non-binary, genderqueer, agender, or a similar identity
- Other (specify) _____
- Prefer not to answer

3. How long have you been in this relationship with your current romantic partner?

_____ Years

_____ Months

_____ Prefer not to answer

4. How would you classify your relationship with your current romantic partner?

- Casual Dating
- Exclusive Dating
- Committed Relationship
- Engaged
- Married
- Separated
- A relationship status not listed (specify) _____
- Prefer not to answer

5. Is sex a part of your relationship with your current romantic partner?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

6. How committed are you to your relationship with your current romantic partner?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Not at all								Extremely
Committed								Committed
Prefer not to answer								

7. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your current romantic partner?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Not at all								Extremely
Satisfied								Satisfied
Prefer not to answer								

8. Please select "5" as your response to this question.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Not at all								Extremely

8. How likely is it that you will end your relationship with your current partner in the next three months?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Not at all								Extremely
Likely								Likely
Prefer not to answer								

Appendix F

Rape Attribution Questionnaire (RAQ) (Frazier, 2003)

Items

Below are statements describing thoughts women often have about the reason why the target experience occurred. Please indicate how often you have had each of the following thoughts in the past week.

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1	2	3	4	5

Prefer not to answer

How often have you thought: the target experience occurred because...?

Behavioural Self-Blame

1. I used poor judgement.
2. I should have resisted more.
3. I just put myself in a vulnerable situation.
4. I should have been more cautious.
5. I didn't do enough to protect myself.
6. Please select "1" as your response to this question.

Rapist Blame

1. Person X thought he could get away with it.
2. Person X wanted to feel power over someone.
3. Person X was sick.
4. Person X was angry at women.
5. The other person wanted to hurt someone.

Strongly disagree	Disagree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree somewhat	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

Prefer not to answer

Control over the Recovery Process

1. This is going to affect me for a long time but there are things I can do to lessen its effects.
2. I don't feel there is much I can do to help myself feel better. (reversed)
3. I know what I must do to help myself recover from what happened.
4. I am confident that I can get over this if I work at it.
5. I feel like the recovery process is in my control.

Future Likelihood

1. I am afraid that this will happen again.
2. It is not very likely that this will happen again.

3. Now that I have experienced this, the odds are it won't happen again.
4. I feel pretty sure that this won't happen again
5. No matter what steps I take, this could happen again. (reversed)

Future Control

1. I have changed certain behaviours to try and avoid this happening again.
2. Since this happened, I try not to put myself in potentially dangerous situations.
3. I do not take any special precautions since this happened. (reversed)
4. I have taken steps to protect myself since this happened.
5. I have made a change to my living situation since this happened.

Appendix G

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS-SF)

(Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please think about how you feel about the most recent sexual incident you reported to us (i.e., the target experience). What emotions describe how you feel about what you experienced? Please rate all of the following emotion words.

Indicate the extent you have felt this way about the target experience.	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely	Prefer not to answer
PANAS 1	Interested	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 2	Distressed	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 3	Excited	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 4	Upset	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 5	Strong	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 6	Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 7	Scared	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 8	Hostile	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 9	Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 10	Proud	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 11	Irritable	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 12	Alert	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 13	Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 14	Inspired	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 15	Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 16	Determined	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 17	Attentive	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 18	Jittery	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 19	Active	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 20	Afraid	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix H1

Qualitative Questions

We would like to know some more information about the unwanted sexual experience you indicated earlier. Please provide as much detail as you feel comfortable with. We ask that you do not identify yourself or individuals by name within your written responses.

Blame Questions

1. Why do you think the target experience happened?
2. What factors do you think contributed to the target experience happening?
3. Why do you think Person X acted the way that they did?

Appendix H2

Qualitative Questions

We would like to know some more information about the unwanted sexual experience you indicated earlier. Please provide as much detail as you feel comfortable with. We ask that you do not identify yourself or individuals by name within your written responses.

Emotion Questions

1. Looking back at the target experience now, what emotions do you feel?
2. Why do you think you feel this way?

Appendix H3

Qualitative Questions

We would like to know some more information about the unwanted sexual experience you indicated earlier. Please provide as much detail as you feel comfortable with. We ask that you do not identify yourself or individuals by name within your written responses.

Labelling Questions

1. If you had to label the target experience, what would you call it?
2. How would you describe the target experience if you were to tell someone else about it?
3. Have you ever thought about the target experience in a different way than you do now? If so, how have your thoughts about this experience changed? What caused your thoughts to change?

Appendix I

Mood Neutralizing Questions

1. What is your happiest early/childhood memory?
2. What is an activity that you do for fun?

Appendix J1

SONA Recruitment Advertisement

Study Title: **Perceptions of Unwanted Sexual Experiences and Relationships**

Detailed Description: The purpose of this online study is to learn more about women's perspectives of their own sexual and relationship experiences, including unwanted sexual experiences.

You will be asked to complete several questionnaires and/or open-ended questions that pertain to your sexual experiences and your experiences within relationships.

Please note that some of the questions we ask you will concern potentially uncomfortable relationship and/or sexual experiences you may have undergone.

Participation is expected to take up to 30 minutes. You will be awarded 0.5 bonus points for your participation in the study.

Eligibility requirements: To participate in the current study, you must **(a) identify as a female University of Windsor student and (b) be at least 17 years of age**

Duration: Up to 30 minutes

Points: 0.5 points

Testing Dates: This study will be conducted online and the participant will fill out the questionnaire as soon as they sign up to participate.

Researcher Contact Information:

Frasia Margaret Morrison, B.A., Master's Student
Department of Psychology, University of Windsor
Email: sexperceptionstudy@uwindsor.ca

Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz
Research Supervisor
Department of Psychology, University of Windsor
Email: pfritz@uwindsor.ca

Appendix J2

Canadian Psychological Association R2 P2 Recruitment Advertisement

Study Title: **Perceptions of Unwanted Sexual Experiences and Relationships**

Detailed Description: The purpose of this online study is to learn more about women's perspectives of their own sexual and relationship experiences, including unwanted sexual experiences.

You will be asked to complete several questionnaires and/or open-ended questions that pertain to your sexual experiences and your experiences within relationships.

Please note that some of the questions we ask you will concern potentially uncomfortable relationship and/or sexual experiences you may have undergone.

Participation is expected to take up to 30 minutes. You will be compensated up to \$15 for your participation in the study.

Eligibility requirements: To participate in the current study, you must **(a) identify as a female; (b) be at least 17 years of age; and (c) be able to read and write in English.**

Location of the study: Windsor, Ontario, Canada

Testing Dates: Date of REB clearance – June 15, 2021

Researcher Contact Information:

Frasia Margaret Morrison, B.A., Master's Student
Department of Psychology, University of Windsor
Email: sexperceptionstudy@uwindsor.ca

Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz
Research Supervisor
Department of Psychology, University of Windsor
Email: pfritz@uwindsor.ca

Appendix K

Response to Email Inquiries from the Community

Hello,

Thank you so much for your interest in our study and for advancing science at the University of Windsor! We are looking for individuals who are at least 17 years of age, identify as women, and can read and write in English. We would ask participants to respond to several multiple response and open-ended questions relating to unwanted sexual experiences they have had with individuals who identify as male. Individuals who participate will be able to earn up to \$15.00 in e-gift cards.

If you believe that you qualify for our study and are interested in answering questions on this topic, please click the link below to view the Letter of Information and participate in the study:

https://uwindsor.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5zKtljVAYlsRVf8

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the primary investigator, Frasia Morrison, at sexperceptionstudy@uwindsor.ca.

Kindest regards,
Frasia Morrison

Appendix L



Letter of Information and Consent **Participant Pool Sample**

Project Title: Perceptions of Unwanted Sexual Experiences and Relationships

You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted by Frasia Morrison under the supervision of Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz from the Department of Psychology, University of Windsor. If you have any questions or concerns about this research please feel free to contact Frasia Morrison at sexperceptionstudy@uwindsor.ca or Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz, through email (pfritz@uwindsor.ca) or by telephone (519-253-3000, ext. 3707). The results from this study will form the basis of a master's thesis research project.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to learn more about women's perspectives of their own sexual and relationship experiences, including unwanted sexual experiences. This will help us to better understand the factors that are involved in how women perceive their sexual experiences. Because unwanted sexual experiences may be discussed, it is possible that you may experience some negative feelings while completing the study. Please do not participate in this study if thinking about or responding to questions about personal sexual experiences will cause you significant emotional distress.

PROCEDURES

Your participation will occur in one session.

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will first be invited to read through this consent form and learn about the study, its risks and benefits. During the initial phase of the study, you will also be asked to fill out a brief questionnaire regarding demographic characteristics and personal and sexual experiences, including experiences that may have been unwanted. Depending on your responses to the initial questions, you may be asked to fill out several other online questionnaires and answer some open-ended questions about the experiences you reported, including unwanted sexual experiences. This study will last up to 30 minutes and will be worth and 0.5 bonus points.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

It is possible that you may experience some negative feelings (e.g., anxiety, sadness, embarrassment, anger) in response to some of the things that you will be asked to think about and share. In addition, the subject matter may cause some distress or you may feel uncomfortable

answering questions about unwanted sexual experiences. Again, please do not participate in this study if thinking about or responding to questions about personal sexual experiences will cause you significant emotional distress. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer, and you can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty. The researcher will provide you with contact information for on-campus and community resources in case you would like to seek further support. Further, if you feel that you are unable to discuss these past events without becoming uncomfortable doing so, you may choose to not participate in this study.

If you are experiencing negative feelings or wish to discuss your experiences more thoroughly, here is a list of mental health and community resources:

https://uwindsor.ca/qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3XlqGfiAc8eO9Ya

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR SOCIETY

This study provides no direct benefits to participants. You may potentially benefit from this study by reflecting on your experiences and thus gaining insight about yourself and your relationships. In addition, information gathered may further the understanding of women's perceptions of their relationships and their sexual experiences, particularly unwanted relational/sexual experiences.

COMPENSATION

Participants will receive 0.5 bonus points for up to 30 minutes of participation in the study towards the psychology participant pool, if registered in the pool and enrolled in one or more eligible courses.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

If you volunteer to be in this study, you will be able to: (a) discontinue (i.e., stop) participation at any time without consequences, (b) refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer, and (c) withdraw from the survey by clicking on the "Discard responses and exit" button before exiting your browser. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you will be asked to describe a positive memory and then a resource list will be provided. Any data collected from this writing activity will be destroyed and will not be used. However, once you finish your participation, we cannot remove your data (including your responses to open-ended questions) because we will not be able to determine which data would be yours. If you withdraw or choose to not answer questions, you will still receive the compensation commensurate with your time. You will not receive the compensation if you do not consent to and begin the study. You will not be compensated if you exit your browser without clicking the "Discard responses and exit" button.

Closing the browser before completing the online survey will mean that your (partial) data could be used for analysis. Once the survey is complete and data is fully submitted, it will be anonymized and you will not be able to withdraw.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

Your name and email will be required for compensation, but once all data have been collected and all participants have been awarded credit, participants' ID numbers that were assigned to them by the researchers for the purposes of this study will be deleted from the compensation file so that participants' identifying information can no longer be linked to their survey data. The electronic compensation data file will be retained for one year from the end of the semester in which data completion occurred in case any participants who took part in the study challenge the mark they received in the course.

The following steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality: (a) no identifying information will be collected from you on the questionnaires; (b) all of the information that you reveal in the surveys will be kept private and will only be accessed by this study's researchers; (c) the information collected will be stored on secure, password protected computers; (d) only anonymized data will be shared with other researchers; (e) in any resulting publications or presentations, participants will be referred to in groups to protect individual identity; and (f) any quotations taken from the open-ended questions will be modified and paraphrased to protect your identity. The data will be kept for a minimum of five years following the last publication. If the data are not used for subsequent research or will not be published, the data will be destroyed.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

A summary of research findings will be available to you upon completion of the project on the Research Ethics Board website, <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/research-result-summaries/>. These findings will be available by October 2022, when the research has been completed, analyzed, and summarized.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

The data from this study may be used in future research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate or leave the study at any time, it will have no effect on your academic standing.

If you have any questions about this research study please contact Frasia Morrison at sexperceptionstudy@uwindsor.ca. You may also contact Dr. Patti Fritz, (519) 253-3000 ext. 3707 or pfritz@uwindsor.ca.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:
Research Ethics Coordinator,
University of Windsor
Windsor, ON
N9B 3P4
Telephone: 519-253-3000 ext. 3948

Email: ethics@uwindsor.ca

Whom do participants contact for questions?

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of the study, you may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator, 519-253-3000 ext. 3948, or ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study Perceptions of Unwanted Sexual Experiences and Relationships as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. By clicking “I agree” I know that I am consenting to participating in this study.

You are encouraged to print a copy of this consent form.

I agree

I do not agree

THIS LETTER OF INFORMATION IS YOURS TO KEEP

Project Title: Perceptions of Unwanted Sexual Experiences and Relationships

Researcher Contact Information:

Frasia Margaret Morrison, B.A., Master’s Student
Department of Psychology, University of Windsor
Email: sexperceptionstudy@uwindsor.ca

Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz
Research Supervisor
Department of Psychology, University of Windsor
Email: pfritz@uwindsor.ca

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

By clicking “I Agree” you are electronically signing this form agreeing to participate in this research. You will be taken to the survey.

Please print a copy of this consent form for your records using the print option in your internet browser.

I Agree I Do Not Agree

Appendix M



University
of Windsor

Letter of Information and Consent Community Sample

Project Title: Perceptions of Unwanted Sexual Experiences and Relationships

You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted by Frasia Morrison under the supervision of Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz from the Department of Psychology, University of Windsor. If you have any questions or concerns about this research please feel free to contact Frasia Morrison at sexperceptionstudy@uwindsor.ca or Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz, through email (pfritz@uwindsor.ca) or by telephone (519-253-3000, ext. 3707). The results from this study will form the basis of a Master's thesis research project.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to learn more about women's perspectives of their own sexual and relationship experiences, including unwanted experiences. This will help us to better understand the factors that are involved in how women perceive their sexual experiences. Because unwanted sexual experiences may be discussed, it is possible that you may experience some negative feelings while completing the study. Please do not participate in this study if thinking about or responding to questions about personal sexual experiences will cause you significant emotional distress.

PROCEDURES

Your participation will occur in one session.

If you volunteer to participate in this study by contacting us via email, you will first be invited to read through this consent form and learn about the study and its risks and benefits (Part 1). During the initial phase of the study, you will also be asked to fill out a brief questionnaire regarding demographic characteristics and questions about sexual and personal experiences, including experiences that may have been unwanted, which will help determine if you are eligible for the second/main portion of the study. This portion of the study (i.e., Part 1—the screening phase) should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. You will be awarded a \$5.00 Tim Hortons gift card (regardless of whether or not you participate in the main online survey).

If you are not eligible for Part 2 of the study, you will be asked to describe a positive memory and provided with information about the study and a list of community resources.

If you are eligible for Part 2 of the study, you will be asked to fill out several other questionnaires and some open-ended questions that inquire about the experiences you reported on at the beginning of the study, including unwanted sexual experiences. This portion of the

study (Part 2) will last up to 30 minutes. You will be given an additional \$10.00 Tim Hortons gift card for your participation in Part 2 of the study (for a total of a \$15.00 Tim Hortons gift card).

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

It is possible that you may experience some negative feelings (e.g., anxiety, sadness, embarrassment, anger) in response to some of the things that you will be asked to think about and share. In addition, the subject matter may cause some distress or you may feel uncomfortable answering questions about unwanted sexual experiences. Again, please do not participate in this study if thinking about or responding to questions about personal sexual experiences will cause you significant emotional distress. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer, and you can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty. The researcher will provide you with contact information for community resources in case you would like to seek further support. Further, if you feel that you are unable to discuss these past events without becoming uncomfortable doing so, you may choose to not participate in this study.

If you are experiencing negative feelings or wish to discuss your experiences more thoroughly, here is a list of mental health and community resources:

https://uwindsor.ca/qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3XlqGfiAc8eO9Ya

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR SOCIETY

This study provides no direct benefits to participants. You may potentially benefit from this study by reflecting on your experiences and thus gaining insight about yourself and your relationships. In addition, information gathered may further the understanding of women's perceptions of their relationships and their sexual experiences, particularly unwanted relational/sexual experiences.

COMPENSATION

Participants will receive a \$5.00 Tim Hortons gift card for up to 10 minutes of participation in the screening portion (Part 1) of the study. After your eligibility for the main online survey portion of the study is determined, you will be asked to fill out several other questionnaires and open-ended questions that inquire about reported experiences, including unwanted sexual experiences (Part 2 of the study). Participants will receive an additional \$10.00 gift card for up to 30 minutes of participation in Part 2 of the study (for a total of a \$15.00 Tim Hortons gift card).

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

If you volunteer to be in this study, you will be able to: (a) discontinue (i.e., stop) participation at any time without consequences of any kind, (b) refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer, and (c) withdraw from the survey by clicking on the "Discard responses and exit" button before exiting your browser. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you will be asked to describe a positive memory and then a resource list will be provided. Any data collected from this writing activity will be destroyed and will not be used. However, once you finish your participation, we cannot remove your data (including your responses to open-ended questions) because we will not be able to determine which data would be yours. If you withdraw or choose

to not answer questions or take part in procedures, you will still receive the compensation commensurate with your time. You will not receive the compensation if you do not consent to and begin the study. You will not be compensated if you exit your browser without clicking the “Discard responses and exit” button.

Closing the browser before completing the online survey will mean that your (partial) data could be used for analysis. Once the survey is complete and data is fully submitted, it will be anonymized and you will not be able to withdraw.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

Your name and email will be required for compensation. The electronic compensation data file will be deleted once all participants have been reimbursed.

The following steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality: (a) no identifying information will be collected from you on the questionnaires; (b) all of the information that you reveal in the surveys will be kept private and will only be accessed by this study’s researchers; (c) the information collected will be stored on secure, password protected computers; (d) only anonymized data will be shared with other researchers; (e) in any resulting publications or presentations, participants will be referred to in groups to protect individual identity; and (f) any quotations taken from the open-ended questions will be modified and paraphrased to protect your identity. The data will be kept for a minimum of five years following the last publication. If the data are not used for subsequent research or will not be published, the data will be destroyed.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

A summary of research findings will be available to you upon completion of the project on the Research Ethics Board website, <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/research-result-summaries/>. These findings will be available by October 2022, when the research has been completed, analyzed, and summarized.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

The data from this study may be used in future research.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Even if you consent to participate you have the right to not answer individual questions or to withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any questions about this research study please contact Frasia Morrison at sexperceptionstudy@uwindsor.ca. You may also contact Dr. Patti Fritz, (519) 253-3000 ext. 3707 or pfritz@uwindsor.ca.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:
Research Ethics Coordinator,
University of Windsor
Windsor, ON
N9B 3P4
Telephone: 519-253-3000 ext. 3948
Email: ethics@uwindsor.ca

Whom do participants contact for questions?

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of the study, you may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator, 519-253-3000 ext. 3948, or ethics@uwindsor.ca

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study “Perceptions of Unwanted Sexual Experiences and Relationships” as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. By clicking “I agree” I know that I am consenting to participating in this study.

You are encouraged to print a copy of this consent form.

- I agree
- I do not agree

THIS LETTER OF INFORMATION IS YOURS TO KEEP

Project Title: Perceptions of Unwanted Sexual Experiences and Relationships

Researcher Contact Information:

Frasia Margaret Morrison, B.A., Master’s Student
Department of Psychology, University of Windsor
Email: morri12t@uwindsor.ca

Dr. Patti Timmons Fritz
Research Supervisor
Department of Psychology, University of Windsor
Email: pfritz@uwindsor.ca

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

By clicking “I Agree” you are electronically signing this form agreeing to participate in this research. You will be taken to the survey.

Please print a copy of this consent form for your records using the print option in your internet browser.

I Agree I Do Not Agree

Appendix N

Post-Study Information and Resource List

Thank you for your participation in the current study!

The purpose of the study is to develop a more comprehensive understanding of women's perceptions of sexual experiences that would meet the definitional criteria of experiences of sexual assault or sexual coercion. Sexual assault is defined as sexual activity without the consent of a participating party. Sexual coercion is defined as the use of verbal, emotional, or physical pressure or manipulation to induce participation in sexual activity (this can include threatening, begging, blackmailing, guilting, etc.). Specifically, the aim of the study is to learn about how women perceive such sexual experiences. We are interested in if women's perceptions depend to some degree on the nature of their relationships with the perpetrator. We hope that this research study will give us a better understanding of how women understand and cope with these sexual experiences based on relationship characteristics with the perpetrator. We know of no current published research that looks specifically at how perpetrator relationships may affect perceptions of sexual assault or coercion experiences.

Please do not hesitate to contact me (sexperceptionstudy@uwindsor.ca) or my supervisor (pfritz@uwindsor.ca) if you have any questions or concerns about this study. Once the study is finished, you will be able to view a report on the study results on the University of Windsor website: <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/research-result-summaries/>; this report will be posted by October 2022.

Sometimes when people have questions or problems, they may not know who to talk to or where to get help. Here is a list of services that may be available to you in the area. If you, a friend, or a family member have questions, would like someone to talk to, or need help with a problem, one of these resources may be able to provide you with support and guidance.

Mental Health and Family Resources in Windsor-Essex County

University of Windsor's Sexual Misconduct Response and Prevention Office

<https://www.uwindsor.ca/sexual-assault/>

University of Windsor's Student Counseling Centre

<https://www.uwindsor.ca/studentcounselling/>

Sexual Assault / Domestic Violence & Safekids Care Center

This care center is located in the Windsor Regional Hospital and provides assessment, counseling, and treatment for domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. It is open 8 am to 4 pm, Monday – Friday or 24 hours, 7 days a week through the hospital emergency services.
519-255-2234

Hiatus House

Hiatus House is a social service agency offering confidential intervention for families experiencing domestic violence.

519-252-7781 or 1-800-265-5142

Distress Centre Line Windsor / Essex

The Distress Centre of Windsor-Essex County exists to provide emergency crisis intervention, suicide prevention, emotional support and referrals to community resources by telephone, to people in Windsor and the surrounding area. Available 12 pm to 12 am seven days a week.
519-256-5000

Community Crisis Centre of Windsor-Essex County

A partnership of hospital and social agencies committed to providing crisis response services to residents of Windsor and Essex counties. Crisis center is open from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday – Friday, at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor, ON.
519-973-4411 ext. 3277

24 Hour Crisis Line

24 Hour crisis telephone line provides an anonymous, confidential service from 12 pm to 12 am seven days a week. The 24 Hour Crisis Line serves Windsor and Leamington areas.
519-973-4435

Assaulted Women’s Helpline

The Assaulted Women’s Helpline offers 24-hour telephone and TTY crisis line for abused women in Ontario. This service is anonymous and confidential and is provided in up to 154 languages.
1-866-863-0511 *or* 1-866-863-7868 (TTY)

Kid’s Help Phone

Kids Help Phone is Canada’s only 24/7, national support service. We offer professional counselling, information and referrals and volunteer-led, text-based support to young people in both English and French.
<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>
1-800-668-6868

Information on Sexual Assault in Canada

<http://www.casac.ca/content/anti-violence-centres> [tells you where to find Sexual Assault Centres in Canada]
<http://www.springtideresources.org/resource/fact-sheet-common-criminal-charges-vaw-cases>
<https://sexualassaultsupport.ca/support/>

Canadian Sexual Assault Laws

<http://www.sacc.to/sya/crime/law.htm>

Resources for Women and Survivors of Sexual Assault

<https://saccwindsor.net/resources/>
<https://aasas.ca/support-and-information/following-sexual-assault/>

COVID-19 Workbook

A workbook focused on helping the reader accept their feelings and tolerate distress in a healthy manner.

<https://www.baypsychology.ca/workshops> The following resources are meant to help you remove evidence that you participated in this study from your technology. Some also offer some helpful tips on how to use technology as safely and as privately as possible.

Clearing Internet Browser History

<https://www.computerhope.com/issues/ch000510.htm>

Note: delete only the browsing history you don't want seen. Deleting the entire history may look suspicious if the person regularly monitors the browser activity so only delete specific sites.

Technology Safety

This contains several different resources that aim to keep your activity online as safe and as private as possible.

<https://www.techsafety.org/resources-survivors>

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix O

Poster and Advertisement Cards for Community Sample



Participants Needed for Research Study

Do you identify as female? Are you older than sixteen?

Have you had unwanted sexual experiences that you are willing to answer questions about?

If so, we invite you to participate in our study.

We are conducting an online study on women's unwanted sexual experiences as well as what women think and how they feel about these experiences.

Eligible participants will fill out questionnaires for approximately 30 minutes and will receive up to \$15 in gift cards.

If you want to take part in the study, please contact Frasia Morrison: Sexperceptionstudy@uwindsor.ca

This study has received clearance from the University of Windsor REB.

Researchers: Frasia Morrison and Dr. Patti Timmons-Fritz

Research Study

Sexperceptionstudy@uwindsor.ca

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Research Study

Sexperceptionstudy@uwindsor.ca

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Research Study

Sexperceptionstudy@uwindsor.ca

Front of Advertisement Card



Back of Advertisement Card

Looking for people identifying as female, are 17 or older, and are able to answer questions about unwanted sexual experiences. The study will take place online and participants will be given up to \$15 in gift cards. For more information please contact Frasia Morrison: Sexperceptionstudy@uwindsor.ca

Appendix P

The Investment Model Scale (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998)

The following questions concern your relationship (friendship, working relationship, romantic relationship, etc.) with Person X.

Satisfaction Level Facet and Global Items

Respondents answer on the following scale:

Don't Agree At All	Agree Slightly	Agree Moderately	Agree Completely	Prefer Not to Answer
-----------------------	----------------	------------------	---------------------	-------------------------

1. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your relationship with Person X.

- (a) Person X fulfills my needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.).
- (b) Person X fulfills my needs for companionship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.).
- (c) Person X fulfills my sexual needs (holding hands, kissing, etc.).
- (d) Person X fulfills my needs for security (feeling trusting, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.).
- (e) Person X fulfills my needs for emotional involvement (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.).

Respondents answer on a scale from 0 (*Do Not Agree At All*) to 8 (*Agree Completely*).

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Do Not Agree At All				Agree Somewhat				Agree Completely	Prefer Not to Answer

- 2. I feel satisfied with our relationship.
- 3. My relationship with Person X is much better than others' relationships.
- 4. My relationship with Person X is close to ideal.
- 5. Our relationship makes me very happy.

Commitment Level Items

Respondents answer on a scale from 0 (*Do Not Agree At All*) to 8 (*Agree Completely*).

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Do Not Agree At All				Agree Somewhat				Agree Completely	Prefer Not to Answer

“To what extent does each of the following statements describe your feelings regarding your relationship with Person X?”

1. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.
2. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with Person X.
3. I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.
4. It is likely that I will have a relationship with someone else instead of Person X within the next year.
5. I feel very attached to our relationship-very strongly linked to Person X.
6. I want our relationship to last forever.
7. I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being close with Person X several years from now).

Quality of Alternatives Facet and Global Items

Respondents answer on the following scale:

Don't Agree At All	Agree Slightly	Agree Moderately	Agree Completely	Prefer Not to Answer
-----------------------	----------------	------------------	---------------------	-------------------------

1. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each statement regarding the fulfillment of each need in alternative relationships (i.e., in relationships with someone other than Person X, e.g., by a dating partner, friends, family).

- (a) My needs for intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
- (b) My needs for companionship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
- (c) My sexual needs (holding hands, kissing, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships
- (d) My needs for security (feeling trusting, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.
- (e) My needs for emotional involvement (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.) could be fulfilled in alternative relationships.

Respondents answer on a scale from 0 (*Do Not Agree At All*) to 8 (*Agree Completely*).

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Do Not Agree At All				Agree Somewhat				Agree Completely	Prefer Not to Answer

2. The people other than Person X with whom I might develop a relationship with are very appealing.
3. My alternatives to our relationship are close to ideal (dating someone, spending time with friends or on my own, etc.).

4. If I didn't have a relationship with Person X, I would do fine-I would find another appealing person to develop a relationship with.
5. My alternatives are attractive to me (dating someone, spending time with friends or on my own, etc.).
6. My needs for intimacy, companionship, etc., could easily be fulfilled in an alternative relationship.

Investment Size Facet and Global Items

Respondents answer on the following scale:

Don't Agree At All	Agree Slightly	Agree Moderately	Agree Completely	Prefer Not to Answer
-----------------------	----------------	------------------	---------------------	-------------------------

1. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your relationship with Person X (circle an answer for each item).

- (a) I have invested a great deal of time in our relationship.
- (b) I have told Person X many private things about myself (I disclose secrets to him/her).
- (c) Person X and I have an intellectual life together that would be difficult to replace.
- (d) My sense of personal identity (who I am) is linked to Person X and our relationship.
- (e) Person X and I share many memories.

Respondents answer on a scale from 0 (*Do Not Agree At All*) to 8 (*Agree Completely*).

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Do Not Agree At All				Agree Somewhat				Agree Completely	Prefer Not to Answer

2. I have put a great deal into our relationship that I would lose if the relationship were to end.
3. Many aspects of my life have become linked to Person X (recreational activities, etc.), and I would lose all of this if we were to end our relationship.
4. I feel very involved in our relationship-like I have put a great deal into it.
5. My relationships with friends and family members would be complicated if Person X and I were to end our relationship (e.g., Person X is friends with people I care about).
6. Compared to other people I know, I have invested a great deal in my relationship with Person X.

Appendix Q

Consent Questionnaire

Which of the following statements would you say describes your experience most accurately (please select all that apply to your Target Incident with Person X):

- I verbally gave my consent:
 - _____ even though I did not want to
 - _____ because I felt I had no other choice
 - _____ after previously saying no even though I did not want to
 - _____ after previously saying no because I felt I had no other choice
 - _____ for specific sexual acts but Person X did things I did not consent to
- I was physically unable to verbally consent because:
 - _____ I was unconscious
 - _____ I was drunk or high
 - _____ My mouth was covered
 - _____ My mouth was held shut
 - _____ I froze and could not respond
- I did not verbally consent but I showed I wasn't interested in other ways ...
 - _____ my body language indicated that I was uninterested
 - _____ I had shown that I was uninterested verbally (i.e., by saying "I'm tired"; "I'm on my _____ period"; "let's do this instead" or something similar)
 - _____ I did not say I was interested
- I said no but Person X did not respect my wishes and continued
- I did not say anything at all
- I am not sure if I provided verbal consent because I cannot remember what happened

Another experience not listed here (please specify): _____

Appendix R

Study Variables, Data Analyses for the Main Hypotheses and Results with and Without Outliers

	Independent variable(s)	Dependent variable(s)	Prediction	Analysis	Results of Analysis with Outliers	Results of Analysis without Outliers
Hypothesis 1	Victim-perpetrator relationship type	Perceptions of blame attribution (RAQ), emotional reaction (PANAS), and labelling (SES-SFV)	Individuals in romantic relationships versus non-romantic relationships (e.g., friendships/working relationships/acquaintance ships) will be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator, report more positive and fewer negative emotion, and be less likely to label their experience	<i>t</i> tests (H1a-H1d) and chi-square test (H1e)	Nonsignificant results for blame, emotional reaction, and labelling.	Romantic relationships associated with more perpetrator blame. Nonsignificant results for self-blame, emotional reaction, and labelling.
Hypothesis 2	Survivor's closeness to perpetrator	Perceptions of blame attribution (RAQ), emotional reaction (PANAS), and labelling (SES-SFV)	Greater feelings of closeness to the perpetrator will be related to higher ratings of diverting blame from the perpetrator and positive emotion, lower ratings of negative emotion, and lower likelihood of labeling their experiences as sexual assault/coercion	Correlation	Greater closeness associated with more positive and negative emotions. Nonsignificant results for blame and labelling.	Greater closeness associated with more positive and negative emotions. Nonsignificant results for blame and labelling.

Hypothesis 3	Whether survivor maintains contact with perpetrator	Perceptions of blame attribution (RAQ), emotional reaction, and labelling (SES-SFV)	Individuals who are still in contact with the perpetrator will be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator, report more positive and fewer negative emotion, and be less likely to label their experience as sexual assault/coercion	<i>t</i> tests (H3a-H3d) and chi-square test (H3e)	Nonsignificant results for blame, emotional reaction, and labelling.	Participants who remained in contact with perpetrator were less likely to endorse the label of “rape.” Nonsignificant results for blame, emotional reaction, and the label “sexual assault.”
Hypothesis 4	Seriousness of romantic relationship	Perceptions of blame attribution (RAQ), emotional reaction (PANAS), and labelling (SES-SFV)	Among individuals in romantic relationships with the perpetrators, individuals in more serious romantic relationships versus casual romantic relationships will be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator, report more positive and fewer negative emotion, and be less likely to label their experience as sexual assault/coercion	<i>t</i> tests (H4a-H4d) and chi-square test (H4e)	Seriousness associated with more positive emotions and lower perpetrator-blame. Nonsignificant results for negative emotion, self-blame, and labelling.	Nonsignificant results for blame, emotional reaction, and labelling.
Hypothesis 5	Satisfaction and commitment	Perceptions of blame attribution (RAQ), emotional reaction (PANAS), and	Individuals who are more satisfied and more committed to their relationship will be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator, report more positive and fewer	Regression	Higher levels of satisfaction associated with lower self-blame and more positive emotions. Greater commitment	Satisfaction was a significant predictor of “sexual assault” label acceptance. Nonsignificant results for blame, emotional

		labelling (SES-SFV)	negative emotion, and be less likely to label their experience as sexual assault/coercion		associated with lower self-blame. Nonsignificant results for perpetrator-blame, negative emotion, and labelling.	reaction, and the label of “rape.”
Hypothesis 6	Length of relationship prior to Target Experience	Perceptions of blame attribution (RAQ), emotional reaction (PANAS), and labelling (SES-SFV)	Individuals who have had longer relationships with their perpetrators will be more likely to divert blame from the perpetrator, report more positive and fewer negative emotion, and be less likely to label their experience as sexual assault/coercion	Correlation	Nonsignificant results for blame, emotional reaction, and labelling.	Longer relationship length prior to Target Experience associated with more negative emotions. Nonsignificant results for blame, positive emotions, and labelling.

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