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**Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation as Moderators in the Relationship
Between Sexual Shame and Attitudes Toward Casual Sexual Behavior**

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Abstract

Norms of sexuality are often described as following inconsistent standards for different types of people, with heterosexual men being afforded the most sexual freedom, specifically in relation to casual sexual behavior. Consequently, women and non-heterosexual individuals may be more likely to experience social consequences if they participate in casual sex. Sexual shame can stem from individual's interpretation of how their sexual behaviors fit (or don't) into the social norms. Casual sexual behavior is increasingly more common and thus the outcomes of endorsing or engaging in this kind of behavior warrant research to address potential psychological consequences. The current study examined the relationship between attitudes toward casual sex and sexual shame, considering gender and sexual orientation as potential moderators of this relationship. Gender and sexual orientation were hypothesized to moderate the relationship between attitudes toward casual sex and sexual shame such that the magnitude of this relationship would be affected by a person's gender and sexual orientation. Participants in this study were 173 students from University of Vermont who completed an online survey. Results were analyzed using moderation analyses, through the PROCESS package for SPSS. The results indicated that gender and sexual orientation were not significant moderators of the relationship between attitudes toward casual sex and sexual shame. However, analysis of simple slopes and ancillary analyses were significant and warrant further consideration. This research necessitates further exploration of attitudes towards sexual behavior and sexual shame to elucidate the role that these variables play in individual development of sexual identity and schemas.

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation as Moderators in the Relationship Between Sexual Shame and Attitudes Toward Casual Sexual Behavior

This study was proposed to research individual's attitudes and emotions in response to their sexual behaviors. The four variables of interest in this study are sexual shame, attitudes toward casual sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation. The main variables in question are sexual shame and attitudes towards casual sexual behavior. Specifically, this study examined the influence of gender identity and sexual orientation as moderating variables on this relationship. In turn, these moderators have the potential to reveal the ways in which identity categorization is related to individual attitudes concerning casual sex. Additionally, this study explored how engaging in casual sex in the current social climate is associated with varying levels of sexual shame depending on an individual's personal identity.

Shame

Shame is commonly defined as a negative emotional experience characterized by a global, negative perception of the self (Velotti, Garofalo, Bottazzi, & Caretti 2017). When an individual has an experience that results in shame, they often report feeling as if a hidden, undesirable version of themselves is being revealed to the greater public (Karlsson & Sjoberg, 2009). The revelation of this undesirable self may lead a person to feel as if their most private inner self has suddenly become exposed, and thus they are forced to face the reality of their deepest desires. It is understood that while shame may be cognitively tied to an action, it is at its core a state of being, a state of existing in the version of oneself that is revealed from the catalyst action (Karlsson & Sjoberg, 2009). While existing in this undesirable version of oneself, the individual is consumed by the idea that this revealed aspect of their person is innately bad, meant to be hidden, and therefore the "shameful" aspect of the individual creates a stain on the person's self-perception, hence the global attribute of shame.

The etymology of shame traces the word back to the Indo-European root *kam/kem* which can be translated as “hiding, concealing, or covering up” (Karlsson & Sjöberg, 2009). The experience of shame where an individual must hide some intrinsic part of themselves has been pervasive for some time. It could be argued that shame as an emotional experience may have some adaptive purpose by inhibiting behavior that was previously experienced as shameful (Velotti et al., 2017). The unfortunate reality is that this potentially adaptive emotion may also be inhibiting normal, natural behaviors, should they occur in a restrictive cultural climate in which the act of shaming is used to maintain oppressive structures of power. Through repeated experiences of shame, individuals may develop a consistent state of negatively evaluating themselves and believing themselves to be globally bad (Velotti et al., 2017).

Frequent experiences of shame may lead to an individual developing what researchers have termed “trait shame”. Trait shame implies stable feelings of inferiority about oneself, feeling an inability to change these feelings of inferiority, and having a strong desire to hide personal flaws (Velotti et al., 2017). Trait shame should be differentiated from “state-based shame”, which scholars describe as shame that is experienced in-the-moment, or in relation to a specific event, situation, behavior, or context (Turner, 2014). The concept of trait shame suggests that shame has the potential to invade many areas of the self, leading the individual to experience shame in an increasingly frequent manner. In turn, shame can have a variety of sources and has been shown to have varying psychological impacts based on the “category” of shame experienced.

Shame has been categorized into characterological shame, behavioral shame, and bodily shame in order to encapsulate the common forms of shame frequently felt across the human experience (Velotti et al., 2017). Characterological shame relates to a person’s identity,

behavioral shame relates to a person's actions, and bodily shame relates to a person's physical body (Velotti et al., 2017). Velotti et al. found that feelings of shame that are specifically related to one's identity (characterological) or one's body (bodily) may be more significantly related to development of internalizing and externalizing psychological symptoms, in comparison with more generalized feelings of shame. This suggests that these types of shame may be important to study in relation to specific behavioral/cognitive outcomes.

The conceptualization of shame has also been quantified by researchers via the development of questionnaires such as the Experience of Shame Scale (Andrews, Qian, & Valentine, 2002). Participants in this study completed a set of questionnaires at the beginning of an 11-week class and again at the end of the class. One of these questionnaires was the Experience of Shame Scale (ESS) consisting of 25-items subdivided into a 3-factor model. The factors are characterological shame, behavioral shame, and bodily shame. Questions in this scale assessed four areas of characterological shame (personal habits, manners with others, the sort of person they are, and personal ability), three areas of behavioral shame (doing something wrong, saying something stupid, failing competitively), and generalized bodily shame. Each factor had questions that assessed an experiential component of shame, a cognitive component of shame, and a behavioral component of shame, in order to assess the ways in which shame was manifesting in each individual. Participants also were assessed for depression symptoms with the SCL-90 at each time of ESS completion (Andrews, Qian, & Valentine, 2002). The ESS and each of its subscales were significantly correlated with measures of depression at both times of assessment (Andrews, Qian, & Valentine, 2002). This study found that characterological and bodily shame made significant, independent contributions to an individual's depressive symptoms, suggesting that different types of shame (characterological and bodily) may

contribute to specific psychopathologies (depression) more significantly than other types of shame (behavioral) (Andrews, Qian, & Valentine, 2002). This suggests that developing so-called trait shame may be indicative of a greater overarching psychological issue. Examining specific areas of shame may also be beneficial for research on the development of depressive disorders.

An important distinction to make in this discussion is the difference between shame, specifically behavioral shame, and guilt. Guilt is understood by researchers and scholars of psychology to be experienced when an individual commits some form of behavioral transgression, specifically a behavior/action that can be corrected (Turner, 2014). Shame on the other hand, occurs when an individual feels that they have failed to meet their own expectations of their ideal self, or identity-related goals (Turner, 2014). This distinction is important as these two self-conscious emotions should be treated as distinct from one another, each having their own individual and clinical ramifications.

Sexual Shame

A specific area of shame that encompasses these three types of shame (characterological, behavioral, and bodily) is sexual shame. Sexual shame is defined as the self-conscious emotion that some people may experience in reaction to a real or imagined sexual scenario and is characterized by feelings of failure and the thought of oneself as globally undesirable or unworthy (Redina, Lopez-Matos, Wang, Pachankis, & Parsons, 2018). The concept of sexual shame takes the overall experience of shame and narrows it to be focused on the experience of this emotion in the realm of sexual orientation, sexual behaviors, opinions concerning sexuality, etc. It may be that this experience of shame, or of being shamed, is an intrinsic step in the development of an individual's understanding of what is public versus private behavior, which is an important socialization process. This socialization process can communicate that one's

sexuality, especially if it is of an uncommon form, is something to hide, something to be ashamed of (Shadbolt, 2009).

Previous research has provided insight on the potential origins and sources of sexual shame. Sexual shame can be positioned in a cultural context in which most aspects of sexuality are not discussed openly, or in other words, allowed access to the social realm (Mollon, 2005). The separation of the sexual self from the public self creates the cognitive perception that sexual desires, behaviors, or fantasies are inherently shameful, something that will inspire disgust, anxiety or embarrassment in others should it be brought into the light (Mollon, 2005). Locating sexual shame in a greater social learning context allows individuals to gain greater understanding about the sources of their sexual shame, which may lie in their learned social norms.

Sexual shame also seems to relate to the development of internalizing (depression, anxiety, and internalized homo-negativity) and externalizing (substance abuse) psychopathologies (Livingston, Bay-Cheng, Hequembourg, Testa, & Downs, 2013; Redina et al., 2019). In Western culture, forces of heteronormativity, purity culture, the idea of the sanctity of marriage, the superiority of men and male sexuality, gender roles, and sexism may all act as social drivers in individual's incidence of experiencing sexual shame (Shadbolt, 2009). Specifically, these social and cultural forces are potential drivers of sexual shame through their impact (conscious or not) on one's interpretation of their own sexual desires and behaviors. If the interpretation of one's sexual feelings and desires is negatively coded, there is this risk for developing greater psychological issues (Rendina et al., 2019, Livingston et al., 2013).

Shame and Sexual Orientation

Contextual factors within society such as those mentioned above privilege certain identities above others. One such factor, heteronormativity, can be described as the cultural

assumption that heterosexuality is the gold standard for defining normal sexual behavior (American Psychological Association Dictionary, 2023). With heterosexuality privileged as the “normal” manifestation of sexual behavior, homosexuality or other forms of sexual identification/orientation will thus be thought of as lesser and be subject to discrimination and stigma. Sexual shame researchers suggest that issues relating to sexual orientation, such as internalized homonegativity, may be key in the development of sexual shame. In one such study, the authors write that internalized homonegativity can be interpreted as a unique manifestation of shame that stems from having a sexual minority identity, in which the sexual minority individual has consistently received messages they are undesirable or unwanted due to their non-heterosexual identity (Cienfuegos-Szalay, Moody, Talan, Grov, Rendina, 2022). Participants in this study were part of a cohort of 985 HIV-negative sexual minority men (identifying as gay, bisexual, or queer) in the U.S. This study utilized the shame subscale of the Sexual Shame and Pride Scale (SSPS; Redina et al., 2019). The results of this study suggested that sexual shame was positively correlated with internalized homonegativity, emotion dysregulation, and sexual compulsivity (Cienfuegos et al., 2022). There was a significant association between the variables of internalized homonegativity and sexual shame. The connection between these two variables suggests that belonging to a sexual minority group, specifically identifying as homosexual, can correlate with greater risk of experiencing sexual shame.

Internalization of social stigma related to one’s sexual orientation/identity can lead to the establishment of a stable, global, shame-based identity. Lesbian women may be at risk for elevated levels of internalized shame than non-lesbian women of a comparable population, suggesting that sexual orientation is an important variable to consider in this area of research (Wells & Hansen, 2003). Research exploring the potential psychological consequences of shame

provides evidence that gay men, lesbians, and bisexual individuals scored significantly higher on scales of internalized shame versus heterosexual individuals (Wells & Hansen, 2003). One potential source of the greater incidence of shame in lesbian people is the internalization of negative sexual stereotypes. If lesbian individuals internalize the idea that being homosexual is inherently shameful and a personal flaw, then they will be at a higher risk for developing a shame-based identity, believing that an intrinsic part of themselves is a source of shame and should therefore be hidden or played down (Wells & Hansen, 2003).

Exploring this idea that lesbian individuals may be at a higher risk for developing a shame-based identity, researchers are arguing that congruence between an individual's private and public life is an important part of developing a *positive* self-identity, defined as identity integration (Wells & Hansen, 2003). There is evidence that the more integrated one's lesbian identity is, the less impact stigma will have on the individual, and thus they can be predicted to experience lower incidence of shame (Wells & Hansen, 2003). This may relate to the idea that shame is partially created through learning that a part of oneself should be hidden from the public view, and therefore is not integrated between an individual's private and public life (Mollen, 2005). Further research concerning the impact of one's sexual orientation on their feelings of shame will be necessary to establish a better understanding of the higher risk associated with sexual minority identities.

Shame and Gender

In addition to sexual orientation becoming a source of shame, gender identity, another personal identifier, is an important variable in exploring incidence of self-conscious emotions like shame. In the context of the research, "self-conscious emotions" refers to shame, pride, guilt, and embarrassment as emotional experiences that inspire some kind of self-awareness or self-

reflection in the individual who experiences them (Else-Quest, Higgins, Allison, & Morton, 2012). A meta-analysis on self-conscious emotion (SCE) research suggested that there are small gender differences in shame and guilt, with women experiencing greater rates of both (Else-Quest et al., 2012). These scholars found that the “emotional domain” in which the shame/guilt was experienced was a significant moderator of gender difference. An emotional domain is simply what the emotion is about, such as one’s perceived physical attractiveness, sexual behavior, relationship to food, and so on. The emotional domains that showed the most significant gender differences for shame and guilt were the body, sex, food/eating, and expressing emotion. (Else-Quest et al., 2012). Female-identified individuals displayed higher rates of shame/guilt for the emotional domains of the body, sex, and food/eating (Else-Quest et al., 2012). Male-identified individuals had higher rates of shame/guilt in the domain of expressing emotion (Else-Quest et al., 2012). These gender differences in the frequency of shame/guilt in relation to specific emotional domains are likely impacted by social norms that dictate what areas of life an individual feels comfortable and confident in (Else-Quest et al., 2012).

Being attentive to the opinions/expectations of one’s greater social environment may dictate the behaviors that individuals choose to participate in based on their anticipation of social rejection and ultimately, experiencing shame. One study exploring the idea that gender differences in shame are impacted by social norms/systems of gender suggested that males who endorse traditional values of masculinity were more likely to have lower levels of anticipated shame/guilt in relation to delinquency (Boeck, Pleysier, & Put, 2018). This suggests that endorsing or being impacted by traditional masculinity may encourage participation in delinquent behavior, such as violence, given that these traditional gendered expectations will

lower the likelihood of the offender experiencing shame (Boeck et al., 2018). Furthermore, perceptions of an individual's peer group's rate of offending have a significant impact on that person's self-evaluation in anticipation of offending. This suggests that anticipated and experienced shame/guilt are likely significantly influenced by one's perceptions of those around them (Boeck et al., 2018). While endorsing traditional gender values may be protective against shame in some situations, it likely also predicts gender differences in experiences of shame. These feelings of shame are dependent on the set of behaviors deemed acceptable for one's assigned or chosen gender identity (Boeck et al., 2018, Else-Quest et al., 2012).

If an individual transgresses these distinct gender norms, they may experience a key element of shame, a so-called "unwanted identity". The term "unwanted identity" has been developed by scholars to describe the experience an individual has when they perceive themselves as possessing a characteristic or behavior that is in opposition to or undermines their ideal sense of self (Ferguson, Eyre, & Ashbaker, 2000). This unwanted identity is not only unwanted by the individual but is perceived to be undesirable to others as well (Ferguson et al., 2000). In some research, women reported greater intensity of shame than men, but only in certain types of situations. The situations in which this greater intensity occurred were ones that inspired this feeling of having an "unwanted identity" (Ferguson et al., 2000). This suggests that women may respond more intensely to situations that inspire shame in which they are cast in an unfavorable light in relation to their gender expectations. Similarly, men reported greater intensity of shame compared to women in situations that were perceived to threaten their adherence/access to traditional masculine identities (Ferguson et al., 2000).

Research concerning gender differences in experiences of shame overarchingly suggests that social norms of gender play a significant role in producing those differences. Individuals

who feel that they are stepping outside the expected boundaries of their gender norms or gender role may be more likely to experience shame. Evidence suggests that, in the domain of sex/sexual behavior, women's boundaries may be much more restrictive (Conley, Ziegler & Moors, 2012; Else-Quest et al., 2012; Farvid, Braun, & Rowney, 2017; Helm, Gondra, & McBride, 2015; Milhausen & Herold, 2001).

Defining Sexual Behavior

Sexuality and engaging in sexual activity, while an arguably universal experience, is not defined the same by everyone. Research concerning definitions of sex suggests that defining what behaviors constitute "having sex" may be ambiguous across all kinds of people (Sewell & Strassberg, 2014). In relevant literature it has been found that some of the most important themes when making the sex/not sex distinction were physical contact with another person, the occurrence of penetration, whether genitals were involved at all, and whether two people's genitals touched (Sewell & Strassberg, 2014). Importantly, there seems to be a very strong social belief that penile-vaginal intercourse counts as "having sex" with almost 100% of participants indicated that this behavior qualified as sex (Sewell & Strassberg, 2014). This data supports the idea that there is a significant influence of heteronormativity in the definition of sexual behavior as well as the idea that sexual behaviors are slotted into a hierarchy of sorts. Due to these heteronormative social standards, differences in defining more ambiguous behaviors as "sex", or as "not sex", may be motivated by the individual's perception of the potential consequences of making such distinctions (Sewell & Strassberg, 2014). These definitional differences, encapsulating a variety of sexual behaviors, have the potential to impact an individual's perception of their own sexual behavior and the emotions it produces.

Definitional differences surrounding sexual behavior and what “counts” as sex may reflect how dominant social norms contribute to experiences of sexual shame, should an individual participate in a behavior that is not a privileged form of “sex”. There is evidence that there may be differences in what men and women would consider to be “sex”, specifically that women were more likely to think of oral-genital stimulation as sex and were also more likely to qualify all varieties of genital stimulation as sex even if they do not achieve orgasm (Bogart, Cecil, Wagstaff, Pinkerton, & Abramson, 2000). Men on the other hand, were less likely to endorse a behavior as sex if they do not achieve orgasm and were more likely to call a behavior sex if they were the recipient of the genital stimulation (Bogart et al., 2000). This indicates that perceptions of “sex” may greatly differ between individuals due to their personal identifiers or social backgrounds and necessitates a variety of definitional possibilities as part of the bigger picture in this research.

Attitudes Toward Sexual Behaviors

Attitudes toward sexual behaviors have been shown to correlate to other elements of sexuality, such as measures of behavior, and thus is a valuable variable to explore in studies of human sexuality. (Blanc Molina, Sayans-Jimenez, Ordonez-Carrasco, & Rojas Tejada, 2018). For example, there is evidence that individuals who hold more permissive attitudes towards sexual behavior will perform a greater variety of sexual behaviors and have a greater number of different sexual partners (Blanc Molina et al., 2018). As there is this known relationship between attitudes towards sexual behavior and actual sexual behavior, this study then asked the question of could this variable of attitudes also be connected to other psychological elements of sexuality? In other words, given that there is evidence of a correlation between attitudes and *behavioral* aspects of sexuality, does this variable “attitudes towards sexual behavior” also relate to

psychological aspects of sexuality, such as sexual shame? As attitudes toward sexual behaviors have been shown to have measurable behavioral correlations, examining the potential correlation between attitudes towards sexual behavior and psychological experiences such as self-conscious emotion is a rational next step in exploring the creation of individual's sexual identity.

Attitudes Toward Sexual Behaviors – Gender Difference

There has been previous research that suggests that there are gender differences in attitudes towards sexual behavior. One study, examining the role of the so-called theory of the sexual double standard, provides evidence of differing gendered attitudes towards casual sexual behavior, or differing perceptions of the cultural standards of sexual behavior. This study analyzed the prevalence the sexual double standard through assessing people aged 18 to 28 on their attitudes and behaviors regarding the sexual double standard (Milhausen & Herold, 2001). In this study, the sexual double standard is defined as a set of social/cultural beliefs in which men have greater sexual freedom and thus are permitted to engage in more casual sexual affairs, with a greater number of partners, while women are expected to restrict their sexual behavior to more committed, monogamous relationships (Milhausen & Herold, 2001).

This study also considers the idea of the reverse double standard, which is the opposite of the sexual double standard, with women being permitted greater sexual freedom. Participants in this study were heterosexual and unmarried, recruited from two locations, university classrooms and well-known "dating bars", both in Canada. Researchers utilized two focus groups, one all men, one all women, to explore topic areas for measuring the sexual double standard. Results from this study indicated that: males had significantly more permissive attitudes towards sexual behavior than females, females were significantly more likely to perceive a double standard than men, twice as many females believed that men had greater sexual freedom than women, and the

majority of males and females agreed that women who have had many previous sexual partners are judged more harshly by other people than men who have had many previous sexual partners (Milhausen & Herold, 2001). Also, the female participants were more likely to agree that social/cultural norms were more permissive for men on a variety of sexual behaviors such as masturbation, having multiple partners, having a younger age of first intercourse, and engaging in casual sexual relations (Milhausen & Herold, 2001). This study provides an in-depth example of gender may dictate differences in attitudes toward sexual behavior.

Attitudes toward casual sexual behaviors may have important indications for greater society as some researchers report that between 60 and 80 percent of North American college students have had some kind of casual sexual experience (Garcia, 2013). The pervasiveness of casual sexual behavior allows it to be an area in which individual's relationships with the culture and social expectations of sex can be explored. There is evidence that there are gender differences in participation in hook-up culture, with men being more likely than women to report having engaged in casual sexual behavior such as oral sex or vaginal intercourse (Conley, Ziegler & Moors, 2012; Helm, Gondra, & McBride, 2015). This is possibly due to women anticipating greater sexual stigma and overall being perceived as less intelligent, more promiscuous, and more sexually desperate should they engage in casual sex (Conley, Ziegler & Moors, 2012; Helm, Gondra, & McBride, 2015).

The sexual landscape currently occupied by heterosexual women, and more generally women who desire sex with men, is one that is fraught with contradictions. While women are often encouraged to engage in casual sex and explore their sexuality in this current sexual climate, they are also constantly reminded of the delicate balance that they must uphold, being sexually free – but never crossing the line into too sexual. This is indicative of a social culture in

which female sexuality is much more intensely and consistently monitored than male sexuality (Farvid et al., 2017). This policing of female sexuality is greatly impacted by privileging heterosexual, cisgendered, monogamous relationships as the “normal” or “proper” site for sexual relations (Farvid et al., 2017). Research suggests that while women may hold the personal view that casual sex is acceptable, they seem to anticipate a broader sociocultural view that casual sex is less acceptable for women than it is for men (Farvid et al., 2017). The overarching fear expressed by some women is that they will develop a negative sexual reputation (Farvid et al., 2017). So, while a woman may personally feel good about her choice to engage in casual sex, the threat of social judgment still looms. Social and cultural hierarchies have created an environment in which engaging in casual sex is a choice fraught with judgement and shame, which varies based upon an individual’s personal identity.

Conclusion

The component of sexual shame that is external – fear of judgment from others, is potentially exacerbated by the attitudinal rejection of casual sexual affairs from both male and female individuals (Milhausen & Herold, 2001, Helm, Gondra, & McBride, 2015, Conley, Ziegler & Moors, 2012). With widely enforced sexual cultural norms, evidence of people making negative judgments surrounding casual sex are not difficult to find. The cultural phenomenon of negative attitudes towards casual sex creates the potential for people to experience shame related to their sexual behaviors if those behaviors fall into a category that is negatively coded. The shame produced by participating in stigmatized behaviors likely relates to the individual’s anticipation of being rejected or judged in comparison to hegemonic sexual norms. In addition to the threat of being othered, shame impacts individual’s global view of themselves. Based on previous research concerning differing gender expectations related to sexuality and the impact of

one's sexual orientation on their likelihood of experiencing sexual shame, I have created my hypotheses for the potential results of this study.

In this thesis, I am predicting that women's attitudes towards sexual behavior with a casual partner will be negatively correlated with their level of sexual shame. In comparison, I am predicting there will be a lower effect size for men for this relationship between attitudes towards casual sexual behavior and sexual shame. Furthermore, I hypothesize that the gender-moderated relationship between attitudes about casual sexual behavior and sexual shame will be in turn moderated by sexual orientation. More specifically, that individuals who identify as non-heterosexual will show a stronger negative correlation in the relationship between their attitudes towards sexual behavior and their level of sexual shame than individuals who identify as heterosexual.

Methodology

Participants

A total of 173 individuals attending the University of Vermont, in the psychological science department, completed this study. Of the participants who completed the study, 144 were female identified and 29 were male identified. The mean age for the female participants was 19.70 (SD = 1.23, range = 18-26). The mean age for the male participants was 20.79 (SD = 3.69, range = 18-39). The race distribution for female participants was 90.4% white, 2.1% Asian American/Pacific Islander, and 5.5% mixed race, with race data missing for 2.1% of the female participants. The race distribution for male participants was 82.8% white, 13.8% Asian American/Pacific Islander, 3.4% other/NA. For the female participant's relationship status data, 63.7% were single, 32.9% were in a monogamous relationship, 0.7% in a polyamorous

relationship, 1.4% marked “other”, and 1.4% NA. For the male participant’s relationship status data, 44.8% were single, 44.8% were in a monogamous relationship, and 10.3% marked “other”.

Due to a data collection error, we were only able to get sexual orientation data for 49 participants. Of these 49 participants, 44 were female identified and 5 were male identified. Of the female identified participants, 36% identified as heterosexual and 63% identified as non-heterosexual. Of the male identified participants, 40% identified as heterosexual and 60% identified as non-heterosexual. The 60% of men who identified as non-heterosexual in this reduced sample only equates to 3 total participants, and of those 3 participants only 1 person completed all necessary measures, therefore making it impossible for us to run any kind of analysis using the sexual orientation data for men. Therefore, we will only evaluate sexual orientation as a moderator for female participants.

Measures

This study utilized the sexual shame and pride scale (SSPS) (Redina, Lopez-Matos, Wang, Pachankis, & Parsons, 2018). The SSPS is comprised of 16 items, with two subscales. The two subscales were designed to each have eight items to measure feelings of either sexual shame or sexual pride. This scale uses a Likert scale of 1 to 6, with 1 being “Not like me at all” and 6 being “Exactly like me”. Researchers found good reliability for this scale, reporting a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.90 for the shame subscale and a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.83 for the pride subscale (Redina, Lopez-Matos, Wang, Pachankis, & Parsons, 2018). Prior research also found good construct validity for this scale, with the shame level being positively associated with relevant constructs such as the Sexual Compulsivity Scale, the Maladaptive Cognitions about Sex Scale, and the Internalized Homophobia Scale (Redina, Lopez-Matos, Wang, Pachankis, & Parsons, 2018). See appendix for the full version of the scale.

The Attitudes toward Sexual Behaviors Scale was also used to gather relevant data for this project. The ASBS has 22 items, and each item requires the evaluation of a specific sexual behavior. This measure uses a Likert scale of 1-5, with 1 being “very negative” and 5 being “very positive”. Higher scores indicate more positive attitudes towards sexual behaviors. Previous research found good interitem reliability for this scale, with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.90 (Blanc, Byers, & Rojas, 2018). Researchers also found that the ASBS has good convergent validity when compared with another previously validated scale on affective-evaluative responses to sexual behaviors, the Sexual Opinion Survey (Blanc, Byers, & Rojas, 2018). See appendix for the full version of the scale.

Procedure

This thesis project was conducted using the SONA system available at UVM. The SONA system is an online tool that allows undergraduate students to participate in research studies and receive course credit or extra credit for their participation (University of Vermont, 2022). UVM students were recruited using this system and were offered SONA credit for their participation. This study was listed under the SONA system as “Sexual Behaviors and Preferences”. If a student decided to participate in the study, they were redirected through a link to UVM Qualtrics to complete the online survey in Qualtrics. All quantitative measures for this study were completed online.

Statistical Analysis

Data was analyzed to test for moderation models in which gender identity and sexual orientation moderate the relationship between level of sexual shame and attitudes towards casual sexual behavior. In addition to this primary analysis, the data was also analyzed using the same moderation model but considering attitudes toward sexual behavior with a *steady* partner, instead

of a casual partner. This study was carried out as cross-sectional, correlational design. Based on this design, we will not be able to establish causality. Our data is exclusively quantitative. There was one point in time looked at for each participant and examining the relationships between our key variables at that point in time. SPSS was the computer program used to generate the necessary statistical analysis. In order to run a moderation analysis with SPSS, the PROCESS for SPSS program was used to streamline the analysis (Hayes, 2022). Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the double moderation analysis that was used as the statistical framework for this study, with the main relationship examined being between sexual shame and attitudes about casual sexual behaviors and the two moderators of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Due to a data collection error, we were only able to obtain information on sexual orientation from 49 participants and thus had to run our double moderation analysis using only this sample of 49 participants. Unfortunately, within this sample only 1 participant identified themselves as both male and non-heterosexual, making it impossible to complete the double moderation analysis looking at the interaction between gender identity and sexual orientation as these analyses require each interaction combination to have $n > 1$. Due to this, we examined sexual orientation as a moderator between sexual shame and attitudes for female participants only.

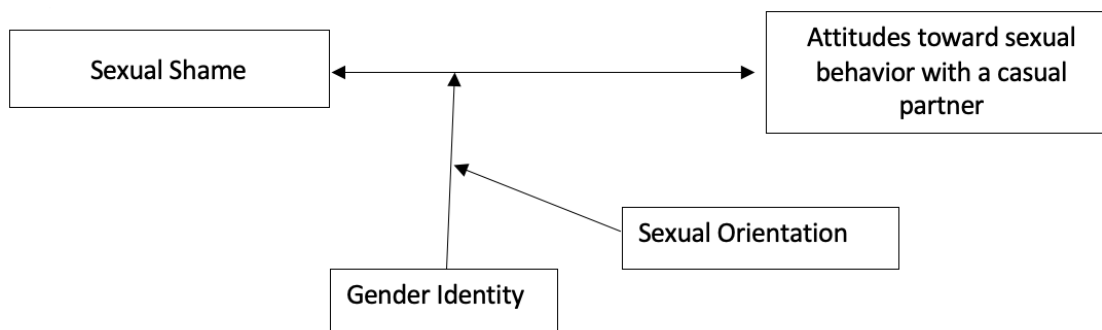


Figure 1. Double moderation analysis visual representation

Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for all measures. The gender identity variable was reduced to a single dummy variable where the highest value (1) was for men and the lowest value (0) was for women. The distribution of the measure “attitudes toward sexual behaviors with a casual partner” was not significantly skewed or kurtotic (Figure 2). The measure of sexual shame was significantly positively skewed (Figure 3), suggesting that most participants had low levels of sexual shame. Sexual shame was also significantly kurtotic (Figure 3), as the responses were not evenly distributed. “Attitudes toward sexual behaviors with a steady partner” was significantly negatively skewed (Figure 4), suggesting that most participants reported viewing sex with a steady partner favorably.

Table 1 also shows the correlation coefficients between the total scores of each measure. The scores on the ASBS with a casual partner was significantly positively correlated with the ASBS with a steady partner (Pearson correlation = .50). Sexual shame was not significantly correlated with either measure of the ASBS (casual or steady).

The results of the moderation model analyzing if gender identity moderates the relationship between attitudes toward sexual behaviors with a casual partner and sexual shame are as follows. The F-statistic for the regression was significant with $F(3,133) = 10.57$ ($p < .01$). The r-squared value for the regression model was .19, suggesting a medium effect size. Results also show that when shame and dummy-coded gender were both entered as simultaneous predictors in Step One of the two-step analysis (with Step Two adding in the interaction effect between shame and gender to test for moderation), dummy-coded gender independently positively related to attitudes toward sexual behaviors with a casual partner ($\beta = .42$, $t = 5.35$, $p < .001$) such that men had more positive attitudes than women, and the relationship between sexual

shame and attitudes toward sexual behavior with a casual partner approached significance ($\beta = .15$, $t = 1.89$, $p = .06$). These results are summarized in Table 2 and Table 3.

We found that the overall moderation effect of gender was not significant ($\beta = -.42$, $t = -1.26$, $p = .21$) (Table 3). However, a follow up analysis of simple slopes showed that, for women, the relationship between shame and attitudes was significant and positive ($\beta = .22$, $t = 2.19$, $p < .05$) such that higher shame indicated more positive attitudes (Table 4). This relationship was not significant for men ($\beta = -.19$, $t = -0.62$, $p = .53$) (Table 4). This relationship is depicted in Figure 5.

The preliminary analysis ran examining the moderation effect of sexual orientation on the relationship between sexual shame and attitudes toward sexual behavior with a casual partner for women yielded no significant results. The overall model was not significant, with $r^2 = .04$, and $F(3, 35) = .49$, at $p = .69$. Sexual shame was not significantly correlated with attitudes toward sexual behavior with a casual partner for this smaller sample of women ($\beta = -.06$, $t = -.26$, $p = .80$). Sexual orientation was also not significantly correlated with attitudes toward casual sexual behavior ($\beta = .24$, $t = .63$, $p = .53$). Finally, the interaction effect was also nonsignificant ($\beta = .003$, $t = .01$, $p = .99$). These results are summarized in Table 5.

Ancillary Analyses

As there was not a significant moderation effect of gender between sexual shame and attitudes toward sex with a casual partner, we were curious to explore what the results would look like if replacing attitudes toward sex with a casual partner with attitudes toward sex with a *steady* partner.

The ancillary analyses examined the relationship between sexual shame and attitudes about sexual behavior with a steady partner with gender identity as a moderator. The relationship was statistically significant, with $F(3,135) = 7.68$ at $p < .01$, with $r^2 = .15$, suggesting a medium effect size. More specifically, gender identity, but not sexual shame, significantly predicted attitudes toward sexual behavior with a steady partner ($\beta = .99$, $t = 4.65$, $p < .01$). Also, there was a significant moderation effect such that gender identity moderated the relationship between shame and sexual activity with a steady partner ($\beta = -.58$, $t = -2.32$, $p < .05$). For men, the relationship between shame and attitudes toward steady partners was significantly negative ($\beta = -.54$, $t = -2.29$, $p < .05$). This relationship was not significant for women ($\beta = .03$, $t = 0.45$, $p = .65$). This relationship is depicted in Figure 6 and summarized in Table 6, Table 7, and Table 8.

Table 1. Summary of means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis of scores on attitudes toward sexual behaviors with casual partner, attitudes towards sexual behaviors with steady partner, and sexual shame.

| Measure | 1 | 2 | 3 | Mean | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|--------------------|---|-------|------|------|-----|------------------------|------------------------|
| | | | | | | Statistic (Std. Error) | Statistic (Std. Error) |
| 1. ASBS Casual | | .50** | .09 | 2.88 | .96 | -.01 (.20) | -.31 (.39) |
| 2. ASBS Steady | | | -.06 | 3.97 | .68 | -.81 (.19) | .88 (.39) |
| 3. Sexual Shame | | | | .75 | .76 | 1.2 (.19) | 1.05 (.39) |

Note. ASBS: Attitudes toward Sexual Behaviors Scale, SD: standard deviation, ** $p < 0.01$

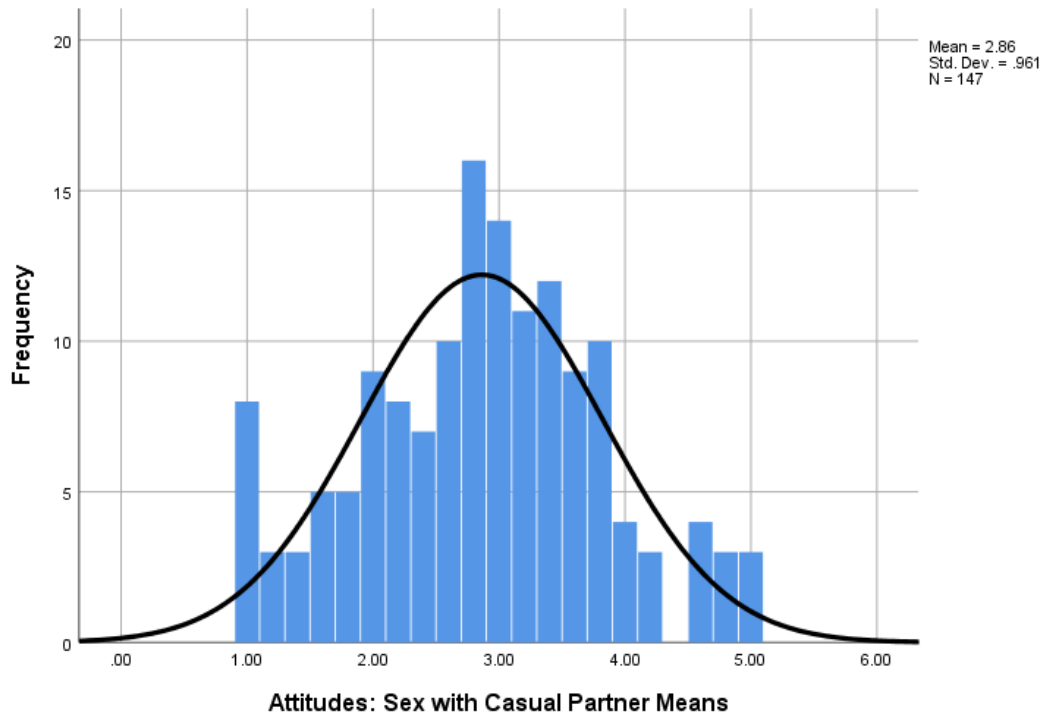


Figure 2. Distribution of Scores on the ASBS, concerning a casual partner

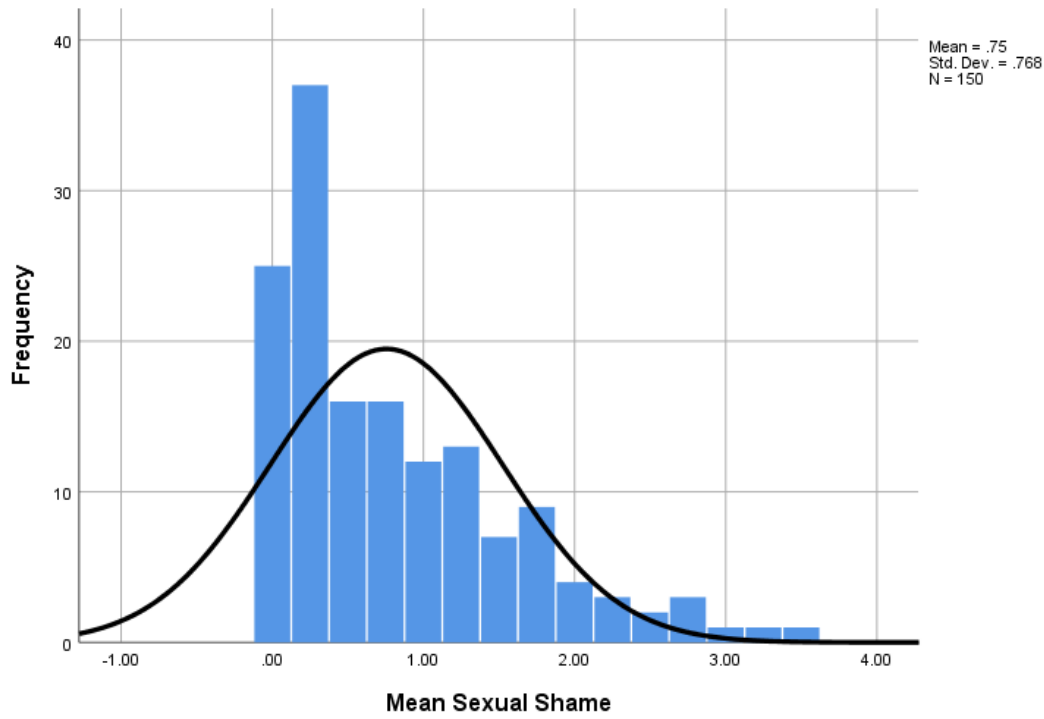


Figure 3. Distribution of scores on Sexual Shame from Sexual Shame and Pride Scale

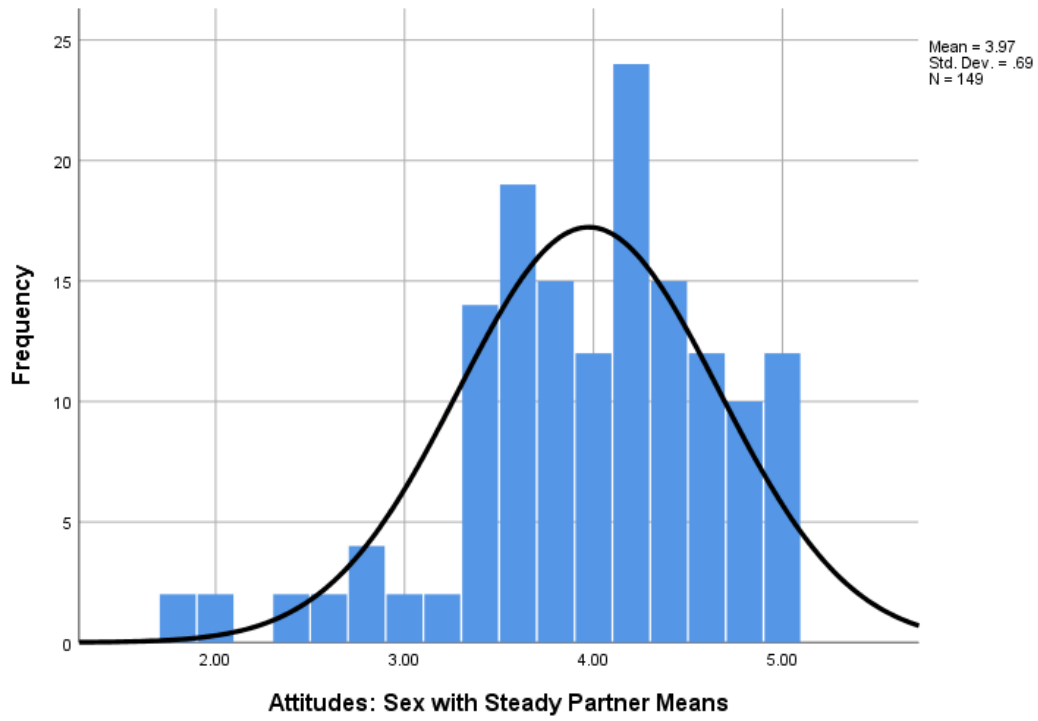


Figure 4. Distribution of Scores on the ASBS, concerning a steady partner

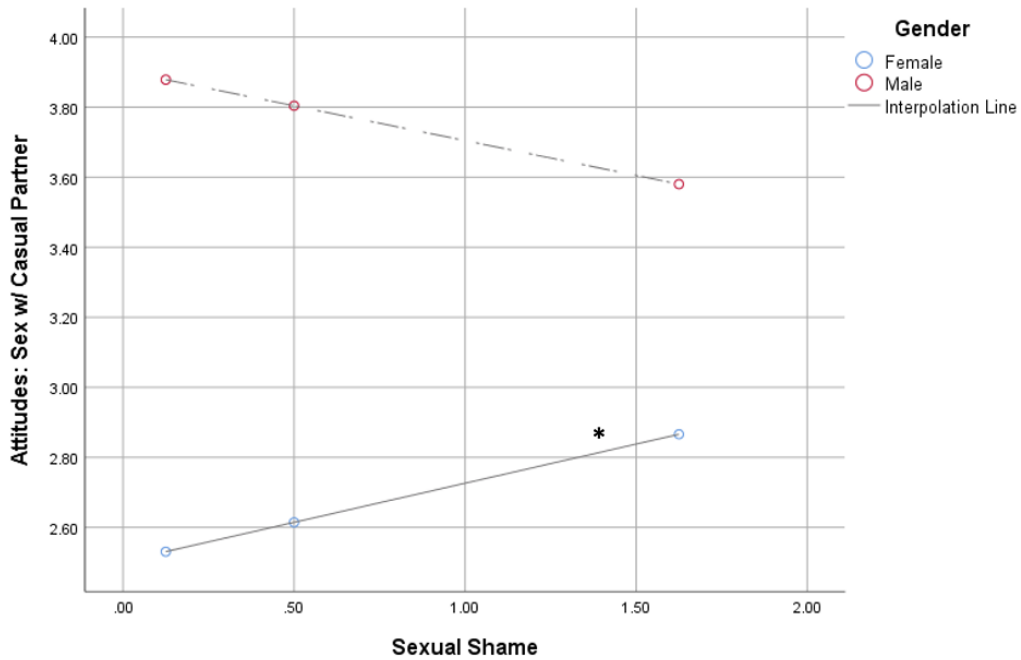


Figure 5. Moderation effect of gender on the relationship between sexual shame and ASBS: casual partner, *p<.05

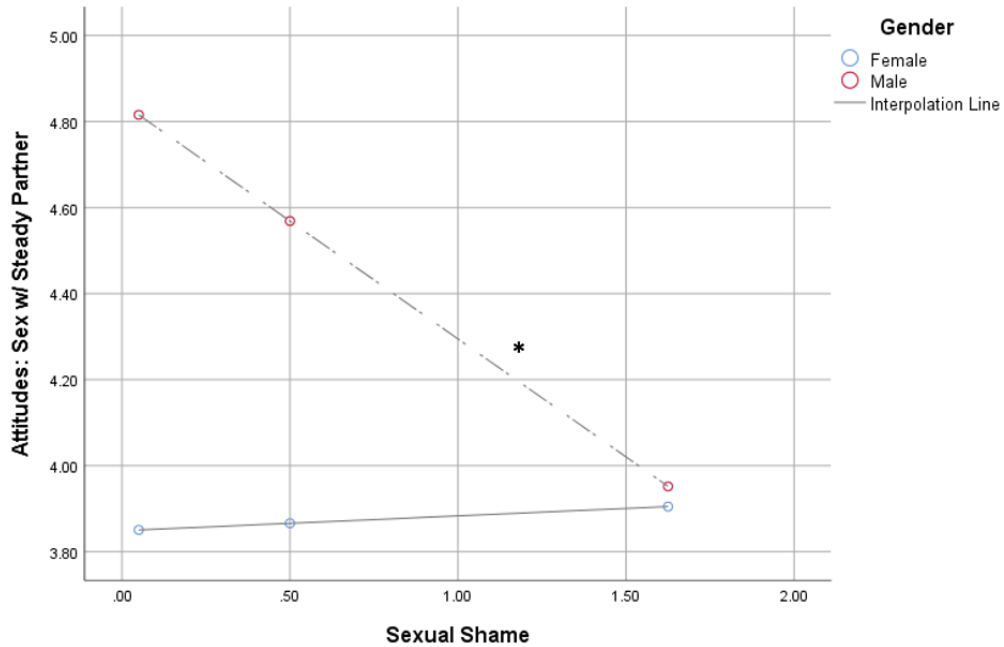


Figure 6. Moderation effect of gender on the relationship between sexual shame and ASBS: steady partner, *p<.05

Table 2.

Model Summary: *X* = Sexual Shame, *Y* = Attitudes about sexual behavior with a casual partner, *W* = Gender Identity.

| R | R-sq | MSE | F | df1 | df2 | p |
|-----|------|-----|-------|------|--------|-----|
| .44 | .19 | .76 | 10.57 | 3.00 | 133.00 | .00 |

Table 3.

Model 1: Outcome variable is attitudes toward sexual behavior with a casual partner.

| | coeff. | t | p |
|--------------|--------|------|-----|
| Sexual Shame | .15 | 1.89 | .06 |

| | | | |
|------------------------|------|-------|-----|
| Gender Identity | .42 | 5.35 | .00 |
| Interaction | -.42 | -1.26 | .21 |

Table 4.

Simple slopes of the relationship between attitudes towards sexual behavior with a casual partner and sexual shame for women versus men.

| Gender Identify | Effect | t | p |
|------------------------|---------------|----------|----------|
| Female | .22 | 2.19 | .03 |
| Male | -.19 | -.62 | .53 |

Table 5.

Model 2: Outcome variable is attitudes toward sexual behavior with a casual partner, sexual shame is the input variable, sexual orientation as the moderation variable. Female participants only

| | coeff. | t | p |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------|----------|
| Sexual Shame | -.06 | -.26 | .80 |
| Sexual Orientation | .24 | .63 | .53 |
| Interaction | .00 | .01 | .99 |

Table 6.

Ancillary analysis. Model Summary: X = Sexual Shame, Y = Attitudes about sexual behavior with a steady partner, W = Gender Identity.

| R | R-sq | MSE | F | df1 | df2 | p |
|----------|-------------|------------|----------|------------|------------|----------|
| .38 | .15 | .43 | 7.68 | 3.00 | 135.00 | .0001 |

Table 7.

Ancillary analysis: outcome variable is attitudes toward sexual behavior with a steady partner.

| | coeff. | t | p |
|------------------------|---------------|----------|----------|
| Sexual Shame | .03 | .45 | .65 |
| Gender Identity | .99 | 4.65 | .00 |
| Interaction | -.58 | -2.32 | .02 |

Table 8.

Ancillary Analysis. Effect of gender identity on the relationship between attitudes towards sexual behavior with a steady partner and sexual shame.

| Gender Identify | Effect | t | p |
|------------------------|---------------|----------|----------|
| Female | .03 | .45 | .65 |
| Male | -.55 | -2.29 | .02 |

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between attitudes toward casual sexual behavior and sexual shame, looking at gender identity and sexual orientation as potential moderators of this relationship. The hypotheses were that (1) women's attitudes toward sexual behavior with a casual partner would be significantly negatively correlated with their level of sexual shame, (2) there would be a lower effect size for men for this relationship between attitudes toward casual sex and sexual shame, and finally that (3) the gender-moderated relationship between attitudes about casual sexual behavior and sexual shame would be in turn moderated by sexual orientation, with individuals who identify as non-heterosexual showing a stronger negative correlation in the relationship between their attitudes about casual sexual behavior and their level of sexual shame than individuals who identify as heterosexual.

Hypotheses 1 and 2

The first and second hypotheses were not supported by the data. Differently from what we expected, gender identity was not a significant moderator in the relationship between attitudes toward casual sexual behavior and sexual shame. Analysis looking at the relationship between sexual shame and attitudes towards casual sex that was conducted separately by gender showed a significant relationship for women only. However, this significant relationship depicted a slope going in the opposite direction from the one hypothesized: women with more positive attitudes towards casual sex reported greater sexual shame.

First of all, it is important to note that the moderation effect was not significant. The lack of significance could be the result of potentially an inadequate sample size for the men sample (only 29 male participants) which could lead to the underpower for this analysis. Alternatively, if we incorporate the results of the simple slopes in our interpretation of the results, the lack of

moderation could also be the result of similarity in the slopes of both men and women, meaning that for both men and women shame is similarly correlated to attitudes towards casual partners.

There is psychological research that supports the existence of gender difference in this realm of study, and research that provides evidence for no difference between gender. Some scholars suggest that perceived/anticipated gender differences in experiences of sexuality can be eliminated if research controls for the social environment in which the individuals exist (Conley, Moors, Matsick, Ziegler, & Valentine, 2011). For example, in a study examining gender differences in sexuality, controlling for both social stigma and the sexual capability of a partner, gender difference in accepting hypothetical offers of casual sex is completely eliminated (Conley et al., 2011). In other words, these researchers argue that any gender differences in attitudes toward a potential casual sexual encounter can be explained by the social qualities of the potential partner and the individual's anticipation of stigma based on their gender (Conley et al., 2011). This suggests that there is not an *intrinsic* gender difference in sexuality, but that the observed difference is often produced by environmental or interpersonal factors, and therefore can be potentially eliminated. As the current study did not take measures related to the desirability of the casual partner or the effect of social stigma, these variables could explain the lack of significance of the moderation effect. Further research that examines the relationship between sexual shame and attitudes toward sexual behavior with a casual partner should consider the social factors of partner desirability and anticipation of stigma.

Although there was no significant correlation between attitudes towards a casual partner and shame, and there was also no significant relationship between these two variables in the moderation model we ran, we observed a significant relationship between these two variables in the sample of women, albeit in the opposite direction from what we hypothesized. The lack of

significant results in these analyses is not usually followed by speculation on simple slopes; however, for the sake of a complete discussion of all observed results I include here some speculations on potential ways to interpret and link to the extant literature the significant simple slope observed for women.

These results, while unexpected, may offer support for theories of sexuality and sexual shame that point to forces of culture as the social drivers of any one individual's interpretation of their sexual fantasies, desires, feelings, or behaviors (Shadbolt, 2009). Specifically, if a woman has a more positive attitude concerning casual sexual behavior, she may be more likely to engage in casual sex, and therefore more vulnerable to negative peer feedback concerning her behavior, which may then lead to a greater level of sexual shame. Even if the women in this study who had high levels of sexual shame and positive attitudes toward casual sex reported feeling good about their choice to engage with a casual partner, previous research suggests that they are likely to experience a threat of eventual social judgment (Farivid et al., 2017). Previous studies have shown that women are generally more likely to be socially coded as unintelligent, desperate, promiscuous, or too sexual should they engage in casual sexual behavior (Conley, Ziegler & Moors, 2012; Farivid et al., 2017; Helm, Gondra, & McBride, 2015). If a woman decides to engage in sexual behavior with a casual partner, she may face social backlash and therefore experience a high level of sexual shame even while maintaining a positive attitude toward casual sex.

A possible alternative interpretation to consider would entail thinking of the reverse direction of the relationship between these variables, such that a woman with higher levels of sexual shame may participate in casual sexual behaviors more often, and thus endorse sex with a casual partner more highly. In support of this interpretation, research indicated that higher levels

of sexual shame may predict greater participation in risky sexual behaviors, such as casual sex (Cienfuegos et al., 2022; Rendina et al., 2019). If an individual has a high level of sexual shame and participates in casual sexual behaviors frequently, they may claim to have a higher positive attitude concerning sexual behavior with a casual partner to avoid the negative emotions that accompany the cognitive dissonance related to an incongruence between our thoughts and actions. There is not significant literature exploring this connection of sexual shame, sexual behavior, and resulting attitudes, and thus further research is needed to elucidate this potential relationship.

Hypothesis 3

Sexual orientation was investigated as a potential moderator. Unfortunately, data concerning the sexual orientation of participants were only available for a small percentage of the participants and only for the female participants. This error meant that the results concerning the moderation effect of sexual orientation are preliminary and seriously lacking in statistical power. With that being said, the preliminary results do not support the third hypothesis. There was no significant interaction for sexual orientation in relation to sexual shame and attitudes toward sexual behavior with a casual partner. While this analysis is underpowered, the magnitude of the statistics, specifically the very low t-value, suggests that sexual orientation may not be a significant moderator for women, even with a greater sample size.

On a speculative level, if larger studies were to confirm the lack of significant effect of sexual orientation in the relationship between shame and attitudes towards casual partners, one could look at the literature on social norms concerning casual sex, or experiences of sexual shame, which are known to affect women from all sexual orientations. The pervasiveness of sexual norms concerning casual sex for women has been discussed in previous research, with

scholars finding that sexual shame is experienced by heterosexual women and lesbian women in relation to social stigma and norms of sexuality (Conley, Ziegler & Moors, 2012, Farvid et al., 2017, Helm, Gondra, & McBride, 2015, Milhausen & Herold, 2001; Wells & Hansen, 2003). Research such as this may help to explain why a woman's sexual orientation would not have a significant effect on her experiences of sexual shame or her attitudes toward casual sex. The identity of "woman" in this case, may overpower any potential influence of sexual orientation.

Ancillary Analyses Discussion

Interestingly, the ancillary analyses examining the relationship between attitudes toward sexual behavior with a *steady* partner and sexual shame showed a significant overall moderation effect of gender identity, where shame negatively predicted attitudes for men but did not significantly predict attitudes for women. This is particularly interesting given the small sample of men and our prior hypothesis that the small sample of men prevented us from observing a significant relationship in the analyses on attitudes towards casual partners. Although these results are not related to apriori hypotheses, they help to understand the data in more depth. One plausible explanation concerning these results is that men who had more negative attitudes toward sex with a steady partner were anticipating being expected to express their emotions concerning their sexuality. When engaging in sexual behavior with a steady partner, there may be more frequent expectation of emotional engagement, purely based on proximity or frequency of interaction. Previous research suggests that male-identified individuals show higher rates of shame in relation to emotional expression, which could offer support to these men experiencing higher sexual shame and more negative attitudes toward sexual behavior with a steady partner if that steady partner has higher expectations of emotional expression (Else-Quest et al., 2012).

An alternative explanation would be that these results would be in relation to sexual performance anxiety. Performance anxiety can be defined as an obsessive need to perform to a certain standard or satisfy one's partner in a sexual encounter (McCabe, 2005). When engaging in a steady, or committed relationship, individuals will more likely need to navigate conflict, express emotion, and likely have more intense romantic feelings for their partner, than if it was a casual encounter like a one-night stand. One study suggests that male individuals experiencing conflict in their steady partnerships suffered from greater sexual dysfunction, of which the greatest predictor was performance anxiety (McCabe, 2005). This suggests that men who are in steady sexual partnerships may be more vulnerable to factors that create uncomfortable sexual situations, which then may lead to a variety of negative emotions, and possibly sexual shame.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study is limited by the number of participants, the diversity of the sample, and the population from which the sample is drawn from. This study is lacking in external validity as it was drawn from a population of exclusively psychological science students at University of Vermont, and therefore is not reflective of a random sample of people. There were significantly more female-identified participants than male-identified participants which impacts the applicability of the results to a larger population of men. The race distribution of participants was almost entirely white people, removing the potential for this work to be applied across intersecting identities of self. As all students are attending UVM, it should also be acknowledged that the ability to attend higher education is indicative of a certain amount of privilege and therefore may reflect a narrower sample of the population.

One specific limitation is that the sample of men was small and did not include enough non-heterosexual participants to examine the double moderation effect originally proposed for

this study. In order for this research to examine the relationship more effectively between sexual shame, attitudes toward casual sex, gender identity, *and* sexual orientation, subsequent samples would need to be recruited from populations of individuals with greater diversity in gender identity and sexual orientation, and generally be of a larger magnitude. Furthermore, research such as this could benefit greatly from random sampling in order to examine the potential for other variables such as socioeconomic status, race, religion, and ethnicity to impact the relationship between sexual shame and attitudes toward sexual behavior.

Finally, the specific environment in which participants were sampled from is important to consider when engaging in sexuality research. The formation of interpersonal relationships of any kind (platonic, sexual, romantic) can be influenced by the social climate in which those individuals exist, as humans are social creatures. In future research related to this topic, if the sample is taken from a distinct social climate, such as a university or major, it may be beneficial to survey participants on the sexuality culture of their institution in order to better understand any potential social factors.

Conclusion

The current research suggests that there could be significant relationships between sexual attitudes and sexual shame, albeit the directionality of this relationship remains unclear and initial evidence for potential underlying gender differences warrants further explorations. Many questions remain unanswered because the small sample size affected the power of our analyses, especially for men and for the role of sexual orientation. Further research, with greater statistical power and greater diversity of individuals, would be interesting to explore the potential connections between sexual shame and attitudes toward sexual behavior. In addition to increasing statistical power, a more sophisticated experimental design that could either elucidate

the temporal precedence of sexual shame in the equation, or that could manipulate the levels of sexual shame, could provide further explanations concerning the relationship identified in this study. Sexuality is an intrinsic part of existing as a human, and something that exists with incredible diversity. The continued study of how people feel about sexual behavior, how sexual behavior affects them, and what sexual social schemas drive their attitudes and emotions concerning sex will be beneficial in creating greater understanding and thus acceptance of the diversity of the human sexual experience.

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Appendix A

Sexual Shame and Pride Scale

LIKERT 1-5 – Does not describe me, describes me slightly well, describes me moderately well, describes me very well, describes me extremely well.

Please indicate how much each statement applies to you

1. I often feel embarrassed by the sexual activities that I like.

2. I'd be ashamed if people knew the kinds of things I have done sexually
3. I'm often embarrassed to tell my sexual partners about my sex life
4. I tend to feel bad or dirty after sex
5. Shortly after sex, I'm often ashamed of what I have just done
6. I'm often embarrassed about the people who I have sex with
7. I often try to hide the people I have sex with or keep them a secret
8. I am ashamed by my sexual capabilities
9. I think that I make a great sexual partner
10. I tend to describe my sexual fantasies and/or fetishes to sexual partners
11. I'm comfortable being naked in front of my sexual partners
12. I know that I am skilled at performing the kinds of sexual acts that I enjoy
13. There are people with whom I regularly discuss my sex life
14. I don't have difficulty telling my sexual partners about what I do or don't like sexually
15. I am comfortable telling my partners what I want or need sexually
16. When I want to have sex with someone, I have no problem approaching them

(SSPS; Rendina, Lopez-Matos, Wang, Pachankis, & Parsons, 2018)

Appendix B

Attitudes Towards Sexual Behavior Scale (ASBS)

Likert 1-5 Very Negative to Very Positive.

People can engage in sexual behaviors by themselves or with different types of partners. Below you will find a list of sexual behaviors in different contexts. We are interested in your attitudes toward these behaviors, taking the context into account.

Please indicate how positively or negatively you feel about engaging in the following behaviors with a CASUAL PARTNER.

1. Caressing or touching any intimate part of the body of a casual partner
2. Penile-vaginal sexual intercourse with a casual partner
3. Mutual masturbation with a casual partner
4. Oral sex with a casual partner
5. Anal sex with a casual partner
6. Send pictures or messages via the internet or a cell phone with sexual content (sexting) to a casual partner
7. Sex over the internet (cybersex) with a casual partner

Please indicate how positively or negatively you feel about engaging in the following behaviors with a STEADY PARTNER

1. Caressing or touching any intimate part of the body of a steady partner
2. Penile-vaginal sexual intercourse with a steady partner
3. Mutual masturbation with a steady partner
4. Oral sex with a steady partner
5. Anal sex with a steady partner
6. Send pictures or messages via the internet or a cell phone with sexual content (sexting) to a steady partner
7. Sex over the internet (cybersex) with a steady partner

Please indicate how positively or negatively you feel about engaging in the following behaviors.

1. Solitary masturbation (alone) when a person doesn't have a steady partner

2. Solitary masturbation (alone) when a person has a steady partner
3. Having sexual fantasies when a person doesn't have a steady partner
4. Having sexual fantasies when a person has a steady partner
5. Reading erotic magazines or books (with sexual content)
6. Watching erotic movies (e.g., showing sexual activities)

Please indicate how positively or negatively you feel about engaging in the following behaviors with MORE THAN ONE PERSON at the same time.

1. Sexual activity with two other persons at the same time (threesome)
2. Sexual activity with a group of persons at the same time (orgy or group sex)

(Blanc, Byers, & Rojas, 2018).