

Women's Orgasm Expectations and Experiences in Casual Sex with Men

by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
List of Tables.....	vi
List of Appendices.....	vii
Abstract	viii
Chapter 1) Introduction.....	1
Scope of the issue.....	3
Conceptual frameworks.....	7
Literature review.....	12
Chapter 2) Study 1: Relational and Physical Pleasure in Women’s Satisfaction with Mixed-Gender Casual Sex.....	17
Relational fulfillment.....	18
Physical fulfillment.....	20
Casual sex outcomes.....	21
Study 1a.....	22
Method.....	23
Results.....	29
Discussion.....	33
Study 1b.....	34
Method.....	34
Results.....	37
Discussion.....	41
Study 1 Discussion.....	41
Chapter 3) Study 2: A Vignette Study of Women’s Orgasm Expectations During Casual Sex with Men.....	44
Interpersonal expectations.....	45
Adjusting expectations.....	47
Study 2a.....	50
Method.....	51
Results.....	57
Discussion.....	62
Study 2b.....	63
Method.....	63
Results.....	64
Discussion.....	69
Study 2 Discussion.....	71

Chapter 4) Study 3: Women’s Orgasm Expectations and Experiences in Casual Sex with Men.....	75
Sexual self-efficacy.....	76
Justification of the orgasm gap.....	77
Method.....	78
Results.....	88
Discussion.....	92
Chapter 5) General Discussion.....	95
Contributions to literature.....	96
Limitations and additional future directions.....	103
Conclusion.....	104
Tables.....	107
Appendices.....	132
References.....	135

List of Tables

Table 1. Study 1a Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Experimental Group	107
Table 2. Study 1 Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Cell	108
Table 3. Study 1a Analysis of Variance Models for Positive Outcomes	109
Table 4. Study 1a Analysis of Variance Models for Negative Outcomes	110
Table 5. Study 1b Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Experimental Group	111
Table 6. Study 1b Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Condition	112
Table 7. Study 1b Analysis of Variance Models for Positive Outcomes	113
Table 8. Study 1b Analysis of Variance Models for Negative Outcomes	114
Table 9. Study 2a Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Condition	115
Table 10. Study 2a Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Experimental Group	116
Table 11. Study 2a ANOVA Models for Positive (Favorable) Dependent Variables	117
Table 12. Study 2a ANOVA Models for Negative (Unfavorable) Dependent Variables	118
Table 13. Study 2a Mean Scores for Vanessa's Orgasm Importance at Time 2	119
Table 14. Study 2a ANOVA Model for Vanessa's Orgasm Importance (VOI) at Time 2	120
Table 15. Study 2a Mean Scores for Vanessa's Change in Orgasm Importance	121
Table 16. Study 2a ANOVA Model for Vanessa's Change in Orgasm Importance	122
Table 17. Study 2b Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Condition	123
Table 18. Study 2b Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Experimental Group	124
Table 19. Study 2b ANOVA Models for Positive (Favorable) Dependent Variables	125
Table 20. Study 2b ANOVA Models for Negative (Unfavorable) Dependent Variables	126
Table 21. Study 2b Mean Scores for Vanessa's Orgasm Importance (VOI) at Time 2	127
Table 22. Study 2b ANOVA Model for Vanessa's Orgasm Importance (VOI) at Time 2	128
Table 23. Study 2b Mean Scores for Vanessa's Change in Orgasm Importance	129
Table 24. Study 2b ANOVA Model for Vanessa's Change in Orgasm Importance	130
Table 25. Study 3 Post-sexual Encounter Outcomes: Regression Analyses	131

List of Appendices

Appendix A. Study 1 Vignettes	133
Appendix B. Study 2 Vignettes	134

Abstract

In the U.S., casual sex is less conducive to women's sexual pleasure than men's as compared to sex between relationship partners (Farvid, 2014; Wesche, Claxton, & Waterman, 2020). Despite the disadvantage, women have not opted out of sleeping with men outside of a committed relationship (Monto & Carey, 2014), and report consistently positive outcomes following casual sex (Piemonte, Conley, & Gusakova, 2019). To understand why women consistently report high levels of satisfaction and enjoyment with casual sex (that is, with sexual encounters where the norm is for their physical pleasure to come secondary to men's), I use intimate justice (McClelland, 2010) to organize my research on women's expectations for, and evaluations of, their mixed-gender casual sex experiences. Across three studies, I approach orgasm as a specific element of casual sex about which women have expectations based both on cultural norms and personal experiences. I compare women's affective and evaluative responses to initial casual sex encounters with a new male partner, accounting for their orgasm attitudes and expectations prior to the event. I use orgasm as the variable of interest to assess the importance of met vs. unmet desires and expectations in women's sexual satisfaction with casual sex with men. Studies 1 and 2 are vignette-based experiments where women indicate a target character's thoughts and feelings about casual sex based on her orgasm attitudes, expectations, and experiences. In Study 3, I used a diary method to collect data on single women's weekly sexual desires, expectations, and experiences. My findings confirm that women's casual sex responses are independently associated with the physical and relational fulfillment they experience during a given encounter. In the vignette studies, orgasming was the strongest

predictor of post-casual sex outcomes, whereas in the diary study, orgasm expectations mattered more than having in orgasm.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the U.S., casual sex between women and men is a site where gender equality and sexual liberation regress (Farvid, 2014; Farvid & Braun, 2017). As compared to sex between relationship partners, casual sex contexts make gender stereotypes, heterosexual norms, and patriarchal power dynamics more cognitively accessible (Timmermans & Van den Bulck, 2018). Without even considering structural or institutional factors like health care accessibility or legal regulation of behaviors that relate to sex, these interpersonal factors make women's casual sex experiences markedly less positive than men's casual sex experiences (Wade, 2017). Women carry a much greater risk of danger than men when engaging in mixed-gender dating or sexual encounters (Farvid & Braun, 2017; Surbey & Conohan, 2000). Women also face greater social stigma than men for behavior that falls outside of a narrowly defined role for appropriate sexuality (MacCorquodale, 1989). Finally, women receive less physical pleasure than men on average during casual sex, as represented through the "orgasm gap," wherein men experience orgasms more frequently and reliably than women during partnered sex (Wade, 2005). The gap is reduced among women and men in committed relationships but is at its widest during initial sexual encounters between new sex partners (of different genders/sexes). Despite these disadvantages, women have not opted out of sleeping with men outside of a committed relationship (Monto & Carey, 2014), nor has there been much empirical evidence to suggest that women think or feel all that negatively about their mixed-gender casual sex experiences (Wesche, Claxton, & Waterman, 2018).

To understand why women consistently report high levels of satisfaction and enjoyment with casual sex (that is, with sexual encounters where the norm is for their physical pleasure to come secondary to men's) I consider critical psychological perspectives that speak to how people make evaluative judgments. I use intimate justice (McClelland, 2010) to organize my research on women's expectations for, and evaluations of, their mixed-gender casual sex experiences. Intimate justice connects socio-political inequalities to personal experiences and outlines how people's satisfaction ratings can only be understood within the context of how much satisfaction they understand to be available to them - or is likely to be available to them. Thus, a guiding principle of intimate justice asks researchers to attend to thresholds and anchors that individuals (and groups) use when making evaluations. In other words, accounting for women's expectations for their casual sex encounters is critical for reducing the opportunities for misinterpretation when measuring and analyzing their evaluations.

In the present research, I investigate whether the expectations women have for their casual sex encounters can help explain their relatively high ratings of satisfaction and otherwise positive outcomes of sexual scenarios that are described qualitatively as lacking. I ask what processes help women make meaning of their casual sex encounters such that they generally conclude to have had positive and pleasurable experiences. I hypothesize that these processes differ based on what women are expecting for their casual sex encounters, what occurs during their casual sex encounters, and whether those occurrences align with or depart from their expectations.

Across three studies, I approach orgasm as a specific element of casual sex about which women have expectations based both on cultural norms and personal experiences. I compare women's quantitative responses to casual sex with a new male partner, accounting for their

orgasm attitudes and expectations prior to the encounter. I use orgasm as the variable of interest to assess the importance of met vs. unmet desires and expectations in women's sexual satisfaction with casual sex with men. Studies 1 and 2 are vignette-based experiments where women describe a target character's thoughts and feelings about casual sex based on her orgasm attitudes, expectations, and experiences. In Study 3, I used a diary method to collect data on women's weekly sexual desires, expectations, and experiences. This design facilitates a quasi-experimental approach to data analysis in that I could make comparisons between and within women who had high vs. low expectations for orgasm before casual sex, and women who did vs. did not orgasm during casual sex. For all three studies, I aim to understand the extent to which orgasm expectations are the anchors against which women evaluate their casual sex encounters, and how their evaluations change based on met vs. unmet orgasm expectations. This dissertation is my attempt to use empirical data to depict a thorough, comprehensive picture of women's evaluations of their mixed-gender casual sex experiences, from perspectives that highlight the importance of sociopolitically-situated norms and expectations when people make meaning and evaluative judgements.

Scope of the Issue

Women and casual sex

In the U.S., casual sex is a common avenue for partnered sexual activity across social groups including age, ethnicity, or sexual orientation (Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012; Paik, 2010). Despite some demographic patterns in frequency of casual sex or attitudes towards the practice, willing and interested participants can be found amongst a variety of populations (Monto & Carey, 2014). Because much of media and scholarly interest in the topic concerns adolescents or young adults (who are earlier in the processes of sexual development or

exploration), many authors express concern that casual sex participants are at risk of psychological harm or distress (Regnerus, 2017; Grossman, 2014; Bogle, 2008). Women are considered particularly vulnerable to these outcomes (Waite & Joyner, 2001), which is likely due in part to stereotypes about women being more relationally oriented than sexually oriented (Eagly, 1987; Conley & Klein, 2022). Fortunately, all people – women included – generally report positive responses following casual sex, including positive emotional reactions, reduced stress, improved mental health, and increased sexual subjectivity (Piemonte, Conley, & Gusakova, 2019; Stinson, 2010; Vrangalova & Ong, 2014; Zimmer-Gembeck, See, & O’Sullivan, 2014).

Women’s experiences with casual sex are extremely gendered; there are distinct differences in women and men’s sexual socialization and in the myriad prescriptive norms for how women vs. men should think, feel, and behave sexually. Those prescriptions are part of sexual scripts, which are cognitive schemata related to sexual cognition, affect, and situations (Gagnon & Simon, 2005/1973). Sexual scripts guide sexual interactions and help individuals make meaning out of sexual stimuli or experiences. People learn sexual scripts through social processes and internalize largely heterosexual norms, cultural scenarios, and gender roles (Kim, Sorsoli, Collins, Zylbergold, Schooler, & Tolman, 2007; Sakaluk, Todd, Milhausen, Lachowsky, & URGiS, 2014). The role assigned to women in the sexual domain is largely passive, submissive, or to be the “gatekeeper” of sex with men (Gavey, 2005; Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009, Moran & Lee, 2014).

Of course, many women find it possible to reject or ignore what their stereotype compels and successfully embody the sexual role they genuinely desire in their partnered sexual experiences (Klein, Imhoff, Reininger, & Briken, 2019). But this is much easier done in sexual

situations that are more psychologically safe – such as sex with familiar and trusted partners – which is far less likely to characterize casual sex encounters (Farvid, 2014; Wetzel & Sanchez, 2022). For example, women in relationships initiate sexual activity more often, showing that in comfortable, trusting contexts, they can more easily depart from their role (Bouchard & Humphreys, 2019). Given sexual scripts’ usefulness for guiding expected behaviors and facilitating a sequence of events (Eaton, Rose, Interligi, Fernandez, & McHugh, 2016; Littleton et al., 2009), people likely “fall back” on sexual scripts more readily during sexual scenarios where the partners may not be as comfortable or trusting (such as in casual sex) than during sexual scenarios with a committed romantic partner (Timmermans & Van den Bulck, 2018).

Orgasm gap. One of the most notorious sexual scripts associated with casual sex between women and men is the orgasm gap, which refers to the discrepancy between women and men in orgasm frequency (Wade, 2017; Willis, Jozkowski, Lo, & Sanders, 2018), with women having fewer orgasms than men in heterosexual encounters. Many scholars have identified specific sexual scripts that prioritize men’s orgasms at the expense of women’s orgasms (McPhillips, Braun, & Gavey, 2001; Opperman et al., 2014; Wade, Kremer, & Brown, 2005). Men generally experience three orgasms for every one that women have (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael & Michaels, 1994; Frederick, John, Garcia, & Lloyd, 2018). There is ample evidence that the gap is socially produced, and not a product of inherent sex differences in orgasm capabilities (Herbenick, Reece, Schick, Sanders, Dodge, & Fortenberry, 2010; Mahar et al., 2020). For example, researchers find that heterosexual encounters are characterized by scripts such as the coital imperative, which compels and prioritizes vaginal intercourse, subsequently encouraging men’s pleasure and, ultimately, their orgasms (Frederick et al., 2018; McPhillips, Braun, & Gavey, 2001).

Even within heterosexual encounters, the orgasm gap is further context-dependent: the discrepancy decreases as the number of sexual encounters between two partners increases, plateauing among people in mixed-gender relationships to 1.25:1 for men:women (Shirazi, Renfro, Lloyd, & Wallen, 2017; Wade, Kremer, & Brown, 2005). A recent study of college women corroborated this, finding that women's orgasm rates with a familiar partner are indeed significantly higher than their orgasm rates with new partners (Wetzel, Cultice, & Sanchez, 2022). Unsurprisingly, women find casual sex encounters with new partners less positive and enjoyable than casual sex with dating partners (Wesche et al., 2018). In this dissertation, therefore, I focus on casual sex encounters between new partners, because it is a context with particular norms and expectations regarding women's orgasms and sexual satisfaction.

Orgasm importance

Orgasms (even in casual sex) are a resource worth pursuing for women's equality because orgasm is by and large a positive, beneficial, and rewarding experience. Not only is orgasm physiologically rewarding thanks to the substantial release of dopamine, but by activating the cerebellum, orgasms are associated with increased relaxation, improved sleep, pain relief, increased immune system functioning, and positive mental health like decreased anxiety and depression (for a review see Lehmilller, 2018). Neuroscience research has further identified that the post-orgasm brain is in "learning mode" from the perspective of learning patterns of reward and punishment (Coria-Avila, Herrera-Covarrubias, Ismail, & Pfaus, 2016; Meston, Levin, Sipski, Hull, & Heiman, 2014). Researchers used a lemon-scent stimuli pre and post orgasm to condition rats to different sexual partners. They found that over time, both sexes of rats developed preferences for sexual partners with whom they had more orgasms (Coria-Avila et al., 2016). And among humans, there is an endless supply of research demonstrating the

importance of orgasm to women's sexual satisfaction and enjoyment (Haning, O'Keefe, Randall, Kemmer, Baker, & Wilson, 2007; Shriazi et al., 2017) as well as to their relational satisfaction (Frederick et al., 2018). Even in research on casual sex, women who orgasmed were found to report increased sexual agency and sexual subjectivity, as well as decreased self-objectification, stereotypical beliefs about gender, and gender-role adherence (Lavery, 2017; Seguin & Blais, 2021; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2014). I therefore take orgasm seriously in the present dissertation as a critical factor in women's enjoyment of casual sex, an outcome I prioritize in my research program in the service of pursuing gender equality in our intimate lives.

Conceptual Frameworks

Researching women's sexual pleasure

As consensus has grown around sexual pleasure as a leading motivation for casual sex, how to define and measure sexual pleasure has been a controversial aspect of research on psychology and sexuality (Hevesi, Horvath, Sal, Miklos, & Rowland, 2021). Despite the breadth of research on the topic, sexual pleasure remains, to this day, inconsistently defined and operationalized. Some recent measures used to capture sexual pleasure ask people to self-report using psychometric scales, although these items often rely on words that are synonymous with pleasure. For example, asking people about their degree of physical gratification from sex (Kennair, Wyckoff, Asao, Buss, & Bendixen, 2018); how much they felt acute sexual satisfaction during an encounter (Woerner & Abbey, 2017); or, commonly, how "pleasurable" they would characterize their experience (Pascoal, Sanchez, Fonseca, Raposo, & Pechorro, 2016).

For sexual pleasure specifically during casual sex, Kennair and colleagues (2018) identified three domains: physical pleasure, orgasm, and orgasm importance. In looking at sexual

regret following casual sex encounters, the authors found that this approximation of sexual pleasure was significantly associated with less regret. In another study, Woerner and Abbey (2017) looked at individuals' reactions to their most recent casual sex encounters and found strong results using three items to measure sexual pleasure (acute sexual satisfaction, overall sexual satisfaction, and orgasm presence). In fact, this conceptualization of sexual pleasure was the most proximal predictive factor in a model of positive responses to casual sex (Woerner & Abbey, 2017), a finding reproduced in other, high-powered studies (Armstrong, England, & Fogarty, 2012; Piemonte & Conley, unpublished data).

These studies suggest that orgasm is indeed a component of the sexual pleasure women experience during casual sex. As we might expect under the cultural context of the orgasm imperative, there is no shortage of research that uses orgasm as a (or the only) definition and measure of sexual satisfaction (Kontula & Miettinen, 2016; Potts, 2000). Because orgasm has continually surfaced as such an important component of women's positive experiences with casual sex, this dissertation takes orgasm seriously as a meaningful site of intra- and interpersonal psychological processing. In the current studies, I approach orgasm as a key variable and I both operationalize and measure orgasm as an event-level occurrence that represents, among other constructs, an experience of sexual pleasure.

I also acknowledge that operationalizing pleasure with orgasm is worthy of critique from a variety of perspectives. Some of the more formative arguments, forwarded by feminist scholars, posit that considering orgasm as the exemplar version of sexual pleasure adopts a male-centered model of sexual enjoyment (Jackson, 1984; Prause, 2012), or that doing so perpetuates medicalized views of sex that may be inappropriate for women's (or anyone's) sexuality (Bancroft, Loftus, & Long, 2003; Gavey et al., 1999). In an effort to reduce my contribution to

standpoints on sex and pleasure that reproduce sexist, exclusionary, or otherwise uncritical conclusions about women and their sexuality, throughout this research I consistently engage the larger theoretical perspectives that encompass this research on casual sex, such as sexual scripts and distributive justice. These standpoints (among others that are implicated in this research) emphasize the way that social power travels between the cultural level, the interpersonal level, and the individual level. By regularly reflecting back to these positions, I seek to keep attention on the social forces that shape people's personal sexual choices, experiences, and feelings. As with all my scholarship, one of my intentions with the present work is to demonstrate, in the context of casual sex, how "the personal is political."

Intimate justice

Similar to the controversies I described regarding orgasm as a representation of sexual pleasure, studying women's sexual satisfaction is a topic mired in conflicting approaches and contentious conclusions. A broader issue is that researchers have been known to make claims about fulfillment and well-being without accounting for, among other issues, differences in what criteria is used (and how it is used) by different social groups to assess their contentment (McClelland, 2010). We know that members of high-status and low-status groups can exhibit different attribution patterns (Kelley & Michela, 1980), social perceptions (Jost, Kivetz, Rubini, Guermandi, & Mosso, 2005), and intrapersonal meaning-making processes (McClelland & Fine, 2014). If this context is unaccounted for, scholars risk misinterpreting group differences or similarities they observe in research findings (McClelland, 2011).

McClelland's intimate justice framework (2010) theorizes about the research implications of connections between 1) the differences in socio-political power afforded to social groups and 2) the personal experiences of individual members of said groups. Synthesizing existing

psychological theories about intergroup inequality and intrapersonal evaluations, intimate justice describes how physical and psychological outcomes are reflective of both individual beliefs and behaviors, as well as socio-political constraints on what individuals are able to believe and how individuals are able to behave. In the context of sexual satisfaction, this translates to identifying what people understand as the maximum and minimum pleasure *available* to them, as this often serves as the upper bound in their interpretation of how to use a scale or other measurement tool (McClelland, 2010; 2014). In a mixed-methods study, McClelland (2014) analyzed how young adults understood the anchors of a sexual satisfaction scale and demonstrated a systematic difference between women and men. Identical evaluations between high vs. low-status group members may therefore indicate (depending on the topic) that the research has missed some aspects of the context in which the evaluations were given.

The consequences of decontextualized analyses could be as serious as contributing to misinformed policies, such as if a study purported to find equally satisfied evaluations among both the dominant and subordinate groups of a given intergroup dynamic (McClelland, 2011). In such a situation, the (likely unintentional) overstatement of how satisfied members of a lower-status or low-power group are with a given stimuli risks contributing to a cultural belief that equality between the two groups in question has been “reached.” Of course, the proliferation of such a conclusion means that institutional policies and cultural norms would also assume equality, further entrenching the current group-based inequalities codified into social structures.

This pertains to the present work because my research is in service of pursuing women’s equality with men in their access to sexual pleasure, a resource we may consider a form of cultural capital because it is not equally distributed or widely available to all (Fahs & Plante, 2017). Given what we know about the inequalities and disadvantages relegated to women with

regards to casual sex experiences, it is critical that my contributions to the literatures accurately communicate what women want, seek, and desire from their sexual experiences with men. More specifically, I cannot conduct analyses that will allow me to confidently make claims about women's sexual satisfaction without also understanding the contextual parameters of their satisfaction ratings. These contextual parameters primarily refer to the norms and expectations against which women assess their sexual experiences, and failing to account for them risks making premature conclusions about what women *would* like out of mixed-gender casual sex. To this end, intimate justice recommends accounting for entitlement to pleasure, alongside measures of pleasure, as well as studying the anchors of scales used in measuring pleasure and satisfaction. These strategies should improve the validity of the constructs of interest, as well as provide more detail for illustrating the landscape in which women are making sexual appraisals.

Sexual scripts

As I mentioned under 'scope of the issue,' I use sexual scripts as a primary tool in the present research (Gagnon & Simon, 1973). Specifically, I use the concept of sexual scripts to organize my approach and understanding of how women form expectations for casual sex, decide on behaviors for casual sex, and make meaning out of their casual sex experiences. As explored by Frith and Kitzinger (2001), there are several overlapping histories of psychologists and other scholars (including sociologists and feminist theorists) using scripts (especially sexual scripts) as a tool to analyze the ways that social interactions are co-constructed (i.e., they simultaneously provide information and are shaped by information). The lines of research that I draw upon for this dissertation approach scripts from a cognitive psychological tradition. They think about scripts in ways that are similar to schemas, or knowledge structures, that pertain to social interactions or situations (Ableson, 1981; Kurth, Spiller, & Travis, 2000). Individuals then

use these knowledge structures to guide and evaluate their social and sexual interactions (Rose & Frieze, 1993).

I follow other feminist scholars who have researched gender and sex using social psychological methods, and they have considered scripts in their investigations of gendered socialization patterns (Hyde & Oliver, 2000). They have engaged with (and defined) scripts as internal psychological states or motivations, including attitudes, beliefs, and understandings of norms. From this perspective, scripts are cognitions located at the level of the individual and thus individual responses are the unit of analysis, as opposed to dyadic-driven data or discourse analysis (Frith & Kitzinger, 2001). This approach is situated within a post-positivist epistemology, and therefore this dissertation begins from post-positivist assumptions about knowledge production. I collected data from individuals' anonymous survey responses and I conducted quantitative analyses on the participants' scale averages. Any results-based claims I made are therefore discussed (and should be interpreted) within an understanding of the meaning and purpose of my research designs and findings.

Literature Review

Relational vs. casual sex

Predominant norms and sexual scripts understand (often accurately) women to prefer relational sex over casual sex and seek emotional intimacy out of sexual activity (Masters, Casey, Wells, & Morrison, 2012; Hyde & Oliver, 2000). Where the narrative of women's chastity or purity has received backlash, conditions still apply to women's perceived sexual desire, such as relegating it to sex within relationships (Bridges, Lease, & Ellison, 2004; Hurlburt & Apt, 1994; Rosenthal, Gifford, & Moore, 1998). But committed relationships between women and men are entrenched in dynamics that reflect and reify the status quo (Sanchez, Fetterolf, &

Rudman, 2012). They are also tied up in the material institutions like the legal system or the government, which codifies social norms and values, and confers order to people's lives. For better or for worse, casual sex relations are not necessarily privy to these standards.

On the one hand, a casual sex encounter can be a bit more isolated from non-sexual dynamics between the individuals than a relationship-sex encounter (Wesche et al., 2020). The baggage of unrelated arguments or domestic stress should not be as present in the bedroom of two people who are not in a partnership as in the bedroom of two people who are. On the other hand, the fact that relationship partners must consider their future relationship dynamics and functioning when they engage in partnered sexual activity could encourage the individuals to treat one another more thoughtfully and respectfully (Carlson, Hanson, & Fitzroy, 2016; Carlson, Miller, & Sassler, 2016). Casual sex partners, meanwhile, may feel freer to mistreat or neglect their partner, given there are much lower, less likely expectations for future niceties or a mutually-desired relationship (Wade, 2017). Throughout this dissertation, I focus on first-time sexual encounters between casual partners, since these situations are those most likely to exclude the woman's pleasure and/or orgasm, meaning women should have a common and robust expectation regarding their chance of orgasm.

Women's orgasm centrality

That casual sex encounters exacerbate the orgasm gap seems at first to conflict with the body of research arguing that people's motivations for casual sex are primarily related to sexual pleasure (Garcia, et al., 2012; Vrangalova & Ong, 2014; Snapp, Ryu, & Kerr, 2015; de Jong, Adams, & Reis, 2018). Even among women, who are considered to engage in hookups or casual sex more for relational and emotional reasons than for an autonomous desire for sexual pleasure

or activity (Bogle, 2008), casual sex motivations center physical pleasure and other body-focused drives (such as reducing stress; Farvid, 2014).

How can women be motivated by the pursuit of pleasure when their chances of orgasming during casual sex are so low? Extensive qualitative research reveals that although both women and men indicate that orgasm is important for their sexual pleasure, it is more central to men's sexual fulfillment than women's (Bell & McClelland, 2018; Braun, Gavey, & McPhillips, 2003; Farvid, 2014; Nicolson & Burr, 2003). Across 41 interviews, McClelland (2011) found that none of the female participants explicitly invoked orgasm as the primary criterion for their sexual satisfaction, instead opting for relational aspects of a sexual encounter – such as feeling close to their partner. Women also express that their pleasure is broader than orgasm, encompassing emotional or affectionate aspects of sex (Bell & McClelland, 2018; Currier, 2013; Farvid & Braun, 2017). In interviews with women of all ages, Nicolson and Burr (2003) find consensus among their participants that while orgasm may be a desired outcome, it is not necessary for satisfactory sexual experiences. Women interviewed by Gavey and colleagues (1999) substantiated these claims, describing physical sensations distinct from orgasm that they find pleasurable: “[With vaginal penetration] I could still get a lot of satisfaction without necessarily sort of actually having an orgasm myself” (Gavey, McPhillips, & Braun, 1999, p. 47). Even quantitatively, women report a decreased value on orgasm as compared to other aspects of sexual satisfaction and in comparison to men (Mark et al., 2014; Muehlenhard & Shippee, 2010). In sum, women consistently relay to researchers that orgasm is not the most important factor to their sexual pleasure.

At the same time, copious research suggests that orgasm is actually quite important to women's pleasure during partnered sex (Fugl-Meyer, Öberg, Lundberg, Lewin, & Fugl-Meyer,

2006; Laan & Rellini, 2011). Across 119 interviews with primarily young, heterosexual women, Opperman et al. (2014) found that more than half of participants describe orgasm using the words pleasure or pleasurable, and often as the “ultimate” pleasure. In fact, when discussing physical pleasure during sex without orgasm, several participants identified this pleasure as less intense than that associated with orgasm (Opperman et al., 2014). Waterman and Chiauzzi (1982) found that among the heterosexual couples participating in their study, orgasm consistency was significantly associated with sexual satisfaction for females, but not for males. In a study of over 6,000 women in college orgasming during their most recent casual sex was the most important variable predicting enjoyment of the encounter (Armstrong, England, & Fogarty, 2012). And unlike the male participants in their study, Wetzel, Cultice, and Sanchez (2022) found that women report desiring an orgasm frequency rate markedly greater than their current frequency rate. It seems that while women do not universally identify orgasm as a central component of their sexual pleasure when asked directly, the analyses in the reviewed studies indicate orgasm is generally more important than women might otherwise suggest.

That women still hope for orgasms while simultaneously downplaying their importance or necessity logically follows, considering how orgasm is conceptualized by the broader public discourse surrounding sex. The orgasm imperative refers to the way orgasm has been socially constructed as the highest form of sexual enjoyment, the often-sole desired outcome, and the only acceptable method of ending a sexual encounter or experience (Jackson & Scott, 2001; Seguin & Blais, 2020). The cultural message that orgasming is the ultimate achievement in the pursuit of sexual pleasure contributes to the viewpoint of sex as something at which people “succeed” or “fail.” In interviews with young women about their sexual satisfaction, the participants that described orgasming as desirable but unlikely to occur were also those who

described a more holistic definition of sexual pleasure (McClelland, 2011). These responses reflect the women's recognition of the orgasm imperative and also suggests that they recalibrated their standards for pleasure accordingly. Given the ubiquity of this particular sexual narrative, it is unsurprising that women still aspire for orgasmic experiences during their partnered encounters while simultaneously describing sexual motivations that do not hinge on orgasm. As the authors conclude based on their interviews with women about their casual sex experiences, women do not see orgasm as the high point of their casual sex encounters, but they also consider their non-orgasmic casual sex encounters lacking (Farvid & Braun, 2017).

The purpose of this dissertation is to speak to this conflict or contradiction: does a woman's sexual satisfaction with casual sex change based on the extent to which her orgasm expectations were met or unmet? This research question presumes that orgasming during a casual sex encounter is, in fact, an event or experience about which women have the ability to form expectations. In other words, in asking my research question, I assume that women can and do engage in forecasting processes about orgasm specifically. As part of this dissertation's interrogation of orgasm as a meaningful intra- and inter-personal psychological experience, I also seek to examine the ways in which orgasm is an appropriate measure of sexual pleasure. Therefore, I test orgasm as a primary source of women's sexual pleasure in mixed-gender casual sex (Study 1) before I test the relationship between women's orgasm expectation fulfillment and their casual sex outcomes in a conservative study design (Study 2) and a resource-intensive study design (Study 3). In sum, I aim to investigate, from social, critical, and feminist psychological perspectives, how women's expectations for orgasm situate their responses to casual sex with a new male partner.

Chapter 2

Study 1: Relational and Physical Pleasure in Women's Satisfaction with Mixed-Gender Casual Sex

Researchers exploring motivation for engaging in casual sex have identified sexual pleasure as a key factor in predicting positive or negative responses afterwards (Frederick, St. John, Garcia, & Lloyd, 2018; Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriweather, 2012; Vrangalova & Ong, 2014). Snapp and colleagues asked college students about their typical motivations for engaging in casual sex, and how they typically feel afterwards (Snapp, Ryu, & Kerr, 2015). They found that motives related to sexual gratification predicted feeling positive emotions and sexual satisfaction associated with casual sex. Similarly, de Jong and colleagues utilized weekly diary reports and tracked participants' reasons for engaging in casual sex and their subsequent emotions (de Jong, Adams, & Reis, 2018). They found that motives related to pleasure and fun were more likely to yield positive responses than alternative motivations such as emotional closeness or social status. Substantial literature also indicates that pleasure is a primary factor in predicting positive outcomes of casual sex, such as emotional well-being and increased sexual agency (England & Fogarty, 2008; Fisher, Worth, Garcia, Meredith, 2012; Galperin et al., 2013; Richters, de Visser, Rissel, & Smith, 2006). Therefore, we should expect women to use markers of physical pleasure to evaluate their casual sex experiences.

Unfortunately for casual sex research, women's sexual satisfaction has been examined primarily within marital literature, and studied less among singles (Kisler & Christopher, 2008; Sprecher, 2002). The interpersonal exchange model of sexual satisfaction (IEMSS; Lawrence &

Byers, 1995) is a popular tool for this topic, because it is organized around the notion of satisfaction deriving from a balance between costs and rewards. Exchanges between partners is part and parcel of a dyadic relationship, and it follows that relational functioning outside of the bedroom will be highly connected to the relationship members' satisfaction within the bedroom. Thus, two components of sexual satisfaction, from the perspective of the IEMSS, are 1) the balance of sexual costs and rewards, and 2) relational satisfaction.

Do these aspects translate to single women? In a study of unmarried (but dating) people, the authors found that women weighted the first component more important to their satisfaction than men (MacNeil & Byers, 2005) and in another study, single women considered the first component more important to their satisfaction than the second component (Kisler & Christopher, 2008). Notably, the authors also found that relational satisfaction and sexual satisfaction are linked more closely for women than for men (Kisler & Christopher, 2008). These findings suggest that women's satisfaction comes both from physical pleasure (as represented by their increased value of sexual rewards) and also from relational fulfillment (as represented by the links between relational and sexual satisfaction). Therefore, in the present study, I consider the extent to which women use physical fulfillment and relational fulfillment when appraising a casual sex encounter. I use experimental vignettes that describe a target character (Vanessa) and her first sexual encounter with a casual partner (Isaac) and vary the physical and relational fulfillment Vanessa experiences. I assess how participants perceive Vanessa's thoughts and feelings following this casual sex encounter.

Relational fulfillment

Research on perceived partner responsiveness shows that when people perceive their relational partners as understanding and validating, they experience elevated intimacy and

emotional closeness (Reis & Shaver, 1988; Reis, Crasta, Rogge, Maniaci, & Carmichael, 2018). How comfortable women feel with sexual communication is associated with how emotionally connected they feel to their sex partners (Hurlbert, Apt, & Rabehl, 1993; Treat, 1987). In one study, the researchers measured intimacy of a relationship by the number of sexual disclosures about likes and dislikes and found that this was positively related to women's sexual satisfaction (MacNeil & Byers, 2005). In the present study, Vanessa includes a sexual disclosure in a demonstration of her interest in, and motivation for, relational fulfillment. Specifically, Vanessa says to Isaac that she loves receiving oral sex, which represents the fact that despite the casual and novel aspects of this sexual encounter, there is at least some degree of emotional intimacy present-- a condition necessary for relational aspects of sexual satisfaction, even during casual sex (Kissler & Christopher, 2008). In other words, having Vanessa disclose that she loves receiving oral sex should signify to participants that – regardless of how Isaac responds – there is potential for Vanessa to be relationally fulfilled (which participants could see as necessary for her overall sexual satisfaction).

I varied whether the encounter is relationally fulfilling or unfulfilling by changing how her casual sex partner – Isaac – responds to her sexual disclosure. According to prior research, a sexual partner's response can be categorized as affiliative or unaffiliative (Birnbaum, Reis, Mizrahi, Kanat-Maymon, Sass, & Granovski-Milner, 2016). In the present study, the affiliative response is for Isaac to provide Vanessa with oral sex. The unaffiliative response is for Isaac to *not* provide Vanessa with oral sex. By performing Vanessa's desired oral sex, Isaac is a more responsive partner than when he does not.

Participants should perceive greater relational fulfillment in the conditions where Isaac responds to Vanessa's disclosure affiliatively (i.e., by performing oral sex) than those where he

responds unaffiliatively (i.e., by not performing oral sex). Across theoretical perspectives, research does find that women do indeed seem to have more communal or other-oriented components of their sexual satisfaction than do men (Bridges, Lease, & Ellison, 2004; McClelland, 2010; 2014; Nicolson & Burr, 2003). And, as previously discussed, women themselves describe the importance of a partner's pleasure and emotional connection in determining their own sexual satisfaction. Thus, the conditions where Isaac responds affiliatively to Vanessa's disclosure should be considered more satisfying than the unaffiliated responses (regardless of the physical fulfillment she experiences).

Physical fulfillment

Even though women are presumed or stereotyped as engaging in hookups or casual sex for relational and emotional reasons than for an autonomous desire for sexual pleasure or activity (Bridges et al., 2004; Masters et al., 2012), women report casual sex motivations that center physical pleasure and other body-focused drives such as reducing stress (de Jong, Adams, & Reis, 2018; Farvid, 2014). In the present study, I manipulated Vanessa's casual sex encounter as either physically-fulfilling or physically unfulfilling by altering whether she orgasms during the encounter or not (although her orgasm is not described as resulting from Isaac's oral sex performance in the conditions where he responds affiliatively and provides oral sex). Given how positively women are impacted by orgasming (see the reviewed literature in Chapter 1), participants should easily consider the conditions with Vanessa's orgasm more physically fulfilling than the conditions where she does not. In sum, I approach physical fulfillment as representing a person's experience of sexual pleasure and operationalize sexual pleasure as "orgasm."

Casual sex outcomes

As compared to men, women report feeling significantly less positive and more negative following casual sex (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Glenn & Marquardt, 2001; Owen & Fincham, 2011). Younger women are especially likely to report more negative emotions than men do, such as worry, vulnerability, and regret (Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006; Townsend & Wasserman, 2011). One function of emotional experiences is to convey intra- and inter-personal information, and researchers have argued that the negative affect women experience serves as a “feedback” system that evaluates their sexual partner’s value and guards against future costly sexual decisions (Townsend, Wasserman, & Rosenthal, 2015). Unlike many outcomes of casual sex that require long-term follow-up data collection (such as assessing behavioral changes, impacts on work or close relationships, or tracking clinical outcomes), emotional responses are a more immediate response. Therefore, in addition to sexual satisfaction with the encounter (which can be measured distinctly from general sexual satisfaction; Piemonte, Conley, & Gusakova, 2019), my primary outcomes of interest are emotional reactions.

The Current Study

In the present research, I investigated women’s responses to a mixed-gender casual sex encounter that is either relationally-fulfilling, physically fulfilling, both, or neither. Study 1 uses experimental vignettes to compare women’s responses across these conditions. The vignettes describe a target character (Vanessa) and her first sexual encounter with a casual partner (Isaac). I collected data from female participants on Vanessa’s likely thoughts and feelings following her sexual encounter.

Although vignettes or other fictional depictions of a situation are arguably watered-down psychological stimuli, processing sexuality information can often be an intra-personally

stigmatizing experience. By this I mean that individuals must manage the various layers of stigma they feel about themselves (that they have internalized from cultural norms) and that they perceive (either consciously or not) other people (such as the researchers) feeling towards them (Cook, 2014). Asking people (especially marginalized individuals, such as women or queer people) about their personal sexuality or sexual cognitions can be a threatening experience and lead participants to alter their responses to manage how they imagine others perceiving them (Fisher, 2013). Here, vignettes or hypothetical characters can alleviate some of the worry or hesitancy that participants may experience. External stories offer individuals the opportunity to reflect and process their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about a potentially agitating, discomfoting, or sensitive topic.

STUDY 1A

I used an online survey with experimental vignettes to collect data on women's evaluations of an initial sexual encounter between a woman (Vanessa) and a man (Isaac). All of the vignettes state that during Vanessa and Isaac's sexual encounter, she tells him that she loves receiving oral sex. The first experimental factor was relational fulfillment: Isaac either responds affiliatively (by performing oral sex) or unaffiliatively (by not performing oral sex). The second experimental factor was physical fulfillment: Vanessa either has an orgasm during the encounter or does not. Therefore, there were a total of four conditions to which volunteer participants were randomly assigned: 1) relationally fulfilling/physically fulfilling; 2) relationally fulfilling/physically unfulfilling; 3) relationally unfulfilling/physically fulfilling; and 4) relationally unfulfilling/physically unfulfilling.

Participants responded to survey items asking them to indicate Vanessa's likelihood of experiencing a variety of affective and cognitive outcomes of the fictional encounter. The

positive (favorable) outcomes include Vanessa's sexual satisfaction with the encounter, interest in having sex with Isaac again, and positive emotional responses. The negative (unfavorable) outcomes include Vanessa's negative emotional responses and resentment towards Isaac. I assessed the relationships between having a responsive partner for a casual sex encounter, having an orgasm during a casual sex encounter, and outcomes of the casual sex encounter.

Based on the reviewed literature, I hypothesized that both orgasming and having a responsive partner will be significantly associated with greater positive outcomes and lesser negative outcomes. Both factors (relational and physical fulfillment) have extensive literatures evidencing their importance to women's enjoyment of sex, and in the current study I tested them in the same model to determine whether there is any interplay between them in women's responses to a mixed-gender casual sex encounter.

Method

Recruitment

Participants were recruited from ResearchMatch.org, an NIH platform that connects researchers with potential study participants in the United States. Participants were volunteers and the study was advertised to those in the database who were listed as women of at least 18 years of age. The study was described as a short survey about sexual attitudes and experiences for women in the U.S whose sexual attraction includes men.

Participants

The survey was completed by 276 individuals. I excluded those who failed one or both of the attention checks ($n = 6$), or who completed the survey in under 203 seconds (half the median time to completion; $n = 2$; see Greski, Meyer, & Schoen, 2015). I also excluded participants who listed their gender as non-binary ($n = 6$) given that this study is about women's

perceptions. Finally, I excluded those whose sexual orientations did not indicate a sexual attraction to men (two lesbian women, an asexual woman, and a demisexual woman, $n = 4$).

The final sample included 258 U.S. women between 21 – 89 years old ($M = 44.95$, $SD = 16.07$). Most of the participants listed themselves as being in a romantic relationship (72.5%) while the remainder were single (27.5%). The women were 85.7% heterosexual and 14.3% bisexual. This sample was 83.7% white and about 87% had completed at least some college.

Procedure

This was an online survey using experimental vignettes for a 2x2 design. All materials were presented through Qualtrics. The initial page of the survey contains the informed consent form and eligibility criteria. By clicking “next,” individuals confirmed their voluntary participation. Participants first read their assigned vignette (approximately five sentences) and then responded to a series of evaluative measures regarding what they read, followed by questions about their own attitudes and experiences with casual sex with men. Participants ended by completing a set of demographic questions and attention check items to verify they sufficiently remember the events of the vignette they were assigned to read.

Materials

The vignettes feature a hypothetical scenario about “Vanessa,” who is described as a single woman living in the U.S. All vignettes begin by stating “Vanessa recently met a man named Isaac. They are about to have sex for the first time. During their sexual encounter, Vanessa tells Isaac that she loves receiving oral sex.” The two experimental factors are 1) partner responsiveness (responsive vs. unresponsive) and 2) orgasm outcome (orgasm vs. no orgasm).

For partner responsiveness, participants in the “responsive” condition next read, “Then, Isaac performs oral sex on Vanessa” while those in the “unresponsive” condition read “However, Isaac does not perform oral sex on Vanessa.”

For orgasm outcome, participants either read “Vanessa orgasms during this encounter” or “Vanessa does NOT orgasm during this encounter.” In sum, participants read about Vanessa either receiving or not receiving oral sex from Isaac, and either orgasming or not orgasming as a result, for a total for four distinct vignette conditions. See Appendix A for full vignettes.

Measures

The positive (favorable) outcome measures included Vanessa’s sexual satisfaction with the encounter, Vanessa’s interest in having sex with Isaac again, and Vanessa’s positive emotional responses. The negative (unfavorable) outcome measures included Vanessa’s negative emotional responses and her resentment towards Isaac. There were also exploratory items about Vanessa’s feelings towards Isaac following the encounter (e.g., romantic, attracted). Additional measures included to explore for control variables were participants’ perceptions of stigma, beliefs about female sexuality, and their own experiences with casual sex.

Outcome Variables.

Sexual satisfaction with encounter. *If you were to ask Vanessa to rate her encounter with Isaac, what do you think she would say?* This scale contained eight items that began “Vanessa would say it was...” and the eight adjectives were: enjoyable; satisfying; fun; pleasurable; respectful; gratifying; valuable; and boring (reverse coded). These items were derived from the Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction Questionnaire (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). Responses ranged from Not at all (1) to Extremely (6). Cronbach’s alpha was .96.

Vanessa's interest in future sex. *How likely is Vanessa to have sex with Isaac again, if given the opportunity?* Responses range from Not at all likely (1) to Extremely likely (6).

Positive and negative emotional responses. *If you were to ask Vanessa how she is feeling the day after her encounter, Vanessa would say she's feeling...* This question format follows the approach used in a body of research on young adults' emotional reactions to casual sex (e.g., Owen & Fincham, 2011; Owen, Quirk, & Fincham, 2014; Piemonte et al., 2019). Emotions are rated on a scale from 1 - *not at all* to 6 - *very much so*. The positive emotions include happy, confident, proud, and excited. The negative emotions include confused, angry, regretful, and ashamed.

Because it is possible to experience both negative and positive emotions simultaneously, negative and positive emotional reactions should not be assessed on a bipolar dimension (Feldman Barrett & Russell, 1999; Mauss & Robinson, 2009). In addition, work on emotional affect suggests that in general, valenced emotional items load onto two main factors; positive affect and negative affect (Crawford & Henry, 2004; Harmon-Jones, Bastian, & Harmon-Jones, 2016). Accordingly, I made two scales – positive and negative emotions. The Cronbach's alphas were .83 and .88 respectively.

Disappointment. Although disappointment is an emotion, I am interested in specifically analyzing participants' responses to this feeling based on the experimental factors because of its relationship to unmet expectations. As with the other emotional items, participants were asked how much Vanessa felt disappointed on the day following her encounter. Responses ranged from 1 – *not at all* to 6 – *very much so*.

Resentment towards Isaac. I asked participants to indicate their agreement with *Vanessa feels resentment towards Isaac*. Responses ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

Control Variables. The following items were included to account for individual differences in sexual history, experience, and preferences, as well as in attitudes about gendered sexuality (e.g., perhaps some participants would hold Vanessa in very low regard, which may impact their descriptions of her feelings).

Stigma. *How much do you agree with the following statement: Vanessa is someone that many people disrespect?* Responses range from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (6). I included this item to measure the negative connotations that participants perceive to stigmatize Vanessa's character and behavior.

Similar to other women. *How much do you agree that Vanessa is similar to other women her age?* Responses range from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (6). I included this item to measure participants' general perception of women's sexuality (as oriented towards casual sex or not, given that Vanessa is the type of woman who has casual sex).

Belief about women's orgasm rates. I asked participants to consider women in the U.S. in general, and to respond to the following item: *Generally speaking, how many women orgasm during the first time they have sex with a man who is a new partner?* Responses ranged from Hardly any, or none (1) to All or almost all (5). I asked this to examine the extent to which participants demonstrate pluralistic ignorance or report a realistic perspective on the frequency with which women experience orgasm during initial sexual encounters with men.

Orgasm frequency. I asked participants if they had ever engaged in partnered sex with a man and those who said “yes” were then asked to indicate their orgasm frequency during partnered sex with men. Responses ranged from Never (1) to Always (5).

Casual sex history. Participants indicated whether they had ever had casual sex with a man by selecting either “yes” or “no.”

Casual sex interest. Participants responded to the item: *Thinking over your sex life (that is, from when you became sexually active until right now), how interested have you generally been in casual sex with male partners?* Responses ranged from Extremely uninterested (1) to Extremely interested (6).

Realism. Participants rated their assigned scenarios on a scale from 1 (extremely unrealistic) to 6 (extremely realistic).

Vanessa’s perceived age. *About what age did you imagine Vanessa?* Participants selected from one of the following: High school age, 18-24, 25-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, and older than 60.

Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted with SPSS. I assessed the correlations between participants age, continuous dependent variables (Vanessa’s: sexual satisfaction with the encounter, interest in future sex with Isaac, positive and negative emotional reactions, and resentment towards Isaac), and continuous control variables (stigma, similarity to other women, orgasm frequency, casual sex interest, and perceived rates of women’s orgasms).

I also assessed whether participant responses differed on the survey items across racial/ethnic categories, relationship status, and sexual orientation. Because the number of individuals was highly disproportionate between comparison groups, I assessed the data visually

with scatterplots and descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, skewness, etc.) and provide descriptives in the results section.

I conducted ANCOVAs on the outcome variables with partner responsiveness (responsive vs. unresponsive) and orgasm outcome (orgasm vs. no orgasm) as the two independent variables. Based on the associations I observed between variables (see correlations under Results), I included Vanessa's orgasm importance and participants' perceived realism as covariates. Realism is the best proxy in the current variable list to account for the participants' own experiences with the scenario portrayed in the vignettes. I also included participant orgasm frequency as a covariate for Vanessa's likelihood of having sex with Isaac again and perceived stigma as a covariate for Vanessa's negative emotions. Not including these items did not change the outcome of any analysis of variance models tested in the results.

Results

Correlations

I observed a few notable associations between covariates and outcome variables. Stigma was positively associated with Vanessa's negative emotions, ($r = .164, p = .01$). Orgasm frequency was negatively associated with Vanessa's interest in sex with Isaac again, ($r = -.128, p = .04$). Her orgasm importance was positively related to how similar to other women she is, ($r = .192, p = .002$) and to participants' own interest in casual sex, ($r = .192, p = .002$).

Age is not significantly associated with any outcome variables. It is positively associated with the proportion of women perceived to experience orgasm during an initial sexual encounter with men ($r = .336, p < .001$). It is negatively associated with perceiving Vanessa as similar to other women ($r = -.146, p = .02$). The realism of the vignettes was negatively associated with most outcome variables: satisfaction ($r = -.278, p < .001$), positive emotions, ($r = -.210, p =$

.001), and Vanessa's interest in sex with Isaac again, ($r = -.214, p = .001$). Meanwhile, it is positively associated with Vanessa's resentment towards Isaac, ($r = .213, p = .001$).

I asked the women in this study to indicate what age they considered Vanessa. The response categories were (scored from 1 – 7): “high school age,” “18-25,” “25-30,” “31-40,” “41-50,” “51-60” and “60 or older.” The average age range selected was “25-30” ($M = 2.88$) and their responses correlated with their own age, $r = .132, p = .034$.

Demographic categories

Having a history of mixed-gender casual sex was not significantly associated with any outcome variables. Women in relationships reported a greater orgasm frequency during mixed-gender sex ($M = 3.57, SD = 1.30$) than single women ($M = 3.17, SD = 1.28$). Bisexual women were younger on average ($M = 33.24$) than heterosexual women ($M = 42.15$), and indicated a greater interest in mixed-gender casual sex ($M = 3.97$ vs. 3.36). The groups' scores on outcome measures were nearly identical, save for heterosexual women reporting slightly higher on Vanessa's likelihood of having sex with Isaac again ($M = 4.25$) than bisexual women ($M = 3.92$).

In examining the data between racial/ethnic groups, I observed that white women seemed to evaluate Isaac the most positively, albeit the differences in average scores are very small between racial/ethnic groups. Asian and Asian American participants were noticeably younger than women of other ethnicities, with an average age of 33.71 whereas the average ages for other racial/ethnic groups ranged from 38 to 36. These women also perceived Vanessa as less similar to other women her age than the other participants ($M = 3.71$). Asian/Asian-American women also indicated the lowest interest in casual sex ($M = 2.67$), whereas Latina/Hispanic women indicated an increased interest in casual sex ($M = 4.83$) as compared to the average and to the

other groups ($M \sim 3.5$). However, Latina women also 1) rated Vanessa's satisfaction with the encounter the lowest ($M = 3.2$), 2) perceived her as having more negative emotions ($M = 3.5$), and 3) gave the lowest score for Vanessa's likelihood of having sex with Isaac again ($M = 3.4$). They similarly perceived Vanessa as more stigmatized ($M = 2.7$) than the others did ($M \sim 2.1$).

Positive (favorable) outcomes

Please see Tables 1 and 3 for means and test statistics. Table 2 contains the means associated with interactions between the experimental conditions.

Sexual satisfaction with encounter. There was a main effect of partner responsiveness, $F(1, 252) = 107.99, p < .001, \eta^2 = .300$. Those in the "responsive" condition rated Vanessa's satisfaction higher than those in the "unresponsive" condition. See Table 1 for means. There was also a main effect of orgasm, $F(1, 252) = 171.46, p < .001, \eta^2 = .405$. Those in the "orgasm" condition rated Vanessa's satisfaction higher than those in the "no orgasm condition." There was no interaction between the conditions. I conducted a one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test, chosen because of the equality of sample sizes and variance between the four cells. All four cells differed significantly from each other at $p < .001$, except one dyadic relationship: those in the "responsive but no orgasm" cell did not differ in Vanessa's sexual satisfaction than those in the "unresponsive but orgasm" cell, $p = .144$.

Positive emotional reactions. Again, both main effects were significant and there was no indication of an interaction. Those in the "responsive: condition reported greater positive emotions than those in the "unresponsive" condition, $F(1, 252) = 35.45, p < .001, \eta^2 = .356$. Those in the "orgasm" condition also reported more positive emotions for Vanessa than those in the "no orgasm" condition, $F(1, 252) = 86.61, p < .001, \eta^2 = .123$. A one-way ANOVA

with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test revealed the same pattern: all four cells significantly differed from one another at $p < .001$ except the same relationship as the prior variable. Again, those in the “responsive but no orgasm” cell did not differ in Vanessa’s positive emotional responses from those in the “unresponsive but orgasm” cell, although it did approach significance, $p = .062$.

Sex with Isaac again. There was a main effect of partner responsiveness, $F(1, 243) = 55.65, p < .001, \eta^2 = .186$, such that those in the responsive condition more strongly agreed that Vanessa would have sex with Isaac again if given the opportunity. There was also a main effect of orgasm, $F(1, 251) = 59.68, p < .001, \eta^2 = .197$, such that the orgasm condition more strongly agreed. There was no evidence of an interaction. A one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test revealed the same pattern: all four cells significantly differed from one another at $p < .001$ except for those in the “responsive but no orgasm” cell reporting scores that did not differ from those in the “unresponsive but orgasm” cell, $p = .993$.

Negative (unfavorable) outcomes

Please see Tables 1 and 4 for means and test statistics. Table 2 again contains the means associated with interactions between the experimental conditions.

Negative emotional reactions. The model for Vanessa’s negative emotional reactions was also significant, with both independent factors demonstrating a main effect. Those in the “responsive” condition reported less negative emotions than those in “unresponsive,” $F(1, 251) = 64.66, p < .001, \eta^2 = .205$. Participants who read the “orgasm” condition also reported less negative emotions than those who read the “no orgasm” condition, $F(1, 251) = 72.85, p < .001, \eta^2 = .225$. There was, again, no interaction. A one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test indicated that all four cells significantly differed from one another at $p < .001$ except for one

pairing. Again, those in the “responsive but no orgasm” cell did not differ in Vanessa’s negative emotional responses from those in the “unresponsive but orgasm” cell, $p = .889$.

Disappointment. For this item, both primary factors again indicated significant effects. Those in “responsive” and those in “orgasm” conditions reported Vanessa’s disappointment lower than those in the “unresponsive” and “no orgasm” conditions. See Table 1 for averages and Table 4 for test statistics. This model’s interaction term was also significant, $F(1, 253) = 7.78$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = .030$. To follow up on the interaction, I conducted a one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test. As in prior analyses, all four cells differed significantly from one another at $p < .001$ except for the pairing of “unresponsive but orgasm” and “responsive but no orgasm.” This mean difference was only $.21$, $p = .776$.

Resentment towards Isaac. This item yielded main effects for both the orgasm and partner responsiveness conditions. Those in the “no orgasm” condition agreed more strongly than those in the “orgasm” condition, $F(1, 253) = 47.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .158$, and those in the “unresponsive” condition agreed more than those in the “responsive” condition, $F(1, 253) = 146.03$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .365$. There was no evidence of an interaction. A one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test indicated that all four cells significantly differed from one another at $p < .001$ and this time, the relationship between those in the “responsive but no orgasm” cell differed significantly from those in the “unresponsive but orgasm” cell, $p = .002$.

Discussion

Overall, the women in this study perceived Vanessa as much more sexually satisfied with her encounter when she received oral sex from Isaac—when he was an affiliative partner and the encounter was relationally fulfilling, and when she orgasmed—when she experienced sexual pleasure and the encounter was physically fulfilling. Under either of these circumstances, she

was reported to feel more of the listed positive emotions and less of the listed negative emotions the day following her encounter. Vanessa was also said to be more interested in sex with Isaac again during either of these circumstances: having received oral sex or having experienced an orgasm.

The interaction between the variables for Vanessa's disappointment demonstrates how in both the orgasm and no orgasm conditions, Isaac being a highly responsive partner was associated with less disappointment than when Isaac was an unresponsive partner. However, this difference was much more pronounced among those who read that Vanessa orgasmed.

Given the lack of observed interactions between these variables (except for one dependent variable), it appears that these two factors – orgasming and having a partner provide a desired sexual activity – are independent such that the presence or absence of one does not indicate a change in importance of the other. If women had indicated that the Vanessa who does not orgasm still received oral sex would be happier than the Vanessa who does not orgasm and did not receive oral sex, I would consider this evidence that having an effortful partner, or someone who tries to meet his partner's hopes, can make up for not orgasming. Thus, I did not find evidence to support the possibility that having a man “try” to please his female partner is fungible with actually having an orgasm.

STUDY 1B

I found a largely consistent pattern of results in Study 1a. To verify these findings, I conducted a replication using a sample of paid participants.

Method

Recruitment

Participants were recruited using Amazon Mechanical Turk (“MTurk”) and Cloud Research (a platform that can accompany MTurk recruitment for higher quality data and for targeting specific populations). Although MTurk has limitations such as the risk of people circumventing the eligibility requirements, studies have consistently demonstrated that data quality from MTurk resembles that of samples comprised of undergraduate students, and that MTurk workers are at least more attentive and reliable than those from online research panels (Kees, Berry, Burton, & Sheehan, 2017; Thomas & Clifford, 2017).

Cloud Research, furthermore, allowed me to cross-validate the reported genders of the participants (since Cloud Research has an internal database that tracks the reported sex/gender of participants across the surveys with which they engage). Cloud Research also includes IP address verification to prevent people from outside the specified geographic area (i.e., the U.S.) from participating in a study from which they would be ineligible. Empirical analyses conducted by an internal Cloud Research team indicate that approximately 80% of MTurk workers demonstrate high engagement by passing the data-quality checks that Cloud Research implements into posted tasks or surveys (Litman, Rosenzweig, & Moss, 2020; Robinson, Rosenzweig, Moss, & Litman, 2019).

The study was advertised as designed for women in the U.S. who are at least 18 years old and who have a sexual attraction to men. It was described as a short survey about sexual attitudes and experiences for women in the U.S whose sexual attraction includes men.

Participants

The survey was completed by 260 individuals. I excluded those who failed one or both of the attention checks ($n = 16$), or who completed the survey in under 146 seconds (half the median time to completion; $n = 1$). I also excluded participants who listed their gender as male

($n = 2$) or non-binary ($n = 1$). Finally, I excluded those whose sexual orientations did not indicate a sexual attraction to men ($n = 2$).

In total, I excluded 22 individuals, with the following race/ethnicity frequencies: white ($n = 12$), African American/Black ($n = 7$), Hispanic/Latina ($n = 1$), Asian American/Asian ($n = 1$), and Native/Indigenous Tribe ($n = 1$). The average age of those excluded is 33.59, which is about six years younger than the average age of the final sample. Fifteen of these 22 have at least a 4-year college degree and all of the remaining excluded individuals reported having completed at least some college.

The final sample included 238 U.S. women between 20 – 90 years old ($M = 39.91$, $SD = 11.75$). Most of the participants listed themselves as being in a romantic relationship (74%) while the remainder were single (26%). The women were 84.5% heterosexual and 15.5% bisexual. This sample was 75.2% white and about 86.6% had completed at least some college.

Procedure

This was another online survey using the same experimental vignettes for a 2x2 design. The procedure is the same as in Study 1a.

Materials and Measures

All materials and measures are identical to Study 1a.

Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted with SPSS. As in Study 1a, I assessed the correlations between participants age, continuous dependent variables (Vanessa's: sexual satisfaction with the encounter, positive and negative emotional reactions, and interest in future sex with Isaac), and continuous control variables (stigma, vignette realism, Vanessa's similarity to other women, participant casual sex interest, and Vanessa's orgasm importance).

I conducted ANCOVAs on the outcome variables with partner responsiveness (high vs. low) and orgasm outcome (yes vs. no) as the two independent variables. Based on the associations I observed between variables (see correlations under Results), I included covariates in the analyses of variance for the outcome variables with which they were associated. Most common covariates were participants' perceived stigma of Vanessa and their evaluation of the vignette's realism. Not including these items did not change the outcome of any ANOVA model tested in the results.

Results

Correlations

The primary and exploratory outcome variables were all significantly correlated with the amount of stigma participants' perceived Vanessa to incur. The primary outcome variables were also all correlated with vignette realism. Vanessa's orgasm importance was positively related to her positive emotional responses. Finally, Vanessa's perceived similarity to other women was positively associated with the participants' ratings of her interest in having sex with Isaac again and negatively associated with how much resentment she feels towards him.

In this study, I again asked participants to indicate what age they considered Vanessa. The response categories were (scored from 1 – 7): “high school age,” “18-25,” “25-30,” “31-40,” “41-50,” “51-60” and “60 or older.” The average age range selected was “25-30” ($M = 2.93$, $SD = .655$) and their responses correlated with their own age, $r = .165$, $p = .016$.

Demographic categories

Relationship status was not significantly associated with any outcome variables. Bisexual women were slightly younger ($M = 34.41$) than heterosexual women ($M = 40.92$) but that was the only difference between the groups.

In examining the data between racial/ethnic groups, Whites are oldest at 41 and Hispanic women at youngest at ~33, so this sample is largely 30–50-year-old women but Black and Latina women are disproportionately represented on the younger side of that age range. Asian and Asian-American participants seemed to evaluate Isaac the most negatively, reporting noticeably higher means for Vanessa’s perceived negative emotions and noticeably lower means for Vanessa’s satisfaction and perceived positive emotions, as compared to women of other race/ethnicities. They also indicated the most perceived stigma against Vanessa and considered her the least similar to other women. Black women considered orgasm more important to Vanessa than other women.

Positive (favorable) outcomes

Please see Tables 5 and 7 for means and test statistics. Table 6 contains the means associated with interactions between the experimental conditions.

Sexual satisfaction with encounter. There was a main effect of partner responsiveness, $F(1, 232) = 45.76, p < .001, \eta^2 = .165$. Those in the “responsive” condition rated Vanessa’s satisfaction higher than those in the “unresponsive” condition. There was also a main effect of orgasm, $F(1, 232) = 346.63, p < .001, \eta^2 = .599$. Those in the “orgasm” condition rated Vanessa’s satisfaction higher than those in the “no orgasm condition.” There was no interaction between the conditions. I conducted a one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test, again chosen because of the equality of sample sizes and variance between the four cells. All four cells differed significantly from each other at $p < .001$. I observed the largest mean difference (2.82) between the “responsive and orgasm” cell and the “unresponsive and no orgasm” cell, and the smallest mean difference (0.64) between the “unresponsive and no orgasm” cell and the “responsive but no orgasm” cell.

Positive emotional reactions. Again, both main effects were significant and there was no indication of an interaction. Those in the “responsive” condition reported greater positive emotions than those in the “unresponsive” condition, $F(1, 232) = 19.64, p < .001, \eta^2 = .078$. Those in the “orgasm” condition also reported more positive emotions for Vanessa than those in the “no orgasm” condition, $F(1, 232) = 137.20, p < .001, \eta^2 = .373$. I again conducted a one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test. All four cells differed significantly from each other at $p < .001$, except one dyadic relationship: those in the “unresponsive and no orgasm” cell did not differ from those in the “responsive but orgasm” cell, $p = .194$.

Sex with Isaac again. There was a main effect of partner responsiveness, $F(1, 232) = 49.72, p < .001, \eta^2 = .177$, such that those in the “responsive” condition more strongly agreed that Vanessa would have sex with Isaac again if given the opportunity. There was also a main effect of orgasm, $F(1, 232) = 124.30, p < .001, \eta^2 = .350$, such that those in the “orgasm” condition more strongly agreed. There was no evidence of an interaction. A one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test indicated that all four cells differed significantly from each other at $p < .001$. As with Vanessa’s sexual satisfaction, I observed the largest mean difference (2.54) between the “responsive and orgasm” cell and the “unresponsive and no orgasm” cell, and the smallest mean difference (0.79) between the “unresponsive and no orgasm” cell and the “responsive but no orgasm” cell.

Negative (unfavorable) outcomes

Please see Tables 5 and 8 for the following analyses’ means and test statistics. Table 6, again, has the mean scores by cell condition.

Negative emotional reactions. The model for Vanessa’s negative emotional reactions was also significant, with both independent factors demonstrating a main effect. Those in

“responsive” reported less negative emotions than those in “unresponsive,” $F(1, 232) = 24.42, p < .001, \eta^2 = .096$. Participants who read the “orgasm” condition also reported less negative emotions than those who read the “no orgasm” condition, $F(1, 232) = 146.13, p < .001, \eta^2 = .386$. There was, again, no interaction. A one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test indicated that all four cells differ significantly from one another at $p < .001$, except for the pairing of “unresponsive and no orgasm” and “responsive but no orgasm,” $p = .161$.

Disappointment. There were both main effects of partner responsiveness and orgasm for Vanessa’s perceived disappointment. Those in the “responsive” and those in the “orgasm” conditions reported lower scores than those in the “unresponsive” and “no orgasm” conditions. Like in Study 1a, there was a significant interaction, $F(1, 232) = 14.19, p = .001, \eta^2 = .058$. A one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test revealed that all four cells differed significantly from one another at $p < .001$ except for, again, the two cells associated with “no orgasm.” Those in the “responsive but no orgasm” cell did not differ from those in the “unresponsive and no orgasm” cell, $p = .501$. Within the “Vanessa Orgasmed” condition, those who read that Isaac was a highly responsive partner indicated lower disappointment ($M = 1.62, SD = 0.95$) than those who read that he was unresponsive ($M = 2.93, SD = 1.23$).

Resentment towards Isaac. This item yielded main effects for both the orgasm and partner responsiveness conditions. Those in the “no orgasm” condition agreed more strongly than those in the “orgasm” condition, $F(1, 232) = 55.27, p < .001, \eta^2 = .192$, and those in the “unresponsive” condition agreed more than those in the “responsive” condition, $F(1, 232) = 39.40, p < .001, \eta^2 = .052$. Please see Table 5 for mean scores. An interaction term between the two factors approached significance, $F(1, 232) = 3.81, p = .052, \eta^2 = .016$, and the means follow the same pattern as those for Vanessa’s disappointment (see Table 6). I conducted a one-way

ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test and observed that all pairwise comparisons were significant at $p < .001$ except for one. Similar to Study 1A, those in the “responsive but non orgasm” did not differ significantly from those in the “unresponsive but orgasm” cell, $p = .331$.

Discussion

In sum, the findings in Study 1b replicated those of Study 1a. Relational fulfillment (as represented through an affiliative sexual partner who performs the desired sexual activity) and physical fulfillment (as represented through sexual pleasure experienced through orgasm) are significantly and independently predictive of more positive outcomes of casual sex with a new male partner. The only variable to indicate that these factors interact in their relationship was ‘disappointment.’ In both studies, Vanessa’s orgasm moderated the association between partner responsiveness and how disappointed she was perceived to feel following their sexual encounter.

Study 1 Discussion

In Study 1, I asked women to tell me the likely thoughts and feelings of a woman (roughly their own age) who had an initial sexual encounter with a man, during which she tells him that she loves receiving oral sex. The man responds by either giving her oral sex or by not giving her oral sex, depending on what version the participants read. The woman then either orgasms or does not orgasm, depending further on what version the participants read. For a total of four possible scenarios to read, this study was a 2x2 experimental vignette testing the relative importance that female participants ascribe to partner responsiveness and orgasming for a woman’s enjoyment of casual sex with a man.

I tested the importance of these two factors by asking female participants to describe how the woman they read about – Vanessa – would feel in response to the sexual encounter wherein

her partner either responded favorably or unfavorably to her communication about her sexual preferences, and wherein she either orgasms or not. Perhaps one of these factors is more important in how much the woman is believed to enjoy the encounter. Using the Likert scales provided, the participants indicated how satisfied and pleased Vanessa was during the encounter, as well as how much she felt different emotions afterwards.

In general, these factors are each important and independently related to women's responses to casual sex. Based on effect sizes, physical fulfillment (here operationalized as orgasm) is clearly the more important component for women's enjoyment of the encounter. There was only evidence of an interaction between relational and physical fulfillment in the model predicting Vanessa's disappointment following the encounter. It appears that having an unaffiliative or unresponsive partner is always more disappointing than having an affiliative or responsive one, but having an orgasm greatly reduces the amount of disappointment felt (even when the partner is unaffiliative or unresponsive). Put another way, relational fulfillment and physical fulfillment each reduced Vanessa's disappointment. When she orgasms, the participants took Isaac's responsiveness more strongly into account when making their evaluations more strongly than when Vanessa does not orgasm. Not orgasming seems to be a negative enough experience to minimize the disappointment felt from having an unaffiliative or unresponsive partner.

Limitations and future directions

One limitation of the present study is a product of the group-differences based ANOVA design. Without approaching the experimental factors as continuous variables, rather than approaching them as discrete categories, I am unable to precisely determine the proportional influence of each factor in predicting women's outcomes. Perhaps orgasming is a certain

number of times more important than partner responsiveness for sexual satisfaction with a casual sex encounter. A study design that facilitates regression or SEM analyses would allow me to assess the relative weights (betas) of the predictors.

The present study's conclusions are also limited in that a vignette experiment is a proxy for women's lived sexual experiences. Having women make inferences someone else does not provide direct information about how women actually feel about casual sex with or without a responsive partner, and with or without an orgasm. It does, however, allow women to give their perceptions and opinions about this sort of sexual encounter, regardless of their own personal sexual history. For effects to emerge across women regardless of their own history and interest in casual sex speaks to the knowledge that women have about the normative experience that women *as a group* have with non-relationship heterosexual encounters. Therefore, it is not only women who have casual sex that can articulate the likely thoughts and feelings of a woman who has done so.

Although women can articulate this experience across personal involvement in casual sex, the experience they articulate cannot be said to be shared by all women globally. Not all women are interested in casual sex with men, and even among those who do, not all women partake in the behavior. Therefore, the present results should not be taken to mean that all women find orgasm and partner responsiveness important for casual sex. Rather, for women who do have casual sex with men, orgasm and partner responsiveness are widely known (among women) as important factors for enjoyment.

Chapter 3

Study 2: A Vignette Study of Women's Orgasm Expectations During Casual Sex with Men

The results of Study 1 point to the unparalleled importance of orgasming during a casual sex encounter. Having an orgasm (or a physically fulfilling encounter) and having an affiliative partner (or a relationally fulfilling encounter) were both associated with increased positive outcomes and decreased negative outcomes of casual sex. Although having an affiliative sex partner was independently predictive of more positive outcomes for Vanessa, the effect sizes for this variable were smaller than that of orgasm, except for her feelings of resentment towards Isaac. For this outcome, the association between being relationally-fulfilled and feeling less resentment was stronger than that of having an orgasm in Study 1a, and comparable to that of having an orgasm in Study 1b. This speaks to the potential for women to be simultaneously satisfied with their sexual encounter and resentful towards their sex partners. Resentment is considered dissatisfaction turned into affect; it is an emotional response to perceiving an unfair outcome or that one has not received what one is owed (Choma & McKeown, 2018; Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, & Mielke, 1999). How can someone be satisfied with their lot, but still have feelings that indicate dissatisfaction?

As I discussed in Chapter 1, intimate justice (McClelland, 2010) is a critical framework that draws upon several connected theories in psychology to attend to the structural factors that shape individuals' feelings of fulfillment or satisfaction and limit what is possible. As a lower-status group than men, women face multiple barriers to equal access to sexual pleasure, including

both explicit restrictions, such as the lack of legally protected access to healthcare, and implicit restrictions, such as the insidiously gendered roles and norms for people's behaviors in the sexual domain (Conley & Klein, 2022). Women use the norms they have learned about casual sex with men to define what is available to them, differentiating between what is ostensibly or ideally available, and what is likely or realistically available (McClelland, 2010). In the context of sexual pleasure, women may include orgasming in the former category, but base their evaluative criteria for satisfaction on the latter. If so, women are adjusting or rescaling their expectations for sexual pleasure to exclude some of their sexual desires, and I argue that they automatically engage in this process to protect their future thoughts and feelings from dissatisfaction and regret. I capture this in the present study by analyzing how women change how much they value sexual pleasure as a function of how much their expectations for sexual pleasure were met. In this way, the present study is an examination of the relationships between women's expectations for sexual pleasure in a given encounter, their experienced sexual pleasure during the encounter, and their sexual satisfaction with that encounter.

Interpersonal expectations

Expectations are fundamental components of social interactions (Burgoon & Le Poire, 1993). People's expectations for their interactions with others influence their social perceptions, senses of self, and behaviors within relationships (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1985; Mischel, 1973). Psychologists refer to the knowledge structures that people use to build their expectations as schemas, and relational schemas are those that represent patterns of interactions with others (Baldwin, 1992; Baldwin & Keelan, 1999). Schemas are often deployed by people using "if-then" framing to anticipate and respond to social situations or exchanges. People commonly use an "if-then" dynamic to determine, behavioral information as some degree of affiliative (which

can be represented on a scale from friendly to hostile) and some degree of dominant (which can be represented as domineering to submissive) and use the information perceived to adjust their own behavior (Hill & Safran, 1994). Researchers have observed people adjusting their behavior to match their interaction partner's on the affiliative dimension (e.g., friendly -- friendly or hostile -- hostile) and to complement their interaction partner's on the dominant dimension (e.g., dominant -- submissive; Keisler, 1983; Wiggins, 1991). Complementarity is a form of behavioral adjustment that describes an individual's behavior as a specific response that was "pulled forth" from the other person (Hill & Safran, 1994). Given that women are socialized to function interpersonally with a particularly "communal" orientation (as compared to men; Eagly, 1987), women are especially subject to responding complementarity (that is, to provide the behaviors that the interaction partner seems to call for, based on their own behaviors). In other words, we should expect women to be particularly well-adjusted to forming expectations that are accurate and appropriate for a given context.

Women can certainly articulate interpersonal expectations for mixed-gender casual sex scenarios, such as the likely sequence of events or what their partner's role constitutes (LaFrance, 2010; Laverty, 2017). Of interest to the present study is women's expectations for orgasming during casual sex with men. It may not be a coincidence that women's sexual satisfaction does not hinge on orgasm: considering the orgasm gap, women and men have very different relationships to orgasming and to broader sexual enjoyment. Men's orgasms have been considered a necessary component of heterosexual encounters, while women's orgasms have been a "bonus" or "extra" addition (Wade et al., 2005; Willis et al., 2018). Women and men display different cognitions about orgasm in both qualitative interviews (Wade, 2017) and in quantitative measures (Seguin & Blais, 2021). For example, women in an online sample

(MTurk) scored lower than men on a subscale measuring the belief that “orgasm absence reflects relationship problems” (Segun & Blais, 2021). There is much research to evidence that women also display lower expectations around orgasm than men, a logical observation in a sexual landscape characterized by the orgasm gap (Farvid & Braun, 2013; Gusakova, Conley, Piemonte, & Matsick, 2020; Matsick, Kruk, Conley, & Moors, 2021). If women’s reduced expectations for orgasm are especially salient or accessible with regards to casual sex, psychological perspectives posit that women who do experience the rare, valued orgasm in such an encounter will also experience heightened affect in response.

One such theory refers to expectancy ‘disconfirmations,’ or when events do not align with expectations (Burgoon, 1993). From this perspective, disconfirmations cause arousal increases in the individuals who perceive them, which serves to reallocate their attention to the unexpected occurrence. The heightened attention enacts evaluation processes so people can appropriately interpret and react to the disconfirmation. If the disconfirmation is more desirable than the expectation, perceivers will interpret and evaluate the event as significantly more positive and well-received than either the expectation or an unwanted disconfirmation (Burgoon, 1993). Similarly, expecting something desirable and failing to receive it constitutes an unfavorable disconfirmation, and perceivers will feel more negative affect in response. In the context of the current research, orgasming during a mixed gender casual sex encounter is a desirable disconfirmation for women, which may be why their responses to casual sex seem so dependent on their orgasm. Their expectation for a casual sex encounter is that they will not orgasm, and this theory suggests that orgasming serves to redirect their attention to the event and arrive at an interpretation to inform their response.

Adjusting expectations

An individual's expectations are derived from more than just the cultural norms she is most familiar with, and from more than just her historical experiences with the phenomenon. Feminist theorists have argued that women's social role also shapes and limits the opportunities and possibilities that women imagine for themselves (Fahs & Plante, 2017). In contexts ranging from domestic labor (England, 2010), to emotional labor (Hochschild, 2012), to body image (Bordo, 2004), women's psychological processes have been shaped by the limitations associated with belonging to oppressed, marginalized groups with lower socio-political power and less access to cultural capital. The sexual domain has, of course, also been subject to this dynamic, with scholars finding that women adjust their sexual expectations to align with the experiences and access to resources of those with reduced sexual freedom (McClelland, 2010; Goldey et al., 2016).

The sexual domain is arguably more vulnerable to regressed or reduced gender inequality than other domains, because private or intimate environments are not subject to the same overt regulation and scrutiny as public environments, such as workplaces or other organizations. Just as some researchers have documented women's 'depressed entitlement' to a greater financial reward (O'Brien, Major, & Gilbert, 2012), others have identified how women's social role "prescribes them reduced sexual satisfaction" (Fahs & Plante, 2017, p 34). In an empirical test of this argument, Klein and Conley (2022) found that participants between the ages of 30 to 50 (women included) agreed that men have more of a "right" to orgasm. From these results, we may consider women's low value of orgasm to be a coping mechanism, as it is easier to change one's internal criteria than to change dyadic behavior or cultural norms (Laan & Rellini, 2011).

Researchers captured evidence of this process when interviewing 20 U.S. women (mean age = 35) about what constitutes "good sex" (Fahs & Plante, 2017). Their analyses demonstrate

that there is a large gap between what women see as the “good sex” they want to be having, and the sex they are actually having. For women to call the sex they are actually having satisfactory means they have adjusted their criteria for satisfaction to exclude the possibility of ranking the “good sex” they would like to be having. Doing so ensures they may have the pleasant/positive experience of using the upper bounds of a satisfaction scale in assessing or reviewing their sexual encounters. This is surely preferred over the self-shame or self-stigma that may occur when locating oneself towards the unfavorable side of a scale or instrument.

One identifiable or measurable component of the “good sex” women would like to be having is orgasm. Thus, in the present dissertation I ask whether women adjust their criteria for satisfaction with mixed-gender casual sex (i.e., their expectations for it) to exclude orgasm (given how infrequently women orgasm in mixed-gender casual sex, and that they can articulate this).

The Current Study

Based on the reviewed literature, women’s responses to an orgasmic or non-orgasmic casual sex encounter should be a function of what their expectations were for orgasming during the encounter. In this way, the focus in this study is on how a woman’s expectations for an experience going fulfilled or unfulfilled impacts her outcomes and evaluations of the experience. In the current study, her expectations are around sexual pleasure, and the experience is a casual sex encounter with a new male partner. In Study 1, female participants confirmed that having an orgasm is a highly satisfying and pleasurable experience during a mixed gender casual sex encounter. Thus, in the present study, I operationalize sexual pleasure as orgasm and am confident that participants would agree that orgasming is an event about which Vanessa has some sort of preconceived notion and about which she can form an expectation. As in Study 1,

the present study's vignettes describe Vanessa having an initial sexual encounter with a new, casual male partner (Isaac). One experimental factor of this study is whether Vanessa orgasms (yes vs. no). The second experimental factor is whether Vanessa expected to orgasm (yes vs. no). For the analyses, I transform that second experimental factor into whether Vanessa's expectations of orgasm were met or unmet.

STUDY 2A

The present study tested if women's responses to orgasmic vs. non-orgasmic casual sex with men can be explained by accounting for their expectation-fulfillment or -unfulfillment. From this perspective, having a low orgasm expectation but having an orgasm (desirable unmet expectations) should be associated with greater positive (i.e., favorable) responses and lesser negative (i.e., unfavorable) responses as compared to 1) having a high orgasm expectation but not having an orgasm (undesirable unmet expectations), 2) having a low orgasm expectation and not having an orgasm (met expectations), and 3) having a high orgasm expectation and having an orgasm (met expectations). In the context of the current study, women who read that Vanessa orgasms should report better outcomes for Vanessa if this is not what she was expecting than if she was expecting to orgasm. Meanwhile, women who read that Vanessa does not orgasm should report better outcomes if this *does* match what she was expecting than if it does not match, because the former situation would be one that she is prepared for while the latter situation is one that would be jarring and lead to more negative affect and cognitions.

Finally, I also hypothesize that Vanessa's orgasm importance will change following her sexual encounter depending on whether the encounter included her orgasm and if she expected that or not. If Vanessa's expectations are met (regardless of whether this is for orgasmic or non-

orgasmic sex), she shouldn't report as strong of a change in her orgasm importance than if her expectations are unmet. Under those circumstances, having an orgasm (when not expecting one) should be associated with a marked increase in Vanessa's orgasm importance whereas not having an orgasm (when expecting one) should be associated with a marked decrease in her orgasm importance.

Method

In the current research I used an online survey with experimental vignettes to test if women's responses to orgasmic vs. non-orgasmic casual sex with a man are a function of the extent to which they were expecting to orgasm. The vignettes describe Vanessa, a woman in the U.S. who enjoys having casual sex, as having an encounter with a new partner. This study is a 2x2 design for a total of four different conditions. The first experimental factor is whether Vanessa expects to orgasm (yes vs. no), and the second experimental factor is whether Vanessa orgasms (yes vs. no).

Recruitment

Participants were recruited from ResearchMatch.org. The study was described as a short survey about sexual attitudes and experiences for women in the U.S whose sexual attraction includes men.

Participants

The survey was completed by 273 individuals. I excluded those who failed one or both attention checks ($n = 40$), or who completed the survey in under 180.5 seconds (half the median time to completion; $n = 2$; Greski, Meyer, & Schoen, 2015). I also excluded participants who listed their gender as non-binary or another gender ($n = 6$) since this study is about women's perceptions. Finally, I excluded those whose sexual orientations did not indicate a sexual

attraction to men (three lesbian women, two asexual women, and a woman who wrote “unsure,” $n = 6$).

In total, I excluded 54 individuals, most of whom were white ($n = 42$, or $\sim 78\%$). The remaining excluded participants were five African American/Black individuals, three Asian American/Asian individuals, and four multi-ethnic/racial individuals. The proportional distribution of educational attainment among the excluded participants matched that of the included participants. This is also true for the breakdown of heterosexual vs. bisexual individuals, as well as single vs. ‘taken’ individuals. The mean age of the excluded group is 44.56, only two years difference from the included participants. The excluded individuals were close to being equally distributed across the experimental conditions.

The final sample included 219 U.S. women, 20 – 86 years old ($M = 46.21$, $SD = 17.33$). Two-thirds of the participants listed themselves as being in a romantic relationship (66.7%) while the remainder were single (33.3%). The women were 78.5% heterosexual and 21.5% bisexual. This sample was 81.7% white and on average, very highly educated: 30% have their master’s degree and about 12% have their Ph.D.

Procedure

This was an online survey using experimental vignettes for a 2x2 design. All materials were presented through Qualtrics. The initial page of the survey contains the informed consent form and eligibility criteria. Enrolled participants were first randomized to either the high- or low-expectation conditions and read the according vignettes. They were then asked to respond to an inquiry of how important they think Vanessa finds orgasming.

Next, participants were randomized to either the orgasm or non-orgasm conditions, and they read the remainder of their respective vignettes. Participants were then asked the same item

again (how important do they think Vanessa finds orgasming). They were also asked to respond to items evaluating the sexual encounter and the sexual partner, from Vanessa's perspective, as well as to items about their own personal attitudes towards casual sex and their own sexual experiences.

Participants ended by completing a set of demographic questions and attention check items to verify they sufficiently remember the events of the vignette they were assigned to read. The primary dependent variables (sexual satisfaction, interest in sex with Isaac again, emotional responses, and resentment towards Isaac) were counterbalanced in their display order to control for order effects.

Materials

Vignettes. The vignettes describe a hypothetical scenario about "Vanessa," and all four vignettes begin with "Vanessa is a woman who often has casual sex." The next sentence differed across the "expectation" experimental factor. Half of the participants read "Vanessa usually *has orgasms* during these encounters." The other half read "Vanessa usually *does NOT orgasm* during these encounters."

The third sentence was identical across all groups: "Tonight, she is getting ready to have casual sex with a guy she recently met named Isaac." After this portion, participants were presented with a question about how important orgasming is to Vanessa.

The vignettes then continued: "Vanessa and Isaac have sex. Isaac has an orgasm." Participants in the "orgasm" condition then read "Vanessa *ALSO* has an orgasm" while those in the "non-orgasm" condition then read "Vanessa *does NOT* have an orgasm."

In sum, participants read that Vanessa either usually orgasms or usually does not orgasm during casual sex, and that she either orgasmed or did not orgasm during casual sex with Isaac. I

created a categorical variable to distinguish between A) participants who read that Vanessa's orgasm outcome (having an orgasm or having no orgasm) matched her expectation (of usually orgasming or usually not orgasming) and B) participants who read that Vanessa's orgasm outcome did *not* match her expectation. The present research's 2x2 design refers to this factor (met vs. unmet expectations) and the orgasm outcome factor (having an orgasm vs. having no orgasm). See Appendix B for full vignettes.

Measures

Outcome Variables.

Vanessa's orgasm importance. To test whether women perceive Vanessa's orgasm importance as increasing or decreasing to match her sexual experience (of either orgasming or not orgasming), I asked participants to complete the following repeated item: *If you were to ask Vanessa, how would she answer the question? "Vanessa, how important is orgasm to you?" Vanessa would say it is...* The responses range from *not at all important* (1) to *extremely important* (6).

The first time that participants respond is immediately after reading whether Vanessa usually orgasms or does not orgasm during her casual sex encounters. A difference in responses to this specific item (i.e., time 1) across the levels of the "expectation" factor (high vs. low) also serves as an implicit manipulation check, since people who read that Vanessa usually orgasms should perceive her orgasm importance as higher than those who read she usually does not orgasm.

The second time participants respond to this item is immediately after reading whether Vanessa orgasmed during casual sex with Isaac: *Now if you were to ask Vanessa, how would she*

answer the question? “*Vanessa, how important is orgasm to you?*” *Vanessa would say it is...*

With the same response options as previously noted.

Favorable and unfavorable outcomes. The rest of the outcome variables are the same as in Study 1. The positive, or favorable, outcomes are the participant ratings of Vanessa’s: sexual satisfaction, positive emotional reactions, and interest in sex with Isaac again. The negative, or unfavorable, outcomes are the participant ratings of Vanessa’s: negative emotional responses, feelings of disappointment, and resentment towards Isaac.

Control Variables

I measured the same control variables as in Study 1, which target individual differences in participants’ attitudes about gendered sexuality. To control for these differences, I assessed the extent to which the participants’ hold stigmatizing views of casual sex and of the target character, Vanessa. Specifically, I asked participants to indicate their agreement with *Vanessa is someone many people disrespect*, and *Vanessa is similar to other women her age*, the idea being that stronger agreement with the former item and weaker agreement with the latter item indicates the participant has more negative views towards women having casual sex.

Additional individual differences included participants’ own interest in casual sex, their histories of participation in casual sex, and how often they orgasm during partnered sex. Finally, participants indicated how realistic they found the vignette description.

Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted with SPSS. I assessed the correlations between participants’ age, continuous dependent variables (Vanessa’s: orgasm importance following the encounter, sexual satisfaction with the encounter, positive and negative emotional reactions, interest in future sex with Isaac, and feelings of resentment), and continuous control variables

(participants' perceptions of the vignette's realism, and of Vanessa's stigma and her similarity to other women, and their own interest in casual sex and rates of orgasm during partnered sex). The reason I selected Vanessa's orgasm importance at Time 2 (following the encounter) rather than Time 1 (before the encounter) is because Time 2 captures this rating *after* the experimental groups encountered both of the study's vignette manipulations. Therefore, Time 2 is a more accurate measure of any variance in Vanessa's appraisals that could be accounted for by her personal orgasm importance (something that participants could vary widely on in their views).

I also assessed whether participant responses differed on the survey items across racial/ethnic categories. Because the number of individuals was highly disproportionate between comparison groups, I assessed the data visually with scatterplots and descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, skewness, etc.). Finally, I compared participant scores on the study measures across the remaining demographic variables: highest education level completed, feminist identity, relationship status, history of casual sex, and sexual orientation (heterosexual vs. bisexual).

For the primary analyses, I conducted ANCOVAs on the outcome variables with orgasm outcome (yes vs. no) and orgasm expectations (met vs. unmet) as the two independent variables. Based on the associations I observed between variables (see correlations under Results), I included participant perceptions of Vanessa's stigma and her orgasm importance, as well as their realism scores, as covariates in their respective models. Not including these items did not change the outcome of any analysis of variance model tested in the results, so I included them to investigate more precisely the extent to which orgasming and having met vs. unmet expectations are predictive of better outcomes of casual sex.

Results

Correlations

Participant age was negatively associated with how similar Vanessa is to her peers ($r = -.199, p = .003$), how realistic they considered the vignette ($r = -.142, p = .036$), and their own interest in casual sex ($r = -.148, p = .029$). It was not associated with any outcome variables. As in Study 1, I asked the participants to indicate the age they imagined Vanessa. Participants selected a value from 18 to 99. In general, participants said between 20 and 35 years old, with an average of 26.64, $SD = 5.23$. This was correlated with participants' own ages, $r = .356, p \leq .001$.

The only dichotomous demographic or identity-related variable to present a significant association with the study variables was feminist identity. Self-identified feminists agreed less strongly that Vanessa was feeling disappointed following the sexual encounter. I therefore included feminist identity as a covariate in analyzing disappointment.

The significant associations I found between covariates and outcome variables are as follows. Perceptions of Vanessa's orgasm importance (at Time 2) was positively correlated with sexual satisfaction ($r = .235, p \leq .001$) and with positive emotional responses ($r = .230, p \leq .001$). Stigma was marginally correlated with resentment, ($r = .138, p = .041$). I therefore included orgasm importance and stigma in the respective outcome analyses.

Positive (favorable) outcomes

See Tables 9 and 11 for means and test statistics. Table 10 contains all means and standard deviations for the interactions observed in both favorable and unfavorable outcome variables.

Sexual satisfaction with encounter. There was a main effect of orgasm, $F(1, 214) = 248.61, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .537$. Those in the “orgasm” condition rated Vanessa’s satisfaction higher than those in the “no orgasm” condition. There was no main effect of expectations, but there was evidence of an interaction between the two factors, $F(1, 214) = 5.75, p = .017, \eta^2 = .026$. I conducted a one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test, chosen because of the equality of sample sizes and variance between the four cells. Those who read that Vanessa had no orgasm but met expectations reported her satisfaction similarly to those who read that she had no orgasm and unmet expectations, $p = .644$. Those who read that Vanessa had an orgasm but unmet expectations perceived similar satisfaction to those who read that Vanessa had an orgasm but met expectations, $p = .201$. All other pairwise comparisons were significant at $p < .001$. In sum, orgasm seems to have a stronger effect than expectations being met or unmet on Vanessa’s sexual satisfaction.

Positive emotional reactions. There was a main effect of orgasm, $F(1, 214) = 132.93, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .383$. Those in the “orgasm” condition perceived Vanessa to feel more positively following the encounter than those in the “no orgasm” condition. There was no main effect of expectations, but the interaction between the two factors was moderately significant, $F(1, 214) = 4.60, p = .033, \eta^2 = .021$. I conducted a one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test to examine the relationships between the cells. Each cell differed significantly from two others at $p < .001$ and did not differ significantly from one other. The pairwise comparisons that failed to find significance were within the orgasm conditions. So those who read that Vanessa orgasmed reported similar scores of her positive emotions, regardless of whether this met or did not meet her expectations, $p = .168$. Similarly, those who read that Vanessa did *not* orgasm reported

similar scores of her positive emotions, regardless of whether her expectations were met, $p = .978$.

Sex with Isaac again. Once again, there was a main effect of orgasm, $F(1, 215) = 162.13, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .430$. Those in the “orgasm” condition rated Vanessa’s interest in having sex with Isaac again more highly than those in the “no orgasm” condition. There was no main effect of expectations, but there was evidence of an interaction between the two factors, $F(1, 215) = 7.44, p = .007, \eta^2 = .033$. A one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test indicated that all four cells differ significantly from one another at $p < .01$, except for one comparison. Those who read that Vanessa orgasmed reported similar scores on this item regardless of whether this met or did not meet her expectations, $p = .889$.

Negative (unfavorable) outcomes

See Tables 9 and 12 for means and test statistics, and Table 10 for means related to predictor interactions.

Negative emotional reactions. The orgasm factor significantly predicted how negatively Vanessa was perceived to feel after the encounter, $F(1, 215) = 68.98, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .205$. Those in the “orgasm” condition perceived Vanessa to feel lower negative emotions than those in the “no orgasm” condition. There was no main effect of expectations, and the interaction between the factors trended towards significance, $F(1, 215) = 3.77, p = .053$. A one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test reveals that the effects are driven by the comparisons between orgasm conditions rather than within. When Vanessa orgasms, her negative emotions do not differ between unmet expectations ($M = 1.77, SD = 0.58$) and met expectations ($M = 1.84, SD = 0.95$), $p = .981$. And when Vanessa *doesn't* orgasm, her negative emotions again do not differ between met expectations ($M = 2.74, SD = 0.89$) and unmet

expectations ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.94$), $p = .086$.

Disappointment. There was another main effect of orgasm, $F(1, 213) = 181.68$, $p \leq .001$, $\eta^2 = .460$, where less disappointment was reported by those in the “orgasm” condition. There was no main effect of expectations. This time, the interaction was significant, $F(1, 213) = 1816.63$, $p = .011$, $\eta^2 = .030$. I conducted a one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test to examine the pairwise comparisons. All four cells were significantly different from one another at $p < .01$ except for one dyad. Those who read Vanessa had an orgasm and this met her expectation reported a score of 1.85 for her disappointment, compared to those who read that Vanessa had an orgasm but that this did not meet her expectations ($M = 1.63$), and these did not differ significantly, $p = .779$.

Resentment towards Isaac. Being in the “orgasm” condition was predictive of lower resentment scores, $F(1, 214) = 88.86$, $p \leq .001$, $\eta^2 = .293$. In this model, the expectation factor approached significance and the interaction between the two was marginally significant, $F(1, 213) = 4.50$, $p = .035$, $\eta^2 = .021$. I again conducted a one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test to examine the pairwise comparisons, and again, all four cells were significantly different from one another at $p < .01$ except for one dyad. Those who read Vanessa had an orgasm and this met her expectation reported a score of 1.78 for her resentment, compared to those who read that Vanessa had an orgasm but that this did not meet her expectations ($M = 1.69$), and these did not differ significantly, $p = .970$.

Vanessa’s Orgasm Importance

Time 1. The first time (Time 1) that participants are asked how much Vanessa values orgasm, they have only read the portion of the vignette that describes whether Vanessa usually orgasms or usually does not orgasm. A t-test comparing responses between these groups was

significant, $t(217) = -13.95, p \leq .001, [95\%CI (-2.34, -1.76)]$. Women who read that Vanessa usually orgasms perceived her to value orgasm more highly ($M = 4.55, SD = 0.89$) than women who read that Vanessa usually does not orgasm, ($M = 2.50, SD = 1.24$).

This finding also demonstrates the strength of our manipulation: we successfully communicated to participants that Vanessa has a higher or lower expectation for orgasm by stating that she either usually has orgasms or usually does not have orgasms when she has casual sex with men.

Time 2. The second time (Time 2) that participants indicate Vanessa's orgasm importance, they have concluded the vignette and have read that Vanessa either orgasmed or did not orgasm during her encounter with Isaac. Given that there was a baseline difference at Time 1 between groups based on Vanessa's orgasm anticipation (high or low), the relationship between Vanessa's orgasm outcome and her orgasm importance should be moderated based on having high or low anticipation for orgasm. Indeed, an ANOVA examining the effects of orgasm anticipation (high vs. low) and orgasm outcome (orgasm vs. no orgasm) on Vanessa's orgasm importance at Time 2 yields a significant interaction between the factors, $F(1, 215) = 8.11, p = .005, \eta^2 = .036$ (see Tables 13 and 14 for means and test statistics).

I then examined the data separately by high vs. low orgasm anticipation. Among those who understood Vanessa to highly anticipate orgasming, her actually having an orgasm received a slightly higher value of orgasm importance than when she did not have an orgasm. But among those who understood Vanessa to have a very low anticipation of orgasm, when she actually orgasmed in the vignettes, she received a much higher value of orgasm importance than when she does not orgasm.

Change in Orgasm Importance. Finally, I analyzed the four experimental conditions separately and conducted a paired-samples t-test to examine whether Vanessa's orgasm importance changed as a function of 1) orgasming or not orgasming, which either 2) meets or disrupts her expectations. Tables 15 and 16 contain mean scores and test statistics. When Vanessa did not orgasm, her orgasm importance did not change. This was the case regardless of whether she expected to orgasm or to not orgasm. However, when Vanessa did orgasm, her orgasm importance score increased significantly. For the Vanessa who usually orgasms, orgasming in the encounter with Isaac raised this score by .2 scale points on average, $t = -2.284$, $p = .026$, [95%CI(-.38, -.03)]. For the Vanessa who usually does not orgasm, orgasming with Isaac boosted this score by an average of 1.5 scale points, $t = -10.15$, $p \leq .001$, [95%CI(-1.75, -1.17)].

Discussion

Overall, the current study had the following consistent findings. First, that orgasm directly, and robustly, impacts how women see Vanessa's outcomes of casual sex such that orgasming leads to greater sexual satisfaction, greater interest in sex again, and more positive emotional reactions, as well as lesser resentment felt towards her partner and lesser negative emotional reactions. This is also strong evidence that orgasming is an appropriate measure of sexual pleasure, which impacts women's ratings of sexual satisfaction—or their evaluation of their experience. Second, that orgasm moderates the relationship between Vanessa's expectations being un/met and her outcomes, such that unmet expectations for having an orgasm led to worse outcomes for Vanessa. These effect sizes were much smaller, however, and the significance values less reliable. I therefore conducted a direct replication with a separate sample of U.S. women.

STUDY 2B

As in Study 1, I conducted a replication of the present research using a sample of paid participants.

Method

Recruitment

Participants were recruited using CloudResearch.com. The present study was described as a short survey about sexual attitudes and experiences for women in the U.S whose sexual attraction includes men. Participants received \$0.40 for their time in the study.

Participants

The survey was completed by 222 individuals. I first removed 34 responses with suspicious metadata (e.g., repeating IP addresses, invalid latitude/longitude coordinates) or suspicious response patterns (e.g., responses that do not address the question or item, strings of random text in open-ended response fields). I also excluded 10 additional individuals who failed the attention checks, and 7 individuals who submitted the survey in under half of the median time-to-completion (135.75 seconds; Greski, Meyer, & Schoen, 2015).

The final sample was 171 women, ages 19-72 ($M = 40.33$, $SD = 11.71$). As in the volunteer sample (Study 2a), two-thirds of the participants listed themselves as being in a romantic relationship (66.7%) while the remainder were single (33.3%). The women were 87.1% heterosexual and 12.9% bisexual. This sample was 78.9% white and highly educated: 55% have at least a bachelor's degree.

Procedure

This was another online survey using the same experimental vignettes for a 2x2 design. The procedure is the same as in Study 2a.

Materials and Measures

All materials and measures are identical to Study 2a.

Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were again conducted with SPSS.

As in Study 2a, I assessed correlations between participants' age and education, outcome variables, and control variables. I also investigated for differences across categories including relationship status, feminist identity, sexual orientation, history of casual sex, and race/ethnicity.

I again conducted ANCOVAs to assess the relationships between the two independent factors and the outcome variables, including control variables in the models for the outcomes with which they were associated. Like in the prior study, not including these items did not change the outcome patterns or significance of effects. I therefore included them so as to home in on the specific variance explained by the independent factors of interest to the current study.

Results

Correlations

In Study 2b, participant age was negatively associated with how similar Vanessa is to her peers ($r = -.153, p = .046$) and how realistic they considered the vignette ($r = -.174, p = .023$). It was positively associated with how much stigma Vanessa was seen to receive ($r = .171, p = .025$), and was not associated with any outcome variables.

Participants indicated the age they imagined Vanessa by selecting a value from 18 to 99. The average age they imagined Vanessa was 27.13, $SD = 4.25$. This was correlated with participants' own ages, $r = .340, p \leq .001$.

Neither being in a relationship nor being heterosexual versus bisexual was related with any differences in control or outcome variables. Having a history of casual sex was associated

with greater agreement that the vignette was realistic, greater agreement that Vanessa is similar to other women her own age, and lesser agreement that Vanessa is highly stigmatized.

The significant associations I found between covariates and outcome variables are as follows. Vignette realism was negatively associated with positive (favorable) emotional outcomes ($r = -.191, p = .012$), and positively associated with negative (unfavorable) outcomes ($r = .166, p = .030$). Stigma towards Vanessa was positively correlated with resentment towards Isaac, ($r = .117, p = .021$). Finally, participant scores for Vanessa's orgasm importance (at Time 2) were positively correlated with positive (favorable) emotional responses ($r = .182, p = .017$) and approached a significant correlation with sexual satisfaction ($r = .230, p \leq .001$). I therefore included realism, stigma, and orgasm importance in the models for their associated outcome variables.

Positive (favorable) outcomes

See Tables 17 and 19 for means and test statistics. See Table 18 for the means associated with the interactions for each outcome variable.

Sexual satisfaction with encounter. There was a main effect of orgasm, $F(1, 166) = 131.75, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .555$. Those in the “orgasm” condition rated Vanessa's satisfaction higher than those in the “no orgasm” condition. There was also a main effect of expectations, $F(1, 166) = 4.96, p = .027, \eta^2 = .029$. Those in the “met expectations” condition rated her satisfaction higher than those in the “unmet expectations” condition. Finally, there was a significant interaction between the two factors, $F(1, 166) = 5.09, p = .025, \eta^2 = .30$. Similar to Study 2A, a post-hoc Tukey HSD test reveals that all four cells differ significantly from one another at $p < .001$ except for one pairwise comparison (the two cells within the “yes, orgasm” conditions). Those who read that Vanessa orgasmed and this met her expectations did not report significantly

different satisfaction from those who read that Vanessa orgasmed and this did not meet her expectations, $p = .812$. However, among those who read that Vanessa did *not* orgasm, her satisfaction was significantly greater if this matched her expectations ($M = 3.55$) than if this did not match her expectations ($M = 2.83$), $F(1, 81) = 11.97, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .129$.

Positive emotional reactions. There was a main effect of orgasm, $F(1, 166) = 73.72, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .308$. Those in the “orgasm” condition rated perceived Vanessa to feel more positively following the encounter than those in the “no orgasm” condition. There was also a main effect of expectations, $F(1, 166) = 5.33, p = .022, \eta^2 = .031$. Those in the “met expectations” condition rated her as feeling more positive emotions than those in the “unmet expectations” condition. In this model, the interaction between the factors trended towards significance, $F(1, 166) = 3.48, p = .064, \eta^2 = .021$. In examining the mean scores between the four experimental groups, I observed that they follow the same pattern of mean scores for sexual satisfaction. According to a post-hoc Tukey HSD test, there is a mean difference of .05 between those who read that Vanessa orgasmed and this met her expectations, and those who read that Vanessa orgasmed and this did *not* meet her expectations, $p = .993$. Meanwhile, those who read that Vanessa did *not* orgasm had a mean difference of .53 between this meeting and not meeting her expectations, $p = .037$. All remaining pairwise comparisons were significant at $p < .001$.

Sex with Isaac again. Once again, there was a main effect of orgasm, $F(1, 167) = 167.19, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .500$. Those in the “orgasm” condition rated Vanessa’s interest in having sex with Isaac again more highly than those in the “no orgasm” condition. And again, there was a main effect of expectations, $F(1, 167) = 10.42, p = .002, \eta^2 = .059$. Those in the “met expectations” condition indicated greater interest in sex again than those in the “unmet expectations” condition. The interaction was significant, $F(1, 167) = 23.85, p \leq .001, \eta^2 =$

.125. I followed up with a one-way ANOVA with a post-hoc Tukey HSD test and observed that all four cells differ significantly from one another at $p < .001$ except for one pairwise comparison. Those who read that Vanessa had an orgasm did not differ in their scores between whether this met or did not meet her expectations, $p = .572$.

Negative (unfavorable) outcomes

Please see Tables 17 and 20 for means and test statistics. Again, Table 19 contains the means associated with the dependent variables' interactions.

Negative emotional reactions. There was a main effect of orgasm, $F(1, 166) = 76.75, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .316$. Those in the “no orgasm” condition rated Vanessa’s as having greater negative emotional reactions than those in the “orgasm” condition. There was also a main effect of expectations, $F(1, 166) = 20.42, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .110$. Those in the “unmet expectations” condition rated her as having greater negative emotional reactions than those in the “met expectations” condition. Finally, there was a significant interaction between the two factors, $F(1, 166) = 11.82, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .066$. I again followed up with a one-way ANOVA and post-hoc Tukey HSD test and observed that all four cells differ significantly from one another at $p \leq .005$ except for one pair. Again, those who read that Vanessa orgasmed did not differ by this meeting or not meeting her expectations, $p = .966$.

Disappointment. This model’s effects followed the same pattern of those of the negative emotional reactions model. There was a main effect of orgasm, $F(1, 166) = 217.33, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .567$. Those in the “no orgasm” condition rated Vanessa’s as feeling more disappointed than those in the “orgasm” condition. Expectation was also significant, $F(1, 166) = 21.35, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .114$. Those in the “unmet expectations” condition rated her as having greater negative

emotional reactions than those in the “met expectations” condition. Finally, there was a significant interaction between the two factors, $F(1, 166) = 18.31, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .099$.

The pattern of effects matched the prior models: all pairwise comparisons are significant at $p < .001$ except for the two cells within the “yes, orgasm” condition. Those who read that Vanessa orgasmed and this met her expectations did not differ from those who read that Vanessa orgasmed and this did not meet her expectations, $p = .999$.

Resentment towards Isaac. Once again, there was a main effect of orgasm, $F(1, 166) = 21.17, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .113$. There was also a main effect of expectations, $F(1, 166) = 6.89, p = .009, \eta^2 = .040$. Those in the “no orgasm” and “unmet expectations” conditions perceived Vanessa as having greater resentment towards Isaac than those in the “orgasm” and “met expectations” conditions. Finally, these were again accompanied by a significant interaction, $F(1, 166) = 9.46, p = .002, \eta^2 = .054$. A post-hoc Tukey HSD test indicated that those who read that Vanessa did not orgasm and this did not meet her expectations differed significantly from the other three cells at $p < .001$. This group reported greater resentment ($M = 3.02, SD = 1.44$) compared to the others (means range from 1.62 to 1.84).

Vanessa’s Orgasm Importance

Time 1. A t-test comparing responses between those who read that Vanessa usually orgasms and those who read that Vanessa usually does not orgasm was significant, $t(169) = -18.94, p \leq .001, [95\%CI (-3.25, -2.64)]$. The former group rated her a higher orgasm importance ($M = 5.02, SD = 0.78$) than women who read that Vanessa usually does not orgasm ($M = 2.08, SD = 1.20$).

Time 2. As in Study 2a, an ANOVA examining the effects of orgasm anticipation (high vs. low) and orgasm outcome (orgasm vs. no orgasm) on Vanessa’s orgasm importance at Time

2 yields a significant interaction between the factors, $F(1, 167) = 11.43, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .064$ (see Table 21 for means and 22 for test statistics).

Following up, I examined the data separately by high vs. low orgasm anticipation. The moderation followed the same pattern as in Study 2a: those who read that Vanessa orgasmed reported her as having greater orgasm importance than those who read that she did not orgasm, but this difference was significantly greater among those who understood her to have low anticipation for orgasm (than among those who understood her to have high orgasm anticipation).

Change in Orgasm Importance. Finally, I analyzed whether participants perceived Vanessa's orgasm importance to change as a function of having her expectations for orgasm or for no orgasm either met, or unmet. I again conducted paired sample t-tests separately for each of the four experimental conditions in this study (Tables 23 and 24 contain the means and test statistics). In this study, Vanessa's orgasm importance did not change if her expectations were met. If she expected not to orgasm and did not, her orgasm importance remained at 2.1 and if she expected to orgasm and did, her orgasm importance remained at about 5.1. However, if Vanessa expected to orgasm and did not, her orgasm importance decreased by about .4 of a scale point, $t = 2.533, p = .015, [95\%CI(.084, .745)]$. If Vanessa expected to not orgasm and she did, her orgasm importance increased by nearly 2 scale points, $t = -8.428, p \leq .001, [95\%CI(-2.18, -1.34)]$.

Discussion

This study was a direct replication of Study 2a with a sample of paid participants. As compared to the women in Study 2a, the current sample was a few years younger on average (40 years old vs. 46 years old) and had fewer bisexual individuals. In all other regards, however, the

samples are highly comparable. The samples from Study 2a and Study 2b are both about 80% white women, and about 5% Black women. They have similar proportions of single vs. taken participants, and similar proportions of participants with casual sex experience.

Despite a smaller sample size than Study 2a, the current study's findings corroborate those from Study 2a with more robust p-values and stronger effect sizes. Orgasm was both a significant direct predictor of Vanessa having better outcomes of casual sex, as well as a significant moderator between expectations and Vanessa's outcomes. In general, having an orgasm was associated with more positive and less negative emotional reactions than not having an orgasm.

The differences I observed in Vanessa's outcomes between her met vs. unmet expectations were driven by those who read that Vanessa did not orgasm. Across all six dependent variables—when Vanessa orgasmed, her expectations being met or unmet made no difference in her scores. Meanwhile, when Vanessa did not orgasm, she had better scores if her expectations were met than unmet. If she did not orgasm and had unmet expectations (i.e., she was expecting to orgasm), she received the lowest scores on the favorable outcomes like interest in having sex with Isaac again and the highest scores on the unfavorable outcomes like feeling resentment towards Isaac.

I also replicated the effects of orgasm and of un/met expectations on how Vanessa changed her orgasm importance. When Vanessa orgasmed, her orgasm importance increased more than when she did not orgasm. This is unsurprising since experiencing a rewarding outcome is a positive reinforcement of the value of that reward. When Vanessa's expectations were unmet, her orgasm importance also changed more than when her expectations were met. This aligns with theoretical perspectives on how interruptions of routines or expectations

causes exaggerated affective responses. Although Vanessa's orgasm importance isn't a direct representation of her affect, I argue that her affect would be associated with cognitive changes in addition. Perhaps her increased disappointment and resentment felt when her expectations of orgasm were unmet were the link between the expectation disruption and her change in orgasm value.

Study 2 Discussion

In this study, I compared U.S. women's quantitative descriptions of a target character, Vanessa, to ascertain what they understand and imagine about mixed-gender casual sex. Female participants read a vignette about Vanessa's casual sex encounter with Isaac. I manipulated whether Vanessa expected to orgasm or not (as conveyed via what "usually" occurs for her during casual sex), and whether she did orgasm with Isaac or not. Female participants read one of the four different possible configurations of these events, and then responded to survey items about Vanessa's thoughts and feelings regarding orgasm, Isaac, and their encounter.

As anticipated, orgasming during the encounter was consistently an important predictor of better outcomes: more positive and less negative emotions, greater sexual satisfaction, and more interest in a repeat encounter with Isaac. In every outcome variable's model, orgasm was the most influential factor with very large effect sizes.

Orgasm was also critical in moderating the relationship between Vanessa's expectations being un/met and her outcomes. If Vanessa orgasms, then what she was expecting does not matter in her feelings afterward, nor in her satisfaction with the encounter or other appraisals of Isaac. But if Vanessa does not orgasm, her feelings and satisfaction only remain boosted if she was expecting this outcome. The effect sizes associated with this moderated relationship are certainly much smaller than those of the relationship between orgasm and Vanessa's outcomes.

Unmet expectations

The findings of the current study consistently demonstrated the same pattern: if Vanessa expects to orgasm and does not, her feelings following the encounter take a major hit. Participants indicate that in this scenario, she feels greater disappointment and resentment towards Isaac than if she had been anticipating the lack of orgasm. This shows us that women can articulate the negative emotional and cognitive consequences of having your hopes or expectations dashed in the context of casual sex.

In the same vein, having your expectations for casual sex disrupted can also lead to a boost in positive outcomes if the disruption is a favorable or desired outcome. When Vanessa does not expect to orgasm but then does orgasm, she is reported to have an increase in sexual satisfaction with the encounter, and in the positive emotional reactions she felt afterwards, as compared to if she orgasmed when expecting to do so. This pattern of exaggerated outcomes observed in Vanessa's affect is a consequence of her expectations being interrupted or violated (the word violation may have a more vicious connotation than I want). According to expectation violation theory, affective responses result from a redirect of attention to something important about the situation. In the current research, orgasming or not seems to be that "something important" about the situation if it disrupts what the woman was expecting.

I captured another consequence of having your orgasm expectations met or dashed by calculating the change in Vanessa's orgasm importance depending on what she experienced. When Vanessa's expectations are met, her orgasm importance changes very little. But when her expectations are *unmet*, how she evaluates orgasm changes dramatically. If she has unmet expectations in a favorable sense – she wasn't expecting to orgasm but did – then she greatly increases her value of orgasm. However, if she has unmet expectations in an

unfavorable sense – she was expecting to orgasm but didn't – then she decreases her value of orgasm.

With these response patterns, the women in this study convey how Vanessa's thoughts and feelings change as a result of having her expectations for orgasm met or unmet. Unmet expectations for orgasm lead to greater disappointment and resentment towards her partner. Unmet expectations for orgasm also led Vanessa to decrease how much value she places on orgasm. This may be a coping mechanism to buffer against further disappointment and resentment. If your experience is missing a certain element, highly valuing that element will be conflicting for your judgment of the experience, and of your own decision to engage in the experience. On the flip side, it is easier to judge the experience and your decision (or those judgments are more positive/favorable) when you have a low value on that certain element. Their descriptions and ratings of Vanessa's thoughts and feelings may reflect how the women in this study have thought and felt about casual sex in their own lives. That they can agree upon Vanessa's various experiences across participant differences (such as relationship status, perceptions of stigma associated with women having casual sex, perceived reality of the vignette, and personal interest in casual sex) indicates the common knowledge and experience that American women have regarding mixed-gender casual sex.

Limitations and future directions

The claims I have made here are limited for much of the same reasons as in Study 1. The forced binary I created for Vanessa's orgasm expectation surely collapses the way women experience having sexual expectations. It's likely that a woman's expectations are dynamic, influenced by more than just "what usually happens" for her in the bedroom. There is also evidence that women's desires and expectations may be more partner-specific than I have

accounted for in the present study (Gunst, Ventus, Karna, Salo, & Jern, 2017). Finally, casual sex with a new partner (like other novel experiences) contains elements of uncertainty, which can be thrilling, exciting, and anxiety-provoking. It may be possible that women approach casual sex with men with unstable expectations and a great deal of uncertainty about what the encounter may entail. Although women and men described a similar sequence of events for a prototypical heterosexual encounter, the variability within women's responses was much higher than within men's (Lavery, 2017). In sum, there is a chance my attempt to operationalize and control the manipulation of "orgasm expectation" was weaker than imagined.

Study 2's conclusions are again limited because a vignette experiment is only a proxy for women's lived sexual experiences. It is possible that the participants of this study provided responses about Vanessa that would never align with their own thoughts or feelings. Using vignettes and fictional scenarios may have removed some of the realism in assessing women's sexual expectations, and reduced our ability to apply these results, but it also allowed me to test my predictions in a time and cost-effective design. Before conducting a resource-intensive research project where I ask women for a higher degree of study participation than a one-time survey, it was important for me to explore the relationships between women's orgasm expectations being met or unmet, and their casual sex outcomes.

Chapter 4

Study 3: Women's Orgasm Expectations and Experiences in Casual Sex with Men

Study 2 served as a preliminary test of the extent to which women's met or unmet expectations for orgasm can explain their responses to a casual sex encounter. To corroborate substantial existing literature, orgasm is an important predictor of more positive outcomes, including greater sexual satisfaction, more positive emotional reactions, and greater interest in a repeat encounter. In the conditions where Vanessa orgasmed, the other predictors had little effect on her outcomes, including her expectation-fulfillment vs. unfulfillment. But when Vanessa did not orgasm, her post-sex feelings and appraisals only remained positive if she was anticipating this outcome. The women who participated in Study 2 recognized the negative impact of having one's expectations go unfulfilled.

It is possible that fictional vignettes about sex allow a space for research participants to imagine departing from the behaviors and attitudes that they exhibit in their real lives. Perhaps women respond differently regarding themselves as opposed to a fictional other. There is also the chance that the participants, despite reporting a history of casual sex with men, have not personally participated in the activity for many years which could bias their perceptions of Vanessa's likely thoughts and feelings. Do women who actively have casual sex with men respond to those encounters based on their own orgasm expectations going met or unmet? The present study moves this research question from the hypothetical to the actual and asks whether women will exhibit the same evidence of adjusting their expectations or evaluative criteria in

response to their casual sex encounters with new male partners. Instead of asking female participants to report on Vanessa's reactions based on whether her orgasm expectations were met or not, in this study I ask female participants to report their own reactions to casual sex. I assess their encounter evaluations as a function of their orgasm expectation-fulfillment, having determined orgasm is a viable mechanism of sexual pleasure for women in casual sex. A diary study design about women's personal sexual and relational lives allows me to obtain additional measures from participants that may not have been relevant enough to justify including in short, online surveys (e.g., Studies 1 and 2). Therefore, in the present study I also assess women's sexual self-efficacy and perceptions of the orgasm gap—two constructs that should be related to their own orgasmic experiences.

Sexual self-efficacy

Concepts abound that relate to women's sexual self-efficacy. Some researchers look at women's agency whereas others consider their sexual assertiveness; some examine sexual autonomy or sexual empowerment, and others may focus on women's comfort communicating and behaving in sexual scenarios (Bay-Cheng, 2019). Despite the assured differences between each construct, the common thread is that researchers use them to assess how self-assured or confident a woman is when she is engaging in sexual activity. Greater sexual self-efficacy is, unsurprisingly, associated with increased self-esteem and greater sexual and general well-being (Mastro & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2015; Zimmer-Gembeck, Ducat, & Collins, 2011). Women report receiving benefits from casual sex apart from physical and relational satisfaction, including gaining confidence and experience (Piemonte et al., 2019; Weaver, MacKeigan, & MacDonald, 2011). To test whether women's sexual self-efficacy changes as a function of their orgasm expectations going met or unmet, I included it as a variable of interest in the current study.

Justification of the orgasm gap

As I reviewed in Chapter 3, studies show that women exhibit a reduced or depressed entitlement to orgasm during sex with men (Fahs & Plante, 2017; Klein & Conley, 2022; Laan & Rellini, 2011). As it turns out, entitlement to the resource or outcome is required to feel deprived of what one is owed or deserves (Thompson, 1991; Major, 1994). If women do not feel entitled to orgasms and do not, therefore, feel relatively deprived of them, then they must be rationalizing or justifying their lower-than-desired rates of orgasm.

System justification theory suggests that rationalizing a dissatisfactory or discriminatory status quo serves to assuage people's negative affect and feelings of dissonance (Napier, Thorisdottir, & Jost, 2010; Jost, Becker, Osborne, & Badaan, 2017). Engaging in status-legitimizing processes functions to reduce uncertainty and psychological threat (thus meeting intrapersonal epistemic and existential needs) as well as to increase a shared intergroup reality (thus meeting interpersonal relational and belonging needs). People who believe they are "suffering justly" feel less anger and less resentment whereas feeling relatively deprived causes discontent, dissatisfaction, regret, and cognitive dissonance (Crosby, 1982; Jost, 2020).

As protection from these negative outcomes, people find reasons to improve their view of the system or conditions that led to the disparate outcomes. Finding the inequality fair is palliative against the unhappiness that accompanies having been exploited or taken advantage of or feeling defrauded or otherwise cheated. From this perspective, it is entirely logical that women justify the sexual inequalities they experience and re-calibrate their standards and expectations to accommodate the perceived inevitable inequality. I am interested in the extent to which women's justification of the orgasm gap relates to their own expectations and experiences

with orgasm. In the current study I ask if women's un/met orgasm expectations predicts their justification of the orgasm gap.

The Current Study

I conducted a quasi-experimental study of women's casual sex responses based on their orgasm expectations and whether they actually orgasmed. I used a diary method to collect weekly data from single women in the U.S. on 1) their sexual experiences over the prior week, and 2) their sexual expectations and hopes for the coming week. My intention was to capture their expectations [for orgasm] as close to the beginning of the sexual encounter as possible, and to capture their reports of what occurred during the encounter, as well as their evaluations of the encounter, as quickly as possible following the experience. In addition to the main outcomes of interest in Studies 1 and 2 (i.e., sexual satisfaction and emotional responses), I also examined women's sexual self-efficacy and their justification of the orgasm gap.

Method

This was a diary study involving single (i.e., unattached) women in the U.S. I aimed to capture a woman's expectations prior to a casual sex encounter with a new male partner, to document the encounter's inclusion or omission of her orgasm, and to measure her affective and evaluative responses to the encounter. Participants enrolled in the study for six weeks with the understanding that their responses are valuable data even without having had casual sex.

Recruitment

Recruitment for this diary study took place over two platforms. First, participants were recruited from ResearchMatch.org, an NIH platform that connects researchers with potential study participants in the United States. I advertised the study as designed for adult (i.e., 18 years

or older) U.S. women who are single (i.e., unattached or not in a relationship) and open to meeting and engaging with new potential sex partners in the next few weeks. Interested participants opted in to learn more, and I sent them an eligibility survey.

The second recruitment platform was the Michigan Medicine Facebook page. With the assistance of an on-campus office (Michigan Institute for Clinical and Health Research; MICHR), I developed recruitment materials for the organization's social media manager to post on the institution's Facebook page. The flyers described the study's tasks (downloading a mobile app and using it to complete a weekly survey for six weeks), the eligibility requirements, and the study compensation (\$1.00 per survey with a bonus of \$4.00 for those who complete all six weeks of surveys). MICHR advertised for this study on their Facebook for one week at the beginning of August, 2022. Interested participants clicked a URL that brought them to the eligibility survey.

The screening survey began with a Captcha verification, at the advice of MICHR. Ostensible humans were then asked to indicate their age, gender, and U.S. state of residence (with options for U.S. territories and non-U.S. residences). Additional questions on the screener included: *Are you willing to use your computer or mobile device to respond to weekly online check-in surveys?* (those who said "no" were ineligible), *Are you currently in a committed romantic relationship or monogamous sexual relationship?* (those who said "yes" were ineligible), and *Do you consider yourself open to dating or sexual activity over the next 6 weeks?* (those who said "no" were ineligible). Eligible respondents were invited to enter their email address, and they received an email containing the study onboarding materials, which included a consent form, instructions for installing the mobile study app, and directions to complete the in-take questionnaire within 48 hours of joining the study on the mobile app.

Participants

I received over 1500 submissions to the screening survey and 1,048 email submissions from eligible respondents. After I sent over 1,000 emails containing onboarding materials, 469 individuals downloaded the mobile app and completed the enrollment survey. When the study was complete (that is, when the latest-enrolled participant completed their six weeks), I began to examine the enrollment survey's meta-data, including the response durations, the response submission times and dates, the response IP addresses, and the response latitude/longitude coordinates. It quickly became clear that most of the responses were untrustworthy: there were specific dates/times where dozens of enrollment surveys were submitted simultaneously, from identical IP addresses and with matching geographic data. These responses often were completed in much less time than I suspected was necessary based on pilot participants' completion of the enrollment survey, and there were frequently instances of participants 'straight-lining' down one side of a given measure.

MICHR employees and I had prepared for potential 'bot' responses, but not for potential invalid responses from people. We agreed that the financial compensation advertised was too low without perfect completion of all the surveys to generate much interest in people who were ineligible, but we were clearly mistaken. Other researchers have encountered similar data validity issues with online recruitment platforms, including MTurk (Webb & Tangney, 2022). If I had more time for this study, I would have required a video-conference-hosted onboarding meeting with myself or research staff for each participant. This would help verify that each person is indeed who they say they are (i.e., a single woman in the U.S.) and would also benefit participants who may have wanted to ask questions or find out more before joining the study.

For the sake of maximizing my confidence in the validity of the data, I limited the present study to only those who had been recruited from ResearchMatch.org, since it is a database of volunteers maintained by the NIH. After removing all suspicious respondents and keeping only those I could verify from ResearchMatch, I had 113 individual enrollment survey submissions. Although it is disappointing to lose the majority of participants, I would much rather conduct analyses on fewer data that I am confident is valid. Unfortunately, the drastically lower number of enrolled participants means that the number of women who engaged in a first-time heterosexual casual sex encounter is lower still. At several points in this present research, I attempt to contextualize the results of the present study to reflect this unexpected limitation.

For the purposes of this study, I excluded women whose sexual attraction does not include men (six lesbian women and three asexual women). The final sample included 104 single U.S. women. Their ages ranged from 20-67, with a mean of 32.7 ($SD = 11.4$). The participants were 82.7% heterosexual and 17.3% bisexual or pansexual. The participants were 59% white, 22% Black, 10% Hispanic/Latina, and 8% Asian-American with 2% indicating “other.”

Seventeen participants indicated that they are currently college students, and the rest of the sample was very highly educated: 43.7% completed a bachelor’s degree and an additional 32.2% also completed a masters. About 60% of participants indicated that their annual household income is between \$25,000 and \$100,000, with about 15% making below \$25,000 and 15% making above \$100,000. Finally, about 54% of participants said that they live alone, while 22% of participants indicated that they live with at least one person younger than 18 years old.

Procedure

Participants enrolled in the study by downloading the mobile app WHIRwell (WHIRLab, 2021) and joining the study as directed in the email sent to eligible individuals. Enrolled participants were prompted to complete the in-take questionnaire, which included measures of participants' attitudes and beliefs regarding sex, gender, and orgasm, questions about their sexual histories, measures of sexual self-efficacy, and their expectations for sexual/dating relations. I used WHIRwell to regularly prompt participants to complete a check-in survey.

WHIRwell is programmed to send in-app messages from the study to the participants. Researchers specify the message content and schedule, and participants receive notifications on their cell phones when the messages are delivered. For this study, WHIRwell sent a weekly message asking participants to complete a check-in survey, once a week for six weeks. The check-in survey asked participants about their sexual activity over the prior week, and about their sexual expectations for the coming week. Those who indicated having sexual activity over the prior week were given some additional measures to complete about their sexual experiences. If participants indicated more than one partnered sexual experience in the past week, they were asked to respond about the encounter which represented their initial time with a new partner.

Measures

All of the questionnaires in this research included an extensive array of instruments and survey items. Only the measures of interest to the current study are described here.

Enrollment Survey

Sexual history. Participants were asked to indicate 'yes,' 'no,' or 'I want to tell you more' in response to items asking if they have ever been in a committed relationship, if they have ever had partnered sex, and -- if so -- if they have ever had casual sex. I also measured their

interest in casual sex across the span of their sex lives on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 6 (extremely).

Partner count. Participants reported the number and gender of their lifetime sexual partners.

Orgasm frequency. I measured how often they orgasm during sex with male partners.

Orgasm importance. *How important is it for you to orgasm during sex with a casual, non-committed partner?* Response options ranged from 1 - 'not at all important' to 6 - 'the most important part.'

Satisfaction with sex life. This scale was comprised of 4 items that asked participants to evaluate their current sex life from bad to good, unsatisfying to satisfying, boring to exciting, and negative to positive. The scale ranges from 1 to 6 with higher scores indicating greater satisfaction with their current sex life. Alpha = .901.

Sexual self-efficacy. I measured different aspects of sexual self-efficacy, including an item inquiring about the participants' efficacy at using condoms or other measures of safer sex and one inquiring about their efficacy at advocating for their own sexual pleasure and satisfaction during partnered sex. Each of these items had scores ranging from 1 to 6, with 6 indicating greater self-efficacy.

Participants also completed an existing self-efficacy scale that assessed how difficult they would find the behaviors described in the items (e.g., using the word 'clitoris' during partnered sex; showing a partner what to do to stimulate me; Bailes, Creti, Fichten, Libman, Brender, & Amsel, 2010). The scores ranged from 1 to 6 with higher scores indicating greater difficulty, or lower self-efficacy. Alpha = .859.

Orgasm gap justification. Participants responded to 2 items asking their agreement with statements about orgasm inequality. One item targeted the group-level orgasm gap: *It's no big deal that men orgasm more often than women*, and one item targeted a person-level orgasm inequality: *It's unfair when only one person orgasms*. This second item was reverse scored and averaged, so that higher scores on the combined variable reflect greater acceptance of the orgasm gap, from 1 – 6.

Expectations for casual sex. *Imagine that you meet a new guy and are interested in him. If you were to have sex, how likely are each of the following?* Participants responded to an array of items on scales from 1-6. For this study, I analyzed “I would orgasm,” “I would enjoy the encounter,” “I would expect my sexual partner to be responsive to my needs and feelings,” and “I would regret this decision later.”

Demographics. Participants indicated their ages, racial/ethnic heritages, sexual orientations, their U.S. state of residence, the highest level of education they completed, the annual income of their household in the past year (as well as how many people contribute to this income and how many people live in their homes), and finally their political attitudes on a scale from 1 - Extremely Liberal to 7 - Extremely conservative. Political attitudes were not affiliated with any measures of interest to the current study.

Post-sex Survey

In the service of retaining participants, I aimed to keep the weekly check-in survey as short as possible, even for those who were answering about a sexual experience. In many cases for the following measures, I used only a subset of items instead of the entire instrument.

Sexual satisfaction with encounter. I asked participants to indicate their satisfaction with the following items, on scales from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 6 (extremely satisfied):

Your overall decision to engage in the encounter; The affection you felt from your partner; The pleasure you experienced; How 'in control' you felt during; The amount of effort put forth by your sex partner; How much attention you received from your sex partner; The amount of trust between you and your sex partner during the encounter. Alpha = .95.

Positive emotional responses. *The day after this sexual encounter, how much did you feel each of the following emotions?* Responses ranged from 1 (not at all) to 6 (extremely). The positive emotions included confident, proud, content, excited, happy, joyful, and cheerful. Alpha = .973.

Negative emotional responses. Like the positive emotions, participants were asked how they felt on the day following their encounter. The negative emotions included in the scale are disappointed, guilty, regretful, ashamed, bothered, uncertain, anxious, and worried (Alpha = .866). Following the former studies, I analyzed "disappointed" individually, given its relevance to unmet expectations, but nothing was unique to this specific emotion. Therefore, I included it in the negative emotional reactions scale.

Orgasm gap justification. I adapted the Acceptance of Gender Income Inequality Scale (Connor & Fiske, 2019) to measure participants' system justifying beliefs about the orgasm gap. Respondents were presented with the following introduction: *Research shows that men have more orgasms than women – a phenomenon known as the orgasm gap. One study found that for every orgasm a woman has, her male partner has about three (Wade, 2015).* Participants then indicated their agreement, on a six-point Likert scale, with seven items written to assess how acceptable they find the orgasm gap, such as 'Differences in orgasm frequency between men and women are justified,' and 'Orgasm equality between men and women should be our ideal.' Alpha = .527.

Sexual self-efficacy. Participants responded to two items on 1-6 scales asking about using condoms or other measures of safer sex, and about advocating for their sexual pleasure to a sexual partner. Higher scores indicate greater sexual self-efficacy.

Met expectations. *This encounter met or exceeded my expectations.* Participants responded on a scale ranging from 1 - strongly disagree to 6 - strongly agree.

Orgasm expectation recall. *Orgasming during this encounter was completely expected.* This item was mistakenly only presented to women who indicated that they did indeed orgasm during the sexual encounter on which they are reporting. Participants responded on a scale from 1- strongly disagree to 6-strongly agree.

New expectations. *If you were to have sex in the coming week, how likely are each of the following?* Participants responded on scales ranging from 1 - highly unlikely to 6 - highly likely. The items of interest here include ‘I would enjoy the encounter,’ ‘I would orgasm,’ ‘My sex partner would be a great lover,’ and ‘I would regret my decision.’

Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted with SPSS. My primary analyses were of the participants who reported on a casual sex encounter, so as to assess their outcomes based on whether their expectations for orgasm (or for not orgasming) were met or unmet. Unfortunately, there were only a couple of dozen participants who completed a post-sex survey on an eligible encounter. Despite wanting to look specifically at women whose expectations were disrupted (i.e., to compare women who orgasmed when not expecting it with women who did not orgasm despite their expectation for it), there simply was not sufficient numbers of initial sexual encounters ($n = 31$). This obviously limits the current study in many ways, especially regarding reliable analyses and the application of any significant relationships to women beyond those

presently involved. Therefore, I approach all of the current results as exploratory and extremely preliminary, meant to provide a cursory examination of the possible relationships between women's casual sex expectations and outcomes.

Given the exploratory nature of this study, I conducted correlational analyses between continuous demographic variables (age, political attitudes, income) and other potential control variables (orgasm importance, orgasm frequency, casual sex interest, and partner count). Despite some associations between these and the outcome variables, I would rather be more conservative in the number of variables I analyze given the minimal sample sizes of the cells of interest. I consequently did not include covariates in the below analyses, so as to explore the most basic aspects of the models.

I performed regression analyses on the outcome variables of interest with expectation for orgasm and orgasm outcome as predictors. The measure of orgasm expectation was continuous while the orgasm outcome is binary, so I centered these variables before including them in the regressions, as well as created a product term to represent the interaction between the two factors. This interaction specifically represents the relationship between the extent to which the women's expectations were met and their sexual outcomes of interest. This was important to test for because the directionality of the potential relationship may differ between positive and negative depending on whether the expectation being met was a desirable or undesirable experience. When any interaction terms did indicate a significant association with an outcome variable, further investigation was limited due to the low sample sizes, so the means I discuss here are far from robust and may even change drastically in a larger sample size. I conducted regression analyses despite the inappropriate sample sizes in order to follow through the dissertation proposal's design and hypotheses. I present regressions to demonstrate my

understanding of the relationships between expectations for an event, the event itself, and associated outcomes.

Finally, I looked within subjects to assess how accurately women remember what their orgasm expectation was prior to the casual sex encounter. When completing their post-sex survey, women who did indeed orgasm during their encounter were asked to indicate their agreement with items asking about the orgasm, including ‘orgasming was completely expected’ and ‘I had hoped to orgasm.’ Because those items were completed *after* the sexual encounter, there is a chance for inaccuracy in a retroactive recall of how the people felt before the encounter. To test how accurately women remember their orgasm expectations, I conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with the T1 item pulled from the enrollment survey: ‘If I were to have sex with a new guy, I would orgasm’ (1 - strongly disagree, 6 - strongly agree) and the T2 item pulled from the post-sex survey: ‘Orgasming was completely expected.’

Results

Pre-sex descriptives

Regarding the participants’ sexual histories, 80% indicated having been in a committed relationship and 87% indicated a history of at least one male sexual partner. The median number of male partners was four, and 63% of the sample indicated having had at least one casual sex encounter with a male partner.

Age was positively correlated with sexual partner count, $r = .210, p = .047$, condom efficacy, $r = .290, p = .003$, and justification of the orgasm gap, $r = .250, p = .011$. Age was negatively correlated with sex-life satisfaction, $r = -.245, p = .013$. As expected, partner count was positively associated with interest in casual sex ($r = .363, p \leq .001$), and condom efficacy (r

= .306, $p = .004$). However, it was negatively associated with justification of the orgasm gap, $r = -.234, p = .028$.

Orgasm importance and orgasm frequency are both positively correlated with sex life satisfaction and sexual self-efficacy. Justifying the orgasm gap is negatively associated with orgasm importance (the more important I find orgasm, the less I justify the orgasm gap; $r = -.320, p \leq .001$) and positively associated with orgasm frequency (the more often I orgasm, the more I justify the orgasm gap; $r = .393, p \leq .001$).

I conducted one-sample t-tests on the enrollment measures to determine whether the women in this sample's mean scores significantly depart from the scale averages (which are 3.5 across the board). The participants' means did not significantly depart from 3.5 on the measures of orgasm frequency, orgasm importance, sexual communication self-efficacy, sex-life satisfaction, and justification of the orgasm gap. They did, however, score significantly *greater* averages than the scale average on measures of condom-use self-efficacy, communication efficacy, and their expectations for positive elements of casual sex (i.e., to orgasm, to have a responsive partner, and to enjoy themselves). Meanwhile, they scored significantly *lower* than the scale means on justifying the orgasm gap and expecting to regret having casual sex.

Post-sex outcomes

Thirty-one of the 104 participants reported an initial sexual encounter with a casual male partner. These women were mostly in their twenties and thirties, with six individuals over the age of 40 ($M = 32.94$ years old, $SD = 10.93$). The breakdown of heterosexual to bisexual women mirrored the full sample, as did the race/ethnicity breakdown. Nineteen women reported having an orgasm during this encounter, and 12 did not. As described in the data analysis section, these numbers are too small for reliable statistical tests. The results detailed herein are therefore

exploratory and rudimentary, meant to provide an initial assessment of the possible relationships between women's expectations for casual sex and their outcomes, and to honor the proposed dissertation's hypotheses and planned analyses. All test statistics for the following analyses are in Table 25.

Sexual satisfaction with encounter. I conducted a regression on sexual satisfaction with orgasm expectation, orgasm outcome, and the interaction term as predictors. As expected, the model was underpowered and not significant, $r^2 = .078$, $F(3, 27) = .766$, $p = .523$.

Sexual pleasure efficacy. A regression on sexual self-efficacy with the same predictors as above was significant, $r^2 = .289$, $F(3, 26) = 3.52$, $p = .029$. Orgasm expectation was positively associated with greater pleasure efficacy, $\beta = .408$, $SE = .140$, $t = 2.41$, $p = .023$. Orgasm outcome was not associated with pleasure efficacy, and the interaction trended towards significance (being generous given the small sample size), $\beta = -.301$, $SE = .281$, $t = -1.720$, $p = .097$. To follow up on this interaction, I examined the data spread and mean scores for participants' pleasure efficacy and their orgasm expectations. Both variables were normally distributed. For the women in this study who did not orgasm, I found no evidence of a correlation between their orgasm expectation ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.71$) and their pleasure efficacy ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.62$). There was also no evidence of a correlation for the women in this study who *did* orgasm, although they did report greater orgasm expectation ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.31$) and pleasure efficacy ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.47$).

Justification of orgasm gap. I again conducted a regression with orgasm expectation, orgasm outcome, and their product term as the predictors. The model was not significant, $r^2 = .024$, $F(3, 26) = .213$, $p = .887$. Although none of the predictors was significantly associated with orgasm gap justification, all of their coefficients were negative.

Positive emotional responses. For this analysis, the r^2 was .145 and the model was a bit closer to significance than the others, $F(3, 26) = 1.472, p = .245$. The coefficient for orgasm outcome was notably larger than the coefficient for orgasm expectation (both of which were positive).

Negative emotional responses. A regression model with orgasm expectation, orgasm outcome, and their product term as predictor variables of negative emotional reactions was significant, $r^2 = .318, F(3, 26) = 4.04, p = .017$. Greater expectation of orgasm was significantly associated with lower negative emotions, $\beta = -.460, SE = .080, t = 02.78, p = .010$. Orgasming during the outcome was also significantly associated with greater negative emotional responses, $\beta = .421, SE = .243, t = 2.41, p = .024$. Finally, the interaction term was closer to significance than the interaction term in any other model (except for pleasure efficacy).

To assess the direction of the potential interaction, I examined the spread of the data and average responses based on orgasm outcome. Women who did not orgasm had relatively low responses to the negative emotional reactions scale ($M = 1.47, SD = 0.51$) and a very skewed distribution towards the low end of the scale. Women who did orgasm, on the other hand, had a greater spread in their negative emotional reactions data, reflected in their increased score ($M = 1.70, SD = 0.79$).

Accurate recall of expectations

To test how accurately women remember their orgasm expectations, I conducted a repeated measures ANOVA. The test was underpowered (observed value = .405) but trended towards significance, $F(1, 18) = 3.297, p = .086, \eta^2 = .155$. At enrollment, the women rated their orgasm expectation a 4.58 out of 6 ($SD = 1.31$), and after their encounter, they rated it a 4.05 ($SD = 1.35$). As with all previously reported analyses, this result is not reliable given the small

number of participants included and thus should only be understood as pilot or preliminary data with effects could very well change with greater statistical power.

Study 3 Discussion

Generally, and rudimentarily speaking, a higher expectation of orgasm and actually orgasming are both associated with better psychological outcomes of casual sex. The results hint that the more women expect to orgasm during an initial casual sex encounter new, male partner, the more positive or favorable her affective and evaluative responses. This may be because of the reasons why a woman has a relatively increased orgasm expectation. Women with higher expectations of orgasm for initial sexual encounters with a new male partner are almost certainly women who can reliably orgasm on their own. Perhaps women who can reliably orgasm with a male partner (even unfamiliar ones) are especially interested in casual sex and find the activity enjoyable for reasons outside of physical fulfillment. They may then feel more positively after casual sex, regardless of their orgasm experience.

Un/met expectations

The women I categorized as having unmet expectations reported lower sexual satisfaction than women whose expectations were met. They also reported greater sexual self-efficacy than women whose expectations were met. These may be contrasting directions, but if these results were found in a reliable sample, I would argue that they demonstrate how expectation ‘disconfirmations’ (Burgoon, 1993) have implications for people’s experiences in the sexual domain. Disconfirmations are thought to induce affective processes, but these findings would indicate they may also implicate people’s cognitive processes, such as making judgments and evaluations (e.g., determining sexual satisfaction).

I did not find evidence that the women in the current study experienced affective responses to unmet expectations. Women who orgasmed despite their expectations (thus having a seemingly desirable disconfirmation) did not report an increase of positive emotions. On the contrary, they reported slightly more negative emotions than the other participants. While there was no obvious difference in negative emotions within women who had a higher expectation of orgasm (regardless of whether they did orgasm), women who had a lower expectation of orgasm reported more negative emotions when they did, in fact, orgasm, than women who did not orgasm (as they expected). This outcome loudly interrupts the assumptions that orgasm is inherently enjoyable, and that orgasm is only experienced positively (favorably). As others have demonstrated, orgasming is far from a ubiquitously satisfying and desirable event (Chadwick, Francisco, & van Anders, 2019). The current study's results may provide an additional context wherein orgasm may detract from someone's experience: when they are not expecting it.

For justifying the orgasm gap, I observed the highest scores among women whose expectations were unmet (i.e., women who orgasmed without expecting to, and women who did not orgasm despite expecting to). It appears that having their expectations met helped decrease the extent of their orgasm gap justification, especially if their expectation was orgasming.

Post-sex changes

All participants reported greater sexual satisfaction following their encounter than in their enrollment survey. A lower expectation of orgasm was associated with an increase in justifying the orgasm gap from before to after their encounter, and a higher expectation of orgasm was associated with a decrease in justification. This may reflect a conditioning of sorts, where women, possibly based on their own sex lives and experiences, display a waning of orgasm expectation and a bolstering of their acceptance of orgasm inequality. Similarly, a woman's

justification may decrease as her orgasm reliability increases: she has evidence that women's orgasms are not as 'elusive' or 'difficult' as some cultural narratives maintain, and thus less tolerance for the inequality.

Finally, women who orgasmed remembered having a lower expectation of orgasm than they originally reported. This could signify a post-encounter counterfactual process where a woman considers whether she was likely to orgasm or not, based on the specific sexual partner. As with all of these results, however, such claims cannot be furthered without a more valid dataset.

Chapter 5

General Discussion

In this dissertation, I investigated women's experiences with first-time casual sex encounters with new, male partners. I wanted to know whether women's sexual satisfaction with these encounters could be understood in the context of their expectations for orgasm and based on whether their expectations were met. Across three studies, I sought to assess the relationships between, for a given encounter, expecting to orgasm or not orgasm, orgasming or not orgasming, and outcomes of the encounter. I examined women's affective and cognitive psychological responses, specifically their emotional reactions and their evaluative judgments.

Studies 1 and 2 were cross-sectional, online surveys with vignette scenarios. Four separate studies were completed by women who indicated the likely thoughts and feelings of a target character, based on the character's described casual sex encounter. Results from Study 1 confirm that women's casual sex responses are independently associated with the relational and physical fulfillment they experience during a given encounter. I also found that orgasming accounts for the variance in women's responses when it occurs, and when it does not occur is when relational fulfillment plays a bigger role. Women may therefore use relational fulfillment to compensate for the lack of orgasm, when appraising the encounter. Results from Study 2 confirm that when orgasming occurs, the significance of other predictors decreases. But when no orgasm occurs, the extent to which she expected that to happen matters for a woman's post-sex responses. Findings further suggest that a woman's orgasm importance would decrease if

her expectation of having an orgasm was unmet (that is – she was expecting to orgasm and did not) and increase if her expectation of not having an orgasm was unmet (that is – she orgasmed when not expecting it).

Study 3 was a time-series study of women’s sexual expectations and cognitions (e.g., satisfaction and other evaluative judgments) before and after an initial casual sex encounter. Despite a promising initial sample size, after excluding invalid data there were too few participants remaining to conduct sufficiently-powered analyses. The findings, therefore, must be taken as preliminary and highly subject to change. The women in this study did not respond to their casual sex encounters exactly as expected, based on the prior studies. Although the data consistently suggest that orgasming when its expected is an especially positive experience, and that not orgasming when its expected is a markedly less-positive experience, women who indicated a lower expectation of orgasm demonstrated mixed results in their casual sex outcomes. On the one hand, they reported an increase of sexual self-efficacy, but on the other hand, they reported the highest degree of negative emotions felt after the encounter. If these results were to hold up in a more reliable study, it would at least corroborate that people can experience competing or conflicting feelings about their sexual encounters at the same time (Vasilenko, Maas, & Lefkowitz, 2014).

Contributions to Literature

This dissertation has the potential to further scholarship across several bodies of literature that span disciplines, including social psychology, sex research, and communication studies. With the studies in this research program, I connect psychological concepts like expectations and evaluations to casual sex research, which is often applied or clinical and focuses on health and behavior. Heterosexual casual sex is, as I have argued, an environment that facilitates stronger

barriers to women's equal access to sexual pleasure. Researchers in this domain must therefore attend to the ways that the health and behavioral outcomes they measure are contextualized by what people understand as available to them, which is partially constructed by the socio-political power afforded to the social groups to which people belong (McClelland, 2010; 2011).

With this dissertation, I also sought to put intimate justice and casual sex research into communication with the hopes of further completing a big-picture understanding of women's sexuality, including their attitudes, desires, feelings, and behaviors. Too often I have observed researchers make claims about women's supposed 'natural' sex drives and their 'inherent' orientation towards romance and emotional intimacy and away from bodily or physiological stimuli (Kennair et al., 2018; Townsend, Kline, & Wasserman, 1995). I used intimate justice's theoretical perspectives to organize research wherein I use social-psychological methodologies because I aimed to create additional knowledge that could provide critical qualifications for potential claims made based on empirical measurements. By critical qualifications, I refer to perspectives that include the role of socio-political and cultural institutions (including the explicit, like laws, and the implicit, like norms) in shaping the psychological experiences of individuals. Concepts or phenomena that may truly be understood in isolation from social context are far and few between. A domain as fraught with personal and political meaning as sex/sexuality would benefit immensely from a greater inclusion of social and cultural contexts.

Research on women's orgasms and sexual satisfaction

The studies I have conducted as part of this dissertation join the long list of prior research that operationalizes women's sexual pleasure as their orgasm experience. This contributes to the problematic scientific traditions of forwarding a male-centered model of sexual enjoyment and medicalized understandings of sexual arousal and response (Bancroft et al., 2003; Gavey et al.,

1999; Jackson, 1984; Prause, 2012; Tiefer, 1996; 2010). The studies may also join the long list of prior research that finds empirical evidence of a robust array of positive outcomes of orgasming for women (Laan & Rellini, 2011; Rubin, Conley, Klein, Liu, Lehane, & Dammeyer, 2019; Wetzel et al., 2022), with a caveat. A (albeit underpowered) finding in Study 3 was that woman who orgasmed when not expecting to reported more negative emotions than other women. If this is accurate, then we have additional evidence for contexts where orgasming can lead to unfavorable outcomes (e.g., Chadwick et al., 2019). Scholars including orgasm as a variable of interest in their work may want to adjust their measures or instruments to allow for the reporting of negative orgasm experiences.

Recent research has framed sexual satisfaction as a combination of physical satisfaction, emotional satisfaction, orgasm frequency, and emotions experienced during sex (Fahs & Swank, 2011). If we consider that satisfaction is an evaluative judgment, it is a cognitive and not an affective process (Choma & McKeown, 2019). There is surely a wide canon of literature debating what constitutes an affect or a cognition, but for the purposes of researching sexual satisfaction, it may be helpful to keep in mind that people's evaluative judgments do not always align with their automatic emotional responses. For example, this dissertation's research suggests that if a woman's expectation for orgasm goes unmet, perhaps her initial feelings are those that indicate dissatisfaction (i.e., disappointment, resentment) but her more measured, thought-through evaluation was that she may not have been able to expect better, so she should conclude that she is satisfied.

To this end, research studies that use counterfactual paradigms may help identify the "steps" in the cognitive processes engaged in by women to separate their ideal hopes from their realistic expectations. The more unlikely an event was to occur, the greater people's affective

responses were to the event's occurrence (see Gilovich, Keltner, Chen, & Nisbett, 2016 for a review). A study where women indicate how close they were to orgasming or not orgasming (the opposite of whatever happened) could allow for this sort of comparison.

Research on close relationships and developmental psychology

Almost a century ago, Terman (1938) studied 750 married women and concluded that “the satisfaction derived from sexual intercourse is largely independent of the climactic response” (Wallin, 1960, p. 192). Since then, copious studies have corroborated these results (e.g., Bardwick, 1971; Bell & McClelland, 2018; Nicolson & Burr, 2003), and research has proliferated that examines what other components, aside from orgasmic climax, constitute women's sexual satisfaction (McClelland, 2014; Wesche et al., 2018). If the subject population is not married women or women in long-term relationships, then it is almost assuredly young women (e.g., college-aged or those in emerging adulthood). Plenty of sex and relationship research explores singlehood in women, but our historical population and demographic trends have meant that women engaging in dating and casual sex have tended to be younger and frequently married by the time they leave this early adulthood stage (Schoen & Weinick, 1993). The decreasing marriage and birth rates among Millennial women in the U.S. mean there is a growing population of women in their 30s and older who are not in committed/romantic relationships (Martin, Astone, & Peters, 2014; Stone, 2018). These women may therefore be participating in casual sex and dating practices previously thought to pertain to mostly young people.

I suspect that where this dissertation's findings departed from the hypotheses indicated by existing literature indicate an incongruity between the participant ages in the samples included in the current studies (~30-60 years old) and the ages of those in samples generally used for

theorizing and claim-making in social psychological research on close-relationships or gendered experiences (~18-26; Cooper & Skaggs Sheldon, 2002; DeLamater & Shibley Hyde, 2004). To the extent that younger women are the basis on which scholars produce theories about women's relationship to casual sex, we are lacking a full understanding of how women at different stages in their lives or sexual development. Age is clearly related to experience, so the older a woman is, the more opportunity there was for her to engage in sexual experimentation, development, and learning. Of relevance to the present research, age and experience is also related to orgasm frequency and reliability. We would be mistaken to presume the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors documented in casual sex research with younger participants will directly translate to an older group of women. Perhaps women's expectations for orgasm in casual sex change based on these factors in ways that implicate the criteria used for evaluating their satisfaction.

To this point, 86% of women in a pilot sample of undergraduate students said they would expect not to orgasm if they were to have casual sex with a man (Piemonte & Conley, unpublished data). This is congruent with ethnographic work among college students and other young adults who engage in casual sex (Wade, 2017). Yet the women in Study 3 (with a mean age in their 40s) indicated an expectation of orgasm that exceeded the scale average. I did not expect this occurrence and had planned to analyze a sample of women with relatively low expectations of orgasm. Clearly, the intrapersonal changes that occur across life-stages certainly influence an individual's psychological experiences of sex and sexuality. More research on middle aged women's casual sex attitudes, perceptions, and responses would help close this knowledge gap.

Research on expectations and inequality justification

According to research on expectation ‘disconfirmations,’ people should display increased positive responses to a favorable disconfirmation (when something enjoyable occurs in contrast to expectations) and increased negative responses to an unfavorable disconfirmation (when something undesirable occurs, against expectations; Burgoon, 1993). In Study 3, I found an extremely preliminary suggestion that orgasming when it was not expected is an unfavorable disconfirmation (despite the litany of evidence that orgasming is a rewarding, positive experience). Like many stimuli, orgasm can therefore produce simultaneous enjoyable and unenjoyable experiences (such as greater sexual self-efficacy *and* greater anxiety). Given the multiple layers of meaning afforded to orgasm through many cultural narratives (e.g., the orgasm imperative, feminist critiques of orgasm as representative of pleasure), it is unsurprising that women would report seemingly contradictory responses. Recent research has suggested that a growing sexual script in the U.S. is for women to be sexually skilled performers (Sakaluk et al., 2014; Wade, 2017). This framing could logically lead women to feel proud, competent, and confident if they orgasm, since orgasming would be fulfilling what they perceive as a behavioral expectation, and also frustrated, angry, and confused, if they are resentful of their perceived requirement.

Perhaps the sexual domain provides unique qualities to psychological processes related to evaluating disconfirmations, and consequently, making sense of undesirable outcomes. To understand the components of these post-casual sex processes more thoroughly, it may be wise to design research that investigates the “pipeline” women may follow from lower to greater orgasm frequency/reliability, as this seems to reflect their orgasm expectations. I suspect there are both intra- and inter-personal factors that determine women’s change in orgasm attitudes, behaviors, and expectations. Intrapersonal factors could be stage of sexual development,

individual differences in attitudes or beliefs, or degree of sex education. Interpersonal factors might be the quality of one's sexual partners or the extent to which one compares themselves to their peers or members of other relevant social groups. People use social comparison to make judgments of all types and feeling as though similar others have the same experience, especially in receiving the lesser end of an unequal outcome, can buffer against feelings of discontent with the inequality by encouraging a sense of belonging and reducing the chances of feeling relatively deprived (Crosby, 1982).

Distributive justice is a framework that attends to how individuals determine and assess inequality and injustice (Hawkins, Marshall, & Meiners, 1995; Thompson, 1991). Distributive justice describes two types of social comparisons that people tend to make in order to determine fairness. One type is relational comparisons, in which an individual compares themselves to the other interaction person, who occupies the complementary dynamic to the individual. The other type is referential comparisons, in which individuals compare themselves to other people like them (aka their in-group). This ostensible social information allows people to evaluate whether they have received what others would consider them owed-- to evaluate whether the outcome is unjust (Hegtvedt & Cook, 2000). I am interested in assessing women's responses to casual sex and orgasm more broadly, between those who make comparisons to their male sex partner (i.e., a relational comparison) and those who compare to fellow women (i.e., a referential comparison). Studies from gender inequality in household labor or workplace labor show that referential comparisons can allow women to access, or protect, a sense of entitlement, whereas relational comparisons can invite the exposure of inequality (Carlson, Miller, Sassler, & Hanson, 2016). The reviewed literature would suggest that when it comes to evaluating their orgasmic

outcomes, women are thinking about other women, not her male partner, in determining whether she was cheated out of something.

Limitations and Additional Future Directions

As I have reviewed in the discussion sections in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, this dissertation comes with several methodological and statistical limitations. Generally speaking, I designed research that would allow me to make comparisons between groups of women. These groups were sometimes crudely formed and surely collapsed the variance we might observe using continuous measures as predictors. I had hoped to address this with the continuous orgasm expectation measure in Study 3, but the reduced number of participants and lack of diversity in both orgasm expectations and experiences blocked my opportunity to conduct reliable analyses. Future research should be designed from the start for regression analyses, and even structural equation modeling (given sufficient numbers of participants) because this approach would allow us to also test the inter-relatedness between variables of interest.

Another misstep in the current dissertation is my failure to include a measure of women's orgasm importance following their casual sex encounter in Study 3. Study 2 findings indicated that a woman's orgasm importance would change as a function of unmet expectations—her orgasm importance would decrease if she expected to orgasm but didn't, and it would increase if she orgasmed despite not expecting to. If Study 3 had the appropriate number of participants reporting on a casual sex encounter, including a measure of their orgasm importance post-sex would allow for a direct test of women's real attitudes changing. The use of fictional scenarios and a target character in Study 2, unfortunately, means the findings do not necessarily reflect how women think and feel after personally engaging in a first-time casual sex encounter with a new male partner.

Conclusion

Casual sex is widely considered a “male domain” (Farvid & Braun, 2017). Men are assumed to hold the power or control over the behavioral aspects of the entire situation, from initiation to what activities occur to the closeness of the relationship afterward (Moran & Lee, 2014). It is wholly unsurprising, then, that women show less enjoyment, less interest, and greater disappointment with the practice or experience. Changing sexual scripts (i.e., beliefs, attitudes, and norms and consequently expectations and behavioral influences) can reduce gender inequality in the sexual realm and increase opportunities for sexual satisfaction, pleasure, safety, and well-being (Masters et al., 2012; Ueda, Mercer, Ghaznavi, & Herbenick, 2020). Sexual well-being is, after all, considered a human right by the World Association for Sexual Health (2014), and has been linked to positive affect, hope, personal growth, and overall improved health (Banerjee & Rao, 2020; de Oliveira & Carvalho, 2021). But, as argued by Bonell and colleagues (2022), when the denial and devaluation of women’s sexual desires or preferences is regular and normative, the class of people we call ‘women’ experience decreased autonomy. Decreased bodily autonomy is a critical component of group-based oppression, and even though access to sexual pleasure is nowhere near as life-threatening as access to sexual health care, women’s freedom *to* do or access something is just as much a part of their pursuits of justice and equity as their freedom *from* doing or receiving something (Fahs, 2014).

Among women, however, there is further unequal access to sexual pleasure and orgasms. Women who are younger, non-white, less educated, and poorer all report worse sexual experiences, including both the boring or lackluster, and the violent or harmful (Braun et al., 2003; Heredia & Rider, 2020; Jackson & Scott, 2007). These are also the same women who are less likely to engage in casual sex (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013; Fahs & Swank, 2011;

Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). With that understanding, the pursuit of positive sexual experiences and of gender equality in sexual pleasure must not center the sex lives of those privileged enough to pursue casual sex safely and securely. Fortunately, several bodies of literature already focus on the umbrella concept of casual sex, including the various forms sex may take outside of marriage or long-term relationships. Researchers in these domains have produced substantial knowledge about people's experiences with, for example, friends-with-benefits, dating or hookup apps, and under-represented forms of pleasure and enjoyment (Wesche et al., 2018).

Queer and feminist scholars have also thoughtfully engaged with research on casual sex and on women's sexual pleasure, and their contributions should travel into health and psychological work more frequently. For example, Chadwick, Francisco, and van Anders (2019) posit that queer notions of sexual pleasure include creativity, empowerment, egalitarianism, and non-orgasmic physical sensations. Any number of research questions could focus on unconventional or undertheorized – but still positive or favorable – components of casual sex. As one example, exploratory analyses from Study 3 indicate that women who orgasmed despite not expecting to reported greater agreement with items such as “I learned about myself sexually” and “I feel positively towards my body.” Even though these women also reported higher scores of negative emotions than others in the study, they also seem to have experienced positive intrapersonal outcomes. Perhaps it is the case that emotions we label negative (e.g., anxiety, frustration, confusion) are felt in association with changes to sexual cognitions.

Casual sex is – and will likely continue to be – a primary avenue of American adults' sexual experiences. Because casual sex is also a context where gender equality and women's access to sexual pleasure are reduced, it is imperative to approach these topics with critical

standpoints, inclusive of the connections between structural, or socio-political marginalization and our own intimate lives. This dissertation is my current contribution to scholarship that seeks to support people's lived experiences with safe and healthy close and interpersonal relations.

Tables

Table 1: Study 1a Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Experimental Group

Outcome	Relationally Fulfilling <i>n</i> = 130 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Relationally Unfulfilling <i>n</i> = 128 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Physically Fulfilling (orgasm) <i>n</i> = 127 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Physically Unfulfilling (no orgasm) <i>n</i> = 131 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Satisfaction	4.41 (1.00)	3.31 (1.08)	4.57 (0.84)	3.18 (1.04)
Positive emotions	3.92 (1.16)	3.17 (1.02)	4.14 (0.98)	2.98 (1.02)
Sex again	4.73 (0.97)	3.66 (1.32)	4.73 (0.98)	3.69 (1.32)
Negative emotions	2.15 (0.96)	3.14 (1.07)	2.20 (0.98)	3.07 (1.10)
Disappointment	2.73 (1.58)	4.17 (1.36)	2.61 (1.43)	4.26 (1.42)
Resentment	2.14 (1.04)	3.65 (1.12)	2.44 (1.17)	3.32 (1.31)

Table 2: Study 1 Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Cell

Affiliative / Orgasm		Affiliative / No orgasm	
<i>n</i> = 65		<i>n</i> = 65	
Satisfaction	5.04	Satisfaction	3.79
Positive emotions	4.52	Positive emotions	3.32
Sex again	5.20	Sex again	4.29
Negative emotions	1.72	Negative emotions	2.59
Disappointment	1.74	Disappointment	3.72
Resentment	1.69	Resentment	2.58
Unaffiliative / Orgasm		Unaffiliative / No orgasm	
<i>n</i> = 62		<i>n</i> = 66	
Satisfaction	4.08	Satisfaction	2.59
Positive emotions	3.74	Positive emotions	2.63
Sex again	4.24	Sex again	3.11
Negative emotions	2.71	Negative emotions	3.54
Disappointment	3.52	Disappointment	4.79
Resentment	3.23	Resentment	4.05

Table 3: Study 1a Analysis of Variance Models for Positive Outcomes

Outcome	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Satisfaction					
Vanessa's orgasm importance	3.06	1	5.08 [^]	.025	.020
Vignette realism	0.10	1	0.17	.678	.001
Physical fulfillment	103.12	1	171.46**	<.001	.405
Relational fulfillment	64.94	1	107.99**	<.001	.300
Physical X Relational fulfillment	0.56	1	0.93	.337	.004
Positive Emotions					
Vanessa's orgasm importance	1.92	1	2.23	.137	.009
Vignette realism	0.49	1	0.57	.453	.002
Physical fulfillment	74.86	1	86.61**	<.001	.256
Relational fulfillment	30.65	1	35.45**	<.001	.123
Physical X Relational fulfillment	0.30	1	0.35	.557	.001
Sex Again					
Orgasm frequency	2.73	1	2.63	.106	.011
Vanessa's orgasm importance	7.77	1	7.49*	.007	.030
Vignette realism	0.25	1	0.24	.625	.001
Physical fulfillment	61.87	1	59.68**	<.001	.197
Relational fulfillment	57.69	1	55.65**	<.001	.186
Physical X Relational fulfillment	0.47	1	0.46	.500	.002

[^] $p < .05$ * $p \leq .01$ ** $p \leq .001$

Table 4: Study 1a Analysis of Variance Models for Negative Outcomes

Outcome	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Negative Emotions					
Perceived stigma	10.94	1	13.83**	<.001	.052
Vanessa's orgasm importance	6.77	1	8.56*	.004	.033
Vignette realism	3.35	1	4.24^	.041	.017
Physical fulfillment	57.63	1	72.85**	<.001	.225
Relational fulfillment	51.16	1	64.66**	<.001	.205
Physical X Relational fulfillment	0.59	1	0.75	.387	.003
Disappointed					
Vanessa's orgasm importance	22.67	1	16.07**	<.001	.060
Vignette realism	0.78	1	0.55	.457	.002
Physical fulfillment	152.83	1	108.35**	<.001	.301
Relational fulfillment	99.23	1	70.35**	<.001	.218
Physical X Relational fulfillment	10.98	1	7.78*	.006	.030
Resentment					
Vignette realism	0.12	1	0.12	.727	.000
Physical fulfillment	37.98	1	38.25**	<.001	.131
Relational fulfillment	141.24	1	142.24**	<.001	.360
Physical X Relational fulfillment	0.07	1	0.08	.785	.000
^ $p < .05$ * $p \leq .01$ ** $p \leq .001$					

Table 5: Study 1b Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Experimental Group

Outcome	Relationally fulfilling <i>n</i> = 124 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Relationally unfulfilling <i>n</i> = 114 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Physically fulfilling <i>n</i> = 120 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Physically unfulfilling <i>n</i> = 118 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Satisfaction	4.18 (1.37)	3.44 (1.34)	4.89 (0.75)	2.74 (1.02)
Positive emotions	3.82 (1.26)	3.30 (1.10)	4.25 (0.86)	2.77 (0.97)
Sex again	4.42 (1.33)	3.51 (1.35)	4.83 (0.92)	3.13 (1.31)
Negative emotions	2.40 (1.25)	2.96 (1.15)	1.90 (0.94)	3.45 (0.98)
Disappointment	3.08 (1.86)	3.94 (1.48)	2.23 (1.27)	4.77 (1.09)
Resentment	2.30 (1.21)	3.17 (1.36)	1.61 (0.88)	3.33 (1.25)

Table 6: Study 1b Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Condition

Responsive / Orgasm		Responsive / No orgasm	
<i>n</i> = 64		<i>n</i> = 60	
Satisfaction	5.23	Satisfaction	3.05
Positive emotions	4.66	Positive emotions	2.93
Sex again	5.27	Sex again	3.52
Negative emotions	1.58	Negative emotions	3.28
Disappointment	1.63	Disappointment	4.63
Resentment	1.61	Resentment	3.03
Unresponsive / Orgasm		Unresponsive / No orgasm	
<i>n</i> = 56		<i>n</i> = 58	
Satisfaction	4.50	Satisfaction	2.41
Positive emotions	4.00	Positive emotions	2.61
Sex again	4.32	Sex again	2.72
Negative emotions	2.26	Negative emotions	3.64
Disappointment	2.93	Disappointment	4.91
Resentment	2.68	Resentment	3.64

Table 7: Study 1b Analysis of Variance Models for Positive Outcomes

Outcome	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Satisfaction					
Perceived stigma	6.84	1	10.43**	.001	.043
Vignette realism	0.72	1	1.10	.295	.005
Physical fulfillment	227.34	1	346.62**	.001	.599
Relational fulfillment	30.01	1	45.76**	.001	.165
Physical X Relational fulfillment	0.23	1	0.35	.556	.001
Positive Emotions					
Perceived stigma	6.46	1	8.49*	.004	.035
Vignette realism	0.06	1	0.08	.776	.000
Vanessa's orgasm importance	0.27	1	0.35	.553	.002
Physical fulfillment	104.38	1	137.20**	.001	.373
Relational fulfillment	14.94	1	19.64**	.001	.078
Physical X Relational fulfillment	1.82	1	2.40	.123	.010
Sex Again					
Perceived stigma	8.93	1	8.62*	.004	.036
Vignette realism	0.82	1	0.79	.374	.003
Similar to other women	4.31	1	4.16^	.042	.018
Physical fulfillment	128.66	1	124.30**	.001	.350
Relational fulfillment	51.47	1	49.72**	.001	.177
Physical X Relational fulfillment	0.91	1	0.88	.350	.004
^ $p < .05$ * $p \leq .01$ ** $p \leq .001$					

Table 8: Study 1b Analysis of Variance Models for Negative Outcomes

Outcome	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Negative Emotions					
Perceived stigma	21.21	1	27.90**	.001	.107
Vignette realism	1.32	1	1.73	.189	.007
Physical fulfillment	111.09	1	146.13**	.001	.386
Relational fulfillment	18.64	1	24.42**	.001	.096
Physical X Relational fulfillment	2.03	1	2.67	.103	.011
Disappointment					
Perceived stigma	13.54	1	11.93**	.001	.049
Vignette realism	0.46	1	0.40	.527	.002
Physical fulfillment	287.83	1	253.48**	.001	.522
Relational fulfillment	38.80	1	34.17**	.001	.128
Physical X Relational fulfillment	16.12	1	14.19**	.001	.058
Resentment					
Perceived stigma	8.44	1	6.96*	.009	.029
Similar to other women	6.59	1	5.44^	.021	.023
Physical fulfillment	67.02	1	55.27**	.001	.192
Relational fulfillment	47.78	1	39.40**	.001	.145
Physical X Relational fulfillment	4.62	1	3.81	.052	.016
^ $p < .05$ * $p \leq .01$ ** $p \leq .001$					

Table 9: Study 2a Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Condition

Outcome	Orgasm <i>n</i> = 108 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	No orgasm <i>n</i> = 111 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Met expectations <i>n</i> = 115 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Unmet expectations <i>n</i> = 104 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Satisfaction	4.95 (0.60)	3.24 (0.86)	4.02 (1.00)	4.16 (1.26)
Positive emotions	4.50 (0.84)	3.04 (0.87)	3.66 (1.03)	3.87 (1.23)
Sex again	5.15 (0.80)	3.33 (1.32)	4.30 (1.24)	4.14 (1.59)
Negative emotions	1.81 (0.78)	2.91 (0.93)	2.32 (1.02)	2.42 (1.03)
Disappointment	1.74 (1.02)	3.95 (1.42)	2.80 (1.48)	2.93 (1.85)
Resentment	1.73 (0.79)	3.05 (1.31)	2.30 (1.26)	2.50 (1.28)

Table 10: Study 2a Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Experimental Group

Orgasm + Met expectations	<i>n</i> = 54 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Orgasm + Unmet expectations	<i>n</i> = 54 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Satisfaction	4.81 (0.55)	Satisfaction	5.09 (0.62)
Positive emotions	4.33 (0.73)	Positive emotions	4.67 (0.92)
Sex again	5.07 (0.72)	Sex again	5.22 (0.86)
Negative emotions	1.84 (0.95)	Negative emotions	1.77 (0.58)
Disappointment	1.85 (1.04)	Disappointment	1.64 (1.00)
Resentment	1.78 (0.90)	Resentment	1.69 (0.67)
No orgasm + Met expectations	<i>n</i> = 61 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	No orgasm + Unmet expectations	<i>n</i> = 50 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Satisfaction	3.32 (0.77)	Satisfaction	3.15 (0.97)
Positive emotions	3.07 (0.88)	Positive emotions	3.00 (0.87)
Sex again	3.62 (1.21)	Sex again	2.98 (1.36)
Negative emotions	2.74 (0.89)	Negative emotions	3.12 (0.94)
Disappointment	3.64 (1.30)	Disappointment	4.34 (1.48)
Resentment	2.77 (1.35)	Resentment	3.38 (1.19)

Table 11: Study 2a ANOVA Models for Positive (Favorable) Dependent Variables

Outcome	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Satisfaction					
Vanessa's Orgasm Importance	0.48	1	0.89	.347	.004
Orgasm Condition	135.23	1	248.61**	≤.001	.537
Expectations Condition	0.08	1	0.15	.701	.001
Orgasm X Expectations	3.13	1	5.75^	.017	.026
Positive Emotions					
Vanessa's Orgasm Importance	1.14	1	1.56	.213	.007
Orgasm Condition	96.79	1	132.93**	≤.001	.383
Expectations Condition	0.62	1	0.86	.356	.004
Orgasm X Expectations	3.35	1	4.60^	.033	.021
Sex Again					
Orgasm Condition	185.77	1	162.13**	≤.001	.430
Expectations Condition	3.33	1	2.91	.089	.013
Orgasm X Expectations	8.52	1	7.44*	.007	.033

^ $p < .05$ * $p \leq .01$ ** $p \leq .001$

Table 12: Study 2a ANOVA Models for Negative (Unfavorable) Dependent Variables

Outcome	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Negative Emotions					
Orgasm Condition	68.98	1	94.65**	≤.001	.306
Expectations Condition	1.42	1	1.95	.164	.009
Orgasm X Expectations	2.75	1	3.77	.053	.017
Disappointment					
Feminist Identity	6.21	1	4.24^	.041	.020
Orgasm Condition	266.18	1	181.68**	≤.001	.460
Expectations Condition	3.65	1	2.49	.116	.012
Orgasm X Expectations	9.71	1	6.63^	.011	.030
Resentment					
Perceived Stigma	6.53	1	5.84^	.016	.027
Orgasm Condition	99.25	1	88.86**	≤.001	.293
Expectations Condition	3.93	1	3.51	.062	.016
Orgasm X Expectations	5.02	1	4.50^	.035	.021
^ <i>p</i> < .05 * <i>p</i> ≤ .01 ** <i>p</i> ≤ .001					

Table 13: Study 2a Mean Scores for Vanessa's Orgasm Importance at Time 2

Low Orgasm Anticipation <i>n</i> = 115 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	High Orgasm Anticipation <i>n</i> = 104 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Orgasm <i>n</i> = 108 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	No Orgasm <i>n</i> = 111 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
3.29 (1.42)	4.63 (0.93)	4.38 (1.14)	3.49 (1.46)

Scale is from 1- 6

Table 14: Study 2a ANOVA Model for Vanessa's Orgasm Importance (VOI) at Time 2

VOI at Time 2	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Orgasm Anticipation	92.45	1	73.62**	$\leq .001$.255
Orgasm Outcome	35.49	1	28.26**	$\leq .001$.116
Anticipation X Outcome	10.18	1	8.11*	.005	.036

$\wedge p < .05$ * $p \leq .01$ ** $p \leq .001$

Table 15: Study 2a Mean Scores for Vanessa’s Change in Orgasm Importance

Orgasm Condition	Expectations Condition	<i>N</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
No orgasm	Unmet	50	-0.04 (0.78)
	Met	61	0.20 (1.08)
	Total	111	0.09 (0.96)
Orgasm	Unmet	54	1.46 (1.06)
	Met	54	0.20 (0.66)
	Total	108	0.83 (1.08)
Total	Unmet	104	0.74 (1.20)
	Met	115	0.20 (0.90)
	Total	219	0.46 (1.01)

Table 16: Study 2a ANOVA Model for Vanessa's Change in Orgasm Importance

Change in Orgasm Importance	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Orgasm Condition	31.05	1	36.73**	≤.001	.146
Expectations Condition	14.24	1	16.85**	≤.001	.073
Orgasm X Expectations	30.48	1	36.05**	≤.001	.144

$\wedge p < .05$ $*p \leq .01$ $**p \leq .001$

Table 17: Study 2b Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Condition

Outcome	Orgasm <i>n</i> = 88 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	No orgasm <i>n</i> = 83 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Met expectations <i>n</i> = 84 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Unmet expectations <i>n</i> = 87 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Satisfaction	5.15 (0.63)	3.19 (1.00)	4.32 (1.12)	4.09 (1.42)
Positive emotions	4.62 (0.90)	3.10 (1.08)	4.02 (1.12)	3.75 (1.26)
Sex again	5.20 (0.75)	3.22 (1.37)	4.45 (1.16)	4.03 (1.72)
Negative emotions	1.67 (0.80)	3.01 (1.26)	2.00 (1.01)	2.63 (1.37)
Disappointment	1.51 (0.87)	4.06 (1.49)	2.39 (1.41)	3.09 (2.00)
Resentment	1.60 (1.01)	2.31 (1.24)	1.74 (0.89)	2.15 (1.38)

Table 18: Study 2b Outcome Variable Mean Scores by Experimental Group

Orgasm + Met expectations	<i>n</i> = 42 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Orgasm + Unmet expectations	<i>n</i> = 46 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Satisfaction	5.09 (0.62)	Satisfaction	5.21 (0.64)
Positive emotions	4.66 (0.83)	Positive emotions	4.59 (0.96)
Sex again	5.07 (0.78)	Sex again	5.33 (0.70)
Negative emotions	1.59 (0.71)	Negative emotions	1.75 (0.88)
Disappointment	1.48 (0.67)	Disappointment	1.54 (1.03)
Resentment	1.64 (0.93)	Resentment	1.57 (1.09)
No orgasm + Met expectations	<i>n</i> = 42 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	No orgasm + Unmet expectations	<i>n</i> = 41 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Satisfaction	3.55 (0.96)	Satisfaction	2.83 (0.92)
Positive emotions	3.38 (1.00)	Positive emotions	2.81 (1.09)
Sex again	3.83 (1.15)	Sex again	2.59 (1.30)
Negative emotions	2.41 (1.10)	Negative emotions	3.61 (1.13)
Disappointment	3.31 (1.37)	Disappointment	4.83 (1.20)
Resentment	1.83 (0.85)	Resentment	2.80 (1.38)

Table 19: Study 2b ANOVA Models for Positive (Favorable) Dependent Variables

Outcome	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Satisfaction					
Vanessa's Orgasm Importance	0.17	1	0.27	.604	.002
Orgasm Condition	131.75	1	207.18**	≤.001	.555
Expectations Condition	3.15	1	4.96^	.027	.029
Orgasm X Expectations	3.24	1	5.09^	.025	.030
Positive Emotions					
Vanessa's Orgasm Importance	0.82	1	0.87	.353	.005
Orgasm Condition	70.13	1	73.72**	≤.001	.308
Expectations Condition	5.07	1	5.33^	.022	.031
Orgasm X Expectations	3.31	1	3.48	.064	.021
Sex Again					
Orgasm Condition	168.87	1	167.19**	≤.001	.500
Expectations Condition	10.53	1	10.42*	.002	.059
Orgasm X Expectations	24.09	1	23.85**	≤.001	.125
^ <i>p</i> < .05 * <i>p</i> ≤ .01 ** <i>p</i> ≤ .001					

Table 20: Study 2b ANOVA Models for Negative (Unfavorable) Dependent Variables

Outcome	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Negative Emotions					
Vignette Realism	0.10	1	0.11	.742	.001
Orgasm Condition	72.49	1	76.75**	≤.001	.316
Expectations Condition	19.29	1	20.42**	≤.001	.110
Orgasm X Expectations	11.16	1	11.82**	≤.001	.066
Disappointment					
Vignette Realism	0.68	1	0.56	.455	.003
Orgasm Condition	261.83	1	217.33**	≤.001	.567
Expectations Condition	25.72	1	21.35**	≤.001	.114
Orgasm X Expectations	22.06	1	18.31**	≤.001	.099
Resentment					
Perceived Stigma	7.89	1	7.00*	.009	.040
Orgasm Condition	23.89	1	21.17**	≤.001	.113
Expectations Condition	7.77	1	6.89*	.009	.040
Orgasm X Expectations	10.68	1	9.46*	.002	.054
^ <i>p</i> < .05 * <i>p</i> ≤ .01 ** <i>p</i> ≤ .001					

Table 21: Study 2b Mean Scores for Vanessa’s Orgasm Importance (VOI) at Time 2

Low Orgasm Anticipation <i>n</i> = 88 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	High Orgasm Anticipation <i>n</i> = 83 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Orgasm <i>n</i> = 88 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	No Orgasm <i>n</i> = 83 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
2.98 (1.60)	4.87 (0.92)	4.47 (1.29)	3.29 (1.72)

Scale is from 1- 6

Table 22: Study 2b ANOVA Model for Vanessa's Orgasm Importance (VOI) at Time 2

VOI at Time 2	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Orgasm Anticipation	158.43	1	123.38**	$\leq .001$.425
Orgasm Outcome	60.63	1	47.22**	$\leq .001$.220
Anticipation X Outcome	14.67	1	11.43**	$\leq .001$.064

$\wedge p < .05$ $*p \leq .01$ $**p \leq .001$

Table 23: Study 2b Mean Scores for Vanessa’s Change in Orgasm Importance

Orgasm Condition	Expectations Condition	<i>N</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
No orgasm	Unmet	41	-0.42 (1.05)
	Met	42	-0.05 (0.54)
	Total	83	-0.23 (0.85)
Orgasm	Unmet	46	1.76 (1.42)
	Met	42	0.10 (0.43)
	Total	88	0.97 (1.35)
Total	Unmet	87	0.74 (1.66)
	Met	84	0.02 (0.49)
	Total	171	0.39 (1.28)

Table 24: Study 2b ANOVA Model for Vanessa's Change in Orgasm Importance

Change in Orgasm Importance	<i>MS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Orgasm Condition	57.33	1	62.24	≤.001	.271
Expectations Condition	17.99	1	19.53	≤.001	.105
Orgasm X Expectations	44.07	1	47.84	≤.001	.223

$\wedge p < .05$ $*p \leq .01$ $**p \leq .001$

Table 25: Study 3 Post-sexual Encounter Outcomes: Regression Analyses

Outcome	β	SE	t	p	95% CI
Sexual Satisfaction					
Expectation for orgasm	.018	.131	.089	.929	-.256, .280
Orgasm outcome	.148	.403	.745	.463	-.526, 1.126
Expectation X Orgasm	.207	.256	1.069	.295	-.251, .798
Pleasure Efficacy					
Expectation for orgasm	.408	.140	2.411	.023	.050, .625
Orgasm outcome	.194	.423	1.087	.287	-.410, 1.329
Expectation X Orgasm	-.301	.281	-1.720	.097	-1.063, .094
Orgasm Gap Justification					
Expectation for orgasm	-.047	.101	-.236	.815	-.231, .184
Orgasm outcome	-.017	.305	-.082	.935	-.652, .602
Expectation X Orgasm	-.140	.203	-.682	.501	-.555, .279
Cognitive Frequency					
Expectation for orgasm	-.300	.116	-1.569	.128	-.421, .056
Orgasm outcome	.285	.358	1.469	.153	-.290, 1.262
Expectation X Orgasm	-.006	.228	-.032	.975	-.475, .460
Positive Emotions					
Expectation for orgasm	.037	.212	.200	.843	-.393, .477
Orgasm outcome	.260	.639	1.324	.197	-.467, 2.159
Expectation X Orgasm	.198	.425	1.034	.311	-.435, 1.314
Negative Emotions					
Expectation for orgasm	-.460	.080	-2.778	.010	-.389, -.058
Orgasm outcome	.421	.243	2.406	.024	.085, 1.084
Expectation X Orgasm	-.293	.162	-1.708	.100	-.609, .056
“This encounter met or exceeded my expectations”					
Expectation for orgasm	-.023	.196	-.127	.900	-.428, .379
Orgasm outcome	.349	.593	1.795	.084	-.154, 2.282
Expectation X Orgasm	.115	.395	.605	.550	-.572, 1.050

$\wedge p < .05$ * $p \leq .01$ ** $p \leq .001$

Appendices

Appendix A

Study 1 Vignettes

	Physically fulfilling	Physically unfulfilling
Relationally fulfilling	<p>Vanessa recently met a man named Isaac.</p> <p>They are about to have sex for the first time.</p> <p>During their sexual encounter, Vanessa tells Isaac she loves receiving oral sex.</p> <p>Then, Isaac performs oral sex on Vanessa.</p> <p>Vanessa orgasms during this encounter.</p>	<p>Vanessa recently met a man named Isaac.</p> <p>They are about to have sex for the first time.</p> <p>During their sexual encounter, Vanessa tells Isaac she loves receiving oral sex.</p> <p>Then, Isaac performs oral sex on Vanessa.</p> <p>Vanessa does not orgasm during this encounter.</p>
Relationally unfulfilling	<p>Vanessa recently met a man named Isaac.</p> <p>They are about to have sex for the first time.</p> <p>During their sexual encounter, Vanessa tells Isaac she loves receiving oral sex.</p> <p>However, Isaac does not perform oral sex on Vanessa.</p> <p>Vanessa orgasms during this encounter.</p>	<p>Vanessa recently met a man named Isaac.</p> <p>They are about to have sex for the first time.</p> <p>During their sexual encounter, Vanessa tells Isaac she loves receiving oral sex.</p> <p>However, Isaac does not perform oral sex on Vanessa.</p> <p>Vanessa does not orgasm during this encounter.</p>

Appendix B

Study 2 Vignettes

	Orgasm	No orgasm
Met expectation	<p>Vanessa, a single woman living in the U.S., often has casual sex.</p> <p>Vanessa usually orgasms during these encounters.</p> <p>Tonight, Vanessa is getting ready to have casual sex with a man she recently met named Isaac.</p> <p>Vanessa and Isaac had sex. Isaac had an orgasm.</p> <p>Vanessa also had an orgasm.</p>	<p>Vanessa, a single woman living in the U.S., often has casual sex.</p> <p>Vanessa usually does NOT orgasm during these encounters.</p> <p>Tonight, Vanessa is getting ready to have casual sex with a man she recently met named Isaac.</p> <p>Vanessa and Isaac had sex. Isaac had an orgasm.</p> <p>Vanessa did NOT have an orgasm.</p>
Unmet expectation	<p>Vanessa, a single woman living in the U.S., often has casual sex.</p> <p>Vanessa usually does NOT orgasm during these encounters.</p> <p>Tonight, Vanessa is getting ready to have casual sex with a man she recently met named Isaac.</p> <p>Vanessa and Isaac had sex. Isaac had an orgasm.</p> <p>Vanessa also had an orgasm.</p>	<p>Vanessa, a single woman living in the U.S., often has casual sex.</p> <p>Vanessa usually orgasms during these encounters.</p> <p>Tonight, Vanessa is getting ready to have casual sex with a man she recently met named Isaac.</p> <p>Vanessa and Isaac had sex. Isaac had an orgasm.</p> <p>Vanessa did NOT have an orgasm.</p>

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