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Sexual Shame in the Sexual Excitation and Inhibition Propensities of Men With and Without Nonconsensual Sexual Experiences

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ABSTRACT

For men with nonconsensual sexual experience (NSEs) histories, sexual shame may play a critical role in their sexual responses. Through online surveys, the current study examined sexual shame in the sexual excitation and inhibition responses of men with NSE histories who both do (identifiers; $n = 255$) and do not identify (non-identifiers; $n = 239$) their NSEs with sexual violence labels (e.g., rape) and men with no NSEs ($n = 289$). Regardless of identification, men with NSEs reported greater sexual shame than men with no NSEs and higher levels of excitatory (e.g., arousability) and inhibitory (e.g., inhibitory cognitions) domains of sexual response propensities. Sexual shame predicted inhibitory domains of sexual response for all of the men. NSE history and identification moderated the relationship between sexual shame and arousability. Sexual shame had a stronger positive association with arousability for both identifiers and those with no NSEs than non-identifiers. The results provide support for the role of sexual shame in men's sexual response and suggest sexual shame is an important target for interventions with men with NSEs.

Nonconsensual sexual experiences (NSEs) include any form of sexual activity that does not involve freely-given consent, including sexual experiences achieved through force, coercion, incapacitation, power differential, abuse of authority, and any sexual activity with a child, in which case consent cannot be given (Kilimnik, Pulverman, & Meston, 2018). NSEs are a prominent social concern that can impact anyone, yet the majority of the research has focused on the consequences of women's NSEs, leaving a dearth of research examining the consequences of men's NSEs. Of the existent literature on men's NSEs, the research has predominantly centered on mental health outcomes (e.g., Amado, Arce, & Herraiz, 2015) with a paucity of research examining the sexual health outcomes of men with NSE histories.

The 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) estimated that in the U.S., the lifetime prevalence of sexual violence (defined as vaginal, anal, or oral penetration by a means of coercion, being made to penetrate someone else, unwanted sexual contact, and unwanted non-contact sexual experiences) is nearly 1 in 2 bisexual men, 2 in 5 gay men, and 1 in 5 heterosexual men (Walters, Chen, & Breiding, 2013). Sociocultural factors tend to enforce a rigid stereotypical masculinity that condemns help seeking behaviors in men (Addis & Mahalik, 2003) and touts a men-always-want-sex sexual script (Morrison, Ryan, Fox, McDermott, & Morrison, 2008; Muehlenhard, 1988). As such, many men are unlikely to report these experiences to authorities (Kimerling, Rellini, Kelly, Judson, & Learman, 2002; Weiss, 2010) or seek help for post-NSE psychosexual adjustment (Turchik et al., 2013).

Many men with NSE histories do not identify their experiences with sexual violence labels, such as sexual assault, sexual abuse, or rape (Artime, McCallum, & Peterson, 2014; Marsil & McNamara, 2016). In discourses of NSEs, men are often positioned as perpetrators and women as victims. Therefore, as stated by Rentoul and Appleboom (1997), men's NSEs "may be antithetical to cultural norms of what it means to be a man (strong, sexually assertive and able to defend himself)" (p. 268). A review of the literature on the impact of men's NSEs and sexual trauma demonstrated pervasive feelings of humiliation and shame that accompanies reconciling stereotypes of masculinity with perceptions of what it means to be a "victim" (Rentoul & Appleboom, 1997). Weiss (2010) examined gender differences in reporting NSEs to police and, despite similar NSE characteristics (e.g., degree of force and injury obtained), men were significantly less likely to report their NSEs to police than women. In the men's narratives of their NSEs, men often noted feeling too embarrassed or ashamed to report the experience to police. Examining this further, Hlavaka (2017) analyzed forensic interviews of young men by police about their NSEs and found similar discourses, including: embarrassment for not being able to defend themselves, denial that the experience happened or was nonconsensual, and a deep sense of emasculation and shame.

While NSE-related shame has been found to perpetuate psychopathology, such as PTSD and dissociation (e.g., DeCou, Cole, Lynch, Wong, & Mathews, 2017; Kalichman et al.,

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2001), it has also been found to play a role in decreasing men's sexual well-being. For instance, Feiring, Simon, and Cleland (2009) found that stigmatization (defined as NSE-related shame and self-blame) was a mechanism for post-NSE sexual concerns and dysfunctional sexual behaviors. Walker, Hernandez, and Davey (2012) discussed how sexual minority status may interact with sexual trauma and stigmatization to create feelings of isolation and shame that impact healthy sexual identity and intimate relationships. This is consistent with Finkelhor and Browne's (1985) earlier discussion of how NSEs can impact sexuality and intimate relationships through chronic maladaptive schemas of shame, mistrust, and traumatic associations with sexuality. As such, sex-specific shame may have a critical role in men's sexual adjustment following NSEs.

Shame has been conceptualized as a "socially aware emotion concerned with real or imagined acceptability of the self in others' eyes" (Mills, 2005, p. 36). While sexual shame, as a domain of broader shame, has not been well researched; conceptually, it can be viewed as shame associated with one's sexual self that is based on perceived or real responses to one's sexual attitudes, behaviors, or experiences. Similar to the development of broader shame, sexual shame develops through a social learning process of experience that demarcates what is "normal" sexuality from what is aberrant, and thus shameful. Clinically, sexual shame has been associated with numerous sexual dysfunctions (Hastings, 1998), but few empirical studies exist that specifically assess sexual shame. Recently, however, Gordon (2018) assessed domains of men's sexual shame and demonstrated men reported shame associated with a variety of sexual elements (e.g., inexperience, masturbation, drive, performance). This provides preliminary evidence that sexual shame is important for men's overall sexual well-being. While many individuals have likely experienced a socialization process of sexual shame due to cultural taboos around sexuality and biased or absent sex education, socialized sexual shame may be compounded with NSE-related shame for men with NSE histories in a way that differentially impacts their sexual well-being.

The sexual correlates of men's NSEs have received little research attention, yet the literature that does exist demonstrates significant decrements in men's sexual well-being. Notably, Elliott, Mok, and Briere (2004) found that men with NSEs reported more sexual concerns and dysfunctional sexual behavior than women with NSE histories. In their review of the literature on the impact of men's NSEs, Rentoul and Appleboom (1997) showcased the impact of NSEs on men's sexuality, including both hyposexual and hypersexual tendencies, lower sex drive, less sexual satisfaction, difficulties with sensual or intimate touching, and concerns about masculine identity. Men with NSEs also reported increased rates of sexual risk-taking behaviors (e.g., unprotected sex) and higher numbers of sexual concerns (e.g., erectile difficulties; Turchik, 2012). Additionally, men with histories of childhood NSEs demonstrated an increased risk for HIV infection (Mimiaga et al., 2009). In a longitudinal study, Krahé and Berger (2017) showed that NSEs reported at time one predicted for lower levels of men's sexual self-esteem a year later at time two. Research has also found higher rates of both sexual avoidance and compulsivity in men with a history of childhood NSEs in comparison to those men without NSE histories (Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2015). One study examined post-NSE sexual adjustment for men who both did and did not identify their NSEs with sexual violence labels. Artime et al. (2014) found that in comparison to identifiers, non-identifiers reported greater sexual distress. The researchers suggested that non-identification may be due to shame that exacerbates sexual distress and prevents these men from seeking therapeutic support.

Sexual response propensity is an area of sexual well-being that has not been examined in relation to men's NSEs. Sexual response involves a dual process of increases in excitation and decreases in inhibition to allow for an arousal response to sexual stimuli (Bancroft, Graham, Janssen, & Sanders, 2009). Indeed, women with childhood NSE histories have been found to have greater inhibition response propensities than those with no NSE histories (Kilimnik & Meston, 2016). Notably, shame has been implicated in cycles of dysfunctional sexual responses for men (Nobre & Pinto-Gouveia, 2008). As sexual response plays a significant role in many aspects of sexual well-being (e.g., sexual function, satisfaction, distress, Bell & Reissing, 2017; compulsivity, Muise, Milhausen, Cole, & Graham, 2013), assessing factors, such as sexual shame, that impact men's sexual response propensities may provide nuanced understanding into the ways in which NSE histories are associated with decrements in men's sexual well-being.

Men's NSEs and their NSE identification have been associated with significant amounts of NSE-related shame and sexual concerns. As such, sex-specific shame may play a particularly important role in men's post-NSE sexual adjustment. For men with NSEs, sexual shame may be compounded with traumatic associations with sexuality and involve trauma-related shame, which in turn may influence the relationship of shame with sexual responses. The current study had three aims: (1) to explore differences in the excitation and inhibition propensities for sexual response across NSE history and identification status, (2) to examine group differences in sexual shame across NSE history and identification status, and (3) to examine the role of NSE history and identification in the relationship between sexual shame and sexual excitation and inhibition. Based on the existent literature, the current study had four a priori hypotheses:

H1: We predicted that men with NSE histories who both do and do not identify their NSEs with sexual violence labels would demonstrate greater sexual inhibition and excitation propensities than men without NSE histories.

H2: We expected that men with NSE histories who both do and do not identify their NSEs with sexual violence labels would report higher levels of sexual shame than those with no NSE histories.

H3: We expected that sexual shame would be a significant predictor of less sexual excitation and greater inhibition propensities in all of the men, regardless of NSE history and identification status.

H4: As an exploratory hypothesis, we expected that the strength of sexual shame's relationship with sexual excitation and inhibition propensities would be moderated by NSE history and identification status. Specifically, we expected that sexual shame would have a stronger relationship with excitation and inhibition propensities for men who do not identify their NSEs with sexual violence labels than those who do identify their NSEs with these labels and those with no NSEs.

Method

Participants

Participants were 776 men recruited online through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk; see Procedure subsection for further information on recruitment and data quality checks). Participants were recruited to allow for relatively equal groups (see Procedure section for a more detailed response of this recruitment process) across those with NSE histories who identified with sexual violence labels (identifiers; n = 255; 32.9%), those with NSE histories who did not identify with sexual violence labels (non-identifiers; n = 239; 30.8%), and those with no NSE histories (n = 282; 36.3%). Participants ranged in age from 18–78 (M = 34.99, SD = 11.00, Mdn = 32). The majority of male participants were Caucasian/White (n = 564, 72.7%) and heterosexual (n = 633, 81.6%). Full demographic information for the men in the current sample is reported in Table 1.

Between-group differences in demographic characteristics were assessed using a multivariate analysis of variance for continuous variables with a Bonferroni correction for the number of comparisons (α/6 = .008). Two of the six continuous variables demonstrated a significant difference across groups, including degree of same-sex sexual attraction and degree of same-sex sexual behavior. Identifiers had more same-sex attraction and behavior than non-identifiers (d = 0.280 and d = 0.312, respectively), and both identifiers (d = 0.571 and d = 0.572, respectively) and non-identifiers (d = 0.311 and d = 0.275, respectively) had more same-sex attraction and behavior than those with no NSEs. Chi-square analyses were used for categorical variables with a Bonferroni correction for the number of comparisons (α/7 = .007). Identifiers had significantly more sexual minority identified men (V = .293) and significantly fewer married men (V = .235) than did those with no NSEs. More identifiers than those with no NSE histories and non-identifiers reported a history of sex therapy (i.e., seeing a mental health professional for sexuality concerns or sexual experiences; V = .295 and V = .189, respectively), as well as more mental health diagnoses (V = .282 and V = .181, respectively). No other between group differences were observed in demographic information.

Materials

Demographics

Information about participants' demographic characteristics were collected, as presented in Table 1.

NSE Identification

As part of the demographic survey, participants were also asked if they had ever experienced NSEs by using common sexual violence labels (i.e., "Have you ever experienced sexual assault?," "Have you ever experienced sexual abuse?," "Have you experienced rape?") using a Yes/No response set.

Nonconsensual Sexual Experience Inventory (NSEI; Kilimnik, Boyd, Stanton, & Meston, 2018)

The NSEI is a comprehensive inventory of NSE histories occurring across the lifespan and various NSE characteristics. Participants are asked whether or not they have *ever* experienced certain sexual activities, including vaginal or anal penetration, oral sex, and touching/fondling, against their will. An additional open-ended question allows participants to detail NSEs they have experienced that were not covered in the prior items. If participants indicate they have experienced an NSE (to any of the five activity-specific items, including the open-ended item), follow-up questions pertaining to age of onset for the NSE, relationship to the perpetrator, whether or not force, violence, or injury was involved, and various other NSE characteristics. This measure was used to categorize men into those with and without NSE histories. For the purposes of this study, the original NSEI designed for women was modified to include an additional question assessing whether individuals had been made to penetrate someone else (with objects, fingers, or genitals), and the first question assessing vaginal penetration was removed. Descriptive information and example items for this measure are provided in Table 2.

Kyle Inventory of Sexual Shame (KISS; KYLE, 2013)

The KISS is a 20-item measure that assesses shame around sexual thoughts, experiences, and behaviors. Participants rate their level of agreement with a series of self-statements (e.g., "I think people would look down on me if they knew about my sexual experiences.") on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*). The scale is totaled with a sum score and higher scores reflect greater sexual shame with a possible range in scores from 20 to 120. The KISS demonstrated strong internal validity in the current sample (α = .94).

Sexual Excitation and Sexual Inhibition Inventory for Women and Men (SESII-W/M; Milhausen, Graham, Sanders, Yarber, & Maitland, 2010)

The SESII-W/M is a 30-item self-report measure of individuals' sexual excitation and inhibition propensities across six domains: Inhibitory Cognitions, eight items that tap cognitions that impede sexual excitation (α = .91; e.g., "Sometimes I have so many worries that I am unable to get aroused."); Relationship Importance, five items that measure the importance of relationship quality in impeding inhibitory responses (α = .75; e.g., "I really need to trust a partner to become fully aroused."); Arousability, five items that assess the ease of becoming aroused (α = .76; e.g., "Just talking about sex is enough to put me in a sexual mood."); Partner Characteristics, five items that tap aspects of one's sexual partner that increase sexual excitation (α = .81; e.g., "Someone doing something that shows he/she is intelligent

Table 1. Demographic information for the whole sample by NSE and identification status (N = 776).

	Identifiers (n = 255)	Non-identifiers (n = 239)	No NSEs (n = 282)
Continuous Variables (Range)	*M* (SD)	*M* (SD)	*M* (SD)
Age (18–78)	35.00 (11.04)	34.28 (10.06)	35.23 (11.38)
Age 1st Sex[a] (10–52)	17.32 (3.61)	18.30 (3.77)	18.10 (4.17)
Age of Puberty Onset (10–28)	12.98 (2.25)	13.25 (1.96)	13.16 (1.56)
Same-sex Attraction[b] (1–5)	1.78 (1.28)	1.47 (0.99)	1.21 (0.66)
Same-sex Behavior[b] (1–5)	1.72 (1.27)	1.39 (0.95)	1.17 (0.62)
Degree of Religiosity/Spirituality[c] (1–5)	3.98 (2.83)	3.86 (2.66)	3.64 (2.74)
Categorical Variables	*n* (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)
Gender Identity			
Male	250 (98.0)	238 (99.6)	281 (99.6)
Transgender	5 (2.0)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.4)
Non-Binary	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Ethnicity			
African American/Black	21 (8.2)	17 (7.1)	17 (6.0)
Asian	12 (4.7)	27 (11.3)	16 (5.7)
Caucasian/White	173 (67.8)	169 (70.7)	222 (78.7)
Hispanic/Latino	26 (10.2)	15 (6.3)	16 (5.7)
Middle Eastern	1 (0.4)	3 (1.3)	0 (0.0)
Native American/First Nations	8 (3.1)	5 (2.1)	8 (2.8)
Pacific Islander/Hawaiian Native	4 (1.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Other	10 (3.9)	3 (1.3)	3 (1.1)
Level of Education			
Some high school or less	2 (0.8)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.4)
High school diploma/GED	28 (11.0)	17 (7.1)	33 (11.7)
Some college/university	105 (41.2)	75 (31.4)	88 (31.2)
College diploma/undergraduate degree	93 (36.5)	115 (48.1)	122 (43.3)
Advanced degree	27 (10.6)	31 (13.0)	38 (13.5)
Sexual Orientation Identity			
Asexual	1 (0.4)	1 (0.4)	0 (0.0)
Bisexual	34 (13.3)	23 (9.6)	11 (3.9)
Heterosexual	179 (70.2)	194 (81.2)	260 (92.2)
Homosexual/Gay	27 (10.6)	12 (5.0)	6 (2.1)
Pansexual	5 (2.0)	4 (1.7)	2 (0.7)
Queer	1 (0.4)	1 (0.4)	0 (0.0)
Prefer no label	6 (2.4)	3 (1.3)	1 (0.4)
Other	2 (0.8)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.4)
Missing	0 (0.0)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.4)
Relationship Status			
Single	45 (17.6)	29 (12.1)	39 (13.8)
Dating	49 (19.2)	51 (21.3)	42 (14.9)
Committed	70 (27.5)	57 (23.8)	70 (24.9)
Cohabitating	27 (10.6)	13 (5.4)	16 (5.7)
Married	64 (25.1)	89 (37.2)	115 (40.8)
Axis I Mental Health Diagnosis			
Yes	154 (60.4)	101 (42.3)	91 (32.3)
No	101 (39.6)	138 (57.7)	191 (67.7)
History of Sex Therapy			
Yes	68 (26.7)	28 (11.7)	15 (5.3)
No	187 (73.3)	211 (88.3)	267 (94.7)

[a]Age of first consensual intercourse included both anal and vaginal penetrative sex.
[b]Degree of same-sex attraction and degree of engagement in same-sex sexual behavior were measured on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*Only other sex partners*) to 5 (*Only same-sex partners*).
[c]Degree of religiosity/spirituality was measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all spiritual or religious*) to 5 (*Highly spiritual and/or religious*).

turns me on."); Setting, four items that assess an increase in sexual excitation propensity due to the sexual setting (α = .64; e.g., "I get really turned on if I think I may get caught while having sex."); and Dyadic Elements, three items assessing dyadic variables between partners that can increase inhibition (α = .76; e.g., "If I am uncertain how my partner feels about me, it is harder for me to get aroused."). There are three conceptually excitatory domains (Arousability, Partner Characteristics, and Setting) and three conceptually inhibitory domains (Inhibitory Cognitions, Relationship Importance, and Dyadic Elements). Participants respond to self-statements using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 4 (*Strongly Agree*). The subscales are totaled with averages and higher scores reflect greater inhibitory or excitatory response propensities for these respective domains with a possible range in scores from one to four. All reported Cronbach's alphas are for the current sample.

Procedure

Men who resided in the U.S. were recruited through MTurk to take part in a study on "consensual and nonconsensual sexual experiences and sexual well-being." The post on MTurk provided information about compensation ($1.50 U.S.D) and time for completion (M = 53.94, SD = 40.99, *Median* = 43.83; in minutes). Accounting for potential data quality removal of participants, our target recruitment was for 300 men in each group (those with no NSEs, men who identified with sexual violence labels, and men who did not identify with sexual violence labels).

Table 2. Descriptive results from the NSEI and NSE characteristics by identification status (N = 494).

Variable	Identifiers[a] (n = 255) n (%)	Non-identifiers[a] (n = 239) n (%)
Frequencies for the NSEI Behavior Specific Questions[b]		
1. Has anyone ever inserted objects, fingers, or genitals into your anus/butt against your will?		
Yes	102 (40.0)[a]	53 (22.2)[b]
No	153 (60.0)[a]	186 (77.8)[b]
2. Has anyone ever inserted your genitals or fingers into their vagina or anus/butt against your will?		
Yes	8 (3.1)[a]	10 (4.2)[a]
No	247 (96.9)[a]	229 (95.8)[a]
3. Has anyone ever made you have oral sex against your will (either giving or receiving)?		
Yes	131 (51.4)[a]	78 (32.6)[b]
No	124 (48.6)[a]	161 (67.4)[b]
4. Has anyone ever fondled your breasts or genitals against your will OR made you fondle their breasts or genitals against your will?		
Yes	180 (70.6)[a]	133 (55.6)[b]
No	75 (29.4)[a]	106 (44.4)[b]
5. Other than the events already mentioned, are there any other sexual experiences that occurred against your will?		
Yes	49 (19.2)[a]	33 (13.8)[a]
No	206 (80.8)[a]	206 (86.2)[a]
Frequencies of NSE Characteristics		
Identification Labels[b]		
Sexual Abuse	185 (72.5)	–
Sexual Assault	168 (65.9)	–
Rape	94 (36.9)	–
Developmental Stage of NSE Onset[c]		
Pre-Puberty	141 (55.3)[a]	31 (13.0)[b]
Post-Puberty & Pre-Consensual	51 (20.0)[a]	65 (27.2)[a]
Post-Consensual	45 (17.6)[a]	120 (50.2)[b]
Missing	18 (7.1)[a]	23 (9.6)[a]
Penetrative NSE[d]		
Yes	183 (71.8)[a]	119 (49.8)[b]
No	72 (28.2)[a]	120 (50.2)[b]

Alphabetical superscripts are used to denote significant and non-significant differences in frequencies between groups, significant differences are $p < .001$.

[a]Identifiers are those men who identified with the sexual violence labels of "sexual abuse," "rape," or "sexual assault" and non-identifiers are those who did not identify with any of those labels.

[b]The NSEI behavior-specific questions and the categories for the Identification labels are not mutually exclusive as many individuals reported multiple forms of NSEs and endorsed multiple labels.

[c]Developmental stage of NSE onset was calculated by determining where the age of their first NSE, as reported on the NSEI follow-up questions, occurred in relation to the developmental indicators of first consensual sex and the beginning of puberty, as assessed in the demographic survey.

[d]Penetrative NSEs included experiencing nonconsensual anal penetration or oral sex (giving or receiving).

Researchers monitored the numbers of men with NSEs who both did and did not identify along with those without NSEs participating in the study. When those without NSEs reached 300, we implemented a screener that screened men out of the study if they did not have NSEs and continued recruitment. When those who did not identify their NSEs with sexual violence labels reached 300, we implemented a screener to screen out those who did not endorse sexual violence labels and continued recruitment until reaching 300 men with NSEs who identified with sexual violence labels. All recruitment posts and information remained the same for all participants.

Interested participants were directed to a Qualtrics platform survey that linked to a consent form detailing the purpose, risks, and benefits of the study, as well as participants' rights and data confidentiality. As part of a larger survey, all consenting participants proceeded to the demographics survey, followed by the self-report measures of NSE history, sexual shame, and sexual excitation and inhibition propensities. Participants who completed at least 50% of the full study and correctly responded to at least four out of seven attention-check items (e.g., "For this question, please select Strongly Agree") were compensated for their participation. Participants were also provided with a debriefing form further explaining the purpose of the study and providing online resources for sexual concerns and sexual trauma. The final sample of 776 men excluded those who missed any of the attention-check items or who were missing more than 10% of their data on a given measure. Individuals who identified with the sexual violence labels but did not report any NSEs on the NSEI were excluded from analyses due to a lack of information about their NSEs (n = 20, not included in the current sample). All procedures were reviewed and approved by the institution's ethical review board for research conducted with human subjects.

Data Analysis

Missing Data

Those participants who had less than 10% of their data missing had their total scores for the respective scale or subscale calculated based on available data. As such, none of the variables included in the analyses had missing data for the retained sample.

NSE Groups and Characteristics

Participants were grouped based on NSE history and identification status. Individuals who did not report any NSEs on the NSEI were considered men with no NSE histories. Individuals who reported

an NSE on the NSEI were considered having an NSE history, including those who endorsed an "other" NSE in the open-ended question. Their descriptions were reviewed to ensure they were describing an NSE and, in the current study, all participants who endorsed this item did detail an NSE. Of those with NSE histories, individuals who identified with the sexual violence labels of "sexual abuse," "sexual assault," or "rape" were considered NSE identifiers, while those who did not identify with these labels were considered non-identifiers. This resulted in three groups: identifiers, non-identifiers, and those with no NSE histories. Frequencies were also assessed for the various characteristics of the men's NSEs by identification status as displayed in Table 2.

Data Management

Parametric variables (KISS and SESII-W/M) were assessed to determine if the sample distribution was significantly different from normal. This was determined by skewness and kurtosis values being beyond 1.5 standard errors away from 0, as well as by visually inspecting histograms of these data. Six of the seven continuous variables were significantly skewed such that KISS total scores, inhibitory cognitions, and relationship importance were positively skewed and arousability, partner characteristics, and dyadic elements were negatively skewed. Skewness values for the SESII-W/M subscales ranged from −0.395 to 0.278 with a standard error 0.083, and kurtosis values ranged from −0.845 to −0.066 with a standard error of 0.165. The skewness and kurtosis values for the KISS scores were 0.293 (0.083) and −0.794 (0.165), respectively. In order to address the non-normality of these data, analyses were run using bootstrapping procedures for 1000 simulations. All of the SESII-W/M subscale and KISS total score variables were standardized prior to analysis. The descriptive information for the unstandardized variables are presented in Table 3. Bivariate relationships for the continuous variables are reported in Table 4.

Covariates

As between-group differences in demographic variables yielded a number of differences that could theoretically be confounds in the analyses (e.g., same-sex attraction and behavior, history of sex therapy), we controlled for these effects by including these covariates in all analyses. We also included participant age given that participant age is often implicated in sexual outcomes (e.g., Araujo, Mohr, & McKinlay, 2004; Bell & Reissing, 2017).

Analyses of Covariance

In order to assess for differences between our three groups in the standardized SESII-W/M subscale and the KISS total score variables were entered as dependent variables in a series of analysis of covariance analyses in which our grouping variable was included as a predictor along with the covariates. The variable was coded such that those with no NSEs were coded as 0, non-identifiers were coded as 1, and identifiers were coded as 2. When the grouping variable was significant in the model, between-group differences with further assessed with linear contrasts for pairwise comparisons.

Multiple Regression Analyses

In order to assess the relationship of sexual shame with sexual excitation and inhibition propensities differentially across the groups, we employed multiple regression analyses with interaction terms using maximum likelihood estimation. Analyses were run using MPlus (Muthén & Muthên, 2010). The dependent variables were allowed to covary in the model resulting in a fully saturated model. Using those with no NSEs as the reference group, identifiers and non-identifiers were entered into the model as two separate dummy coded variables. These variables were coded for their respective groups with 1s and both other groups with 0s. The model had the standardized SESII-W/M subscales regressed on the standardized KISS scores, as well as the dummy coded group variables and their

Table 3. Descriptive information of the unstandardized SESII-W/M subscales and KISS by group (N = 776).

	Identifiers (n = 255)			Non-identifiers (n = 239)			No NSEs (n = 282)		
		95% CIs			95% CIs			95% CIs	
Variable	M (SD)	LL	UL	M (SD)	LL	UL	M (SD)	LL	UL
Sexual Shame	59.83 (21.82)	57.14	62.52	55.84 (19.56)	53.35	58.33	43.37 (19.14)	41.13	45.61
Inhibitory Cognitions	2.11 (0.77)	2.01	2.20	2.13 (0.75)	2.04	2.23	1.82 (0.70)	1.74	1.90
Relationship Importance	2.31 (0.76)	2.22	2.41	2.23 (0.69)	2.14	2.32	2.17 (0.73)	2.08	2.25
Arousability	2.87 (0.67)	2.79	2.95	2.91 (0.61)	2.83	2.99	2.72 (0.64)	2.64	2.79
Partner Characteristics	2.72 (0.69)	2.64	2.81	2.73 (0.66)	2.65	2.82	2.54 (0.65)	2.46	2.61
Setting	2.60 (0.67)	2.52	2.69	2.66 (0.66)	2.58	2.75	2.59 (0.66)	2.51	2.67
Dyadic Elements	2.67 (0.79)	2.57	2.77	2.69 (0.68)	2.61	2.78	2.45 (0.75)	2.36	2.53

CIs = confidence intervals; LL = lower limit of the confidence interval; UL = upper limit of the confidence interval.

Table 4. Bivariate relationships between the SESII-W/M subscale scores and KISS total scores (N = 776).

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Inhibitory Cognitions	1.000	.380***	.052	.080*	-.216***	.394***	.611***
2. Relationship Importance		1.000	-.256***	.058	-.366***	.420***	.245***
3. Arousability			1.000	.368***	.277***	.097***	.123**
4. Partner Characteristics				1.000	.153***	.233***	.125***
5. Setting					1.000	-.233***	-.114**
6. Dyadic Elements						1.000	.240***
7. Sexual Shame							1.000

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Correlation coefficients were assessed with Pearson's r correlations and two-tailed tests of significance. Variables 1 through 6 are the SESII-W/M subscale scores and variable 7 is the KISS total score.

interactions with KISS scores. The differences in effects between identifiers and non-identifiers were mathematically calculated outside of the model, both for the difference in the effect of KISS scores predicting the SESII-W/M subscales and the main effects of sexual shame within identifiers and non-identifiers.

Results

NSE History and Characteristics

Although we recruited for equal groups of identifiers (n = 255) and non-identifiers (n = 239), the degree of identification with the various sexual violence labels varied. While just less than three quarters of identifiers identified their NSEs with the sexual abuse label (72.5%), approximately only one third identified with the rape label (36.9%), with the sexual assault label falling between the other two at 65.9% endorsement. While many men reported multiple types of NSEs, 71.8% of identifiers and 49.8% of non-identifiers had experienced at least one penetrative NSE. Characteristics of the NSEs of the current sample are reported in Table 2.

Multiple Regression Analyses

H1 and H2: Mean Differences in Sexual Shame and Sexual Excitation/Inhibition between the Three Groups

Both identifiers and non-identifiers demonstrated greater average scores on the Inhibitory Cognitions, Arousability, Partner Characteristics, and Dyadic Elements subscales than did those with no NSEs. Additionally both identifiers and non-identifiers reported greater levels of sexual shame than did men with no NSE histories. No significant mean differences were observed between identifiers and non-identifiers on any of the variables. The results of this model are reported in Table 5.

H3: The Role of Sexual Shame in Sexual Excitation and Inhibition

Greater sexual shame significantly predicted higher Inhibitory Cognition, Relationship Importance, and Dyadic Elements subscale scores for all three groups. Greater sexual shame scores were also associated with lower Setting scores for non-identifiers and those with no NSEs. Additionally, sexual shame had a significant positive association with Arousability for identifiers and those with no NSEs, but no significant relationship with Arousability for non-identifiers. The results of the fully saturated model are presented in Table 6.

H4: Differences in the Role of Sexual Shame in Sexual Excitation and Inhibition Across the Three Groups

The regression model containing the interactions to test the moderation effect of NSE history and identification status on the relationship between sexual shame and sexual excitation and inhibition domains demonstrated a significant moderation effect for group (no NSEs, non-identifiers, identifiers) on the Arousability subscale. For both identifiers and those with no NSEs sexual shame had a significantly stronger positive association with Arousability than the relationship between the variables for non-identifiers. These results are shown in Table 6.

Discussion

Sexual shame is an under-researched area in the development and maintenance of sexual concerns in men. The current study examined differences in sexual shame and sexual excitation and inhibition response propensities between identifiers, non-identifiers, and those with no NSE histories. Additionally, the study examined the role of NSE history and identification status in the relationship between sexual shame and these sexual response propensities.

In support of our first hypothesis, both identifiers and non-identifiers demonstrated greater sexual inhibition (i.e., inhibiting cognitions and dyadic elements that impact inhibition) and excitation propensities (i.e., ease of arousability, partner characteristics contributing to excitation) than those with no NSEs. This is in line with previous research that has found both compulsive and avoidant sexual behaviors in men with NSE histories (Vaillancourt-Morel et al., 2015), and broader research connecting sexual trauma to both hypo- and hypersexual tendencies (e.g., Noll, Trickett, & Putnam, 2003). While the pathways through which these seemingly contrasting sexual trajectories occur are unknown, the current findings may point in the direction of the dual control model. As both increases in excitation and decreases in inhibition are involved in a sexual response (Bancroft et al., 2009), the higher levels of both excitation and inhibition responses in men with NSE histories in comparison to those without NSEs may be indicative of an internal struggle for both hypo- and hypersexual tendencies.

In support of our second hypothesis, both identifiers and non-identifiers reported more sexual shame than did those with no NSE histories. This suggests that NSE histories, regardless of identification, are associated with elevated sexual shame in men. Research has previously demonstrated the connection between NSEs and shame (Weiss, 2010) and the current study extends these findings to sex-specific shame. Finkelhor and Browne (1985) theorized that NSEs can create shameful and traumatic associations with sexuality and the current study's findings provide preliminary evidence for the theory that NSEs may add to individuals' sexual shame.

In partial support of our third hypothesis, sexual shame significantly predicted three domains of sexual inhibition for all of the men, regardless of NSE history or identification status (Inhibitory Cognitions, Relationship Importance, Dyadic Elements). While Feiring et al. (2009) demonstrated the role of NSE-related shame in sexual concerns, the current study provides empirical support for the role of sex-specific shame in the maintenance and development of greater inhibitory sexual response propensities in men. This is consistent with Nobre and Pinto-Gouveia's (2008) findings that feelings of shame during sexual activity were significantly associated with inhibiting cognitions during sex and lower levels of sexual response in men. These findings indicate that sexual shame may be an important treatment target for reducing sexual inhibition responses in men.

Sexual shame was not significantly associated with partner characteristic-induced excitation for any of the men and only predicted ease of arousability and excitation from novel sexual contexts in some groups. It is unclear why sexual shame predicted for lower Setting scores non-identifiers and those with no NSEs,

Table 5. Results from the analyses of covariance for group differences on the standardized SESII-W/M subscale scores and KISS total scores (N = 776).

Variables	F[1]	p-value	$_p\eta^2$
Inhibitory Cognitions			
Age	0.97	0.325	0.002
Same-Sex Attraction	0.01	0.926	0.008
Same-Sex Behavior	0.15	0.703	0.001
Sex Therapy History	11.44	0.008	0.022
Group[2]	11.19	0.009	0.014
Relationship Importance			
Age	1.94	0.164	0.002
Same-Sex Attraction	1.22	0.270	0.000
Same-Sex Behavior	1.34	0.247	0.002
Sex Therapy History	0.33	0.566	0.002
Group[2]	3.85	0.050	0.005
Arousability			
Age	1.16	0.282	0.001
Same-Sex Attraction	0.12	0.731	0.001
Same-Sex Behavior	0.10	0.753	0.000
Sex Therapy History	0.41	0.521	0.002
Group[2]	6.50	0.011	0.008
Partner Characteristics			
Age	1.72	0.190	0.003
Same-Sex Attraction	2.25	0.134	0.013
Same-Sex Behavior	0.43	0.513	0.000
Sex Therapy History	0.36	0.551	0.000
Group[2]	7.04	0.008	0.009
Setting			
Age	0.87	0.353	0.001
Same-Sex Attraction	0.21	0.648	0.000
Same-Sex Behavior	0.12	0.734	0.000
Sex Therapy History	0.10	0.756	0.000
Group[2]	0.08	0.771	0.000
Dyadic Elements			
Age	0.11	0.740	0.000
Same-Sex Attraction	0.56	0.456	0.008
Same-Sex Behavior	1.74	0.187	0.003
Sex Therapy History	1.24	0.263	0.004
Group[2]	7.17	0.008	0.009
Sexual Shame			
Age	8.46	0.004	0.015
Same-Sex Attraction	0.43	0.513	0.036
Same-Sex Behavior	0.00	0.969	0.001
Sex Therapy History	39.18	<0.001	0.075
Group[2]	52.33	<0.001	0.064
	B (SE)[4]	t[1]	p-value
Pairwise Comparisons for Significant Group Differences			
Inhibitory Cognitions[3]			
No NSEs – Non-identifiers	-0.38 (0.09)	-4.39	<0.001
No NSEs – Identifiers	-0.30 (0.09)	-3.34	0.001
Non-identifiers – Identifiers	0.10 (0.09)	1.03	0.303
Relationship Importance[3]			
No NSEs – Non-identifiers	-0.07 (0.09)	-0.78	0.438
No NSEs – Identifiers	-0.18 (0.09)	-1.86	0.064
Non-identifiers – Identifiers	-0.11 (0.09)	-1.13	0.258
Arousability[3]			
No NSEs – Non-identifiers	-0.32 (0.09)	-3.65	<0.001
No NSEs – Identifiers	-0.21 (0.09)	-2.18	0.030
Non-identifiers – Identifiers	0.07 (0.09)	0.77	0.443
Partner Characteristics[3]			
No NSEs – Non-identifiers	-0.28 (0.09)	-3.15	0.002
No NSEs – Identifiers	-0.24 (0.09)	-2.60	0.010
Non-identifiers – Identifiers	0.05 (0.09)	0.52	0.605
Dyadic Elements[3]			
No NSEs – Non-identifiers	-0.31 (0.09)	-3.63	<0.001
No NSEs – Identifiers	-0.23 (0.10)	-2.44	0.015
Non-identifiers – Identifiers	0.08 (0.09)	0.91	0.364
Sexual Shame[3]			
No NSEs – Non-identifiers	-0.51 (0.08)	-6.45	<0.001
No NSEs – Identifiers	-0.60 (0.09)	-6.95	<0.001
Non-identifiers – Identifiers	-0.09 (0.09)	-1.01	0.312

[a]Degrees of freedom for the F-test for the three group models were 1, 770; degrees of freedom for the t-tests for the pairwise comparison models are 515 for the No NSEs to Non-identifiers group comparisons, 531 for the No NSEs to Identifiers group comparisons, and 488 for the Non-identifiers to Identifiers group comparisons.

[b]The group variable in the three group models was coded such that the No NSEs group was 0, the Non-identifiers group was 1, and the Identifiers group was 2.

[c]For the pairwise comparisons the group on the left was coded as the reference group (0) while the group on the right was coded as 1.

[d]Linear contrast coefficient estimates for between group comparisons.

Table 6. Model results for the moderation models of the six standardized SESII-W/M subscale scores on standardized KISS scores, dummy coded group variables and their interactions (N = 776).

Independent Variable:[2]	β (*SE*)	95% CI for β LL	95% CI for β UL	*p*-value
Dependent Variable: Inhibitory Cognitions Total R^2 = 0.380				
Intercept	0.02 (0.05)	-0.08	0.12	0.675
Age	0.03 (0.03)	-0.03	0.08	0.352
Same-Sex Attraction	-0.06 (0.09)	-0.24	0.12	0.522
Same-Sex Behavior	0.05 (0.10)	-0.14	0.23	0.623
Sex Therapy History	-0.01 (0.10)	-0.20	0.18	0.903
KISS	0.65 (0.05)	0.56	0.75	<0.001
Identifiers	-0.08 (0.08)	-0.23	0.07	0.291
Non-identifiers	0.05 (0.07)	-0.10	0.19	0.520
KISS X Identifiers	-0.08 (0.07)	-0.21	0.06	0.261
KISS X Non-identifiers	0.01 (0.07)	-0.14	0.15	0.905
Differences between Identifiers & Non-identifiers:[3]				
Slope difference	-0.09 (0.07)	-0.23	0.06	0.241
Main effects of KISS within Non-identifiers & Identifiers:[3]				
Identifiers	0.57 (0.05)	0.47	0.68	<0.001
Non-identifiers	0.66 (0.06)	0.55	0.77	<0.001
Dependent Variable: Relationship Importance Total R^2 = 0.065				
Intercept	0.03 (0.06)	-0.09	0.14	0.658
Age	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.10	0.04	0.445
Same-Sex Attraction	-0.13 (0.11)	-0.35	0.08	0.230
Same-Sex Behavior	0.12 (0.11)	-0.10	0.34	0.287
Sex Therapy History	-0.10 (0.11)	-0.31	0.12	0.375
KISS	0.26 (0.06)	0.14	0.38	<0.001
Identifiers	0.03 (0.09)	-0.15	0.21	0.739
Non-identifiers	-0.06 (0.08)	-0.23	0.10	0.457
KISS X Identifiers	-0.02 (0.09)	-0.21	0.15	0.781
KISS X Non-identifiers	0.00 (0.09)	-0.18	0.19	0.965
Differences between Identifiers & Non-identifiers:[3]				
Slope difference	-0.03 (0.10)	-0.22	0.16	0.761
Main effects of KISS within Non-identifiers & Identifiers:[3]				
Identifiers	0.24 (0.07)	0.10	0.38	0.001
Non-identifiers	0.27 (0.07)	0.13	0.41	<0.001
Dependent Variable: Arousability Total R^2 = 0.040				
Intercept	-0.12 (0.06)	-0.23	-0.01	0.029
Age	0.05 (0.04)	-0.02	0.12	0.166
Same-Sex Attraction	-0.04 (0.11)	-0.25	0.17	0.698
Same-Sex Behavior	0.03 (0.11)	-0.17	0.24	0.752
Sex Therapy History	0.01 (0.11)	-0.19	0.22	0.891
KISS	0.13 (0.06)	0.02	0.24	0.026
Identifiers	0.12 (0.09)	-0.06	0.29	0.194
Non-identifiers	0.26 (0.08)	0.10	0.43	0.002
KISS X Identifiers	0.08 (0.09)	-0.10	0.25	0.377
KISS X Non-identifiers	-0.20 (0.10)	-0.39	-0.01	0.036
Difference between Identifiers & Non-identifiers:[3]				
Slope difference	0.28 (0.10)	0.09	0.47	0.004
Main effects of KISS within Non-identifiers & Identifiers:[3]				
Identifiers	0.21 (0.07)	0.08	0.33	0.001
Non-identifiers	-0.08 (0.08)	-0.23	0.08	0.326
Dependent Variable: Partner Characteristics Total R^2 = 0.038				
Intercept	-0.12 (0.06)	-0.22	-0.01	0.036
Age	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.10	0.03	0.289
Same-Sex Attraction	0.15 (0.11)	-0.06	0.37	0.169
Same-Sex Behavior	-0.07 (0.11)	-0.29	0.16	0.556
Sex Therapy History	-0.12 (0.11)	-0.33	0.10	0.294
KISS	0.08 (0.06)	-0.04	0.20	0.198
Identifiers	0.17 (0.09)	-0.02	0.35	0.076
Non-identifiers	0.23 (0.09)	0.06	0.41	0.010
KISS X Identifiers	0.07 (0.09)	-0.11	0.25	0.438
KISS X Non-identifiers	-0.06 (0.10)	-0.25	0.13	0.546
Difference between Identifiers & Non-identifiers:[3]				
Slope difference	0.13 (0.10)	-0.07	0.33	0.196
Main effects of KISS within Non-identifiers & Identifiers:[3]				
Identifiers	0.15 (0.07)	0.01	0.29	0.039
Non-identifiers	0.02 (0.08)	-0.14	0.17	0.822
Dependent Variable: Setting Total R^2 = 0.029				
Intercept	-0.11 (0.06)	-0.22	0.01	0.069
Age	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.12	0.02	0.195
Same-Sex Attraction	0.06 (0.10)	-0.14	0.26	0.569
Same-Sex Behavior	-0.04 (0.10)	-0.24	0.17	0.735
Sex Therapy History	0.06 (0.11)	-0.15	0.27	0.580
KISS	-0.16 (0.06)	-0.29	-0.04	0.011
Identifiers	0.09 (0.09)	-0.10	0.27	0.348
Non-identifiers	0.21 (0.09)	0.04	0.38	0.018
KISS X Identifiers	0.10 (0.09)	-0.08	0.29	0.271
KISS X Non-identifiers	-0.10 (0.10)	-0.29	0.10	0.330
Difference between Identifiers & Non-identifiers:[3]				
Slope difference	0.20 (0.10)	-0.00	0.40	0.054

(*Continued*)

Table 6. (Continued).

Independent Variable:[2]	β (*SE*)	95% CI for β		*p*-value
		LL	UL	
Main effects of KISS within Non-identifiers & Identifiers:[3]				
Identifiers	-0.06 (0.08)	-0.21	0.09	0.432
Non-identifiers	-0.26 (0.08)	-0.41	-0.11	0.001
Dependent Variable: Dyadic Elements Total R^2 = 0.068				
Intercept	-0.10 (0.06)	-0.21	0.01	0.072
Age	0.01 (0.03)	-0.05	0.08	0.726
Same-Sex Attraction	-0.10 (0.11)	-0.31	0.11	0.353
Same-Sex Behavior	0.15 (0.11)	-0.07	0.36	0.173
Sex Therapy History	-0.00 (0.10)	-0.20	0.19	0.977
KISS	0.20 (0.06)	0.08	0.32	0.001
Identifiers	0.11 (0.09)	-0.08	0.29	0.256
Non-identifiers	0.21 (0.08)	0.04	0.37	0.014
KISS X Identifiers	0.03 (0.10)	-0.17	0.22	0.794
KISS X Non-identifiers	-0.00 (0.10)	-0.19	0.19	0.996
Difference between Identifiers & Non-identifiers:[3]				
Slope difference	0.03 (0.10)	-0.18	0.23	0.796
Main effects of KISS within Non-identifiers & Identifiers:[3]				
Identifiers	0.23 (0.08)	0.07	0.38	0.004
Non-identifiers	0.20 (0.07)	0.06	0.34	0.005

α = .05.

[a]All models were run with bootstrapping procedures on 1000 simulations.

[b]The group status variables were dummy coded with those with no NSE histories as the reference group so the main effects of the KISS presented in the table should be interpreted as the main effects of sexual shame on the SESII-W/M subscale within the no NSEs group. The non-identifiers and identifiers variables were dummy coded for the respective group with 1s and both other groups with 0s such that the effects of dummy coded variable "Identifiers" or "Non-identifiers" presented in the table are the mean differences between that group and the no NSE group while the interaction of the KISS and non-identifiers or identifiers is the difference in the effect between that group and those with no NSEs.

[c]The difference in effects between identifiers and non-identifiers as well as the main effects within non-identifiers and identifiers were mathematically calculated outside of the model.

but not identifiers. Further research on arousal response propensities in novel settings may help clarify these findings. The positive association of sexual shame with Arousability scores for identifiers and those with no NSEs may reflect a relationship of shame with one's ease of arousability. Indeed, research has suggested that more hypersexual tendencies are associated with greater shame (Reid, Temko, Moghaddam, & Fong, 2014). As the SESII-W/M Arousability subscale includes items that tap into an inability to prevent arousal (e.g., "Sometimes I am so attracted to someone, I cannot stop myself from becoming sexually aroused."; Milhausen et al., 2010), it may be that greater sexual shame is experienced with less arousal control for these groups of men.

We had hypothesized that sexual shame would differentially predict sexual excitation and inhibition across NSE history and identification status. Yet, our moderation analyses suggested only one significant moderating effect on the relationships of sexual shame with the domains of excitation and inhibition. The stronger positive association of sexual shame with arousability for identifiers and those with no NSEs than non-identifiers indicates that part of the cognitive-affective process of not identifying one's experiences with sexual violence labels may be predictive of less shameful associations with the ease of arousability. Finkelhor and Browne (1985) proposed that NSEs create traumatic associations with sexuality, which leads to potentially confusing pairings of sexual and trauma responses. The different relationship of sexual shame with arousability for identifiers and non-identifiers may be indicative of different traumatic associations with sexuality, which may provide some insight into variation in sexual outcomes for those with NSEs. For instance, the association of sexual shame with arousability for identifiers may be predictive of more hyposexual tendencies, while the lack of association between shame and arousability for non-identifiers may be predictive of more hypersexual tendencies. Alternatively, previous research on women's identification of their NSEs and their sexual self-schemas demonstrated that the NSEs were more prominent in the schemas of identifiers than non-identifiers, which in turn predicted decrements in sexual functioning (Kilimnik et al., 2018). Perhaps the relationship of sexual shame with arousability for identifiers is related to a greater association of one's NSEs with one's sexual self. Evidently, sexual shame plays an important role in the sexual excitation and inhibition propensities of men, though further examination of these nuanced group differences may help illuminate moderators for the effectiveness of shame-targeting treatment interventions.

The current study was not without limitations. Due to the cross-sectional nature of this study, the directionality of the relationship between NSEs and sexual shame cannot be addressed. Prospective longitudinal studies would be better suited to examine the trajectory of sexual shame across lifetime experiences with sexuality. Future research could also expand on the current study by recruiting a more diverse sample. Notably, our sample was predominantly White and identified as heterosexual. As such, we are unable to generalize these results outside of this population.

Further, the recruitment post called for participants for a study of consensual and nonconsensual sexual experiences and sexual well-being. This may have resulted in a self-selection bias of our sample, such that men who had more salient concerns of the connection between their NSEs and sexuality may have more readily participated in the study than individuals who did not view a connection between their experiences and their sexual well-being.

The current analyses did not assess a variety of NSE characteristics (e.g., fear at the time of the NSE) or other attitudinal

measures (e.g., rape myth acceptance) that may play a role in sexual shame and its relationship to NSEs and sexual adjustment. To preliminarily address this limitation, the supplemental analyses to the current manuscript explored differences between identifiers and non-identifiers in the relationship of sexual shame and sexual excitation and inhibition propensities while controlling for some NSE characteristics (see online supplemental materials). Notably, Young, Riggs, and Robinson (2011) found that certain NSE characteristics, such as whether or not they were penetrative, were only minimally associated with NSE related feelings of fear, shame, or humiliation. The authors suggested that NSE characteristics alone might not be good indicators of NSE severity or outcome.

Another limitation of the current study was the lack of information about NSE perpetrator gender and how that may interact with sexual identity to foster feelings of emasculation and shame, as well as processes of NSE identification. For instance, men with NSEs with perpetrators of a gender inconsistent with their sexual orientation may struggle with intersectional discourses of masculinity and sexual orientation that could have further sociocultural barriers deterring NSE identification. Walker et al. (2012) highlighted the important intersectional considerations of trauma, gender, and sexual orientation, such that belonging to multiple identities and marginalized groups may exacerbate NSE correlates such as social isolation and shame. Therefore, it seems particularly important for clinicians to discuss sexual shame in the context of sexual trauma with sexual minority men.

Holmes, Offen, and Waller (1997) have previously discussed the importance of clinicians and therapists being aware of the pervasiveness of men's experiences with NSEs and fostering a therapeutic climate that encourages disclosure. As non-identifiers and identifiers did not significantly differ on sexual shame or sexual excitation and inhibition propensities, it is critical that clinicians and service providers consider the language they use in the discussion of NSEs and assessing sexual trauma history, especially given that fewer non-identifiers than identifiers reported a history of therapy for sexual concerns.

Research has pointed toward the importance of counteracting shame in the psychological treatment of men with NSE histories (DeCou et al., 2017; Feiring et al., 2009). The current research extends this work and provides empirical support for the consideration of sexual shame as a further target for intervention in the treatment of men with NSE histories. As shame is a socially learned affective state, disentangling shame and trauma from one's sexual narrative may be a useful clinical tool for increasing sexual well-being in men with NSE histories.

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