

SEXUAL CONSENT EXPERIENCES OF INDIVIDUALS IN COMMITTED  
RELATIONSHIPS

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## DEDICATION

For my family, my husband, and friends who have supported me through this journey.

## ABSTRACT

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### SEXUAL CONSENT EXPERIENCES OF INDIVIDUALS IN COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

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Despite the growing body of research on sexual consent, confusion surrounding the definition and processes of sexual consent still exists. There is also little research to date exploring the relationship between sexual consent, sexual communication, sexual satisfaction, and gender for individuals in committed relationships. This confusion and lack of research may be contributing to high rates of sexual coercion and rape within committed relationships. The present study utilized a moderated mediation analysis to investigate whether consent mediates the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction, and furthermore, whether that mediation differs for men and women. Sexual consent as a mediator for the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction was also tested. The study sample included individuals in committed relationships who were recruited through an online questionnaire distributed via Reddit, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or e-mail. The present study found sexual communication leads to sexual satisfaction partially because it helps foster an environment of sexual consent. However, subtle coercion partially explained this relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction for women but not for men. These findings suggest the need for clinicians to assess for sexual coercion in relationships as well as support clinicians in educating couples on how their sexual communication may be impacting their sexual encounters.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Problem Statement .....	2
Study Purpose .....	3
Research Questions.....	4
Delimitations.....	5
Definitions.....	5
Summary .....	6
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
Feminist Theory .....	7
Sexual Consent.....	9
Sexual Consent Among College Students .....	10
Cues and Scripts.....	11
Coercion.....	14
Gender and Sexual Consent .....	15
Consent in Long-Term Relationships .....	17
Sexual Communication.....	18
Sexual Satisfaction.....	20
Summary .....	21
III. METHODOLOGY .....	23

Sampling Methods .....	24
Procedure .....	24
Recruitment.....	24
Data Collection .....	25
Protection of Subjects .....	26
Measures .....	26
Sexual Consent.....	26
Sexual Communication.....	27
Sexual Satisfaction.....	28
Data Analysis Plan.....	29
Summary .....	30
IV. RESULTS .....	32
Sample.....	32
Preliminary Analysis.....	34
Primary Analysis.....	36
V. DISCUSSION .....	39
Ongoing Consent .....	39
Communicative Sexuality .....	40
Subtle Coercion.....	42
Implications.....	44
Limitations .....	46
Conclusion .....	49
REFERENCES .....	50

## APPENDICES

A. Recruitment Flyer .....	58
B. Sexual Communication and Behaviors Survey .....	59

## LIST OF TABLES

1. Participant Demographics.....	33
2. Variable Correlations.....	36

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Sexual consent research has been conducted more intently over the past 20 years (spontaneous consent, moral transformation, communicative sexuality, etc.; Beres, 2007). However, most research studies focus on the experiences of university students who are engaging in sexual activity, often for the first time ever (Curtis & Burnett, 2017; Groggel et al., 2021; Herbenick et al., 2019). Sexual consent research began as a response to the growing rates of sexual assaults on college campuses to combat such experiences for students (Palermo et al., 2022). Sexual consent studies are widespread and important in establishing the effectiveness of educational programs regarding consenting behaviors, which students are required to complete upon acceptance into a university as a way to incorporate Title IX and SaVE Act requirements (a new requirement for universities who receive federal funding and student financial aid; Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network [RAINN], 2021).

The definition of consent has been disputed among researchers for several decades; what is consent, what does it look like, and how can one tell it has been offered or rejected. A review of consent research has uncovered the typical ways researchers approach the topic of consent and expresses concerns about its generalizability (Beres, 2007). This concern is due to multiple definitions, perceptions regarding consensual behaviors (verbal, nonverbal, psychological, physical, etc.), and the idea of spontaneous consent (deciding whether consent was present based on perceptions of satisfaction, morality, its meaning to the relationship, etc.; Beres, 2007). Research on sexual consent is crucial to understand the ways in which individuals engage in and communicate about sexual activity; however, the research is mostly restricted to college aged individuals and casual sexual encounters.



## **Problem Statement**

Sexual assault, rape, and sexual harassment are prevalent issues in the United States for both men and women. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) reported a National Study on Sexual Harassment and Assault and found from 2,000 individuals (1,000 men and 1,000 women), 43% of men and 81% of women to be victims (of sexual assault, rape, and/or sexual harassment) in 2018 in the United States (NSVRC, 2018). The NSVRC also reported that in 2018, about 734,630 individuals experienced completed, attempted, or threatened rape (Morgan et al., 2018). Furthermore, reports on the prevalence of intimate partner violence reveal that about 35.6% of women and 28.5% of men in 2011 experienced intimate partner violence (NSVRC, 2018). Sexual assault, harassment, and rape are still a presenting issue once individuals enter committed relationships. Past research findings suggest that women in relationships are at a higher risk of experiencing sexual victimization by their partner (Winslett & Gross, 2008).

For many individuals, a sexual encounter as one defines it, is a significant part of marriage and marital satisfaction. Open sexual communication is a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction (Montesi et al., 2010), suggesting the importance of sexual communication for individuals in committed relationships. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the relationship between sexual consent, sexual satisfaction, and sexual communication for individuals 18 and older who may be more vulnerable to experiencing consent related concerns (e.g., sexual assault, sexual coercion; Groggel et al., 2021).

Existing literature has rarely explored the relationship between sexual consent and sexual communication as well as the relationship between sexual consent and sexual satisfaction. Both relationships may be important in understanding how individuals in committed relationships are

communicating sexual consent and the perceptions they have about their sexual experiences. Little is known about the role that sexual consent has for men and women. While research has supported a positive association between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction (Jones et al., 2018; MacNeil & Byers, 2009), limited research has been conducted on individuals in committed relationships and their experiences regarding sexual consent, sexual communication, sexual satisfaction, and gender.

### **Study Purpose**

Consent research has been conducted primarily with university students regarding their casual sexual experiences (Curtis & Burnett, 2017; Groggel et al., 2021; Herbenick et al., 2019). These studies have uncovered high rates of sexual assault and rape as well as gender differences surrounding the recognition of consent and other cues. The current study aims to investigate what these experiences look like as individuals age and enter committed relationships. While many studies have been conducted looking at consent in casual relationships, rape statistics for individuals in committed relationships and marital consent are under-researched for this group but may still be prevalent (NSVRC, 2018). This understanding that sexual violence is occurring for college-aged individuals and the lack of research for this violence in committed relationships has inspired the present study to investigate the relationship between sexual consent, sexual satisfaction, and sexual communication for heterosexual individuals in committed relationships and whether gender alters this relationship. There is also little research that examines the relationship between sexual consent and sexual communication and therefore research on this relationship may be necessary to understand the process individuals in committed relationships take to communicate sexual consent. The current study hopes to uncover the relationship

between sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction for individuals in committed relationships and the role of gender for these variables.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to investigate gender roles and the relationship between sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction for individuals in committed relationships. The following research questions and hypotheses will be examined:

RQ1: What is the relationship between sexual consent and sexual satisfaction?

H1: A positive, significant correlation will be found where higher levels of sexual consent will be related to higher levels of sexual satisfaction.

RQ2: What is the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction?

H2: A positive, significant correlation will be found where higher levels of sexual communication will be related to higher levels of sexual satisfaction.

RQ3: What is the relationship between sexual consent and sexual communication?

H3: A positive, significant correlation will be found where higher levels of sexual consent will be related to higher levels of sexual communication.

RQ4: Does sexual consent mediate the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction?

H4: Consent will be a mediator for the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction.

RQ5: Does gender moderate the indirect effect of consent in explaining how sexual communication influences sexual satisfaction?

H5: Gender will be a moderator for the indirect effect of sexual consent on the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction.

## **Delimitations**

The present study will target individuals who are in a committed relationship of 1 year or longer (married or unmarried) who are at least 18 years of age. Participants must also engage in sex as they define it with their current spouse or significant other.

## **Definitions**

The following operational definitions will be utilized for the current study:

1. *Sexual Consent*: The process of communicating one's willingness to engage in sexual activity either verbally or nonverbally (communicative) that is free of coercion, can be explicit or implicit, can be revoked at any point during the process of sexual activity (ongoing) of any kind (touching, kissing, oral activity, or intercourse), including the freedom to say yes as well as no. Importantly, the present study suggests sexual consent is only present in a sexual encounter if it has been given or received by all sexual partners involved. Research indicates sexual consent should not be defined as affirmative because it suggests a woman should agree to engage in sexual activity energetically and joyfully and a man should always energetically and joyfully desire sexual activity. This is representing a gender inequality and the current study will be adopting this ideology to recognize the feminist perspective (Heer et al., 2021). This will allow the present study to adopt the idea that obtaining consent is an ongoing process.
2. *Sexual communication*: The verbal transferring of thoughts, perceptions, concerns, fantasies, likes, dislikes, hopes, dreams, and/or comfort relating to sexual activity of any kind to one's sexual partner.

3. *Sexual Satisfaction*: The perception of one's recent sexual encounters as being enjoyable, pleasurable, and/or fulfilling.
4. *Coercion*: Engaging in sexual activity of any kind as the result of being pressured, forced, threatened, having feelings of obligation, and/or manipulation (French et al., 2014).

### **Summary**

Sexual consent research has primarily focused on college-aged individuals due to their increased risk of being sexually assaulted, sexually harassed, or raped. As the NSVRC (2018) reported, statistics indicate high rates of sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape, and intimate partner violence in the United States and suggest a need for more research on these topics (Morgan et al., 2018). Little research to date has gone further and investigated what sexual consent looks like as individuals mature and enter committed relationships. The present study is designed to examine the relationship between sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction, and the role gender differences may have on individuals in committed, heterosexual relationships and their experiences with sexual encounters.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The present study focuses on uncovering the relationships between sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction within committed, heterosexual relationships and the effect of gender differences on these variables through a feminist perspective. This chapter will present the feminist framework guiding the study. The chapter will explore the existing literature on these topics (sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction) as well as other related topics (coercion, sexual cues and scripts, and gender). The goal will be to recognize strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in the literature regarding these topics.

#### **Feminist Theory**

Feminist theory introduces ideologies concerned with power differentials and inequalities. Originally, feminism began as way to combat oppression on the basis of literature, law and women's rights, and the typical colonial patriarchy (Govindaraj, 2012). However, feminist theory's focus has now shifted to incorporating women's experiences in society's view of what is the 'norm' (Govindaraj, 2012). The present study's focus on sexual consent will benefit from utilizing a feminist lens because it will allow the author to recognize inequalities in these sexual encounters and empower the individuals who seem to have lost power.

Feminist theory will allow the current study to recognize gender as being a part of all social life including the family system and long-term relationships (Heer et al., 2021). Feminist theory has been incorporated over the years in many different areas of research and everyday life. One study investigated feminist theory's role in medical education to reflect the gender differences present in healthcare fields such as wage gaps and sexual harassment (Sharma, 2019). Another study explored its role in migration as women's experiences tend to be vastly

different from a male migrant's experiences based on education levels, social networks available, and employment opportunities after immigration (Nawyn, 2010). Feminist theory was also applied to social work as a way to respect and represent the different statuses women have experienced (mental health status, socioeconomic status, social status, etc.) in their lifetime (Saulnier, 2000). Finally, one study investigated past feminist research to address feminist theory's place in family therapy and found much of early family therapy to utilize gender-neutral ideologies, which may have neglected appreciation of gender differences (Thompson & Walker, 1995). However, it is noted that feminism has now found its way into much of family therapy (contextual family therapy, social constructivist theory, etc.; Thompson & Walker, 1995) suggesting feminist theory's important space in family therapy for both clinical and research settings.

Research concerning consent has revealed that women are typically victims of assault (NSVRC, 2018), suggesting there is an inequality in decision-making about sexual encounters between men and women. One study investigated sexual scripts through a feminist perspective to understand how holding sexual stereotypes affects sexual consent (seeking it and adhering to it; Hust et al., 2017). They found that a woman's sexual consent processes are affected by her internalization of typical sexual scripts and suggest this can lead to "dangerous behaviors" because the internalized sexual scripts tend to become reality in real-life sexual encounters (Hust et al., 2017, p. 207).

One past study on sexual consent using a feminist and queer theory lens examined consent within the LGBTQ+ community and found this community has a shared ideology of sexual consent; however, they still find it to be a sensitive and stressful process that should be continuous (Heer et al., 2021). They utilized feminist theory to recognize the nuances of power

within the context of sexual consent for the LGBTQ+ community (Heer et al., 2021). The current study hopes to do the same with heterosexual individuals in committed relationships as a way to recognize the power differences in their relationships and how gender is affecting sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction for these individuals.

Gender differences are evident in the ways individuals communicate sexual consent (Jozkowski et al., 2014), and when sexual scripts are internalized, men are given power as the initiator and women are often left powerless (Curtis & Burnett, 2017). Previous research has informed the field of several gender differences related to sex, sexual communication, and sexual consent. Understanding those in the framework of how gender impacts behaviors and positioning within the culture is important. Sexual scripts are gendered and use reinforced gender norms where women have less power (Curtis & Burnett, 2017). In these sexual relationships, women are not seen as equals, and this may explain why women have higher rates of victimization (NSVRC, 2018). These power differences between men and women have led to higher rates of sexual victimization, sexual assault, and sexual harassment (NSVRC, 2018). Feminist theory aims to combat these power differences and create equality between men and women, including advocating for men who may also be victims of sexual abuse at the hands of men and/or women (Heer et al., 2021). Feminist theory will aid the current study in recognizing these power differences within a sexual relationship and how gender is moderating the sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction for individuals in committed, heterosexual relationships.

### **Sexual Consent**

Previous research studies exploring sexual consent have used differing definitions of sexual consent (Beres, 2007). Some studies do not define consent at all, assuming there is a shared definition (Ostler, 2003). This can be problematic because it creates ambiguity in the



definition of sexual consent as well as in the process of obtaining or sharing sexual consent with sexual partners. Other studies define sexual consent but are followed by studies identifying their definition as problematic (i.e., affirmative consent: “yes means yes”). This ambiguity might be contributing to sexual assault instances because there are differing views of what consent actually looks like or what it should look like (Beres, 2007). One study investigated the reactions to the unsolicited sexting law passed in September of 2019 in Texas (stating it is now illegal to send unsolicited sext messages in the state of Texas) and found Reddit users to be confused not only on how to obtain consent virtually, but also on what consent is (Evans et al., 2022). They suggest Texas’ law may not be beneficial until Texas citizens fully understand what sexual consent is and how they should be communicating it (Evans et al., 2022).

The present study will define sexual consent as a process done to communicate one’s willingness to engage in sexual activity either verbally or nonverbally that is free of coercion, can be explicit or implicit, can be revoked at any point during the process of sexual activity of any kind (touching, kissing, oral activity, or intercourse), including the freedom to say yes as well as no. Importantly, the present study suggests sexual consent is only present in a sexual encounter if it has been given or received by all sexual partners involved.

### **Sexual Consent Among College Students**

Sexual consent research has been conducted primarily with college students and their experiences with casual sexual encounters. A research study investigated momentary and retrospective perceptions of sexual consent on a fictional vignette to combat the ideology that consent is concrete rather than ongoing (Willis & Jozkowski, 2021). Perceptions were measured at 11 times points during the fictional vignette. They hypothesized a hindsight bias would be present as participants would retrospectively rate the situation as being consensual earlier than

they rated it momentarily; however, they only found a hindsight bias for one behavior: making out (Willis & Jozkowski, 2021). For other behaviors, they found participants to have the opposite effect, rating that consent was given sooner in momentary perceptions and later in retrospective perceptions (Willis & Jozkowski, 2021). Overall, the findings suggest that individuals' perceptions of sexual consent changes (in the moment versus after the fact) and thus supports the recently emerging idea that consent is an ongoing process (Willis & Jozkowski, 2021).

Another study found that students expect consensual communication from their partner to be verbal but indicated using both verbal and non-verbal cues to communicate when they are unwilling to engage in sexual activity (Palermo et al., 2022). Importantly, consent being free of violence or coercion as well as being given by someone who has full consciousness and awareness, was never explicitly stated as being crucial by these university students (Palermo et al., 2022). Lastly, they found that students believe conversations about sexual consent are always important except in long-term relationships, because consent in these cases would be implied (Palermo et al., 2022). Following the research suggesting women in relationships are at higher risk of experiencing sexual victimization (Montesi et al., 2010), research investigating the importance of consent and committed relationships to combat this idea that consent in long-term relationships is implied as imperative.

### **Cues and Scripts**

Sexual consent has been found to become complicated when it comes to sexual coercion and sexual scripts, because when they are internalized, they become dangerous and ambiguous (Groggel et al., 2021; e.g., when men are the initiators, they are at higher risk of experiencing coercion or rape because their consent is implied). Research suggests a typical sexual script describes a man to be the initiator of sexual activity, always wanting to engage in sexual activity

and pursuing it, while a woman is the gatekeeper, who makes the final decision on whether sexual activity will occur, while feeling pressured to resist at first, to avoid the possibility of being shamed for engaging too much in sex (Curtis & Burnett, 2017; Jozkowski et al., 2017). This suggests that consent is something men should “get” from women (Willis et al., 2021) and persistently pursue until the woman who is supposed to be resistant (according to the typical script as gatekeeper) gives in (Jozkowski et al., 2014). This typical script for sexual activity is harmful because it suggests men cannot experience sexual assault (because they always want sex and therefore always initiate it), and they must ignore when a woman resists his attempts until she changes her mind (Jozkowski et al., 2014). Likewise, this script suggests a women cannot initiate or want to engage in sexual activity (because she needs to be resistant at first as a way to uphold her reputation), but she must later decide to engage in sexual activity (Jozkowski et al., 2014).

Other studies find these sexual scripts tend to be internalized and can be dangerous and thus support the need for further research (Groggel et al., 2021). A longitudinal study conducted in Germany defined sexual scripts as “cognitive representations of typical elements of sexual interactions that guide sexual behavior” and found these to be predictors of actual sexual behavior in college students’ sexual experiences (Krahé & Berger, 2021, p. 1130). They identified risk factors in the sexual scripts of college students to include casual sex with a relatively unknown partner, alcohol consumption, and ambiguity (Krahé & Berger, 2021). This suggests the possibility of increased vulnerability to sexual victimization when the risk factors are present in sexual scripts and propose a need to manage the risk associated with sexual ideologies (Krahé & Berger, 2021). Becoming knowledgeable about sexual consent and what it

may look like during an intimate encounter may aid individuals in avoiding the possibility of these sexual victimizations.

Further research investigated college students' interpretations of a neutral sexual vignette where neither party communicated willingness or unwillingness to engage in sexual activity and found gender expectations to have played a significant role (in line with typical sexual scripts where the man is the initiator and the woman is the gatekeeper; Groggel et al., 2021). They also found university students believed a woman to be expressing her willingness and a man to be expressing his interest in engaging in sexual activity when the two exit a party together on the basis that "everyone knows and understands what 'let's get out of here' means" (Groggel et al., 2021, p. 20). The authors suggest this to be the result of sexual scripts and that regardless of their knowledge of the effects of alcohol consumption and coercion, university students tend to rely primarily on the sexual scripts they have internalized (Groggel et al., 2021).

Another study examined alcohol consumption and its relevance to sexual consent, sexual scripts, and sexual encounters on a college campus. They found sexual scripts tend to include drinking, something commonly engaged in on a first date (Hunt et al., 2022). They found gendered sexual scripts to be on par with the traditional gender scripts about intoxication where most men were concerned about their sexual performance while women focused on their safety. The study also found that many college students (both men and women) rely on intoxication parity (both parties should be "equally intoxicated"; Hunt et al., 2022). These findings suggest how prominent sexual scripts are for college-aged individuals and how alcohol consumption alters one's ability to recognize what is moral during a sexual encounter. This alcohol use prevalence within sexual scripts along with sexual scripts in general can create confusing sexual encounters, increasing the risk of experiencing sexual violence.

## **Coercion**

For individuals who engage in sex, however they define it, internalized sexual scripts can be dangerous. However, experiencing coercion can be equally if not more damaging for these individuals. Many sexual consent definitions include a need for sexual consent to be “freely given” and thus free of coercion, but what does it mean to be free of coercion? The present study defines coercion as engaging in sexual activity of any kind as the result of being pressured, forced, threatened, having feelings of obligation, and/or manipulation (French et al., 2014).

One study investigated sexual coercion as it relates to rape and found individuals indicated sexual coercion was not on a continuum with rape being the most extreme form, but rather it was a separate experience altogether (Testa & Derman, 1999). Women who experienced rape and women who have experienced coercion were found to be different (Testa & Derman, 1999). These findings suggest that coercion is its own serious issue separate from rape and should be researched on its own. However, it should be noted that this study was conducted in the 1990s, prior to much of the sexual consent research that revealed the commonality of date rape and sexual assault among college students. Nevertheless, this study emphasizes the importance of a sexual experience to be consensual, including the absence of rape and coercion.

In addition, research has shown that men are more likely to use coercion than women. One study found that men are more likely to partake in coercive sexual behaviors when they experience an increase in sexual arousal (Crosby et al., 2021). Contrary to past hypotheses that erotic stimuli may be influencing whether one uses coercion in sexual encounters, the study also revealed that being willing to engage in risky sexual behaviors was not a result of exposure to either neutral or erotic stimuli. Overall, women were found to be less likely to engage in coercive sexual behaviors than men. This suggests that individual differences (and possibly gender

differences) may contribute to the willingness to engage in coercive sexual behaviors more than exposure to erotic stimuli (or being aroused; Crosby et al., 2021).

### **Gender and Sexual Consent**

Previous literature has indicated meaningful differences in how men and women in heterosexual relationships communicate consent. One study found no gender differences in college-aged men and women for their definitions of consent; however, they found the way men and women communicated their sexual consent varied (Jozkowski et al., 2014). Women were less likely than men to communicate their consent (or lack thereof) via nonverbal cues. Women were also found to be more likely to simply respond “yes” when asked about their interest in engaging in sexual activity, and thus acting out the typical script for sexual activity (Curtis & Burnett, 2017). The study also found that some men exclusively look for nonverbal cues when obtaining consent and most women look for verbal cues from their male partners (Jozkowski et al., 2014). When obtaining consent, men are looking for the form of consent communication they primarily use (nonverbal) and women do the same (look for the form of consent primarily used by themselves: verbal). Thus, men and women are evaluating the giving of consent by their partner according to communication behaviors that the partner does not primarily use to communicate their consent (Jozkowski et al., 2014). Such a misunderstanding in sexual consent communication between men and women elicits a need for more research on sexual consent, not only the definition, but what it looks like and how it ties to other important aspects of the sexual relationship such as sexual communication and sexual satisfaction.

Similarly, another study investigated sexual consent and the patterns of communication men and women use (Newstrom et al., 2021). They found differences in the way men and women communicate their consent and the way they perceive their partner is communicating

sexual consent, that is men utilized indirect verbal cues while women utilized direct verbal and nonverbal cues to indicate sexual consent (Newstrom et al., 2021). They also found when participants' partners utilized indirect verbal cues, both men and women believed this to be their partner indicating consent, however they themselves do not utilize indirect verbal cues as ways of consenting to engage in sexual activity (Newstrom et al., 2021). These gender differences in communication of sexual consent led the authors to suggest a need for further research on relationship variables and how those may be contributing to these disparities within long-term relationships (Newstrom et al., 2021).

Often, sexual consent research studies have been conducted by examining the experience for one gender in particular and found similar findings: communication preferences unique to gender in heterosexual encounters. One study investigated a male's sexual arousal and how it is associated with their perceiving whether a woman will be open to engaging in sexual activity (Rerick et al., 2019). Results indicated present sexual arousal in men predicted their interpretation of whether a woman was willing to engage in sexual activity based on their behaviors (Rerick et al., 2019). Higher levels of sexual arousal led men to perceive the woman's behaviors were indicative of their desire to engage in sexual activity, and it led women to perceive the male's behaviors were indicative of their desire to engage in sexual activity (Rerick et al., 2019). These findings suggest that when men are sexually aroused, they erroneously interpret women's behaviors and could be interpreting simple behaviors that women do not intend as non-verbal cues to communicate sexual desire or consent (Rerick et al., 2019). Other single-gendered research was conducted to investigate the relationship between sexual consent, sexual assertiveness, and sexual want in college aged females (Darden et al., 2018). They found sexual consent and sexual want to be moderated by sexual assertiveness (Darden et al., 2018).

Sexual assertiveness was found to be an indicator of sexual communication (i.e., able to communicate their want or lack thereof to engage in sexual activity; Darden et al., 2018). For women in relationships, external consent was associated with sexual assertiveness when low sexual want was present (Darden et al., 2018). The findings from this study indicate the importance of sexual assertiveness when communicating consent in sexual encounters with sexual partners. However, it is unknown how gender impacts sexual consent and its role in the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction.

### **Consent in Long-Term Relationships**

While literature on sexual consent has covered important topics such as college-aged individuals and scripts, cues, coercion, and gender differences, there is a paucity of research examining these encounters as individuals age and enter committed relationships. Existing research on sexual consent in committed relationship and in marriage is limited to studies from the 1990s exploring the phenomenon of marital rape (Riggs et al., 1992) or looking at marital rape in countries outside the U.S. (Archampong & Sampson, 2010). Only recently, has sexual consent research began to again cover U.S. heterosexual couples in committed relationships. One study investigated sexual consent in committed relationships and the impact of relationship length on consent (Willis et al., 2021). The authors found that couples rely on “context cues rather than communication cues” (perceiving or assuming the other’s consent rather than explicit conversations requesting or giving consent) for sexual activity communication in couples who have a longer relationship length (Willis et al., 2021, p. 682). Another study found that for individuals in committed relationships, coercion was only found to be present in relationships where both partners were dissatisfied (Lucero Jones et al., 2022). Thus, when coercion is present,



it negatively affects the sexual relationship. This suggests the importance of the sexual experiences of individuals in committed relationships to be free of coercion.

Other research has investigated indirect sexual communication, sexual satisfaction, and relational uncertainty in marital dyads and found sexual communication and sexual satisfaction to be dependent of one another (i.e., sexual communication depends on the presence of sexual satisfaction and vice versa; Theiss, 2011). These results support an interaction in married couples' sexual communication and sexual satisfaction; however, this does not account for sexual consent and the role it plays. While these studies reveal some important information about committed relationships and married couples, the present study will investigate how individuals in committed relationships experience the relationship between sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction and the moderation of gender.

### **Sexual Communication**

Existing research studies on sexual communication suggest its importance for satisfaction in relationships including sexual satisfaction, communication satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction (Blunt-Vinti et al., 2019; MacNeil & Byers, 2009; Theiss, 2011). The present study defines sexual communication as the verbal transferring of thoughts, perceptions, concerns, fantasies, likes, dislikes, hopes, dreams, and/or comfort relating to sexual activity of any kind to one's significant other. Sexual communication is crucial to investigate for the current study because it has been found to predict sexual satisfaction (Theiss, 2011), which has been linked to marital satisfaction (Mark & Jozkowski, 2013).

Studies have been conducted to explore the relationship between sexual communication and sexual communication satisfaction during sexual activity. One study found that the more partners communicate during sexual activity, the more likely they were to be satisfied with their

sexual communication, whether it was verbal or non-verbal communication (Blunt-Vinti et al., 2019). The authors also found satisfaction with sexual communication to be a predictor of sexual satisfaction (Blunt-Vinti et al., 2019). They suggest these findings should be used to highlight the importance of sexual communication while engaging in sexual activity as it is associated with higher levels of sexual communication satisfaction and thus is a predictor of sexual satisfaction (Blunt-Vinti et al., 2019). Similar studies have investigated sexual self-disclosure and its impact on sexual satisfaction for individuals who are dating or in long term relationships. One study found higher sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction in the relationships where more sexual self-disclosure was present (MacNeil & Byers, 2009). They also found a need for balance in the relationships (a cost and reward model) and found it to contribute to sexual satisfaction when individuals understand their partner's sexual preferences (a relationship that would be less costly and more rewarding; MacNeil & Byers, 2009).

Another study utilized a meta-analysis to investigate the relationship between sexual communication and sexual function and found these to be positively associated (Mallory et al., 2020). They found this relationship to be strong for women in particular (a woman's sexual desire was promoted by sexual communication), thus suggesting a woman in particular experiences an increased number of orgasms when sexual communication is present in the relationship (which was also the case for men, however the link was stronger for women; Mallory et al., 2020).

The existing literature suggests sexual communication is linked to sexual satisfaction (MacNeil & Byers, 2009), and sexual functioning (Mallory et al., 2020); however, little is known about its relationship to sexual consent for individuals in committed relationships. Sexual communication behaviors have been found to be ambiguous and confusing between men and

women who utilize different methods of communication to communicate sexual consent (Jozkowski et al., 2014). Thus, increasing the possibility of misinterpreting a sexual conversation, leading to unwanted or coercive sexual encounters. These coercive sexual encounters create an unsatisfying sexual relationship between sexual partners (Lucero Jones et al., 2022), suggesting the possibility of sexual consent as a mediator for the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction. Communicating sexual consent is a complex and often misunderstood activity, increasing the need for further research investigating these processes and their impact on sexual communication and sexual satisfaction for individuals in committed relationships.

### **Sexual Satisfaction**

Many studies have explored the relationship between sexual satisfaction and sexual communication (Blunt-Vinti et al., 2019; MacNeil & Byers, 2009; Theiss, 2011) and suggest the importance of understanding sexual satisfaction for individuals in long-term relationships. The current study defines sexual satisfaction as the perception of one's sexual encounters as being enjoyable, pleasurable, and/or fulfilling. Sexual satisfaction and sexual communication have been found to rely on one another (Theiss, 2011), thus supporting the importance of investigating the two as they relate to sexual consent for individuals in committed relationships.

Research on college-aged individuals shows how they often engage in sex as they define it that is not satisfying for them, based on social pressures or internalized narratives. One study on sexual pleasure in relation to college students and their experiences with alcohol consumption revealed that college students tend to believe engaging in sexual activity with alcohol involvement makes sexual experiences better or easier (Herbenick et al., 2019). However students reported sexual activity was more likely unwanted and was less pleasurable when

alcohol consumption was present. Thus, consuming alcohol when engaging in sexual activity increases the risk of sexual assaults and decreases sexual satisfaction (Herbenick et al., 2019). Another study has investigated women's experiences with faking orgasms to end a sexual experience. The study mentions the orgasm to be society's way of viewing a sexual encounter as being over and successful in fulfilling satisfaction for both parties involved (Thomas, Stelzl, & Lafrance, 2017). However, in their interviews, women revealed that orgasms are the best end to a sexual encounter which creates pressure to experience one and methodically results in women faking an orgasm in order to end sexual encounters that were unwanted and/or not consented to (Thomas, Stelzl, & Lafrance, 2017). The act of faking an orgasm then, is seen as a way to support society's view on normative heterosexual sex because it accommodates a male's sexual experience and feelings of sexual success. While researchers reserve room for orgasms to represent sexual satisfaction for some people, orgasms as the dominant determinant of sexual satisfaction may be contributing to the under-researched and not-yet created language that represents a woman's actual experience of sexual satisfaction (Thomas, Stelzl, & Lafrance, 2017).

### **Summary**

The literature on sexual consent, communication, and satisfaction paints a dire picture for young people who are often engaging in behaviors that leave them unsatisfied, unable to advocate for their personal pleasure, and feeling victimized or even knowingly or unknowingly coercing others. However, research shows the important role that sexual communication and satisfaction play in marital satisfaction (Jones et al., 2018; Mark & Jozkowski, 2013). For this reason, the present study will explore how sexual communication, sexual consent, and sexual satisfaction relate to one another and to gender for individuals in committed relationships

through a feminist perspective in order to determine what sexual activity practices and procedures look like for these individuals.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationships between sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction for individuals in committed relationships and how gender differences affect these variables. The following research questions and hypotheses will be examined:

RQ1: What is the relationship between sexual consent and sexual satisfaction?

H1: A positive, significant correlation will be found where higher levels of sexual consent will be related to higher levels of sexual satisfaction.

RQ2: What is the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction?

H2: A positive, significant correlation will be found where higher levels of sexual communication will be related to higher levels of sexual satisfaction.

RQ3: What is the relationship between sexual consent and sexual communication?

H3: A positive, significant correlation will be found where, higher levels of sexual consent will be related to higher levels of sexual communication.

RQ4: Does consent mediate the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction?

H4: Consent will be a mediator for the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction.

RQ5: Does gender moderate the indirect effect of consent in explaining how sexual communication influences sexual satisfaction?

H5: Gender will be a moderator for the indirect effect of sexual consent on the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction.

## **Sampling Methods**

The present study targeted heterosexual individuals in a committed relationship of 1 year or longer and were at least 18 years of age. The study investigated individuals rather than dyads under the assumption that individuals may be more likely to be open and honest when their partner is not involved. Participants were also required to have engaged in sex as they define it with their current spouse or significant other. In order to participate, participants needed to be individuals in committed relationships of 1 year or longer, heterosexual, 18 years or older and of age to legally give consent, and engage in sex as they define it with their current spouse or significant other. These criteria were essential for the current study to address the issues of sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction for individuals in committed relationships.

## **Procedure**

### **Recruitment**

The current study utilized social media, emails, and Reddit. The study utilized personal accounts on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Reddit to post the study's recruitment flyer. The social media posts were placed in specific Facebook groups, sub-Reddit pages for long-term relationships and/or specific survey pages, and other organizations, lists, and websites that may be relevant. The flyer included information about informed consent consisting of the name of the study, the study's purpose, inclusionary criteria, study risks and benefits, estimated time needed to complete the survey, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval information, a link to the online survey, and information about how to contact the researchers. See Appendix D for recruitment flyer. The current study sent out the recruitment flyer through email to Texas Woman's University students for a chance to participate.

## **Data Collection**

Interested individuals who met the study's inclusion criteria were able to click the link from the recruitment flyer which took them directly to the online survey via PsychData. The first page of the survey was the informed consent page and asked if the participant consents to participate in the present study. If the participant selected the answer choice stating "yes" and consented to participate, PsychData directed them to the questionnaire. If the participant responded "no" and did not consent to participate, PsychData went straight to the end of the survey and thanked them for their time. The informed consent included information about the study, its purpose, its relevance to the field, potential risks and benefits of the study, inclusion criteria, IRB approval information, and emphasized the study being completely voluntary and participants' ability to end the survey at any point in time.

Once the participant indicated their consent to participate in the present study, PsychData directed them to the online questionnaire where they filled out their responses based on their current long-term relationship. The questionnaire asked multiple choice questions, select all that apply questions, and Likert scale questions surrounding the topics of sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction within the individual's current significant relationship. Once participants completed the questionnaire, PsychData directed them to the end of the survey which stated, "Thank You" and provided a link to another questionnaire that allowed participants to enter their contact information for a drawing in which three participants won a \$20 Amazon gift card. Participants were not required to complete the second survey or enter the drawing. Participant responses to the second questionnaire were not linked to data from the first questionnaire.



## **Protection of Subjects**

Approval was obtained from Texas Woman's University's IRB to ensure participants are being treated fairly and remain unharmed during and after participation. The current study did not collect any identifying information in the questionnaire to maintain the confidentiality of its participants. The second survey collected contact information but completing that survey was completely optional and was only necessary if the participant wanted to be placed in the drawing to win a gift card. This second survey did not at all tie to the first questionnaire and therefore did not identify that participant's responses to the survey. The emails collected on the second survey were stored in PsychData and will be deleted once the gift cards have been distributed. By not obtaining any identifying information from participants completing the first survey, the present study provided a safe and confidential participant experience.

## **Measures**

### **Sexual Consent**

The present study utilized one sexual consent scale to obtain an understanding of sexual consent for individuals in committed relationships.

#### ***Process Based Consent Scale***

The sexual consent scale utilized for the current study is the Process Based Consent Scale. The present study utilized the final scale found through an exploratory factor analysis (Glance et al., 2021). The Process Based Consent Scale is a 17-item scale exploring three items: subtle coercion, ongoing consent, and communicative sexuality using a 7-point Likert scale (Glance et al., 2021). The first item, subtle coercion, investigated behaviors that could be seen as mild and may be more supportive behaviors (e.g., "When my partner says that they do not want to be a part of sexual activity, I try to change their mind," and "I am easily upset if I feel that my

partner is not taking care of my sexual needs”; Glace et al., 2021). Ongoing consent assesses whether individuals check in with their partner throughout the process of engaging in sexual activity (e.g., “If my partner seems less than excited about sex, I will stop and ask if they want to be sexual with me” and “I pay attention to my partner’s body language during sexual encounters to be sure that they want to have sex”; Glace et al., 2021). Communicative sexuality looks further at how individuals are communicating their willingness or desire to engage in sexual activity (e.g., “I verbally tell my partner what I want sexually” and “During sexual activity, it is important to me that my partner knows what I am comfortable with”; Glace et al., 2021). They found the Process Based Consent Scale to be reliable and valid through Cronbach’s alpha (0.84 for communicative sexuality, 0.86 for ongoing consent, and 0.89 for subtle coercion), investigating correlations between this scale and related subscales, and hierarchical linear regressions (Glace et al., 2021).

### **Sexual Communication**

The current study utilized two sexual communication scales to gain a wide range of understanding on the sexual communication patterns of individuals in committed relationships.

#### ***Revised Sexual Self-Disclosure Scale***

The Revised Sexual Self-Disclosure Scale (SSDS-R) is a 30- item scale consisting of 9 subscales (three items in each) and investigates what sexual topics individuals have discussed with their partner and their comfort with discussing these topics with their partner through a 5-point Likert scale (e.g., “The kinds of touching that sexually arouse me,” “My juicy sexual thoughts,” “What sex in an intimate relationship means to me,” “The times I have pretended to enjoy sex,” “The sexual behaviors that I consider appropriate,” etc.; Snell et al., 1989). Each of the nine subscales address a different sexual topic: sexual delay preferences, sexual dishonesty,

distressing sex, sexual accountability, the meaning of sex, sexual preferences, sexual fantasies, sexual sensations, and sexual behaviors (Snell et al., 1989). Another study found the SSDS-R to be reliable via Cronbach's alpha (0.95 for females and 0.97 for males; Jones et al., 2018).

### ***Sexual Communication Patterns Questionnaire - Short Form***

Previous studies have utilized a modified version of the CPQ-SF (Futris et al., 2010) to account for communication patterns about sexual topics called the Sexual Communication Patterns Questionnaire Short Form (SCPQ-SF; Jones et al., 2018). The SCPQ-SF is an 11-item questionnaire investigating sexual situations/encounters in which issues arise and the likelihood of sharing a positive interaction through a 9-point Likert scale. Each item was altered from the CPQ-SF to instead begin with "When sexual issues or problems arise..." in order to address the sexual component however the responses remained the same ("Both spouse avoid discussing the problem," "Both spouses try to discuss the problem," "Female tries to start a discussion while male tries to avoid a discussion," and "Male tries to start a discussion while female tries to avoid discussion"; Jones et al., 2018). For one study, the SCPQ-SF was found to be reliable through Cronbach's alpha (0.90 for females and 0.82 for males; Jones et al., 2018).

### **Sexual Satisfaction**

The present study utilized one questionnaire to investigate the sexual satisfaction of individuals in committed relationships with their current significant other.

### ***New Sexual Satisfaction Scale - Short***

The New Sexual Satisfaction Scale Short (NSSS-S) consists of 12 items measuring sexual satisfaction for married individuals on a 5-point Likert scale (e.g., "The quality of my orgasms," "My mood after sexual activity," "My partner's sexual creativity," "The frequency of my orgasms," etc.; Stulhofer et al., 2011). The 12-item questionnaire investigates sexual

satisfaction on 5 dimensions: emotional connection/closeness, sexual activity, sexual sensations, sexual exchange, and sexual presence/awareness. In previous studies, the NSSS-S proved to have strong convergent validity, internal consistency, test-retest validity, and strong internal consistency through Cronbach's Alpha for Mark et al. (2014; 0.87 to 0.96) and for Stulhofer et al. (2011; 0.90 to 0.93).

### **Data Analysis Plan**

Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure that the variables 1) are normally distributed, 2) that correlations are in the expected directions, and 3) to monitor for any potential multi-collinearity. Prior to conducting data analyses, tests for normality were conducted and all variables in the analyses were within normal limits of skewness and kurtosis. To test research questions 1 (what is the relationship between sexual consent and sexual satisfaction?), 2 (What is the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction?), and 3 (What is the relationship between sexual consent and sexual communication?), bivariate correlations were conducted between the variables.

To test research questions 4 (Does consent mediate the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction?) and 5 (Does gender moderate the indirect effect of consent in explaining how sexual communication influences sexual satisfaction?), a moderated mediation analysis was conducted using the software MPlus version 7. A multigroup analysis was conducted by running a simple moderation analysis separately for men and women. Invariance testing was used to constrain each pathway of the model and test for significant differences in men and women. After constraining each pathway of the moderation model, the chi-square test of model fit was examined to determine whether gender significantly moderated each relationship. Pathways that did not differ significantly between men and women were

constrained to be equal. If all pathways were constrained to be equal in the final model, it was determined that moderated mediation did not occur, or in other words the indirect effect of sexual consent did not differ for men and women. However, if the chi-square test for model fit is significant, it indicates that moderated mediation has occurred, and thus, men and women should not be constrained to be equal.

An a priori power analysis was conducted using G\*Power 3.1.9 to determine the minimum sample size required to find statistical significance using Pearson's correlation analysis (Cohen, 1988). With a desired level of power set at .80, an alpha ( $\alpha$ ) level at .05, and a small-to-moderate effect size of .25 ( $\rho$ ), it was determined that a minimum of 123 participants would be required to ensure adequate power. To ensure adequate power for a multiple regression with three predictors and a small-to-moderate effect size ( $f^2 = .10$ ), a power analysis indicated that a minimum of 114 participants would be required. Given these analyses, a minimum sample size of 130 participants will be recruited to ensure adequate power for all tests.

### **Summary**

The present study will focus on investigating sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction for individuals in committed relationships and how gender differences affect these variables. The study will target individuals in committed relationships of 1 year or longer, individuals who are 18 years of age, and engage in sex as they define it with their current significant other. An online survey will be conducted to investigate these variables via PsychData and will utilize three sexual consent scales (Internal Consent Scale, External Consent Scale, and Process Based Consent Scale), two sexual communication scales (SSDS-R and SCPQ-SF), and one sexual satisfaction scale (NSSS-S). Correlations and moderate analyses will be conducted to investigate these relationships. The current study aims to uncover the

relationships between sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction for individuals in long-term relationships and the role of gender differences on these variables.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Sample**

The present study's sample included 536 participants who identified as heterosexual and in a committed relationship. The sample consisted of 131 men and 405 women with ages ranging from 18 to 60 years old. Ethnicities including Caucasian (64%), Hispanic/Latino (16.2%), African American (6.5%), Asian/Pacific Islander (8.4%), American Indian/Alaskan Native (1.1%), and other (3.7%) participated in the present study. Relationship duration averages (6.87 years) and sexual activity duration averages (6.64 years) were similar for participants. A large portion of the sample consisted of married individuals (45.7). Participants ranged in the number of children they have from 0 to 10 children. The sample reported engaging in sex frequently with one to two sexual encounters a week for 40.3% of participants. Participants were highly educated with 41.8% of the sample having completed a bachelor's degree and 17% having completed a master's degree. A majority of the sample is currently employed full time (51.9%) and the average household income varies with 31.5% of participants having an average of \$100,000 or more. All participant demographic information can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1***Participant Demographics*

Variable	N (%)
Participants	
Male	131 (24.4)
Female	405 (75.6)
Total	536 (100)
Ethnicity	
Caucasian	343 (64)
Hispanic/Latino	87 (16.2)
African American	35 (6.5)
American Indian/Alaskan Native	6 (1.1)
Asian/Pacific Islander	45 (8.4)
Other	20 (3.7)
Duration of Current Relationship	
Mean	6.87 years
SD	6.90 years
Range	0-43
Duration of Sexual Activity	
Mean	6.64 years
SD	6.77 years
Range	0-39
Age	
Mean	29.91 years
SD	8.73 years
Range	18-60
Relationship Status	
In a committed relationship	197 (36.8)
Cohabiting	61 (11.4)
Engaged	32 (6)
Married	245 (45.7)
Number of Children	
Mean	.83
SD	1.40
Range	0-10
Average Sexual Encounter Frequency	
Less than Once or Twice a Year	14 (2.6)
Less than Once a Month	39 (7.3)
Once a Month	26 (4.9)
Two Times a Month	92 (17.2)
1-2 Times a Week	216 (40.3)
3-5 Times a Week	117 (21.8)
Almost Daily	27 (5)



Variable	N(%)
Level of Education	4 (.7)
Some High School	77 (14.4)
High School Diploma	21 (3.9)
Technical Certification	85 (15.9)
Associates Degree	224 (41.8)
Bachelor's Degree	91 (17)
Master's Degree	33 (6.2)
Doctorate Degree	
Current Employment	278 (51.9)
Employed Full Time	65 (12.1)
Employed Part Time	21 (3.9)
Self-Employed	17 (3.2)
Homemaker	16 (3)
Unemployed	134 (25)
Full Time Student	5 (.9)
Retired or Disabled	
Average Household Income	82 (15.3)
Less than \$20,000	58 (10.8)
\$20,000 – \$34,999	57 (10.6)
\$35,000 - \$49,999	95 (17.7)
\$50,000 – \$74,999	170 (13.1)
\$75,000 - \$99,999	169 (31.5)
\$100,000 or More	

### Preliminary Analysis

Bivariate correlations were conducted to see whether sexual communication and sexual satisfaction were related. Results for research question 1 indicated there was a significant, positive correlation between sexual communication discussed and sexual satisfaction, male  $r(536) = .48, p < .001$ ; female  $r(536) = .54, p < .001$ . A significant positive correlation between sexual communication resolution and sexual satisfaction, male  $r(536) = .45, p < .001$ ; female  $r(536) = .58, p < .001$ .

Bivariate correlations were conducted to see whether sexual consent and sexual communication were related. Results for research question 2 indicated here was a significant,

positive correlation between ongoing consent and sexual communication discussed, male  $r(536) = .44, p < .001$ ; female  $r(536) = .43, p < .001$ . A significant positive correlation between ongoing consent and sexual communication resolution, male  $r(536) = .39, p < .001$ ; female  $r(536) = .44, p < .001$ . A significant positive correlation between communicative sexuality and sexual communication discussed, male  $r(536) = .70, p < .001$ ; female  $r(536) = .62, p < .001$ . A significant positive correlation between communicative sexuality and sexual communication resolution, male  $r(536) = .56, p < .001$ ; female  $r(536) = .55, p < .001$ . A significant positive correlation between subtle coercion and sexual communication discussed for women, female  $r(536) = .19, p < .001$  but not for men, male  $r(536) = .12, p > .05$ . A significant positive correlation between subtle coercion and sexual communication resolution for women  $r(536) = .16, p < .001$ , but not for men,  $r(536) = .16, p > .05$ . Subtle coercion was reversely coded and thus less subtle coercion was related to higher sexual satisfaction.

Bivariate correlations were conducted to see whether sexual consent and sexual satisfaction were related. Results for research question 3 indicated there was a significant, positive correlation between ongoing consent and sexual satisfaction, male  $r(536) = .33, p < .001$ ; female  $r(536) = .42, p < .001$ . A significant positive correlation between communicative sexuality and sexual satisfaction, male  $r(536) = .49, p < .001$ ; female  $r(536) = .57, p < .001$ . A significant positive correlation between subtle coercion and sexual satisfaction for women,  $r(536) = .23, p < .001$ , but not for men,  $r(536) = -.01, p > .05$ . See Table 2 for correlation results.

**Table 2***Variable Correlations*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sexual consent: ongoing consent (1)	1	.61***	.32***	.43***	.44***	.42***
Sexual consent: communicative sexuality (2)	.56***	1	.23***	.62***	.55***	.57***
Sexual consent: subtle coercion (3)	.32***	.13	1	.19***	.16***	.23***
Sexual communication: discussion (4)	.44***	.70***	.12	1	.55***	.54***
Sexual communication: resolution (5)	.39***	.56***	.16	.67***	1	.58***
Sexual satisfaction (6)	.33***	.49***	-.01	.48***	.45***	1

*Note.* Upper-right cells - correlations between variables for women

Lower-left cells - correlations between variables for men

Trace - correlations between men and women

(\*)  $p \leq .05$

(\*\*)  $p \leq .01$

(\*\*\*)  $p \leq .001$

**Primary Analysis**

A moderated mediation analysis tested whether different types of sexual consent helped explain the relationship between sexual communication and satisfaction.

Results for research questions 4 (does consent mediate the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction?) and 5 (does gender moderate the indirect effect of consent in explaining how sexual communication influences sexual satisfaction?) indicated differences in the mediating effects for one of the three consent variables (subtle coercion). Fully

constraining male and female models revealed that the moderated mediation did not occur for ongoing consent ( $\chi^2 = .52, p = .915$ ) and communicative sexuality ( $\chi^2 = .82, p = .801$ ), but did occur for subtle coercion ( $\chi^2 = 7.96, p < .05$ ).

Subtle coercion significantly mediated the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction for women, but not for men (Male indirect effect  $b = -.05, p = .239$ ; Female indirect effect  $b = .09, p < .05$ ). The total effect of sexual communication on sexual satisfaction for both men and women was significant (Male total effect  $b = 2.79, p < .001$ ; Female total effect  $b = 2.22, p < .001$ ). The direct effect for both men and women remained significant ( $b = 2.13, p < .001$ ). Both models explained a large amount of variance in sexual satisfaction (Male  $R^2 = .23, SE = .05, p < .001$ ; Female  $R^2 = .35, SE = .05, p < .001$ ). Significant gender effects were found within the mediation model for subtle coercion ( $\chi^2 = 7.96, p < .05$ ).

Ongoing consent mediated the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction. No significant gender differences were found between any pathway in the mediation analysis; therefore, all pathways were constrained to be equal. Results indicated that ongoing consent significantly mediated the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction ( $b = .33, p < .001$ ; Male  $R^2 = .27, SE = .05, p < .001$ ; Female  $R^2 = .36, SE = .05, p < .001$ ). The total effect of ongoing consent on the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction was significant for both men and women (total effect  $b = 2.19, p < .001$ ). The direct effect for both men and women remained significant ( $b = 1.86, p < .001$ ).

Communicative sexuality also mediated the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction. No significant gender differences were found between any pathway in the mediation analysis; therefore, all pathways were constrained to be equal. Results indicated that communicative sexuality significantly mediated the relationship between sexual

communication and sexual satisfaction ( $b = .79, p < .001$ ; Male  $R^2 = .31, SE = .06, p < .001$ ; Female  $R^2 = .42$ ). The total effect of communicative sexuality on the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction was significant for both men and women (total effect  $b = 2.19, p < .001$ ). The direct effect for both men and women remained significant ( $b = 1.40, p < .001$ ).

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The current study found significant positive correlation between sexual consent and sexual satisfaction, and sexual communication. Like past research studies (Blunt-Vinti et al., 2019; MacNeil & Byers, 2009; Theiss, 2011), the current study found sexual communication to be highly correlated to sexual satisfaction. The present study revealed nuances in sexual consent and its impact on the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction from a sample of individuals in committed relationships. Additionally, the study demonstrated that the impact of consent on sexual satisfaction differs for men and women.

The present study revealed that sexual communication leads to sexual satisfaction partially because it helps foster an environment of consent. Three types of sexual consent impact sexual satisfaction in heterosexual individuals in committed relationships. First, ongoing consent was found to be significant for this relationship for both men and women. Second, communicative sexuality was found to significantly impact the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction. Third, subtle coercion was reversely coded and was found to affect the relationship differently for men and women suggesting that coercion negatively impacts women's sexual satisfaction (more subtle coercion was related to lower sexual satisfaction) but has no relationship to men's sexual satisfaction.

#### **Ongoing Consent**

The current study found ongoing consent to be significantly affecting the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction for both men and women. Therefore, when partners are constantly checking in with one another at different stages of a sexual encounter (e.g., at the onset, before penetration, etc.), both men and women were more likely to

experience sexual satisfaction. This finding differed from a past study that found discussing consent was important for students except for students in long-term relationships where their consent was implied (Palermo et al., 2022). Considering both studies, individuals (particularly college students) in committed relationships may not be communicating consistently, or at all, their sexual consent with partners. However, these individuals may not be aware that ongoing communication of consent is associated with higher levels of sexual satisfaction.

Previous findings suggest policy (particularly regarding universities) is shifting to promote affirmative consent (yes means yes; Pugh & Becker, 2018). While this idea seems great, it may be ignoring the presence of sexual coercion (Pugh & Becker, 2018) and thus a new tactic for obtaining sexual consent is necessary. Without a change in the way individuals are communicating their sexual consent with one another, sexual assaults and sexual violence will still exist. Studies have shown that even when events such as sexual assaults or sexual violence occur, social risks of reporting these incidents at times outweigh the justice victims would be searching for (Khan et al., 2018). Thus, as individuals are experiencing sexual coercion, trauma, sexual assault, fear of how this might affect them socially, they may not be receiving justice for that incident. As individuals enter sexual relationships, understanding how their communication regarding giving and receiving consent can impact their sexual satisfaction will be crucial. As partners utilize ongoing consent and consistently check in with their partners during sexual encounters, they are more likely to avoid negative sexual experiences (e.g., sexual coercion, sexual assaults) and to experience higher sexual satisfaction with their sexual partners.

### **Communicative Sexuality**

The present study found that for both men and women, communicative sexuality was found to significantly affect the relationship between sexual communication and sexual

satisfaction. Thus, verbal communication played a significant role in sexual satisfaction for both men and women. Past research has suggested that men and women differ in the way they communicate consent and expect to be communicated with about consent from their partner (men look for nonverbal cues to receive consent and women look for verbal cues; Jozkowski et al., 2014). While past studies argue that individuals are searching for cues their heterosexual partners do not primarily use (Jozkowski et al., 2014), the present study suggests that couples attain greater sexual satisfaction when consent cues are verbal. Therefore, it is implied that verbal communication cues lead to greater sexual satisfaction and may be a better option when communicating about sexual consent.

Previous findings have suggested the association between sexual communication and commitment to the relationship, and thus, when partners are sexually communicating, they are more satisfied and more committed to the relationship (Collins & Horn, 2019). Individuals in committed relationships may not realize how their ability to communicate verbally regarding their sexual relationship relates to their level of commitment to the relationship with one another. Other important aspects of sexual communication to consider include the ability to create a safe space to discuss things like sexually transmitted infections, number of previous partners, and contraception (Horan, 2016). Creating a space that is safe to sexually communicate, even when conversations may be uncomfortable will be crucial not only for satisfaction and commitment, but to understand sexual partners in a new way and to possibly create stronger bonds.

This sexual communication is even crucial surrounding a couples' first sexual encounter as it promotes sexual intimacy (cognitive, emotional, and relational) as well as overall relationship development (Theiss & Solomon, 2007). Couples may not realize the significant role verbal sexual communication plays on their sexual satisfaction, relationship commitment, and



overall safety. Along with previous research, the present study's findings promote the importance of sexual communication with sexual partners for individuals in committed, heterosexual relationships.

### **Subtle Coercion**

The current study found subtle coercion to significantly affect the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction for women, but not for men. Subtle coercion only partially explained the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction for women, but not for men. In other words, subtle coercion has no impact on men's sexual satisfaction but has a negative indirect effect on women's sexual satisfaction. The question remains, why does subtle coercion impact women's sexual satisfaction while men experience no affect? The sexual pressures women often face to accept sexual advances may contribute to why women uniquely experience subtle coercion as a mediator of the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction.

These sexual pressures women face include pressure to satisfy a partners' needs, pressure to be the supplier of sex, and pressure to conform to sexual scripts. First, Ramsey and Hoyt (2015) investigated heterosexual women's perceived objectification by their partner and its impact on experiencing sexual pressures. The study found that women were significantly more likely to feel their role is to satisfy the male's need for sex if they have perceived their partner as objectifying them (Ramsey & Hoyt, 2015). It also found this perceived objectification to be linked to a higher likelihood of experiencing "sexual coercion in general and sexual coercion via commitment manipulation" (Ramsey & Hoyt, 2015, p. 161).

Second, these sexual pressures existing for women may be due to typical economic trends. One study examined how economic principles may have also contributed to the

transaction of sex between men and women (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004). The study elaborated the idea of supply and demand where the woman acts as the supplier and the man acts as the demander (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004). It suggests the idea that sex is a good, with low supply but high demand (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004). Thus, possibly creating sexual pressures on women to act in their role as “supplier,” similar to sexual scripts.

Third, one study investigated sexual pressures and found two things to occur in sexual encounters: gender-neutral interactions (i.e., avoiding embarrassment) and gendered interactions (i.e., conforming to typical sexual scripts; Ford, 2021). Thus, women may be engaging in sex due to the sexual pressures or due to avoiding embarrassment of themselves or their potential partners. The current study’s findings suggest the importance of understanding the role sexual coercion, sexual consent, and sexual communication plays in a couples’ sexual encounters and supports the importance of clinicians educating and assessing their couples on these topics. These findings may exist due to these pressures women face that men are not aware of or not able to understand, leading to further miscommunication and pressure placed on women. Assessing for the existence of these pressures and of coercion in relationships may be crucial in learning to communicate with one’s partner about the pressures that may exist without one or both partners being aware of it.

Women face these sexual pressures; pressure to satisfy a partners’ needs, pressure to be the supplier of sex, and pressure to conform to sexual scripts, that men may know little to nothing about. Men and women have been found to experience guilt or self-blame after experiencing sexual coercion, with a portion experiencing trauma symptoms (Byers & Glenn, 2012). These findings suggest sexual coercion exists for both men and women and do impact their wellbeing. Research suggests men do experience sexual coercion and obligations in the

form of verbal, seduction, physical, and substance coercion that led to higher rates of psychological distress (French et al., 2014); however, the present study found this to not impact men's sexual satisfaction. While men are aware of obligations that exist for sex, they may be unaware of the impact it has on their female partners' sexual satisfaction. Men are experiencing sexual coercion and negative impacts psychologically; however, they are not experiencing impacts on their sexual satisfaction while women experience negative impacts both psychologically and sexually. This inequality that exists between men and women and their experiences of sexual coercion may affect men's ability to understand and empathize with a women's experiences of sexual consent and its importance for their sexual satisfaction. Further psychoeducation and research for couples to understand the pressures both men and women face and how those pressures are impacting both partners will be crucial.

### **Implications**

In further understanding the relationship between sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction, future directions are identified. The present study's findings regarding the effect of sexual consent on the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction between men and women emphasizes the importance of understanding sexual consent and sexual coercion. The present study revealed two important aspects of how consent functions in heterosexual couples. First, subtle coercion negatively impacts women's sexual satisfaction. While past research has shown that women are affected by sexual coercion (Testa & Derman, 1999), the present study supports the importance of sexual consent and adds that the absence of subtle coercion is important for a woman's sexual satisfaction but not for a man's sexual satisfaction. Second, the present study found no relationship between subtle coercion and sexual satisfaction for men. Such findings suggest that either men do not experience subtle

coercion, or that men's sexual satisfaction is not impacted by subtle coercion. It will be important for future researchers to further investigate men's experiences of sexual coercion within committed relationships and how this might inform their sexual experiences. Men do not seem to be significantly affected by the presence of sexual consent suggesting a need to understand what other aspects of sex may be significantly affecting their sexual satisfaction. This knowledge will help to bring awareness for both men and women the sexual experiences that impact men's sexual satisfaction and will be beneficial for couple dyads as they navigate their sexual lives together.

Items pertaining to subtle coercion on the Process Based Consent Scale include "I would tell a partner that if they cared about me, they would have sex with me;" "sometimes, people need a little verbal convincing to have sex;" "I am easily upset if I feel that my partner is not taking care of my sexual needs" (Glance et al., 2021). These are important for women to recognize as things that when present, negatively impact their sexual satisfaction. Women must become aware of the ways in which they have been socialized to say 'yes' when they may not mean it or want it (e.g., sexual scripts; Ford, 2021; Thomas, LaFrance, & Stelzl, 2017).

The present study found sexual coercion to have no effect on men's sexual satisfaction, which may mean they are unaware of behaviors that are perceived by their women partners as coercive. As men are often physically larger and more powerful than women, understanding how this and other characteristics may be contributing to coercive behaviors and perceptions. Education for men is crucial to understand what behaviors they are engaging in that women perceive as coercive and are thus negatively impacting women's sexual satisfaction. It will also be important for men to understand how not feeling that sexual consent impacts them in their

heterosexual relationships may be affecting their ability to understand the concept of sexual consent that women experience and their need for consent for positive sexual satisfaction.

Furthermore, relationship educators and mental health clinicians should work to educate heterosexual couples on how sexual coercion may be playing a role in the couple's sexual satisfaction. Educating couples about sexual coercion and how its presence could be leading to less satisfying sex may be crucial for building connection. More specifically, therapists working with couples to provide psychoeducation surrounding subtle coercion, as couples may not be aware of what subtle coercion consists of and how it impacts their sexual satisfaction. Teaching couples how to communicate about these topics may be necessary as both men and women are shown to be more sexually satisfied if they have better verbal communication (Blunt-Vinti et al., 2019; MacNeil & Byers, 2009). Taking into consideration the framework of consensual assumptions in which couples are operating under (i.e., do you have to say 'yes' in order to consent?) may also be important as couples learn to communicate with one another about consent. This verbal communication education may also be important for increased sexual function (e.g., erectile function, orgasm, less pain; Mallory et al., 2020). These findings may inform providers of a need to assess sexual coercion in couples therapy to better understand what may be contributing to a couple's distress. Couples' therapists and pre-marital counselors should become aware of the impact of sexual consent on sexual satisfaction for men and women in order to educate couples on what may be contributing to sexual and relationship discourse.

### **Limitations**

While the present study reveals new information about the factors influencing sexual satisfaction in heterosexual couples, there are several limitations in the study. In particular, several limitations relate to the sample that was collected. First, the number of women who

completed the survey was far greater than men who completed the survey. Although the preliminary power analysis indicated that the study had enough male participants to analyze responses and compare them to the women's, it is unknown whether the findings would vary with equal numbers of male and female participants. Second, age poses another limitation regarding the study sample. Most participants reported that they were between the ages of 18 and 42, which means that most participants were from only two generations, generation Z and millennials. While this is a variety of ages, these findings cannot be generalized to older couples from other generations (e.g., boomers or generation X). Third, a high percentage of participants identified as Caucasian (64%) with the next highest ethnicity being Hispanic/Latino (16%). With a more diverse sample or with particular ethnic groups, the results may vary. Fourth, the current study was highly educated with 81% of participants reporting some level of college education (i.e., associate's, bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree). Along with being highly educated, participants were also found to bring in between \$50,000 and six figures a year in income. Thus, these findings may not be generalizable to lower income individuals or those who did not receive some college degree. Last, the participants reported a high level of sexual frequency with most participants reporting having sexual encounters one to two times a week (40%) or three to five times a week (21%). Is it unknown whether these findings would characterize committed relationships where sexual encounters are less frequent.

The findings for the present study are specific to individuals in heterosexual, monogamous pairings. It is unclear if the gender differences discovered regarding consent would be similar for men and women in the LGBTQ+ community. Moreover, it is still unknown how transgender and non-binary individuals may experience sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction and these gender differences cannot be generalized.

Additionally, only a few valid and reliable measures for sexual consent exist. Sexual consent measures that do exist often cannot be combined for a total score or even be used to create a latent variable. This poses an issue in simply searching to understand how sexual consent functions within relationships for individuals and dyads. Furthermore, the lack of measurable consent instruments may be contributing to the lack of understanding of sexual consent (what it means and how it applies to relationships) found in much of the sexual consent research (Beres, 2007; Evans et al., 2022).

Moreover, the current study's sample consisted of individuals who are in committed relationships rather than couple dyads. While individuals within relationships were explored and questions surrounding participants' current partner were inquired about, only one member of the dyad completed the survey. It is unclear how collecting and analyzing participant data paired with partner data may have changed the results. Further investigation of the relationships between sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction may benefit from using dyadic data analysis.

The current study only investigated heterosexual individuals and thus further investigation is needed to understand how the relationship between sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction impacts populations within the LGBTQ+ community and how it may be different from that of heterosexual sexual experiences. The knowledge from the present study raises questions surrounding the relationships from those within the LGBTQ+ community including sexual coercion and same sex couples and the transgender experiences of sexual coercion. Further, individuals engaging in polyamorous relationships may be impacted by sexual consent and sexual communication differently based on the dynamics of these relationships, which will be important to understand. It will also be important to understand the

role discrimination may have on sexual satisfaction. Individuals who belong to a minority group (e.g., the LGBTQ+ community or an ethnic minority) deserve further investigation on their experiences and how those may be impacting their sexual lives (sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction). These understandings will be important for mental health clinicians working with couples as they work towards educating and communicating about these topics.

### **Conclusion**

The present study sought to examine the relationship between sexual consent, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction, and the role gender differences may have on individuals in committed relationships and their experiences with sexual encounters. The study uncovered a significant effect of subtle coercion on the relationship between sexual communication and sexual satisfaction for women, but not for men. Suggesting women are experiencing a negative impact on their sexual satisfaction when coercion is present, when men are not. These findings support a need for clinicians and providers to educate their couples on how the presence of sexual coercion and absence of sexual communication may be contributing to less satisfying sexual encounters. Further investigation on how these variables may relate to one another for men, individuals within the LGBTQ+ community, and individuals belonging to a minority ethnicity group will be necessary to aid populations outside of the heterosexual, primarily white individuals in committed relationships.



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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT FLYER

# Are you Married or in a Committed Relationship?

## PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!



### SEXUAL COMMUNICATION AND BEHAVIORS IN COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS

We are conducting a Texas Woman's University research study that will examine the processes you take when engaging in and communicating about sexual activity in your current relationship

### STUDY DESCRIPTION

By sharing your experiences with sexual activity, therapists can understand sexual communication and sexual satisfaction in heterosexual committed relationships. Online questionnaire at your convenience. This study will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet interactions.

### WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- Men and Women who are married or in a committed relationship of one year or longer
- Engage in vaginal/penile intercourse
- 18 years or older
- Heterosexual

### ANY QUESTIONS?

Please contact Alyssa Stokes at [astokes4@twu](mailto:astokes4@twu) or Rebecca Lucero Jones at [rlucerojones@twu.edu](mailto:rlucerojones@twu.edu)

TWU IRB Approval Number: IRB-FY2022-259

Interested individuals can click the link below to participate:

[HTTPS://WWW.PSYCHDATA.COM/S.ASP?SID= 195354](https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?sid=195354)

Participants will have the opportunity to enter in a drawing to win a \$20 Amazon gift card for their time.

APPENDIX B

SEXUAL COMMUNICATION AND BEHAVIORS SURVEY

[Edit Survey](#) | [Preview Survey](#) | [View or Print Entire Survey](#) | [Remove All Question Logic](#)

Survey ID	Survey Title	Status
195354	Sexual Communication and Behaviors in Committed Relationships Survey	ON

Edit Survey Title

Sexual Communication and Behaviors in Committed Relationships Survey

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
[https://www.aamft.org/Directories/Find\\_a\\_Therapist.aspx](https://www.aamft.org/Directories/Find_a_Therapist.aspx)

American Psychological Association Psychologist  
Locator <http://locator.apa.org/>

National Register of Health Service Psychologists  
<http://www.findapsychologist.org/>

Mental Health of America Referrals  
<http://www.nmha.org/go/searchMHA>

Psychology Today Find a Therapist  
<http://therapists.psychologytoday.com/rms/>

National Board for Certified Counselors  
<http://www.nbcc.org/CounselorFind>

Another potential risk of the study is fatigue due to the length of the questionnaire (20-30 minutes). You can take a break or discontinue participation at any time.

Another potential risk of this study is a loss of confidentiality. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions. Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. Only the investigator and her advisor will have access to the data which will be stored on a password protected computer and encrypted flash drive in a locked room. To protect your privacy, personal, identifiable information will be removed from study documents and replaced with a study identifier.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

#### Participation and Benefits

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. There are a number of possible benefits that may result from the proposed research. There is significant literature available suggesting that partners who communicate clearly with each other about sexuality are often more satisfied with the sexual and relationship quality. If you elect to enter the drawing for one out of three gift cards, you may receive a \$20 gift card as compensation for participation.

#### Questions Regarding the Study

If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researchers; their contact information is at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

\*1) Do you consent to participate in this research study?

☐ Yes ☐

No

#### Question Logic

If [Yes] is selected, then skip to question [No logic applied]

If [No] is selected, then skip to question [GO TO END OF SURVEY]

2) Gender

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Non-binary

☐ Trans male

☐ Trans female

☐ Other

3) Your Current Age

4) In which ethnic group do you mostly place yourself?

- ☐ African-American
- ☐ American Indian / Alaskan Native
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander ☐
- Caucasian
- ☐ Hispanic/ Latino
- ☐ Other (please specify)

5) What is your relationship status? In

- ☐ a committed relationship
- ☐ Cohabitating
- ☐ Engaged
- ☐ Married

6) Duration of your current relationship in years (If less than two years, use a decimal. i.e. 1 and a half years = 1.5 years)

7) How many years have you and your current partner/spouse been sexually active with each other? (if less than one year, use a decimal. i.e. 6 months = .5 years)

8) Your highest achieved education level

- ☐ Some High School
- ☐ High School Diploma
- ☐ Technical Certification
- ☐ Associates Degree
- ☐ Bachelors Degree Masters
- ☐ Degree Doctorate Degree
- ☐

**10) Current Employment**

- ☐ Employed Full Time or more
- ☐ Employed Part-time (Less than 30 hours a week) Self-
- ☐ employed
- ☐ Full-time Student
- ☐ Homemaker
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Retired or disabled

**11) Average Combined Yearly Income Less**

- ☐ than \$20,000
- ☐ \$20,000 - \$34,000
- ☐ \$35,000 - \$49,000
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$74,000
- ☐ \$75,000 - \$99,000
- ☐ \$100,000 or more

**12) In the last year, what is your average sexual encounter frequency? We**

- ☐ haven't had sex
- ☐ Less than once or twice a year
- ☐ Less than once a month
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Two times a month
- ☐ 1-2 times a week 3-
- ☐ 5 times a week
- ☐ Almost daily

**13) What is your preferred sexual encounter frequency? We**

- ☐ haven't had sex
- ☐ Less than once or twice a year
- ☐ Less than once a month
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Two times a month
- ☐ 1-2 times a week 3-
- ☐ 5 times a week
- ☐ Almost daily

Please indicate your comfort level in discussing these topics with your partner/spouse.

	I do not feel comfortable	I feel slightly comfortable	I feel moderately comfortable	I feel mostly comfortable	I feel completely comfortable
14) My past sexual experiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15) The kinds of touching that sexually arouse me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16) My private sexual fantasies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17) The sexual preferences that I have	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18) The types of sexual behaviors I have engaged in					
19) The sensations that are sexually exciting to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20) My "juicy" sexual thoughts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21) What I would desire in a sexual encounter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22) The sexual positions I have tried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23) The types of sexual foreplay that feel arousing to me					
24) The sexual episodes that I daydream about	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25) The things I enjoy most about sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26) What sex in an intimate relationship means to me					
27) My private beliefs about sexual responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28) Times when sex was distressing for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29) The times I have pretended to enjoy sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30) Times when I prefer to refrain from sexual activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31) What it means to me to have sex with my partner					
32) My own ideas about sexual accountability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33) Times when I was pressured to have sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34) The times I have lied about sexual matters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35) The times when I might not want to have sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36) What I think and feel about having sex with my partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
37) The notion that one is accountable for one's sexual behaviors					
38) The aspects of sex that bother me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
39) How I would feel about sexual dishonesty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
40) My ideas about not having sex unless I want to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
41) What I consider "proper" sexual behavior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
42) The sexual behaviors that I consider appropriate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
43) How satisfied I feel about the sexual aspect of my life					

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Please indicate how much you have discussed these topics with your partner.

	have not discussed	I have slightly discussed	I have moderately discussed	I have mostly discussed	I have fully discussed
44) My past sexual experiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
45) The kinds of touching that sexually arouse me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
46) My private sexual fantasies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
47) The sexual preferences that I have	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
48) The types of sexual behaviors I have engaged in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
49) The sensations that are sexually exciting to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
50) My "juicy" sexual thoughts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
51) What I would desire in a sexual encounter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
52) The sexual positions I have tried	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
53) The types of sexual foreplay that feel arousing to me					
54) The sexual episodes that I daydream about	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
55) The things I enjoy most about sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
56) What sex in an intimate relationship means to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
57) My private beliefs about sexual responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
58) Times when sex was distressing for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
59) The times I have pretended to enjoy sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
60) Times when I prefer to refrain from sexual activity					
61) What it means to me to have sex with my partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
62) My own ideas about sexual accountability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
63) Times when I was pressured to have sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
64) The times I have lied about sexual matters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
65) The times when I might not want to have sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
66) What I think and feel about having sex with my partner					
67) The notion that one is accountable for one's sexual behaviors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
68) The aspects of sex that bother me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
69) How I would feel about sexual dishonesty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
70) My ideas about not having sex unless I want to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
71) What I consider "proper" sexual behavior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
72) The sexual behaviors that I consider appropriate					
73) How satisfied I feel about the sexual aspect of my life					

	Extremely unlikely	Very Unlikely		somewhat Unlikely		somewhat Likely		Very Likely	Extremely Likely
74) Both partners avoid discussing the problem	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
75) Both partners try to discuss the problem	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
76) Female tries to start a discussion while male tries to avoid a discussion	<input type="radio"/>								
77) Male tries to start a discussion while female tries to avoid a discussion									
		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

During a discussion of issues or problems (specifically conflicts that ARE sexual in nature), how likely is it that...

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Extremely Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Neutral	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely	Extremely Likely
78) Both partners express feelings to each other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
79) Both partners blame, accuse, or criticize each other									
80) Both partners suggest possible solutions and compromises									
81) Female pressures, nags, or demands while male withdrawals, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss the matter further	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
82) Male pressures, nags, or demands while female withdrawals, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss the matter further	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
83) Female criticizes while male defends himself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
84) Male criticizes while female defends herself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

People may have different feelings associated with their CONSENT or WILLINGNESS to engage in sexual activity. Think about the last time you engaged in vaginal-penile intercourse with your current partner. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that you felt the following during the last time you engaged in vaginal-penile intercourse. If you have never engaged in this activity, please select the last box. Indicate all responses that may apply.

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	N/A
91) I felt secure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
92) I felt protected	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
93) I felt safe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
94) I felt respected	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
95) I felt certain	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
96) I felt comfortable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
97) I felt in control	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



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People may have different feelings associated with their CONSENT or WILLINGNESS to engage in sexual activity. Think about the last time you engaged in vaginal-penile intercourse with your current partner. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that you felt the following during the last time you engaged in vaginal-penile intercourse. If you have never engaged in this activity, please select the last box. Indicate all responses that may apply.

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	N/A
85) I felt a rapid heart rate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
86) I felt flushed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
87) I felt eager	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
88) I felt heated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
89) I felt lustful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
90) I felt erect/vaginally lubricated					

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People may have different feelings associated with their CONSENT or WILLINGNESS to engage in sexual activity. Think about the last time you engaged in vaginal-penile intercourse with your current partner. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that you felt the following during the last time you engaged in vaginal-penile intercourse. If you have never engaged in this activity, please select the last box. Indicate all responses that may apply.

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	N/A
98) I felt aroused	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
99) I felt turned on	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
100) I felt interested	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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People may have different feelings associated with their CONSENT or WILLINGNESS to engage in sexual activity. Think about the last time you engaged in vaginal-penile intercourse with your current partner. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that you felt the following during the last time you engaged in vaginal-penile intercourse. If you have never engaged in this activity, please select the last box. Indicate all responses that may apply.

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	N/A
101) The sex felt consented to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
102) The sex felt agreed to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
103) The sex felt wanted	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
104) The sex felt consensual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
105) The sex felt desired	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Edit   Delete   Move					
	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	N/A
106) I felt ready	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
107) I felt sure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
108) I felt willing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
109) I felt aware of my surroundings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**110)** People may have different feelings associated with their CONSENT or WILLINGNESS to engage in sexual activity. Think about the last time you engaged in vaginal-penile intercourse with your current partner. Which of the following behaviors did you engage in to communicate your desire to engage in vaginal-penile intercourse. If you have never engaged in this activity, please select the last box. Indicate all responses that may apply.

- ☐ I increased physical contact between myself and my partner
- ☐ I engaged in some level of sexual activity such as kissing or "foreplay"
- ☐ I touched my partner, showed him/her what I wanted through touch or increasing physical contact between myself and the other person
- ☐ I used non-verbal cues such as body language, signals, flirting
- ☐ I removed mine or my partner's clothing
- ☐ N/A

**111)** People may have different feelings associated with their CONSENT or WILLINGNESS to engage in sexual activity. Think about the last time you engaged in vaginal-penile intercourse with your current partner. Which of the following behaviors did you engage in to communicate your desire to engage in vaginal-penile intercourse. If you have never engaged in this activity, please select the last box. Indicate all responses that may apply.

- ☐ I did not resist my partner's attempts for sexual activity
- ☐ I did not say no or push my partner away
- ☐ I let the sexual activity progress to the point of intercourse
- ☐ I reciprocated my partner's advances
- ☐ N/A

**112)** People may have different feelings associated with their CONSENT or WILLINGNESS to engage in sexual activity. Think about the last time you engaged in vaginal-penile intercourse with your current partner. Which of the following behaviors did you engage in to communicate your desire to engage in vaginal-penile intercourse. If you have never engaged in this activity, please select the last box. Indicate all responses that may apply.

- ☐ I initiated sexual behavior and checked to see if it was reciprocated
- ☐ I used verbal cues such as communicating my interest in sexual behavior or asking if he/she wanted to have sex with me
- ☐ I indirectly communicated/implied my interest in sex (i.e. talked about getting a condom)
- ☐ N/A

114)

People may have different feelings associated with their CONSENT or WILLINGNESS to engage in sexual activity. Think about the last time you engaged in vaginal-penile intercourse with your current partner. Which of the following behaviors did you engage in to communicate your desire to engage in vaginal-penile intercourse. If you have never engaged in this activity, please select the last box. Indicate all responses that may apply.

- ☐ It just happened
- ☐ I did not say anything
- ☐ I did not do anything; it was clear from my actions or from looking at me that I was willing to engage in sexual activity/sexual intercourse
- ☐ N/A

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
115) If my partner seems less than excited about sex, I will stop and ask if they want to be sexual with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
116) If my partner is not expressing physical affection toward me during sex, I check in with them to make sure they want to have sex, even if they verbally agreed to sex.							
117) If I am unclear about my partner's body language I make sure to verbally check in with them to be sure that they want to have sex.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
118) I pay attention to my partner's body language during sexual encounters to be sure that they want to have sex.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
119) If I'm having sex with a partner who I've had sex with before, I still make sure to check in about their sexual needs and desires.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
120) I would tell a partner that if they cared about me they would have sex with me.							
121) When my partner says that they do not want to be a part of sexual activity, I try to change their mind.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
122) Sometimes, people need a little verbal convincing to have sex.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
123) I think that if you care about someone you should have sex with them even if you are not in the mood.		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
124) I think my partner should feel guilty if they do not want to have sex with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
125) I am easily upset if I feel that my partner is not taking care of my sexual needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
126) I verbally tell my partner what I want sexually.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
127) I ask my partner what they want sexually.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
128) It is important to me to talk about my sexual needs and desires with my partner often.							
129) I know that it will not hurt my relationship with my sexual partner if I say no to sex when I <input type="radio"/> don't want to have it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
130) I value ongoing conversations about my and my partner's sexual desires.							
131) During a sexual activity, it is important to me that my partner knows what I am comfortable <input type="radio"/> with.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		

Please respond to the following questions about your satisfaction with your sexual relationship.

	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	Not at all satisfied	A little satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely Satisfied
132) The quality of my orgasms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
133) My "letting go" and surrendering to sexual pleasure during sex					
134) The way I sexually react to my partner	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
135) My body's sexual functioning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
136) My mood after sexual activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
137) The pleasure I provide to my partner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
138) The balance between what I give and receive in sex					
139) My partner's emotional opening up during sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
140) My partner's ability to orgasm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
141) My partner's sexual creativity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
142) The variety of my sexual activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
143) The frequency of my sexual activity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
144) The frequency of my orgasms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Please respond to the following questions with YOUR perception of your partner's sexual satisfaction (Without discussing with your partner).

	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
150) The pleasure he/she provides to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
151) The balance between what he/she gives and receives in sex					
152) My emotional opening up during sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
153) My ability to orgasm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
154) My sexual creativity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
155) The variety of his/her sexual activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
156) The frequency of his/her sexual activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
157) The frequency of his/her orgasms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	<b>Not at all satisfied</b>	<b>A little satisfied</b>	<b>Moderately satisfied</b>	<b>Very satisfied</b>	<b>Extremely satisfied</b>
145) The quality of his/her orgasms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
146) His/her "letting go" and surrendering to sexual pleasure during sex					
147) The way he/she sexually reacts to me					
148) His/her body's sexual functioning					
149) His/her mood after sexual activity					

[Change the "Survey Title" Setting?]

# Sexual Communication and Behaviors in Committed Relationships Survey

Edit Survey Conclusion

## Thank you!

### Debriefing Page

This study used deception to ensure that the research results would not be biased. The following explanation will specify the purpose of the study, the deception that was used, and the necessity of the deception.

#### Purpose of Study:

Sexual consent research has been done primarily with university students and their casual sexual experiences. These studies have uncovered high rates of sexual assaults, rape, gender differences and more. The current study aims to investigate how the sexual experience changes as individuals age and enter committed relationships. Marital rape statistics and marital consent experiences are under-researched, but may still be prevalent. The current study hopes to uncover the relationship between sexual consent in a committed relationship, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction and how these variables influence each other for individuals in committed relationships.

#### Description of Deception:

Participants were recruited under the guise that this was a study about sexual communication and sexual satisfaction. Participants were not informed that sexual consent was also a focus of this study.

#### Necessity of Deception:

Previous studies have found desirability bias when investigating sexual consent. Often participants minimize behaviors that may be considered coercive or nonconsensual because participants are aware that consent is a socially preferred behavior.

#### Resources:

For any questions or concerns, please contact the present study's researchers at:

Principal Investigator: Alyssa Stokes ..... [astokes4@twu.edu](mailto:astokes4@twu.edu)  
214/727-2829

Faculty Advisor: Rebecca Lucero Jones, PhD..... [rlucerojones@twu.edu](mailto:rlucerojones@twu.edu)  
940/898-2687

#### A list of resources is available below:

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
[https://www.aamft.org/Directories/Find\\_a\\_Therapist.aspx](https://www.aamft.org/Directories/Find_a_Therapist.aspx)

American Psychological Association Psychologist Locator  
<http://locator.apa.org/>

National Register of Health Service Psychologists  
<http://www.findapsychologist.org/>

Mental Health of America Referrals  
<http://www.nmha.org/go/searchMHA>

Psychology Today Find a Therapist  
<http://therapists.psychologytoday.com/rms/>

National Board for Certified  
Counselors  
<http://www.nbcc.org/CounselorFind>

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If you wish to enter the drawing to win a \$20 Amazon gift card, please click the link below:

<https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=196007>

[Automatic Text]

**For maximum confidentiality, please close this window.**