The Influences of Sexualization on the Experiences of Immigrant Adolescent Girls

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April, 2018

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

of Doctor of Philosophy in School/Applied Child Psychology

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Abstract

The sexualization of girls and women in North America has become an increasing concern for the general public over the past several decades, a phenomenon which has led to damaging physical, cognitive, and psychological consequences (e.g., Zurbriggen, Collins, Lamb, Roberts, Tolman, Ward, & Blake, 2007; 2010). Although scholars have extensively explored the impact of sexualization on girls and women in general, little is known about how immigrant adolescent girls in particular experience, and are influenced by, sexualization. Thus, this qualitative study explored the meaning that young immigrant women made of their lived experiences with sexualization during their adolescence. Participants were 12 women ages 20 to 25, who immigrated to Canada between the ages of 9 and 12, and who were influenced by, or experienced, sexualization throughout adolescence. A feminist social constructionist epistemology and a phenomenological methodology were employed. Semi-structured interviews completed with the participants were transcribed, and subsequently analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The results illustrated that immigrant adolescent girls' experiences were influenced both directly and indirectly through sociocultural and interpersonal means, thereby shaping their attitudes around dating and sex and negatively influencing their mental health and well-being, both in adolescence and young adulthood. Discourses emerged from participants' accounts, which suggested that the sexualization of immigrant adolescent girls is perpetuated by narrow social expectations for the gendered appearance and behaviour of females. Implications for research, as well as clinical practice for school psychologists, are presented.

Keywords: sexualization; immigrant; adolescence; girls

Résumé

La sexualisation des filles et des femmes en Amérique du Nord est devenue une préoccupation croissante pour le grand public au cours des dernières décennies, un phénomène qui a entraîné des conséquences graves sur le plan physique, cognitif et psychologique (p. ex. Zurbriggen, Collins, Lamb, Roberts, Tolman, Ward et Blake, 2007; 2010). Bien que les chercheurs aient largement exploré l'impact de la sexualisation sur les filles et les femmes en général, on en sait peu sur la manière dont les adolescentes immigrantes, en particulier, subissent et sont influencées par la sexualisation. Ainsi, cette étude qualitative a exploré le sens que les jeunes immigrantes ont donné à leurs expériences vécues avec la sexualisation durant leur adolescence. Les participantes étaient 12 femmes âgées de 20 à 25 ans, qui ont immigré au Canada entre l'âge de 9 et 12 ans et qui ont été influencées par, ou ont vécu des expériences de sexualisation au cours de l'adolescence. Une épistémologie constructionniste sociale féministe et une méthodologie phénoménologique ont été utilisées. Les entrevues semi-structurées complétées avec les participantes ont été transcrites, puis analysées à l'aide de l'analyse phénoménologique interprétative. Les résultats ont montré que les expériences des adolescentes immigrantes ont été influencées directement et indirectement par des moyens socioculturels et interpersonnels, façonnant ainsi leurs attitudes par rapport aux relations émotionnelles et sexuelles et ayant une influence négative sur leur santé mentale et leur bien-être à l'adolescence et comme jeune adulte. Certains discours des participants suggèrent que la sexualisation des adolescentes immigrantes est perpétuée par des attentes sociales étroites quant à l'apparence et au comportement sexués des femmes. Les implications pour la recherche, ainsi que pour la pratique clinique des psychologues scolaires, sont présentées.

Mots-clés: sexualisation; immigrant; adolescence; filles

Acknowledgements

Completing this dissertation would not have been possible without the support of a number of individuals. First and foremost, I am extremely grateful to Dr. Ada Sinacore for being an exemplary supervisor and truly caring for my personal and professional development over the course of my doctorate. I am very appreciative of the time you have given me, the meaningful feedback you have provided, and your consistent encouragement throughout this process. This dissertation is a collaborative effort with you, and I am honoured to have been given the opportunity to work with, and learn so much, from you. Additionally, I would like to thank the other members of my doctoral committee: Dr. Jill Hanley, who also served on my doctoral defense committee and provided invaluable support and feedback, and Dr. Jessica Ruglis, for her helpful thoughts and questions, particularly during the planning stages of this study. I am also appreciative of the members of my defense committee, Dr. Chiaki Konishi, Dr. Ratna Ghosh, Dr. Bassam Khoury, and Dr. Stephanie Martin for their insightful questions and comments. Further, I wish to acknowledge the work of my colleagues, Shaofan Bu, for his tireless efforts as a peer reviewer for this study, and Marie-Michelle Boulanger, for her superb French translation skills. Thank you also to Dr. Steven Shaw for helping me achieve my dream of completing a doctorate by supporting my research and studies in the School/Applied Child Psychology program.

I am also grateful to the 12 young women who willingly shared their stories and experiences with me – this study would not have been possible without them.

This research was financially supported through a number of avenues, including a substantial doctoral research scholarship from the Fonds de Recherche du Québec – Société et Culture; the Margaret Gillett Graduate Research Award from the Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies at McGill University; and internal fellowships from the Department of

I would especially like to thank my wonderful friend, Susan Harrison, for not only opening up your home to me so I could write this dissertation in peace, but for your endless words of reassurance, your constant support throughout this year and the previous ten, and your thoughtful and compassionate nature that kept me grounded through this process. Thank you for the laughs and tears – you epitomize the word friend and I am eternally grateful for you. Je t'aime, bfPI. Thank you also to my momsie, Marilyn Garrett, for your never-ending support.

I have the most incredible family and with each passing year of my doctorate, I became more and more thankful for their love and encouragement. To my extended family, Victoria, Eugene, Leeza, and Daniella Khayutin, and Victoria and Hakim Ghanem, who were especially helpful as I completed my degree and provided unlimited meals, beds, laughs, and unconditional love. To Veronika Tisson, for showing me how much you care. To my three favourites, Netta, David, and Dan Khayutin, who are arguably the best siblings in the world and have made me stronger than I ever knew I could be, thank you for the love. The random visits and the copious amounts of Wis got me through.

Finally, the completion of this dissertation and my doctoral degree would not be possible without the love and support of my parents, Mila and Alex Khayutin. As new immigrants to Canada, you made numerous sacrifices so that your children could have multiple opportunities to pursue their dreams and live life without restrictions. You inspired me to think about how to help others and to give voices to individuals whose stories needed to be heard, just like I always wanted to hear about yours. Thank you for being shining examples of good parents; ones who ask questions, who are curious, who listen, and who show unwavering support for their children. This dissertation could not have been finished without your encouragement.

This dissertation is dedicated to you, Mama and Papa – I am nothing without your love.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

The sexualization of girls and women, and its consequences on cognitive, physical, and emotional functioning, has become an increasing concern for scholars examining sexualization and for the general public (Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). That is, researchers, psychologists, child advocacy groups, parents, and journalists have recognized that the sexualization of girls and young women is largely problematic. As such, the American Psychological Association (APA) initiated a Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls in 2005, and published a report describing psychological theory, research, and practice in order to address these concerns (Zurbriggen, Collins, Lamb, Roberts, Tolman, Ward, & Blake, 2007; 2010).

The Task Force report described that sexualization occurs through four possible avenues, in which: (a) an individual's value is determined only or primarily by sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics; (b) sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon an individual; (c) an individual is held to a standard that equates a narrow definition of attractiveness with "being sexy"; and (d) an individual is sexually objectified, made into a tool for others' sexual use and pleasure, rather than treated as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Roberts and Zurbriggen (2013) further noted that one or more of these conditions suggests sexualization.

Sexualization ensues through three interrelated spheres: sociocultural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Sociocultural influences, such as media, have been a strong focus in research, given the rise in media use in children and adolescents in general, and in young girls more specifically (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). Mass media has long depicted an extremely limited beauty ideal of women (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-

Dunn, 1999), leaving girls and women struggling to meet sociocultural standards of physical

attractiveness (Levine & Murnen, 2009). A variety of media sources, including but not limited

to, commercial and print advertising, magazines and books, television, movies, video and

computer games, music lyrics and videos, and the internet, have been documented in the extant

literature as purveyors of the beauty ideal and contributing to the sexualization of girls and

women. Additionally, although there is limited research, numerous examples exist of how

certain products, such as dolls, girls' clothing, and cosmetics, are marketed to girls in a

sexualized manner, thereby maintaining the sexualization of girls and women (Zurbriggen et al.,

2010).

Further, research has demonstrated that sexualization may be sustained through an

individual's interpersonal relationships. More specifically, a young girl may be influenced by

parents, teachers, and peers, who may implicitly or inadvertently convey societal messages of

sexualizing girls and women (e.g., Cooley, Toray, Wang, & Valdez, 2008; Parks & Kennedy,

2007). Moreover, more damaging forms of sexualization, including sexual harassment, abuse, or

assault, may be avenues in which individuals further contribute to the sexualization of girls and

women (e.g., Hill & Kearl, 2011; Lindberg, Grabe, & Hyde, 2007; Paludi & Kravitz, 2011).

Scholars have posited that girls should not be seen as passive recipients of sociocultural

and interpersonal messages regarding sexualization, but rather agents of self-sexualization

(Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). Self-sexualization is described as the act in which females define

themselves in terms of their appearance, equate sexiness with a narrow standard of

attractiveness, or engage in sexuality that is inappropriate for their age. The existing literature

has generally focused on *self-objectification*, or a tendency for girls and women to view

themselves and their bodies as objects of desire for others, and to treat themselves as objects to

be evaluated for their appearance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Indeed, research has shown that self-objectification is a more common practice for girls and women than for their male counterparts (Grabe, Hyde, & Lindberg, 2007; Clark & Tiggemann, 2006; 2007). For example, girls and women have been documented to show more self-objectifying behaviour through clothing choices (Hamilton, 2008) or online pictures on social media sites (Kapdizic & Herring, 2011; 2014). Some females have also been observed to "act out" in a sexually precocious manner, which is a common consequence after experiencing sexual abuse or sexualization (Letourneau, Schoenwald, & Sheidow, 2004; Zurbriggen et al., 2010).

In addition to the study of the three interrelated spheres in which sexualization transpires, scholars have documented the negative consequences of sexualization in girls and women. More specifically, the influences of sexualization have been shown to affect a variety of domains of an individual's functioning, such as cognitive and physical functioning (e.g., Fredrickson & Harrison, 2005; Gay & Castano, 2010; McKenny & Bigler, 2014), as well as physical health and activity (e.g., Carr & Szymanski, 2011; Lopez Khoury, Litvin, & Brandon, 2009; Slater & Tiggemann, 2011). Further, extant literature has revealed that conditions of sexualization, such as objectification, have led to a multitude of interrelated mental health difficulties, including negative emotions, body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, disordered eating, and depression or depressive episodes (e.g., Calogero, 2009; Grabe & Hyde, 2009; Rivadeneyra, Ward, & Gordon, 2007; Tiggemann & Slater, 2015). Sexualization has also been shown to lead to reduced sexual health (Impett, Schooler, & Tolman, 2006), engagement in risky sexual behaviour (Thompson, 2009), or confusion regarding sexual identity (Morgan & Thompson, 2009).

The existing research has provided pivotal information in order to improve the public's understanding of this phenomenon, particularly the damaging consequences on girls at an

increasingly younger age. However, there is a limited understanding of the way sexualization intersects with and is influenced by other identity variables, including immigration. Although the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls report called for a better understanding of the effects of sexualization on immigrant girls, a thorough search of the literature resulted in no research on the effects of sexualization on this particular population.

Further, the extant literature that focuses on challenges pertaining to immigrant youth rarely considers the challenges of adolescence resulting from sex differences, and often groups immigrant boys and girls together without studying unique challenges for each sex, rendering invisible differences. The few studies that do look at sex differences between immigrant boys and girls have mainly illuminated issues for immigrant girls with respect to gendered expectations at home and in school, risky behaviour and mental health, and sexual behaviour and dating practices, but have not examined challenges already identified as particularly salient for adolescent girls (e.g., body dissatisfaction) or mental health difficulties (e.g., eating disorders) that may affect an immigrant girl's adjustment to a new country.

Research Rationale and Purpose

The sexualization of girls and women is a significant issue in North American society; however, the influences of sexualization on the experiences of immigrant adolescent girls has scarcely been examined. That is, there is limited understanding of how young immigrant girls make sense of a North American culture that sexualizes girls and women through sociocultural and interpersonal means. Although immigrant adolescent girls may hold certain cultural values that keep them from engaging in sexual activity (e.g., Lalou & Piché), they also face the additional pressure of negotiating sexuality in a new context while simultaneously seeking peer acceptance and acculturating to a new country and school (Rafaelli, Kang, & Guarini, 2012). As

it stands, nearly 22 percent of the Canadian population is foreign born (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Given the significance of adolescence as a period of sexual development (Tolman & McLelland,

2011), and the risks associated with negotiating a highly sexualized North American culture, it is

imperative to understand how newly arrived adolescent girls make sense of sexualization in a

new context. In order to shield immigrant girls from the negative effects associated with

sexualization, it is essential to learn how they experience, and are influenced by, this

phenomenon. Therefore, the aim of this research study is to explore how young immigrant

women's experiences during adolescence were influenced by sexualization.

Research Questions

This research study proposed the following questions: (a) How do young immigrant

women construct their lived experiences with North American sexualization since adolescence?

(b) What meaning do young immigrant women derive from their experiences with sexualization

across time? (c) How do young immigrant women's sociocultural, interpersonal, and

intrapersonal contexts shape their experiences of sexualization? (d) What do young immigrant

women perceive are the needs of immigrant adolescent girls who are confronted with

sexualization?

Epistemology

This study utilized a feminist social constructionist (FSC) epistemology. FSC holds at its

foundation four main assumptions: (a) that multiple realities exist; (b) that knowledge is co-

constructed; (c) that experiences of oppression are real; and (d) and that gender is performed

(Gergen, 1985; Parton, 2003; Sprague, 2005). The underlying assumptions of FSC are well

matched for the exploration of the influences of sexualization on the experiences of immigrant

adolescent girls. The assumption that multiple realities exist lends to the recognition of the

experiences of immigrant adolescent girls as distinctive and meaningful in the extant sexualization research. Further, in line with the assumption that knowledge is co-constructed, sexualization should also be comprehended as a co-constructed process involving immigrant adolescent girls, and the many constituents involved, who all contribute to how sexualization is understood and experienced. Additionally, FSC's position of anti-oppression exposes assumptions related to ethnicity, culture, and gender, which marginalize immigrant adolescent victims of sexualization. The final assumption that gender is a verb, or a performative action, elucidates how sexualization is fundamentally linked to the societal construction of gender, and that failure to follow socially prescribed rules regarding appearance and behaviour may have negative psychological and social implications. Therefore, FSC epistemology strongly facilitates the examination of the influences of sexualization on immigrant adolescent girls, in relation to its potential to counter dominant discourses and to create a means for social change.

Methodology

A qualitative methodology was chosen to examine the influences of sexualization on the experiences of immigrant adolescent girls, given that qualitative research designs lend to a deeper understanding of individuals' personal experiences in order to glean meaning from these experiences (Morrow, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2005; Smith, 2015). Hermeneutic Phenomenology was employed to illuminate immigrant adolescent girls' unique experiences with sexualization. The approach of hermeneutic phenomenology allows for a richer and more detailed account of individuals' experiences of a specific phenomenon, and to elucidate trivial aspects that may be taken for granted, so as to make meaning and attain a better understanding of these experiences (Laverty, 2003). Data collected through semi-structured interviews was analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which involves a meticulous examination of

individuals' experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon in question (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). This analytical approach is consistent with the FSC epistemological framework of this study, which elucidates how individuals construct meaning from personal experiences and social interactions (Sprague, 2005). Therefore, IPA enabled the researcher to explore how participants experienced, or were influenced by, sexualization, and how their understanding of sexualization was influenced by multiple contexts.

Organization of the Dissertation

The organization of this dissertation is as follows: Chapter Two reviews the extant literature on the sexualization of girls and women, as well as its strengths and limitations, and provides a brief overview of the limited research on issues pertaining to immigrant girls. The rationale for this research study and the research questions are then presented. Chapter Three first discusses Feminist Social Constructionism and Hermeneutic Phenomenology, the epistemology and methodology selected for this research study, and then reviews the research procedure to carry out the study and explains Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, which was employed as the analytic method. In Chapter Four, the results of this study are revealed, and organized in the following manner: (a) parent expectations and rules; (b) expectations and rules in school; (c) access to information on sex and sexuality; (d) participants' experiences with dating and sex; and (e) consequences to mental health and well-being. Chapter Five begins with a discussion of the discourses that emerged from the results and reviews the main findings in relation to the existing literature and the epistemology of this study. Chapter Five concludes by presenting the study's scholarly contributions, implications for practice in school psychology, the overall strengths and limitations of this study, and future directions for research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

North American culture is inundated with sexual imagery across various mass media outlets, suggesting that sex and sexually appealing bodies play key roles within capitalist consumer culture. However, there has been increased concern and evidence over the last three decades with respect to sexuality being imposed on girls of a younger age. Thus, the sexualization of young females and its consequences has increasingly become a concern for the general public (Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). For example, a most infamous example of the sexualization of girls, which triggered public outcry, was the tragic murder of six-year-old JonBenét Ramsey, who was featured on many magazine and newspaper covers in beauty pageant apparel and makeup (Oppliger, 2008; Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). The JonBenét Ramsey story highlighted the expectations of girls participating in beauty pageant contests, such as wearing false eyelashes, hair extensions, and makeup, while parading themselves onstage, and yielded public concern over the effects of such sexualization. Presently, parents, psychologists, child advocacy groups, and journalists have acknowledged that the sexualization of girls specifically, and girlhood in general, is far more problematic than initially realized and extends well past beauty pageants.

Given these concerns, the American Psychological Association (APA) established a Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls in 2005, and published a report detailing psychological theory, research, and practice addressing these concerns (Zurbriggen, Collins, Lamb, Roberts, Tolman, Ward, & Blake, 2007; 2010). In addition, *The Sexualization of Girls and Girlhood* (Zurbriggen & Roberts, 2013) was published as a follow-up to the APA Task Force report. Using these publications as a foundation, the following literature review will outline the

definition of sexualization, the three spheres in which sexualization occurs, and the physical and mental health consequences on young girls and adolescents. Next, strengths and limitations of the literature on the sexualization of girls will be discussed.

Before beginning the discussion on sexualization, it is important to differentiate between *sex* and *gender*, as it pertains to the literature. According to Johnson and Repta (2012), sex is defined as a "biological construct that encapsulates the anatomical, physiological, genetic, and hormonal variation that exists in species" (p. 19). However, gender further builds on the concept of sex by giving meaning to sex differences. That is, gender is referred to "different roles, responsibilities, limitations, and experiences provided to individuals based on their presenting sex/health" (p. 21). Both sex and gender are multidimensional constructs and are socially constructed, as people create and assign individuals to them. They are temporally and culturally specific and are subject to change across time. Thus, for the purposes of this literature review and research study, these definitions of *sex* and *gender* will be used. It should be noted that both terms are used inconsistently within this area of research; therefore, every effort was made to use these terms consistently and to use them as they are represented in the literature.

Definition of Sexualization

As part of the APA Task Force report, Zurbriggen and colleagues (2010) differentiated sexualization from healthy sexuality. Specifically, these researchers appropriated the definition of healthy sexuality from the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS; 2004), and stated that when experienced or portrayed, healthy sexuality is demonstrated through intimacy, bonding, and shared pleasure, and also involves mutual respect between consenting partners. Similarly, the Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education

(Public Health Agency of Canada, 2003) denotes sexual health using the definition provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) and described the following:

> Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected, and fulfilled.

In contrast to healthy sexuality, Zurbriggen and colleagues (2010) outlined sexualization as occurring through four avenues, in which: (a) a person's value is determined only or primarily by sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics; (b) sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person; (c) a person is held to a standard that equates a narrow definition of attractiveness with "being sexy"; and (d) a person is sexually objectified; made into a tool for others' sexual use and pleasure, rather than treated as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). The presence of one or more of these conditions suggests sexualization (Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013).

Firstly, sexualization occurs when sexual appeal is believed to be the most valued trait of a young girl or woman, to the exclusion of other characteristics. Secondly, sexualization ensues when an individual is inappropriately imbued with sexuality. More specifically, young girls are viewed as possessing adult sexuality, while adult women are viewed as girlish, yet sexy (Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). Thirdly, sexualization transpires by holding females to a narrowly defined level of physical attractiveness, which is generally likened to being "sexy." Fourthly, sexual objectification is defined as the act of treating an individual as an instrument for sexual pleasure

(Bartky, 1990). Objectification occurs in interpersonal encounters, as well as in cultural

depictions, whereby the body is displayed as a decorative object in order to represent the entire

person, or in a "dismembered" fashion (where parts of the body are obscured or excluded)

(Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). Sexual objectification of girls and women has garnered the most

attention in extant research (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Each of these conditions is exemplified in

the three spheres of sexualization, which are discussed below.

Spheres of Sexualization

In the report released by the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (Zurbriggen et

al., 2010), the scholars posited that sexualization transpires in three interrelated spheres: (a)

sociocultural; (b) interpersonal; and (c) intrapersonal. The prevalence of sexualization in each

sphere is further outlined.

Sociocultural Sexualization

Of the three spheres of sexualization, media and sociocultural contributions have

garnered the most attention in research (Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). Scholars have repeatedly

provided evidence regarding the sexualization of girls and women in mass media, as well as the

role of marketable products. Each of these sociocultural influences is discussed below.

Mass media. In a study completed through the Kaiser Family Foundation in 2010,

startling results were reported with respect to children's media use. More specifically, Rideout,

Foehr, and Roberts (2010) found that the average total time in which children and adolescents

reported engaging with media, including television, music, computer, video games, print, and

movies, had risen by 44 percent in the last 15 years. In the same study, the authors noted that

two thirds of all 8- to 18-year-olds owned their own cell phone and on average, spent 33 minutes

talking on their phone and/or sent 118 text messages per day. The jump in media use in tweens

(defined as ages 11 to 14 years in this study) was also documented to be particularly significant, as they generally increased their total media use from 5 hours and 29 minutes to 8 hours and 40 minutes during this period of development.

More recent studies completed in the United States have found similar results to those noted in the Kaiser Family Foundation study. Specifically, the 2015 Pew Research Center report indicated that 92% of adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 reported using the internet daily, surpassing all other age groups in their internet use (Lenhart, 2015). This study also found that 71% of teenagers reported using more than one social networking site. In addition, a study published by Common Sense Media revealed that teenagers spent nearly nine hours on average using media online, while tweens (defined as those between the ages of 8 and 12 in this study) spent nearly six hours every day (Rideout, 2015). However, the author noted that social media use still lagged behind daily traditional media use, such as music and television. In Canada, a study by Casiano and colleagues (2012) suggested that 40% of youth ages of 12-19 years watched 11 hours or more of television each week, while 37% of youth indicated 6 or more hours of computer/internet use each week. As well, research completed by Active Healthy Kids Canada (2013) indicated that youth spend an average of 7 to 8 hours per day engaged in sedentary-based screen activities.

Further, Rideout and colleagues (2010) reported that girls were significant consumers of entertainment media, as their overall media use each day was noted to be over 10 hours per day. Thus, valid concerns have been raised regarding the ease in which sexualized messages can be delivered to young girls through entertainment mediums (Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). Children's use of such mediums allows for potential exposure to the sexualized portrayals of girls and women and may also inadvertently teach girls that women are sexual objects

(Zurbriggen et al., 2010). In general, mass media portrays a limited ideal of feminine beauty, including qualities such as flawless skin, a thin waist, long legs, and well-developed breasts, as well as prejudice against being overweight (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). Thinness itself is also considered to be a critical element of physical attractiveness (Harrison, 2006). Further, the use of airbrushing techniques in print advertising distorts the reality of the typical appearance of girls or women (Kilbourne, 1999; 2013), resulting in few individuals who are able to meet the cultural standards of physical attractiveness (Levine & Murnen, 2009; Wolf, 1991). Some have argued that mass media may be viewed as *the* single biggest purveyor of the beauty ideal, promoting an unrealistic image of female physical beauty that is impossible for the majority of women to achieve (Levine & Murnen, 2009).

The influence of several media sources, including but not limited to, commercial and print advertising, magazines and books, television, movies, video and computer games, music lyrics and videos, and the internet are discussed below.

Advertising. The sexualization of girls and women is especially evident in commercials, print, and online advertising. In promotional ads, women are displayed in a state of undress and depicted as sexual objects more often than men (Ganahal, Kim, & Baker, 2003; Lin, 1998; Nelson & Paek, 2008). In addition, commercials targeted towards children and adolescents often depict women as frivolous and incompetent (Davis, 2003; Rouner, Slater, & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2003). Moreover, commercials advertising particular products tend to sexualize women, such as those advertising beer (Chura, 2003; Hall & Crum, 1994; Rouner et al., 2003). Tobacco commercials have also been shown to promote use in order to promote women's sexiness and maintain thinness (Szymanski, Moffitt, & Carr, 2010). Promises made by advertisers include ideals of sex appeal and sexual attractiveness (Lambaise & Reichert, 2003),

as well as a greater likelihood of being involved with a good-looking man if engaging in tobacco use (Szymanski et al., 2010).

The sexual objectification of the female body is most apparent in print advertising and has increased in frequency in the last two decades (Baker, 2005; Conley & Ramsey, 2011). Roberts and Zurbriggen (2013) contemplated that although marketers and advertisers attempt to limit the direct sexual objectification of young girls, they often employ youthful or "barely legal" adolescents, leading to blurred lines between child and adult. Print advertising often represents *adultification*, or the sexual portrayal of young girls as women (for example, young girls wearing makeup and heels), as well as *youthification*, or the sexual portrayal of women as young girls (for example, adult women licking a lollipop or an ice cream cone) (Kilbourne, 1999; 2013). In a study by Speno and Aubrey (2017), a content analysis of images of girls and women in popular magazines showed that adultification is more prevalent than youthification, and that girls who are adultified are more likely to display sexy facial expressions and be more provocatively dressed.

On average, across magazines, advertisements featuring women portrayed them as sex objects (Baker, 2005; Stankiewicz, 2008). Furthermore, sexy females are more sexually attired, and appear much more frequently in ads than sexy males regardless of readership-orientation of the magazines (Reichert, Carpenter Childers, & Reid, 2012). For example, in a longitudinal content analysis of *Rolling Stone* magazine by Hatton and Trautner (2011), the authors found that women were frequently more sexualized than men. Moreover, findings from this study suggested that women were increasingly likely to be "hypersexualized," thus pointing to a narrowing of culturally acceptable ways for portraying femininity in popular media. In general, the intended audience of magazines is linked to the number of ads that sexualize women; that is,

while women appeared partially clad, suggestively dressed, or nude in approximately 50 percent of the ads in women's magazines, 78 percent of women were depicted in such manner in men's magazines (Reichert & Carpenter, 2004). Furthermore, Caucasian women are more likely to be represented as a decorative object than African American women in magazines (Baker, 2005; Sanchez-Hucles, Hudgins, & Gamble, 2005).

Online advertising also contributes to promoting a narrow female beauty ideal. For example, Slater, Tiggemann, Hawkins, and Werchon (2012) analyzed 631 advertisements over 14 websites and reported that advertisements for games, weight loss products, and cosmetic and beauty products strongly focused on appearance and laid emphasis on the thin ideal. Clearly, advertising on television, online, and in print perpetuates the four components through which the sexualization of girls and women occurs.

Magazines and books. Another sociocultural influence of the sexualization of girls and women is print media. In addition to advertising, fashion and beauty journals such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue*, introduced new magazines targeted to young girls, including *Cosmo Girl* and *Teen Vogue*. Though these publications have reduced the number of sexualized messages that appear in the adult version of these magazines over the past several years, the overall theme of attaining a *sexy* appearance remained the same (Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). In the past, popular magazine covers targeting young girls and adolescents often included catch phrases, such as "surf-sexy hair" (Teen Vogue, 2012) or "387 Ways to Make Him Fall For You" (Cosmo Girl, 2008), which provided instructions in order to achieve a sexy appearance and attract attention from the opposite sex.

In addition, research findings suggest that other magazines published specifically for young girls, such as *Seventeen* and *Girls' Life*, have increased in their depiction of low-cut tops

and tight fitted clothing across time (Graff, Murnen, & Krause, 2013). Scholars have repeatedly reported findings regarding the visual rhetoric in magazines and its convergence on a single construction of sexuality for women, thus promoting the idea that women should be primarily concerned with attracting and sexually satisfying men (Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998; Firminger, 2006; Krassas, Blauwkamp, & Wasselink, 2001). In order to do so, women's magazines encourage their readers to look "hot" or "sexy" in the form of advice on clothing, diets, hairstyles, cosmetics, and exercise (McMahon, 1990; Menard & Kleinplatz, 2008). Moreover, in reviewing the content in multiple teen magazines, scholars noted the centrality of heterosexual relationships and the rigid norms of physical beauty through the consumption of cosmetics and fashion (Durham, 1998; Garner et al., 1998; Moran & Lee, 2011). A review of men's magazines by Krassas and colleagues (2001) also suggested that women are likely to be portrayed as sex objects, commonly photographing them in contoured or demeaning positions. Findings from the same study also indicated that these magazines depicted White people to be sexier than other races and also assumed heterosexuality.

Researchers evaluating sports journalism have suggested that female athletes are rarely admired for their athletic endeavours, but rather the focus is on their physical appearance, femininity, and/or heterosexuality (Fink, 2014). For example, the June 2012 *Vogue* magazine cover featuring Serena Williams and Hope Solo in swimsuits emphasized their physiques rather than their many accolades and achievements in their respective sports, neither of which require swimming gear.

Results from multiple studies (e.g., Enck-Wanzer & Murray, 2011; Garner et al., 1998) have also suggested that magazines limit the development of girls' sexuality and sexual attitudes, by reinforcing narrowly defined norms and practices. For example, in an analysis of *Cosmo*

Girl!, several representations of stereotypical behaviour in boys and girls were consistently reinforced, such as assuming heterosexual readership and limiting discussion regarding relationships for other sexual orientations; highlighting the notion of teenage boys as primary initiators of relationships; emphasizing that teenage boys are emotionally distant, romantically inept, and aggressive; and stressing the passivity and supporting role that girls should assume in relationships (Enck-Wanzer & Murray, 2011).

The book industry, while limited with regard to empirical studies, has been found to be mixed with its representation of girls and women. That is, while a number of female empowerment books are available on the market, the top selling books, including self-help books, romance novels, and the modern-day "chick lit", portray negative or shallow images of women (Oppliger, 2008). In addition, a content analysis of the prevalence and portrayal of sexual activity in adolescent literature revealed that adolescent novels were replete with sex-related information, particularly in books targeted to young girls and adolescents (Callister, Coyne, Stern, Stockdale, Miller, & Wells, 2012). Findings from the same study also indicated incidents of sexual intercourse that occurred outside non-committal relationships and sexual material that rarely dealt with issues of abstinence, safe sex practices, and health risks associated with sex.

Historically, researchers have found that women and girls are underrepresented in children's literature, most notably in the classic study conducted by Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, and Ross (1972). In a recent study, McCabe and colleagues (2011) analyzed over 5,600 children's books published throughout the twentieth century in the United States and found that compared to females, males are represented nearly twice as often in titles and are 1.6 times more likely to be central characters.

Television. Young viewers continue to be exposed to a television world that is predominantly saturated with male characters, particularly in programs geared to youth, and in which female characters are often more attractive and provocatively dressed than their male counterparts (Eaton, 1997). Female characters on television also vary by program genre. For example, less typically attractive women have historically been relegated to comedic roles (Oppliger, 2008), although this became less apparent in the last two decades with the overwhelming success of comedic programs with strong female leads, such as *Friends*, *Sex and the City*, *Thirty Rock*, and *The Mindy Project*. However, the blatant sexual dialogue and sexual encounters for women on these television shows continued to be evident. In contrast, reality television often depicts women to be catty, backstabbing, and cruel, while primetime dramatic series often portray women to be powerful and intelligent, yet promiscuous (Oppliger, 2008). Television also regularly offers stereotypical portrayals of sexual roles that are heavily based on sexual double standards; that is, while women are depicted as sexual objects whose value is based solely on their physical appearance, men are depicted as sex-driven predators whose value is enhanced by their success with women (Ward & Friedman, 2006). Although it appears that some gender stereotypes have declined compared to previous decades, other stereotypes, such as "dominant men" or "sexually provocative women" have persisted (Sink & Mastro, 2016). As well, recent research has documented that popular children's television programming has also been shown to perpetuate cultural stereotypes with boys depicted as valuing girls solely for their physical appearance (Kirsch & Murnen, 2015).

In addition, sexual messages and comments, and conversations about sex on television are prolific (Eyal, Kunkel, Biely, & Finnerty, 2007; Ward, 2003), and include sexually objectifying comments, remarks, or behaviours (e.g., leering, ogling, catcalling) of women in

general, or female characters specifically (Lampman et al., 2002, Ward, 1995). Grauerholz and

King (1997) also demonstrated that there is a greater focus on women's bodies, as well as more

verbal sexual comments focusing on their bodies or body parts. Even when analyzing children's

media, the prevalence of the sexualization of female characters is extensive. For example, in a

study by McDade-Montez, Wallander, and Cameron (2017), a quantitative content analysis of

children's television programs that were popular among girls aged 6 to 11 revealed that

sexualization was present in every coded episode, with at least three instances per episode. The

authors further noted that female characters were more commonly portrayed in a sexualized

manner than were their male counterparts and were sexualized 72% of instances (McDade-

Montez et al., 2017).

Moreover, analysis of sexual content in the workplace as portrayed on primetime

television revealed a plethora of sexually explicit content (Lampman et al., 2002), as well as

incidents of sexual harassment (Montemurro, 2003). Television series have also normalized and

glorified noncommittal sex or "hook-ups" in both same- and opposite-sex representations

(Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012), while making minimal reference to

consequences of such behaviour including pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (Kunkel,

Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005). Given the influence of television on adolescents'

sexual attitudes and viewpoints (Ward, 2002), the unrealistic and derogatory portrayals of

women vastly contribute to the sexualization of young girls, as it may result in the tolerance,

acceptance and even enjoyment of such comments and behaviour (Lampman et al., 2002).

Additionally, the sexualization of sexual minority women and same-sex experiences

between girls and women has become more prominent in television (Diamond, 2005a; Jackson &

Gilberton, 2009; Thompson, 2013). Same-sex sexualized images (e.g., kissing) or references to

"girl-on-girl" action can be found on several network and cable channels (e.g., *Grey's Anatomy*, *House*) and in shows that are geared towards teenagers (e.g., *Pretty Little Liars, Glee*) during primetime hours. For example, in an episode of *Gossip Girl*, a teen drama popular with girls ages 12 to 34, the camera focused on two leading female characters kissing during an implied threesome with a male character on the show (Lasher & McLean, 2009).

   Movies. Feature films and documentaries have further reflected and contributed to the sexualization of girls and women; however, the empirical data examining this notion is extremely limited. In general, male characters outnumber female characters in movies by over two to one, with female characters being twice as likely to be involved in explicit sexual content (Bleakley, Jamieson, & Romer, 2012). Movies that have become increasingly appealing to teenagers and young adults often contain storylines with sexual themes, such as *Easy A* (2010) or *The Twilight Saga* (2008-2012) (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). In movie trailers, sexual scenes featuring only female characters accounted for almost one third of sexual scenes shown in these trailers, with many scenes featuring women looking longingly at the camera, exposing cleavage, undressing, or admiring their own reflections in mirrors (Oliver & Kalyanaraman, 2006). Even in G-rated or family movies, males outnumber females by a ratio of 2.57 to 1, with females more likely to be depicted as young and in traditional roles (Smith, Pieper, Granados, & Choueiti, 2010). This underrepresentation of girls and women in family-targeted films reflects a missed opportunity to present a broad spectrum of females in non-sexualized roles (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). In addition, the sexualization of sexual minority women has increased in popularity in movies. For example, a girl-on-girl kiss on *Cruel Intentions* (Ball et al., 1999) received an award for "Best Kiss" at the 2000 MTV Movie Awards (Bender et al., 2000), while *American Pie 2* depicted two girls kissing while being directed by the male leads to do so, as well as voyeuristic

behaviour by other male characters in the movie (Bartelme et al., 2001). It should be noted, however, that writers and producers have become increasingly aware of the importance of representing diverse sexual orientations on television and in movies; therefore, incidents of two girls or women kissing have understandably increased over time.

Video and computer games. Another medium that often promotes the sexualization of girls and young women is the gaming world. Specifically, female characters are often underrepresented and proportionally more often sexualized in comparison to their male counterparts, as they are more likely to be shown partially nude, wearing sexually revealing clothing, or featured with an unrealistic body types (Burgess, Stermer, & Burgess, 2007; Downs & Smith, 2010; Ivory, 2006). Males are more likely than females to be heroes or main characters, use more weapons, have more abilities, and be more muscular and powerful; females, on the other hand, are more often supplemental characters, more attractive, sexy, and innocent, and wear more revealing clothing (Miller & Summers, 2007). In addition, male characters are almost four times more frequently portrayed than their female counterparts, and are given more game relevant action (Burgess, Stermer, & Burgess, 2007). With respect to marketing video games, Near (2013) reported that sales were positively related to sexualization of non-central female characters, and negatively related to the presence of any central female characters, regardless of the presence of male characters.

Further, extant research has demonstrated findings that provide evidence for the sexualization of young women in computer games. Specifically, Peck, Ketchum, and Embrick (2011) reported that the quality of representation of women in computer games is lower than males, and that women are typically depicted in sexualized roles. However, the type of computer game may play an important role in this discussion. For example, Wohn (2011) reported that

females were overly represented in online games, and that neither males nor females were depicted in a sexual manner. Overall, however, the sexualization of young women in video and computer games continues to be a cause for concern, given their popularity with children and adolescents.

　　　　Music. Evidence of the sexualization of young women is well documented in research examining music videos and lyrics. Specifically, in a content analysis of gender display in music videos, or the socially constructed stereotypical nonverbal behaviour of men and women (Mayo & Henley, 1981), Wallis (2011) revealed that significant gender displays primarily reinforced the notion of women as sexual objects and, to a lesser extent, females as subordinates and males as aggressive. Other studies have similarly demonstrated that the sexual objectification of females in music videos is normative (Turner, 2011; Frisby & Aubrey, 2012). Artists' sex and music genre has also been shown to reinforce sexual objectification. Generally, girls and young women are represented in ways that emphasize voyeurism, performance, and service to males in music lyrics and videos, thus "pornographizing" feminine sexuality (Levy, 2005). Aubrey and Frisby (2011) analyzed music videos across R&B/hip-hop, pop, and country genres, and results indicated that female artists were more sexually objectified, held to stricter standards of appearance, and more likely to demonstrate sexually alluring behaviour. In addition, research findings have revealed that sexual objectification was more prominent in R&B/hip-hop and pop videos than in country videos, likely due to the socially conservative nature of the latter genre (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Frisby & Aubrey, 2012). Youthification, or sexual portrayal of women as young girls (Kilbourne, 1999; 2013), is also exemplified in music videos, in which young women or music artists wear school uniforms or have pigtails in their hair (e.g., Britney Spears' "…Baby One More Time" music video (Martin & Dick, 1999).

Although there is limited research documenting sexualization through song lyrics, there is mounting evidence that lyrics sexualize females or refer to them in highly degrading ways (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). In a study by Cougar Hall, West, and Hill (2012), the authors analyzed sexualization in lyrics of popular music on the *Billboard Hot 100* in the penultimate year of six decades from 1959 to 2009 (i.e., 1969, 1979, etc.) and results indicated that male artists' lyrics and 2009 lyrics were significantly more likely to contain sexualization. Oware (2007) also employed content analysis of 44 songs by female hip-hop artists taken from the Billboard charts between 1992 and 2000 and revealed that a majority of the songs examined had female artists who objectified, self-exploited, and used derogatory lyrics when referring to other women. The lyrics of popular music and hip-hop predominantly feature themes including objectification of women, sexual violence, sexual degradation, women defined by having a man, women not valuing themselves, and lust in the absence of love (Bretthauer, Schindler, Zimmerman, & Banning, 2007; Cundiff, 2013; Madanikia & Bartholomew, 2014; Martino, Collins, Elliott, Strachman, Kanouse, & Berry, 2006). In fact, a content analysis completed by Smiler, Shewmaker, and Hearon (2017) revealed that references to romantic relationships became less common over time, while references to sexual behaviour and objectified bodies became more common. Indeed, simply reviewing the *Billboard Hot 100* charts over the last several years reveals multiple songs, such as Robin Thicke's "Blurred Lines", Maroon Five's "Animals", or Pitbull's "Timber", in which the lyrics objectified or sexualized women. In Katy Perry's popular international hit single, "I Kissed A Girl," the artist sexualizes the girl in the song by singing that she just "wants to try [her] on" and "I don't even know your name; it doesn't matter; you're my experimental game."

It is important to note that artists themselves often engage in self-sexual objectification in order to promote themselves and their music. Andsager and Roe (2003) noted that teen artists at the turn of the 21st century, such as Britney Spears or Christina Aguilera, often exploited their sexuality as a way of establishing a more mature version of themselves when crossing over from teenage icon to adult musician, thus prompting focus and discussion regarding their bodies and sexuality, and not on their music. Both Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera also infamously engaged in a same-sex kiss with Madonna at the 2003 MTV Video Music Awards (Cody et al., 2003). Artists' self-sexualization certainly continues to be evident almost two decades later as popular recording artists, such as Miley Cyrus, Selena Gomez, Ariana Grande, and Demi Lovato have also used their sexuality as a means of displaying maturity in their music and appearance, as they have transitioned into young adulthood.

Internet. The internet provides another forum in which the sexualization of girls and women is ever-present. The wide popularity of *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter*, and *Snapchat*, as well as countless websites and blogs, provides numerous instances in which the sexualization of females is evident. On social media sites, young women often feel pressure to present themselves in a sexualized manner (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008), and generally place more emphasis on displaying physical attractiveness than males (Manago et al., 2008, Siibak, 2009). In addition, analyses of profile pictures posted by teenagers revealed that most girls' pictures presented themselves looking up or sideways at the viewer (i.e., seductive behaviour) and in suggestive dress (Cougar Hall, West, & McIntyre, 2012; Kapadzic & Herring, 2011, 2014). Online environments generally exemplify that teenagers' profile pictures perpetuate gender stereotypes of behaviour and presentation (e.g., men as emotionally distant,

women as sexually available), and that teens tend to imitate mass media models in order to appear attractive (Kapidzic & Herring, 2010; Siibak, 2010).

Moreover, the relationship between self-objectification in young women's personal profile photographs and such variables as body type have been studied. Specifically, higher rates of self-sexualization were shown in personal profile photographs of women who considered themselves to be of average body type, while lower rates were observed in women who rated themselves as carrying extra weight, and therefore, not meeting the "thin ideal" (Cougar Hall, West, & McIntyre, 2012). Further, Trekels, Ward, and Eggermont (2018) showed that appearance conversations with their adolescent friends on Facebook directly related to self-sexualizing behaviours in teenagers. This same study also revealed that self-objectification and the belief that complying with prevailing appearance ideals is rewarded (for example, with popularity, increased self-esteem, and romantic success) were valid explanatory mechanisms for these associations. Further, a meta-analysis investigating the influence of sexualizing media on self-objectification among women identified that the use of online media led to stronger self-objectification effects when compared to television use (Karsay, Knoll, & Matthes, 2017).

Access to a wide array of intensely sexualized material is also increasingly available through the internet (Bridges, Condit, Dines, Johnson, & West, 2015). Specifically, Weiss (2013) estimated that 12 percent of all internet websites are pornographic, and that 25 percent of all search engine requests are related to sex. Pornography is also the first and major forum of sex education for adolescents and young adults (Hunter, Figuerdo, & Malamuth, 2010). While existing research is lacking in children and adolescents' exposure to sexually objectifying material online, research findings have indicated significant increases in the number of youth

who are intentionally or accidentally encountering pornographic content online (Mitchell,

Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2007).

In sum, the existing literature has illuminated the prolific sexualization of girls and

women through various media outlets, with consistent findings that girls and women are largely

underrepresented in media compared to boys and men, and are increasingly more sexualized and

objectified across time and contexts.

Products. While few empirical studies have been conducted to examine the prevalence

of products marketed to girls that present images of sexualized or sexy persons, there are an

abundance of examples of marketed toys, clothing, and makeup that maintain the sexualization

of girls and women. For example, *Bratz* dolls are marketed in bikinis, or come dressed in

sexualized clothing, such as miniskirts or fishnet stockings (Lamb & Brown, 2006).

Interestingly, Boyd and Murnen (2011) found that *Monster High* dolls had a higher number of

sexualizing characters than *Bratz* dolls. Other toys geared for young girls, such as *Trollz* dolls,

which sport big hair, miniskirts, and bare midriffs, have also been marketed to girls as young as

four years of age (Sheff, 2005). *Barbies* remain pervasive in the experiences of young girls,

despite their highly sexualized image (Kuther & McDonald, 2004), although Mattel, the makers

of *Barbie*, have recently focused their media promotions on "imagining the possibilities" and less

so on appearance. However, Starr and Ferguson (2012) demonstrated that six- to nine-year-old

girls were more likely to choose a sexualized doll over a non-sexualized doll for their ideal self,

or their preferred look.

Findings of recent studies have suggested that girls' clothing often contains sexualizing

characteristics, with tween stores like *Abercrombie Kids* or *La Senza Girl* having the highest

proportion of sexualized clothing, in which adult-style sexy versions of underwear and camisoles

are sold (Goodin, Van Denburg, Murnen, & Smolak, 2011; Lamb & Brown, 2006; Pollett & Hurwitz, 2004). In addition, Halloween costumes for girls often emphasized physical attractiveness or sexual eroticism (Nelson, 2000). For example, Spirit Halloween, a speciality store for Halloween with over 1100 locations in Canada and the United States, advertised costumes for girls that represent several "occupations" including "convict cutie," "major flirt," and "pretty red plumber" (Spirit Halloween, 2015), with most occupations being depicted in a sexual manner. Further, depictions of low cut tops and tight fitted clothing has increased in teen magazines targeting young girls (Graff et al., 2013). Given that girls may partially develop identity through the clothing they choose (Lamb & Brown, 2006), it is increasingly concerning that clothing is being designed to highlight girls and women's sexuality (Zurbriggen et al., 2010).

The APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls report also discussed that the cosmetic industry often markets cosmetic products to young girls, including perfumes, lip glosses, eye shadow kits, and nail polish. While there is little concern with girls wanting to look attractive or smell pleasant, Zurbriggen and colleagues (2010) noted that cosmetics and perfume are often associated with the desire to be sexually attractive, which is inappropriate for prepubescent girls.

Overall, the sexualization of girls and women creates unrealistic notions of beauty and sex appeal in young girls and adolescents. Beyond popular media, there are also several other avenues in which the sexualization of females occurs through marketable products, such as toys, clothing, and cosmetics. Although researchers have generally focused on the sexualization of college-aged or adult women, greater emphasis has been placed in understanding the influences of sexualization on adolescents. Overall, popular media and merchandise have played a prominent role in promoting the sexualization of girls and women. The next section will address the influence of interpersonal relationships in perpetuating sexualization.

Interpersonal Sexualization

The interpersonal relationships of young girls, such as those with parents, teachers, and peers, can further contribute to the sexualization of girls and women (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Since the people in girls' lives are themselves influenced by the sociocultural messages that sexualize girls and girlhood, they may subtly or overtly contribute to conveying societal messages of the sexualization of females (Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). Furthermore, the influence of more destructive forms of sexualization, such as sexual harassment, abuse, or assault, must also be acknowledged as ways in which individuals further contribute to the sexualization of girls and women (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). The role of parents, teachers, and peers, as well as damaging forms of sexualization, are briefly discussed below.

Parents. Parents are regarded as the primary socializers of their children, with influence over a variety of beliefs and behaviours (Moore & Rosenthal, 2006). Although the research linking parents and the sexualization of girls is scarce, a limited number of studies suggest that further exploration of this relationship is warranted. For example, research findings have shown that mother-daughter interactions influenced adolescent girls' and young women's behaviours and attitudes towards thinness and body image (Cooley, Toray, Wang, & Valdez, 2008; Field et al., 2005; Paff Ogle & Damhorst, 2004). Mother and daughters' self-objectification has also been demonstrated to be positively related to one another's (Arroyo & Anderson, 2016). Further, mothers who engage in "fat talk" about their own bodies, or fathers who make body comments when girls begin puberty, also shaped girls' thoughts on their own appearances and sexuality (Nichter, 2000). Parental support of their daughters entering beauty pageants as young girls may further contribute to the sexualization of girls, as such events promote "sexiness"

through physical appearance and sexualized behaviour, such as flirting with audience members (Zurbriggen et al., 2010; Oppliger, 2008).

Teachers. Although the research regarding the influence of teachers on the sexualization of girls and girlhood is extremely limited, nevertheless, there is evidence of teachers indirectly communicating messages that promote physical appearance and the thin ideal (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). For example, researchers have demonstrated a negative correlation between teachers' ratings of student competence and their ratings of children's physical attractiveness (Parks & Kennedy, 2007). As well, McCabe and colleagues (2007) demonstrated that teachers, as well as mothers, often expressed concerns about their own bodies to preschool children. Preschool teachers have also been shown to encourage preschool girls to play dress-up more than boys, as well as to portray a sexualized adult woman, in their child's play (Martin, 1998). Further, a study by Morris (2005) revealed that teachers often expected girls to "act like a lady" by instructing girls how to sit and get up properly, dress appropriately, and speak in a quiet manner, thereby promoting sociocultural stereotypes of how girls should look and behave at school.

Peers. Classmates, friends, and neighbourhood peers may further contribute to sexualizing girls via bullying behaviour. For example, findings from a study by Brown (2003) reported that when perceiving a threat, teenage girls sought revenge by negatively sexualizing girls and labelling them as *sluts*. Similarly, in a retrospective study with young women, Lerner (2015) found that secondary school girls experienced sexual harassment or sexually-focused bullying when they did not ascribe to dominant social expectations for physical appearance. Generally, females are often cyberbullied, or bullied via online forums, about their appearance, sexual attractiveness, promiscuity, and popularity, while males are primarily cyberbullied about sexual orientation and athletic ability (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009). Notions of physical attractiveness also

influence popularity among peers (LaFontana & Cillessen, 2002; Lease, Kennedy, & Axelrod, 2002; Merten, 2004). Moreover, popularity is now equated with sexiness, with girls reporting that behaving in a sexual manner with boys leads to power (Pollett & Hurwitz, 2004). Findings at the college level have also exemplified that college-age males are more likely to engage in partner objectification than females (Zurbriggen, Ramsey, & Jaworski, 2011).

Sexual harassment, assault, and abuse. Sexual harassment has become increasingly common in the school environment, as 40 to 50 percent of students have experienced some form of sexual harassment in a single school year (Young, Grey, & Boyd, 2009). However, girls are more likely than boys to experience sexual harassment in school, such as unwanted sexual jokes, comments, or gestures, being touched, grabbed, or pinched in a sexual way, being intentionally brushed up against in a sexual way, and being flashed or "mooned" (Hill & Kearl, 2011). Additionally, Lindberg, Grabe, and Hyde (2007) revealed that peers generally played a prominent role in making sexual comments or evaluations, with children as young as 10 years of age reporting experiences of sexual harassment. Findings from the same study also suggested that girls displaying pubertal development were more likely to hear sexually harassing comments by their peers.

While sexual harassment by peers is more common than by teachers, results from a study conducted by the American Association of University Women (2001) suggested that teachers have targeted female students with unwanted sexual attention. Other common contexts in which girls and women experience sexual harassment and unnecessary sexualization include the internet or in the workplace, often at the hands of their peers, co-workers, and employers (Paludi & Kravitz, 2011).

Additionally, sexual assault and sexual abuse can be viewed as destructive forms of sexualization of girls. Rates of peer sexual assault in high school are staggering, with 12% of girls reporting rape, 6% of girls reporting being forced to engage in oral sex, and 11% of girls reporting being forced to engage in other sexual activities (Young et al., 2009). Moreover, the prevalence of sexual abuse is reportedly higher in females than males (MacMillan, Tanaka, Daku, Vaillancourt, & Boyle, 2013; Molner, Buka, & Kessler, 2001; Pereda, Guilera, Forns, & Gómez-Benito, 2009). Although family members or casual acquaintances are often responsible for sexual assault or abuse, adolescents are especially significant in perpetrating sexual assault, as rates of sexual offenders are highest among teenagers ages 12 to 17 (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008). In addition, scholars have shown that sexual minority women have experienced various forms of interpersonal sexualization, including childhood sexual abuse and adult sexual assault (Balsam, Rothblum, & Beauchaine, 2005). Clearly, family members and peers directly facilitate the sexualization of girls and girlhood through sexual harassment and violence.

Sexual exploitation. By definition, prostitution is an occupation in which girls and women are sexually objectified and treated as sexual commodities, through interpersonal or intrapersonal objectification (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). While it is difficult to report the exact prevalence of underage sex workers, findings have shown that women often enter into prostitution as adolescents (Boyer, Chapman, & Marshall, 1993; Clarke, Clarke, Roe-Sepowitz, & Fey, 2012; Nadon, Koverola, & Schludermann, 1998; Weber, Boivin, Blais, Haley, & Roy, 2004). Moreover, there are a growing number of children and adolescents involved in trafficking or sexual exploitation in national and international sex industries (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016). Victims often include individuals with histories of being marginalized, abused, or isolated, such as runaways, homeless youth, and youth from the foster care system

(Fong & Berger Cardoso, 2010). In Canada, it is believed that girls and young women aged 16 to 22 are the favoured targets of sex traffickers (Oxman-Martinez, Hanley, & Gomez, 2005), with over 90% of sex trafficking victims coming from *within* Canada's borders (Public Safety Canada, 2012). Thus, the global problem of sexual exploitation of females further contributes to the sexualization of girls and women.

In sum, while there is limited research on the interpersonal influences of sexualization, extant literature suggests that parents, teachers, and peers contribute to sexualizing young girls and adolescents. In addition, extreme forms of sexualization, such as sexual harassment and abuse, and sexual exploitation, undoubtedly propagate, as well as result from, the objectification of young girls and women. The final sphere of sexualization to be discussed is intrapersonal sexualization, or the sexualization of oneself.

Intrapersonal Sexualization

Roberts and Zurbriggen (2013) argue that girls cannot be viewed as passive recipients of sociocultural and interpersonal messages regarding sexualization. Rather, they are their own agents of self-sexualization, by thinking of themselves in terms of their sexy appearance, equating sexiness with a narrow standard of attractiveness, or engaging in age-inappropriate sexuality. Extant research has given much attention to the topic of *self-objectification*, or the tendency for girls and women to view and treat themselves and their own bodies as objects of others' desires, and to treat themselves as objects to be looked at or evaluated for their appearance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Several research studies have demonstrated that self-objectification has become common practice for girls and women (Slater & Tiggemann, 2002; Clark & Tiggemann, 2006; 2007). Additionally, girls and women have been found to engage in self-objectification more often than

boys and men (Grabe, Hyde, & Lindberg, 2007; Strelan & Heargraves, 2005). While most studies evaluating self-objectification have been conducted with adolescents and college students (Tiggemann, 2013), girls as young as eight years of age have been noted to choose sexually provocative clothing, padded bras, and makeup in order to look "hot" (Hamilton, 2008). As discussed above, self-objectification is also prominent in song lyrics (Oware, 2007), exemplified in music artists' marketing strategies (Andsgar & Roe, 2003), and evident in analyses of online profile pictures on social media sites (Cougar Hall et al., 2012; Kapidzic & Herring, 2011; 2014).

In addition to making sexualized choices about their appearance, research has documented how girls and female adolescents "act out" in sexually precocious ways (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). However, Zurbriggen and colleagues (2010) recognized that sexualized behaviour is often a common consequence of sexual abuse (e.g., Letourneau, Schoenwald, & Sheidow, 2004; Putnam, 2003), resulting from damage to cognitive processes needed for healthy decision-making (Zurbriggen & Freyd, 2004). As such, the experience of sexual abuse and victimization may result in girls presenting themselves as sexual objects or engaging in age-inappropriate sexual behaviour (Zurbriggen et al., 2010).

In summary, there is some evidence to support that girls may engage in and contribute to self-sexualization, although their surroundings likely facilitate this process (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). As such, self-sexualization, as well as sociocultural and interpersonal influences, are not independent entities, but rather intersect and influence one another. Moreover, sociocultural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal influences of sexualization have been documented to lead to negative physical, psychological, and sexual consequences in girls and women. These consequences require fuller discussion in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the impact of female sexualization.

Consequences of Sexualization

The negative effects of sexualization on girls and women have been well documented in extant literature. More specifically, scholars have revealed that sexualization affects a variety of domains, including cognitive functioning, physical health and activity, mental health and well-being, and sexuality. These areas are elucidated below in greater detail, and the negative consequences of sexual harassment, abuse, and exploitation are also reviewed.

Cognitive Functioning

Perhaps one of the subtlest effects of self-objectification on girls and women is the reduction of cognitive resources due to increased attention to physical appearance. Specifically, Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, and Twenge (1998) showed that girls wearing sweaters performed significantly better on math problems than girls wearing swimsuits. These results were later found to occur among women of multiple racial backgrounds (Hebl, King, & Lin, 2004). In addition, findings from multiple studies have suggested that self-objectification or thinking about physical appearance impairs functioning in a variety of cognitive domains, such as logical reasoning and spatial skills (Gapinski, Brownell, & LaFrance, 2003), selective attention (Quinn, Kalle, Twenge, & Fredrickson, 2006), and working memory (Gay & Castano, 2010). In a sample of 10- to 14-year-old girls, those who scored higher on a measure of internalized sexualization, which reflected their belief that women should be sexually attractive to men, showed decreased academic success and lower standardized test scores than their peers (McKenny & Bigler, 2014).

Physical Health and Activity

In addition to consequences impacting cognitive functioning, sexualization may indirectly impact girls and women's physical health. Specifically, studies have shown a positive

correlation between body dissatisfaction and smoking, as a method of controlling weight (Filssel & Lafreniere, 2006; Lopez, Drobes, Thompson, & Brandon, 2008; Lopez Khoury, Litvin, & Brandon, 2009; Stice & Shaw, 2003). Further, Harrell (2002) demonstrated that college-aged women who emphasized sexual attractiveness over their health and competence, and thus showed a higher sexually objectified standard for their appearance, were more likely to smoke. Moreover, both everyday (e.g., body evaluation) and extreme (e.g., sexual victimization) forms of sexual objectification have been positively correlated with alcohol, nicotine, and forms of drug abuse (Carr & Szymanski, 2011).

In addition, self-objectification has been linked to lower levels of physical activity in girls and women (Greenleaf, 2005; Melbye, Tenenbaum, & Eklund, 2007; Slater & Tiggemann, 2011). More specifically, factors such as body image concerns have been shown to contribute to adolescent girls' reduced rates of participation in sports and other physical activities (Slater & Tiggemann, 2011). Accordingly, scholars have found that when girls and women do exercise, they are more likely to cite appearance and weight-related reasons for doing so rather than citing exercising for health benefits (Aubrey, 2010; Vartanian, Wharton, & Green, 2012), which may lead to poorer body image (Prichard & Tiggemann, 2008). Interestingly, several studies have found that women with high self-objectification may make more of an effort to appear attractive while working out by wearing fitted exercise apparel (Melbye et al., 2007; Prichard & Tiggemann, 2005).

Mental Health and Wellness

The effects of the sexualization of girls and women are not only limited to cognitive functioning or activity, but impact their mental health and well-being as well. Specifically, scholars have linked conditions of sexualization, such as objectification, to a host of negative

emotions in females regarding their physical appearance, including shame, appearance anxiety,

and disgust, as well as additional consequences such as body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem,

disordered eating, and depression or depressive episodes. It should be noted that these

consequences do not exist in isolation; rather, they are often found to be comorbid with one

another and act through a variety of pathways. For example, in a study exploring the link

between objectification to the mental health of early adolescent girls (ages 10 to 13), Tiggemann

and Slater (2015) found that magazine and internet exposure, as well as appearance

conversations with friends, predicted self-objectification, which itself predicted body shame,

which then predicted both dieting and depressive symptoms. Each of these consequences to

mental health and wellness is briefly reviewed below.

　　　Negative emotions. Objectification and sexualization of one's appearance weakens

comfort and confidence in one's own body, leading to a variety of emotional consequences

including, but not limited to, shame, anxiety, and self-disgust. More specifically, researchers

have found that constantly monitoring appearance led to increased feelings of body shame in

heterosexual (Fredrickson et al., 1998; Slater & Tiggemann, 2002) and lesbian women (Haines et

al., 2008). Since the cultural standard for physical attractiveness is met by so few women (Wolf,

1991; Kilbourne, 2000), it is unsurprising that young girls who chronically compare themselves

to this unattainable cultural standard feel inadequacy and shame regarding their bodies

(Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Additionally, internalizing a sexual gaze as a primary view of oneself

(Tiggemann & Lynch, 2001), viewing idealized women's bodies via media outlets (Monro &

Huon, 2005), and exposure to sexualizing words, such as *sexy* or *shapely* (Roberts & Gettman,

2004), have been linked to increased appearance anxiety, or checking and adjusting one's

appearance. Slater and Tiggemann (2002) findings indicated that for girls as young as 12 or 13

years of age, emphasizing features such as sex appeal or attractiveness, as well as regarding

one's body and viewing the self from an observer's perspective were positively correlated to

both increased body shame and appearance anxiety. In addition, Fredrickson and colleagues

(1998) reported that college-age women who were asked to try on bathing suits in front of a

mirror experienced greater feelings of disgust or revulsion than those women who tried on a

sweater. Accordingly, a study by Choma, Visser, Pozzebon, Bogaert, Busseri, and Sadava

(2010) revealed that higher body shame and appearance anxiety each uniquely predicted higher

self-surveillance, as well as lower self-esteem, suggesting a bidirectional relationship between

these negative emotions and behaviours.

Body dissatisfaction. In addition to negative emotional consequences, researchers have

identified that exposure to media ideals of sexual attractiveness, such as commercials or fashion

magazines, led to greater body dissatisfaction among girls and young women (Hargreaves &

Tiggemann, 2004; Turner et al., 1997). Interestingly, when exposed to sexualized media images

of Caucasian women, African American girls did not demonstrate negative effects of such media

(Frisby, 2004), and were less interested in beauty images of mainstream teen magazines due to

conflicts with African American standards of appeal and attractiveness (Duke 2000). However,

Frisby (2004) demonstrated that Black girls showed greater body dissatisfaction when viewing

images of African American models. Moreover, when both African American and Caucasian

girls viewed idealized television portrayals of beauty, they felt higher drives for thinness and

greater dissatisfaction with their bodies (Botta, 2003).

In general, body dissatisfaction has been shown to significantly increase for girls as

compared to boys during adolescence (Bearman, Presnell, Martinez, & Stice, 2006; Bucchianeri,

Arikian, Hannan, Eisenberg, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2013; Calzo, Sonneville, Haines, Blood,

Field, & Austin, 2012), and young women in college generally reported lower body satisfaction than their male counterparts (Bucchianeri et al., 2013; Frederick, Forbes, Grigorian, & Jarcho, 2007). These findings suggest that girls and young women are more sensitive and primed for further dissatisfaction with their bodies when faced with sexualized content.

Low self-esteem. Sociocultural and interpersonal influences of sexualization have also been linked to lowering girls' and young women's self-esteem. Specifically, exposure to media standards of female physical beauty has been linked to poor self-esteem in young African American and Latin American youth (Rivadeneyra, Ward, & Gordon, 2007; Ward, 2004), while college-age women who viewed ads featuring female models had lower self-esteem than those women who viewed no-model advertisements (Hawkins, Richards, Granley, & Stein, 2004). Greater consumption of music television, particularly those music videos that greatly sexualize girls and women, was positively related to self-objectification among adolescent girls, which in turn predicted a number of negative outcomes, including lower body esteem (Grabe & Hyde, 2009). As noted above, greater self-surveillance predicted lower self-esteem in undergraduate women (Choma et al., 2010; Mercurio & Landry, 2008). Tolman, Impett, Tracy, and Michael (2006) further revealed that girls in more objectified relationships were more likely to demonstrate low self-esteem.

Depression or depressive episodes. Viewing idealized images in mainstream media has been positively correlated with increased depression symptoms or negative mood states (Durkin & Paxton, 2002; Hawkins et al., 2004; Mills, Polivy, Herman, & Tiggemann, 2002). More recently, Tiggemann and Slater (2015) reported that media exposure and appearance conversations with friends predicted self-objectification and body shame, which in turn, predicted depressive symptoms in young girls. Additionally, several studies have revealed that

higher self-objectification led to increased body shame and depressive symptoms in adolescent girls (Grabe et al., 2007; Grabe & Hyde, 2009; Harrison & Frederickson, 2003; Jones & Griffiths, 2015), and in young women in college (Grabe & Jackson, 2009; Register, Katrevich, Aruguete, & Edman, 2015).

Disordered eating. To date, the majority of empirical research testing out predictors of objectification theory has focused on the outcome of disordered eating (Tiggemann, 2011). Findings across several studies have suggested positive correlations between greater exposure to the female beauty ideal in media and disordered eating, attitudes, and symptoms (Botta, 2003; Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Thomsen, Weber, & Brown, 2002). Self-objectification has also been shown to directly and indirectly (via body shame and appearance anxiety) predict disordered eating in female college students (Calogero, 2009; Greenleaf & McGreer, 2006; Myers & Crowther, 2008). Similarly, higher internalization of self-sexualization was associated with disordered eating in lesbian women (Haines et al., 2008). Fewer studies have examined the role of objectification theory in younger populations; however, results have highlighted a positive link between self-objectification and disordered eating in adolescent girls (Harrison & Frederickson, 2003; Slater & Tiggemann, 2002; 2010).

Cosmetic enhancement. As a result of experiencing negative emotions or mental health difficulties, girls and young women have increased their frequency of cosmetic enhancement, as well as cosmetic purchases in order to attain or maintain their notions of physical beauty. It should be noted that several studies have demonstrated that sex overrules sexual identity; in other words, lesbian and bisexual women are as likely as heterosexual women to value thinness, self-objectify, and view themselves to be overweight (Down, James, & Cowan, 2006; Kozee & Tylka, 2006). Consequences of sexualization, such as dissatisfaction with one's body, may

provide incentive to seek plastic surgery or expensive salon treatments in order to attain the female beauty ideal. While the Canadian Society of Plastic Surgeons does not gather statistics on its procedures, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons (2014), there was a 2 percent increase of invasive surgeries from the prior year, such as breast augmentation and rhinoplasty, and a 3 percent increase of minimally invasive procedures, such as laser hair removal, laser skin resurfacing, and Botox injection, in teenagers. Moreover, two thirds of 16-year-old girls in a suburban high school reported knowing someone who had undergone cosmetic surgery and have desired such procedures as breast augmentation or liposuction for their hips, thighs, and stomachs for themselves (Pearl & Weston, 2003). In addition, the desire to improve body dissatisfaction may lead girls to spend most of their money on beauty products (Parks, 1998), as well as seek out expensive salon treatments, such as waxing, eyebrow shaping, facials, manicures, and pedicures (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). In a focus group study conducted by Ashikali, Dittmar, and Ayers (2016), a general theme posited by the 27 adolescents between ages 15 to 18 years who participated in the study revealed that mass media played an important role by normalizing surgery and underrepresenting the risks associated with it. Given that these procedures, treatments, and products are costly, Zurbriggen and colleagues (2010) posited that self-sexualization might actually serve to widen the gap those girls who have the financial means to look "sexy" and thus attain social popularity and those girls who cannot afford expensive cosmetic enhancements. In support of this notion, Ashikali and colleagues (2016) found that the biggest perceived barrier between desiring cosmetic surgery and undergoing a procedure was indeed money.

Sexuality

Researchers have established that the sexualization of girls and women leads to harmful effects on adolescents' and women's sexual health and sexual expectations, as well as their viewpoints and opinions about sexuality and sexual stereotypes. As discussed above, the objectification and sexualization of girls and women is exemplified in cases of sexual harassment, abuse, and exploitation, which has been linked to negative consequences in these girls and women. The discussion below further highlights the impact of the sexualization of girls, adolescents, and women on sexual health and experiences, sexual attitudes, and sexual abuse and exploitation.

Sexual health and experiences. Although healthy sexuality has been linked to many positive benefits, such as greater intimacy and lower levels of stress (Weekes, 2002), and higher self-esteem (Hurlbert & Whittaker, 1991), extant literature has documented several negative consequences due to the sexualization of girls and women. For example, Impett, Schooler, and Tolman (2006) found that self-objectification was directly linked to reduced sexual health (e.g., decreased condom use) in Caucasian and Latina adolescent girls. In addition, college-age women were found to have objectifying notions of women and greater negative attitudes towards functional aspects of one's body (e.g., sweating, breastfeeding, menstruation) when they attributed media content in magazines or television shows as a realistic portrayal of everyday life (Ward, Merriwether, & Caruthers, 2006).

Other scholars have shown that repeated media exposure to the narrow ideal of physical beauty affects the perception of sexual experiences in adolescence. Specifically, identification with television characters and higher rates of reading men's magazines has been related to college-age female virgins' expectations of a negative first-time experience of sexual intercourse

(Ward & Averitt, 2005). Similarly, Roberts and Gettman (2004) found that young women expressed diminished interest in sexual relationships after being exposed to objectifying words typically found on magazine covers.

As noted above, the effects of objectification and sexualization can lead to negative emotions, as well as dissatisfaction regarding one's body in adolescence, and thus may lead to sexual problems in adulthood (Brotto, Heiman, & Tolman, 2009; Graham, Saunders, Milhausen, & McBride, 2004). Wiederman (2001) revealed that limited pleasure from sexual experiences was noted in women who were critically focused on their appearance. Such self-consciousness and negative thinking about appearance during sexual activity has been shown to decrease women's sexual functioning (Cash, Maikkula, & Yamamiya, 2004), while body shame has been linked to lower sexual arousability and sexual pleasure (Sanchez & Kiefer, 2007). As well, higher levels of body discomfort and self-consciousness has been associated with lower levels of sexual experience and assertiveness, and higher levels of risky sexual behaviour (Schooler, Ward, Merriwether, & Caruthers, 2005). Similarly, the sexualization of sexual minority women has implications for sexually unhealthy behaviour in girls. For example, Thompson (2009) found that combined alcohol impairment and engaging in same-sex behaviour in order to gain attention from men had the potential to lead women to sexual compromises and other more serious and risky sexual behaviour (e.g., one-night stand). In addition, Steer and Tiggemann (2008) found that self-objectification was related to appearance anxiety and body shame in women, which in turn, led to self-consciousness during sexual activity, as well as decreased sexual functioning. Further, greater internalization of media ideals has been linked to increased body surveillance and body shame, which directly predicted sexual satisfaction (Calogero & Thompson, 2009).

Sexual attitudes and identity. Zurbriggen and colleagues (2010) posited that commonplace sexualization of girls and women in the media may affect girls' conceptualization of sexuality and femininity, and thus lead them to assume stereotypical notions regarding sex and gender roles. Extant research has documented findings to support this position, whereby girls and young women who consume mainstream media are more likely to endorse sexual stereotypes that portray women as sexual objects (Ward, 2002; Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006). In addition, scholars have found that higher levels of media exposure led to stronger beliefs in the importance of physical attractiveness and appearance (Ward, Hansborough, & Walker, 2005; Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006).

Further, the relationship between self-objectification and attitudes regarding sexuality in adolescents has been explored, albeit to a very limited extent. Specifically, Hirschman, Impett, and Schooler (2006) used semi-structured interviews to reveal unique differences among less self-objectified and more self-objectified late-adolescent girls. Using thematic analysis, the authors identified that less self-objectified girls expressed positive attitudes regarding sexuality, as evidenced by feeling more comfortable when talking about sexuality or engaging in sexual experimentation. In contrast, girls who self-objectified more frequently were less comfortable talking about sex and expressed regret at having had sex.

Research pertaining to the implications of sexualization for sexual identity development in girls is extremely limited (Thompson, 2013). Notions of patriarchy often rely on heterosexuality (Tolman, 2006), where young women are socialized to believe that men's protection and provision are necessary, and that relationships with women are unnatural or insufficient. Since hegemonic femininity assumes and requires heterosexuality (Tolman, 2006), an internalization of the heterosexual norm may result in identity issues for sexual minority girls

and women, such as feeling uncertain about same-sex attractions or identity uncertainty (Diamond, 2005b; Morgan & Thompson, 2009; Thompson, 2009). An internalization of negativity toward a sexual minority identity can also lead to various mental and physical health risks, such as psychological distress, depression, or lower self-esteem (Szymanski, Kashubeck-West, & Meyer, 2008).

Effects of sexual harassment, assault and abuse, and exploitation. Sexual victimization is an extreme form of sexualization, and always involves both the inappropriate imposition of sexuality and sexual objectification (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Although it may occur simultaneously with violence, emotional abuse, or neglect, and is therefore not solely due to sexualization, a review of the negative effects of such victimization is warranted.

Being a victim of peer sexual harassment has been associated with a variety of negative outcomes, including low body self-esteem (Lindberg et al., 2007), anxiety (Nishina & Juvonen, 2005), depression (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2008; Nadeem & Graham, 2005), and reduced academic performance (American Association of University Women, 2001; Duffy, Wareham, & Walsh, 2004). In addition, experiences of sexual harassment have been linked to problems in the development of healthy body esteem and healthy eating habits among adolescents (Harned & Fitzgerald, 2002), as well as higher rates of disordered eating in early adolescent girls as compared to their male peers (Petersen & Hyde, 2013). A Canadian study conducted in London, Ontario revealed that, for girls, sexual harassment in grade 9 was associated with elevated risk of self-harm, suicidal thoughts, maladaptive dieting, substance use, and feeling unsafe in school (Chiodo, Wolfe, Crooks, Hughes, & Jaffe, 2009). Moreover, these female students were significantly more likely than non-harassed girls to report victimization by peers and dating

partners in grade 11, such as additional sexual harassment, physical dating violence, and physical peer violence.

Childhood sexual abuse has been associated with several physical and mental health consequences as discussed above, including depression (Briere, 1998), anxiety (Molnar, Buka, & Kessler, 2001), body shame (Andrews, 1995), eating disorders (Smolak & Murnen, 2002), physical health impairment (Leserman, 2005), and difficulty in interpersonal relationships (Colman & Widom, 2004). The pervasiveness or intensity of such effects was often related to the frequency, severity, or duration of the abuse (Banyard & Williams, 1996; Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993) or to the responses of others (Ullman, 2003) and girls' own perceptions and attributions (Haaken & Lamb, 2000). In addition, young women who experienced sexual victimization in college were more likely to show a significant drop in their grade point average, as well as a higher likelihood of leaving university (Mengo & Black, 2015).

As noted above, childhood sexual abuse may lead to increased sexualized behaviour or self-sexualization (Friedrich, Fisher, Ditner, Acton, Berliner, & Butler, 2001; Letourneau et al., 2004). In addition, child abuse has been linked to lower sexual assertiveness in both adolescence and adulthood, such as lower levels of birth control use and refusal of unwanted (and not forced) sexual activity (Quina, Morokoff, Harlow, & Zurbriggen, 2004). Classen, Palesh, and Aggarwal (2005) found that a perpetrator's disrespect of a child's physical boundaries, in addition to the child's constricted sense of self, may lead to subsequent relational difficulties (e.g., asserting boundaries, self-protection) and greater likelihood of being victimized as an adult, such as prostitution (Nadon et al., 1998). In fact, many studies that have taken a retrospective approach in identifying risk factors for prostitution highlight that a history of childhood sexual abuse was

often reported by women engaging in prostitution (Farley et al., 2001; Norton-Hawk, 2002; Raphael, 2004).

Scholars have linked a host of emotional consequences for girls and women as a result of prostitution or human trafficking, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (Valera, Sawyer, & Schiraldi, 2001; Twill, Green, & Taylor, 2010), anxiety and self-destructive behaviour (Clawson & Goldblatt Grace, 2007), low self-esteem (Flowers, 2001), depression (Twill et al., 2010), and an increased risk of suicide attempts (Clarke et al., 2012). In addition, prostitution may sometimes become a means to support an adolescent's drug habit (Logan & Leukfeld, 2000), and drug use may begin or escalate subsequent to the involvement in prostitution, sometimes as a way of coping with their violent experiences (Farley et al., 2001). While some studies have demonstrated positive psychosocial effects of engaging in sex work, such as the development of social networks, feelings of empowerment, and independence (Sinacore, Jaghori, & Rezazadeh, 2015), the negative outcomes discussed above are often linked to involuntary or forced experiences of prostitution or human trafficking.

In summary, the discussion above provides ample evidence regarding the negative effects of sexualizing and objectifying girls and young women. Exposure to various sociocultural and interpersonal influences leads to several harmful cognitive and physical consequences, as well as a host of mental health concerns, including, but not limited to, negative emotions, body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, depression, and disordered eating. Furthermore, girls' and women's sexual health, sexual attitudes or viewpoints, and sexual expectations and experiences may be impacted by self-objectification or exposure to the media ideal of femininity and physical attractiveness. Finally, extreme acts of sexualization, such as sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation, have been shown to lead to harmful effects on girls and young women.

Strengths and Limitations of the Literature

The existing body of literature on the sexualization of girls and women exemplifies a necessary starting point from which to understand its impact. A range of studies regarding sexualization and its conditions, as well as the influence of sociocultural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal factors, have led to an increased understanding of the negative effects it has on young girls' and women's cognitive, physical, emotional, and sexual functioning. The majority of the research regarding the sexualization of girls has used quantitative research designs and measures, and have served to increase awareness of this pervasive phenomenon and how it manifests in various ways. Research findings have provided important information in order to improve the public's recognition and understanding of this phenomenon, particularly the harmful effects on girls at an increasingly younger age. Moreover, the extant literature has postulated an important foundation of work for the development of theory and practice to better understand and prevent the sexualization of girls and young women, such as working in schools to improve media literacy, working with families, and working with girls and young women themselves (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). The positive response to the APA Task Force report published in 2010 also suggests that parents, educators, and girls were eager for the information in order to combat sexualization.

Although the overarching strength of the existing literature on the sexualization of girls and women is providing a comprehensive and informative picture of this phenomenon, it has its limitations.   The broad term of "sexualization" is a weakness in itself, as researchers have predominantly focused on the conditions of objectification or self-objectification, with fewer studies examining the effects of the other three conditions of sexualization, including inappropriately imposing sexuality on young girls, being held to narrow standards of beauty, and

determining a person's value through sexual appear or behaviour. In addition, while the four

conditions are not required to be concurrently present with one another (Roberts & Zurbriggen,

2013; Zurbriggen et al., 2010), there is limited research in understanding the intersections

between the four conditions.

Another limitation of the literature on the sexualization of girls and young women is the

sample population of an overarching number of studies examining this phenomenon. The

majority of the studies have included a sample of Caucasian adolescent girls or college women,

with only a limited number of studies addressing how this phenomenon impacts girls of colour.

While scholars in the United States have conducted some studies examining how the

sexualization of girls manifests itself in African American and Latin American girls and

adolescents, there is limited understanding of the way experiences of sexualization intersects

with and is influenced by other identity variables, such as race, ethnicity, and religious

affiliation. Moreover, while scholars have recently begun to address the intersection of

sexualization and sexual orientation (e.g., Thompson, 2013), the majority of research regarding

sexualization has been conducted with heterosexual populations or has focused on analyzing

content in media in which heterosexuality is assumed. The lack of research to date with respect

to understanding the impact of sexualization on girls and women of sexual minority may reflect a

heterosexist bias that characterizes research in general (Thompson, 2013). An absence of studies

exploring the experiences of sexual minority females further contributes to the marginalization of

LGBTQ women (Lerner, 2015).

Similarly, there is limited understanding of the intersection between sexualization and

immigration. While Zurbriggen and colleagues (2010) called for a better understanding of the

effects of sexualization on immigrant girls, as well as moderators of these effects (e.g., country

of origin, age of immigration, level of acculturation), a review of extant literature suggests that there is no research on the effects of this phenomenon for this particular subset of girls. Moreover, the research on the sexualization of girls has largely been conducted in the United States, with limited understanding of how this phenomenon manifests itself in other countries, including Canada. While Canada and the United States share many similar cultural influences of sexualization (e.g., mass media), as well as parallel notions of common attitudes and beliefs regarding sexuality, notable differences in the multicultural milieu or sex education curricula may affect how the sexualization of girls impacts the emotional and sexual functioning of immigrant girls and young women. Researchers examining the effects of sexualization have yet to conduct studies with this population; however, general research on immigrant adolescents may provide some foundational knowledge to serve as a basis for understanding existing challenges for adolescent immigrant girls. Thus, the next section reviews the narrow body of existing research for this population.

Review of Literature Pertaining to Immigrant Adolescent Girls

Over the past several decades, extant literature on immigrant youth in North America has focused on a multitude of topics, in order to improve understanding with respect to their experiences, as well as the barriers faced pre-, during, and post-migration. The predominant areas in the literature that have received significant attention include migration processes, experiences of discrimination, risky behaviour and sexual activity, mental health; and academic engagement and achievement. However, the literature that focuses on issues pertaining to immigrant adolescents rarely considers the sex differences that arise within these areas, but rather groups immigrant boys' and girls' experiences to reach an overarching understanding of the issue at hand. A critical review of the body of research on immigrant youth in North

America revealed three areas of research specifically pertaining to immigrant adolescent girls: (a) roles and responsibilities; (b) risky behaviour and mental health; and (c) sexual behaviour and dating practices. These three areas of research are briefly reviewed below.

Roles and Responsibilities

Much of the literature on immigrant girls focuses on the negotiation of gendered expectations at home and in school, as these girls construct their ethnic identities. Indeed, differences around gender role expectations for youth of certain cultural backgrounds provides interesting discussion in how potential conflicts are manifested in the adaptation of these adolescents (Qin, 2009). Understanding the conflicts often faced by adolescent immigrants in different settings and how they navigate these challenges then allows researchers and practitioners to better support their development (Qin, 2009).

There have been a few studies that have identified unique challenges regarding roles and responsibilities faced by girls from various ethnic backgrounds. For example, a study by Michael (2009) revealed that immigrant girls contested gender and role expectations at home, despite their fathers' discomfort with their adoption of 'American' values and behaviour, resulting in family tension and inter-generational conflict. Furthermore, immigrant girls were often expected to act as caregivers to their younger siblings, as a way for their parents to resolve childcare needs (Lee & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2014). In addition, Qin (2009) revealed several gendered expectations for Chinese adolescent girls at home, including academic success and restrictions to their social life outside of the home. Thus, despite the limited research examining gendered roles and responsibilities, these expectations must be considered in conjunction with other barriers faced by immigrant girls.

Risky Behaviour and Mental Health

A variety of factors have been identified that influence adolescents' engagement in risky behaviour or impact their mental health. The literature on immigrant girls reveals exceptional difficulties that are experienced by this group of youth that must be carefully considered by scholars working with this population.

In general, immigrant girls report less substance use than immigrant boys (Lim, Stormshak, & Falkenstein, 2011), yet they demonstrate more mental health difficulties than immigrant boys, as well as compared to their North American peers (Hilario, Vo, Johnson, & Saewyc, 2014; Sirin, Ryce, Gupta, & Rogers-Sirin, 2013). However, a number of predictors have been identified with respect to the positive mental health of young girls, such as the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship (Updegraff, Delgado, & Wheeler, 2009), living in two-parent homes (Xu, Bekteshi, & Tran, 2010), and language proficiency (Nguyen, Rawana, & Flora, 2011). Nonetheless, adolescent immigrant girls who maintained their ethnic identity often experienced discrimination (Soto, 2012) or stress as a result of discrimination (Hilario et al., 2014), which led to mental health implications. Thus, while researchers are beginning to focus their understanding of challenges faced by immigrant girls independently of immigrant boys in general, there is very little understanding and knowledge of risk and protective factors that support immigrant girls' mental health and limit their substance use.

Sexual Behaviour and Dating Practices

Another unique area of focus in the literature on immigrant girls is to understand their development of sexual behaviour, as well as their dating experiences. This topic is especially difficult to ascertain in many ethnic cultures, since it is often taboo to speak of sexuality and

sexual practices (Fontes, 2012). Nevertheless, findings in this area of research are of greater significance to immigrant girls than their male peers.

Specifically, highly acculturated Latin American girls living in an English-speaking home were more likely to develop sexually transmitted diseases and to exhibit sexual risk behaviours, such as number of sexual partners, sexual initiation after alcohol use, and lack of condom use, than those girls who were foreign-born and did not speak English at home (Lee & Hahm, 2010). Accordingly, immigrant girls who were less acculturated in terms of language use at home were at significantly less risk of dating violence than those girls who predominantly spoke English with their parents, possibly due to less closeness with, or social support from, their parents (Ramos, Green, Booker, & Nelson, 2011).

In addition, several findings with respect to immigrant girls have been elucidated in studies that have included both males and females. For example, when foreign-born girls demonstrated less identification with North American practices, they were better protected against engaging in unprotected sex (Schwartz et al., 2013). Qin (2009) further highlighted through qualitative interviews that many Chinese adolescent girls maintained a strong cultural orientation as they negotiated the internal conflict of dating and sexuality in North American school settings. Additionally, Spence and Brewster (2010) illustrated the protective effect of ethnic identity on sexual initiation. Overall, while findings have resulted in establishing some important links between sexual behaviour and ethnic identity, there is limited knowledge with respect to the development of sexual behaviour and dating practices in immigrant girls.

Strengths and Limitations of Literature on Immigrant Adolescent Girls

Review of the literature on immigrant girls revealed several strengths with respect to how this population is studied. As noted above, scholars have examined multiple factors (e.g., ethnic

identity, parent-child relationships) that affect the main areas of research for foreign-born adolescent girls. The examination of these factors is an overarching strength of research on immigrant youth generally, and immigrant girls in particular, as variables are not studied in isolation, but rather, in terms of how they intersect with and impact one another. Moreover, scholars often examined results in relation to generation status (e.g., first vs. second generation) rather than grouping all adolescents of the same ethnicity into one category. This allowed researchers to understand the subtle nuances between these two groups, and also provide more information with respect to how migration impacts newly arrived female youth.

However, several limitations have been noted in the literature on immigrant girls. For example, researchers often surveyed immigrants of different ethnic backgrounds, without considering how significant cultural differences (e.g., collectivistic vs. individualistic values) could impact their findings. Furthermore, scholars often studied general ethnic groups together (e.g., Asian), with few studies focusing on specific subcultures of the group (e.g., Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese). Many of the studies that do examine specific ethnic immigrant groups through national surveys were only able to provide findings at the population-level, without allowing for better understanding of individual experiences (Guarini et al., 2011).

A significant limitation in the research on immigrant youth, as well as particular research on adolescent girls, is that sex and gender differences within the immigrant youth population are rarely accounted for in the literature. That is, studies generally grouped immigrant boys and girls together, without studying unique challenges for each sex, rendering invisible differences with respect to risky behaviour, sexual and mental health, and academic achievement. Furthermore, many studies revealed statistically significant findings for immigrant boys, but not girls, particularly with respect to risky behaviour and sexual activity (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2013).

Very little research has examined female immigrant adolescents individually; that is, studies included both boys and girls without accounting for known sex differences in adolescent development. Moreover, much of the research on adolescent immigrants has been conducted outside of North America, and findings may not be applicable to immigrant youth in Canada and the United States.

In addition to the aforementioned gaps in the literature, there are few studies that have examined challenges already identified as particularly salient for adolescent girls, such as self-esteem and body image (Harter, 2006), relational aggression (Card, Stucky, Sawalani, & Little, 2008), and peer victimization through "sexting" (e.g., a girl sending a nude photo of herself) and its repercussions (e.g., picture is circulated among friends, girl is humiliated) (Perry & Pauletti, 2011). Moreover, while the number of studies examining mental health concerns, such as depression, in foreign-born girls is increasing, there is little knowledge with respect to other mental health difficulties that have well-established higher prevalence rates in girls, such as anxiety or disordered eating, which may impact their adjustment to a new country or school achievement. In addition, much of the research with respect to sexuality and dating practices of immigrant girls have been completed within specific cultural groups (e.g., Latin American girls) due to their increased risk of pregnancy as compared to other ethnic minorities (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2015), and thus may not be applicable to immigrants of other cultural origins.

Although the sexualization of girls and women in North America has been studied extensively, considerably less is known about how adolescent immigrant girls who are new to North America make sense of the sexualized sociocultural and media representations of girls and women. That is, while they may be armed with certain cultural restrictions that keep them from

engaging in sexual activity in their country of origin (e.g., virginity as a prerequisite for marriage) (Lalou & Piché, 2004), immigrant girls face the additional challenge of negotiating sexuality in a new context where they are seeking peer acceptance and acculturating to a new school and country (Rafaelli, Kang, & Guarini, 2012). Given the influx of immigrants, with almost 22 percent of Canadians being foreign born (Statistics Canada, 2016), combined with the significance of adolescence as a period of sexual development (Tolman & McLelland, 2011), and the risks resulting from negotiating a highly sexualized culture, understanding how new immigrant adolescent girls make sense of sexualization in a new context is imperative. That is, while scholars have documented several protective factors that result from being an immigrant youth, immigrant girls are at risk for the negative outcomes associated with sexualization and living in a sexualized culture. As well, if they participate in behaviours that are counter to the expectations of their heritage culture, they may have the additional challenges of managing conflicting viewpoints of family/community members or of selecting partners that are "deemed appropriate" by their culture of origin. In order to protect immigrant girls from the negative consequences associated with sexualization, an investigation into how immigrant females experience, understand and contend with sexualization is warranted. While quantitative methods have revealed the extent of sexualization, a qualitative research design provides rich descriptions of the influence of sexualization on the experiences of adolescent immigrant, enabling a deeper understanding of their unique viewpoints.

Research Questions

In light of the strengths and limitations of the extant literature on the sexualization of girls and women in general, as well as the strengths and limitations of the research on adolescent immigrant girls, the current study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do young immigrant women construct their lived experiences with North American sexualization since adolescence?

2. What meaning do young immigrant women derive from their experiences with sexualization across time?

3. How do young immigrant women's sociocultural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal contexts shape their experiences of sexualization?

4. What do young immigrant women perceive are the needs of immigrant adolescent girls who are confronted with sexualization?

Researcher Assumptions

In order to explore the research questions presented in this study, it is necessary to openly acknowledge the preconceived assumptions and notions held by the researcher, which will influence the way the phenomenon in question is examined and perceived. I believe that adolescence is a critical stage of development in the human lifespan, in which the construction of an individual's identity occurs and in which messages regarding gender and sexual norms are internalized. Moreover, I consider that the sexualization and objectification of girls and young women is extremely problematic in Canadian society, since it leads to a host of negative consequences. As such, the influence and impact of sexualization on immigrant adolescent girls needs to be addressed. Finally, given the North American standards of gender roles and behaviours, I hold the conviction that girls and young women have lived experiences that are distinct from boys and men. Although it is assumed that these experiences of girls and women will not be the same by virtue of being female, I believe that special attention to the variety of phenomena experienced by girls and young women is warranted.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

A qualitative research design was chosen to understand the way young immigrant women have made meaning from their experiences with sexualization, and to facilitate a deeper understanding and shed additional light on the influences of sexualization on the experiences of adolescent immigrant girls. In keeping with the foundational elements of qualitative research as outlined by Haverkamp and Young (2007), the following chapter will first describe the theory and assumptions of feminist social constructionist epistemology, as well as the rationale as to why it was chosen as the theoretical framework for this research study. Next, a discussion regarding the methodology selected for this study is presented, wherein the philosophical underpinnings and objectives of hermeneutic phenomenology are highlighted. As well, the relationship between the epistemology and methodology is explored. The researcher then discusses her subjective stance, in the spirit of qualitative research, whereby the worldviews, assumptions, and biases of the researcher are made explicit (Morrow, 2007). Following this, the components of the research study, including the participants, materials, and procedures are outlined. Finally, the chapter concludes with a detailed description of the method in which the data collected was analyzed, as well as how trustworthiness and rigour in this research study was ensured.

Epistemology

This research study employed a feminist social constructionist (FSC) epistemology. There is no one single description that would adequately define an FSC position. Rather, FSC can be thought of an epistemology which holds at its foundation the following key assumptions: firstly, that there are multiple, valid truths; secondly, that knowledge is co-constructed; thirdly,

that experiences of oppression are real; and fourthly, that gender is a verb (Gergen, 1985; Parton, 2003; Sprague, 2005). Each of these assumptions is discussed below, followed by a rationale for employing an FSC epistemology in the current study.

A principle assumption of FSC is that a person's notions of reality are constructed from personal experiences. Thus, each person constructs their experiences differently, suggesting that multiple truths of reality exist. Employing an FSC epistemology in research then allows for multiple participant viewpoints to emerge, and to use these viewpoints as the basis to further understand a phenomenon of interest (Sprague, 2005).

In addition, an FSC epistemology holds the assumption that knowledge is co-constructed. More specifically, a person's understanding of the world is developed through their daily interactions with others; in other words, people use relationships to make meaning of their social environments (Gergen, 1985; Parton, 2003; Sprague, 2005). Given that understanding and knowledge is an active, constructive process, the FSC researcher is not meant to be objective in the interview process. That is, the researcher is not expected to assume a detached or observing role, in which one controls their values to avoid biased results. Rather, the researcher is meant to interpret and co-create meaning through the interaction with their participants (Haverkamp & Young, 2007).

A third fundamental assumption of FSC is that oppression is a real notion; therefore, researchers employing an FSC epistemology aim to be anti-oppressive. Specifically, they recognize that the way in which people make meaning out of their experiences is specific to particular temporal and situational contexts; that is, a person's way of understanding particular events or experiences is specific to the particular economic, political, social, and moral climates that sustain a given power structure (Gergen, 1985; Lock & Strong, 2010). In other words, a

person's "reality reflects the oppressive influence of social, political, and historical factors" (Haverkamp & Young, 2007, p. 268), in addition to positive influences. In acknowledging that certain notions of reality are privileged by social or historical elements, an FSC researcher aims to challenge the oppressing dominant social structures and empower marginalized persons by giving them space for their voice to be heard (Haverkamp & Young, 2007).

Finally, a fundamental underlying assumption of FSC is that gender is a verb; it is about an action, and it is shaped and changed by context (Sinacore & Enns, 2005). It is the context in which a person performs that defines their gender; in some contexts, they act in a feminine manner, while in others they are masculine (Bohan, 1993). Thus, gender can be modified by particular contexts and perceptions, and has been deemed to structure power relations between men and women (Riger, 1992; Sinacore & Enns, 2005). According to Bohan (1993), traditionally, women were more likely to encounter circumstances that drew more feminine behaviour (e.g., subordination), while men were more likely to encounter situations that drew more masculine traits (e.g., dominance). This splitting of traits is constructed and reinforced by society's expectations of behaviour for men and women in a given context. However, as power relations between women and men have changed, so have notions of what behaviour is regarded as feminine or masculine. Masculinity and femininity are now viewed as fluid and changing over time. Similarly, several other social identities, such as race, culture, sexual orientation, and class, are viewed to be unfixed identities that are shaped by fluctuating social contexts and power dynamics (Sinacore & Enns, 2005). Thus, the role of the FSC researcher is to critically examine marginalized or oppressed social identities, in order to illuminate how society and cultural norms subjugate these identities and maintain a certain imbalance in power.

Feminist social constructionism was chosen as the epistemic framework for this research study because its underlying assumptions are well suited for the critical examination of the impact of sexualization on young immigrant females. Firstly, the assumption that multiple realities exist allows for the unique and valuable experiences of immigrant adolescent girls to be shared, which will contribute to the extant knowledge on the sexualization of girls and women. Secondly, given that FSC emphasizes that knowledge is co-constructed, the experiences of sexualization must be understood through the experiences of those individuals involved. More specifically, sexualization is a co-constructed process involving girls and women, parents, teachers, peers, and co-workers, as well as those individuals in mass media, all of whom contribute to give meaning to this phenomenon. Thirdly, FSC's anti-oppressive stance will reveal assumptions related to gender, ethnicity, and culture that particularly marginalize young immigrant females in the general discussion of the sexualization of girls and women. Fourthly, FSC illuminates how the sexualization of females is inherently linked to society's construction of gender; that is, failure to adhere to socially prescribed gender appearance or behaviour can lead to a host of negative social and emotional consequences. Thus, FSC compliments the central notion of this study, as it exposes sexualization as a powerful mechanism used to maintain dominant sexual and gender norms. Overall, FSC epistemology is highly conducive to the study of the impact of sexualization on adolescent immigrant girls, given its potential to challenge prevailing discourses and creating room for social change to occur.

Methodology

Although the sexualization of girls and women in North America has been studied extensively, a rich description regarding the impact of sexualization on adolescent immigrant girls is lacking. In order to add knowledge to existing research, a qualitative research design was

selected to examine how immigrant adolescent girls experience, and are influenced by, the general sexualization of girls and women. Traditionally, qualitative methods were used to investigate topics for which there is little or no research (Morrow, 2007). In general, qualitative inquiry is designed to study and gain a deeper and richer understanding of people's social and personal experiences and to glean meanings from such experiences (Morrow, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2005; Smith, 2015). Thus, the current research study employed a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative method to illuminate sociocultural and interpersonal influences of sexualization on adolescent immigrant girls.

Philosophical Considerations

Prior to describing hermeneutic phenomenology as the method of choice for this research study, it is imperative to understand its philosophical roots. According to several scholars, German philosopher Edmund Husserl originally developed phenomenology as a method of studying people's lived experiences and the meanings of these experiences as they are lived (Hein & Austin, 2001; Laverty, 2003; Polkinghorne, 1983; van Manen, 1997). Husserl posited that knowledge is formed through consciousness, and that the phenomena that make up conscious experiences manifest essences or structures, which could be directly examined (Hein & Austin, 2001; Lock & Strong, 2010). Husserl theorized that in order to successfully grasp the essences of a phenomenon, one must suspend or *bracket* their beliefs regarding that phenomenon and set them aside, in order to clearly see the phenomenon for what it is (Laverty, 2003). According to Husserl, by intentionally directing one's focus on the structures and essences of a phenomenon, the exact nature of one's lived experience as they appeared through consciousness could be revealed (Hein & Austin, 2001; Laverty, 2003).

Following Husserl's conceptualization of phenomenology, other descendants of phenomenology emerged. One such descendent, hermeneutic phenomenology, was developed by German philosophers Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Hermeneutic phenomenology, like Husserl's phenomenology, seeks to understand a person's experience as it is lived (Laverty, 2003). However, while Husserl looked to understand a phenomenon by grasping at its essences through bracketing, Heidegger approached phenomenology with a constructivist lens and posited that one can only *interpret* a phenomenon by considering the context within which it occurs (Hein & Austin, 2001; Laverty, 2003). That is, Heidegger theorized that part of human nature was to interpret and stressed that every human experience involves an interpretation that is influenced by a person's cultural, social, and historical background (Laverty, 2003). Heidegger contended that phenomenology is an "interpretive understanding of existence in the world" (Hein & Austin, 2001, p. 5), which uses fundamental aspects of prior understanding, such as history and language, to shape one's interpretations of a phenomenon. In sharp contrast to Husserl's position, Heidegger viewed bracketing to be impossible; rather, he proposed that researchers acknowledge their own implicit assumptions and biases and make them explicit, by considering them on an ongoing basis and by openly discussing how they relate to the phenomenon in question (Hein & Austin, 2001; Laverty, 2003).

Building on Heidegger's work, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1976) viewed interpretations of phenomena as the *fusion of horizons*. Specifically, Gadamer defined *horizon* as "a range of vision" (Laverty, 2003, p. 10), which stems from a person's specific social location. Gadamer regarded language as the medium through which experiences are understood, and as a way of communicating one's understanding of experience to others (Lock & Strong, 2010). It is through an exchange of ideas and opinions in conversation with another individual that a person's

understanding of various traditions and ways of living can be widened and enriched; in other words, it broadens their range of horizon. By helping people look beyond their own cultural and historical embeddedness through dialogue, a fusion of horizons is reached (Lock & Strong, 2010). Thus, hermeneutic researchers engage in a conversation with their participants, in which they co-construct the data and come to a *fusion of horizons*.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

A hermeneutic phenomenological approach permits for a deeper understanding of people's lived realities, such as the influences of sexualization on the experiences of immigrant adolescent girls. The objective of the hermeneutic phenomenological researcher is to cultivate a rich, detailed description of the lived experiences of a specific phenomenon and illuminate seemingly trivial aspects within these experiences that may be taken for granted, in order to make meaning and achieve a better sense of understanding of these experiences (Laverty, 2003).

Hermeneutic phenomenological research is viewed as a dynamic interaction of six research activities: (a) turning to a phenomenon of interest; (b) investigating experience as it is lived; (c) reflecting on essential themes; (d) describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting; (e) maintaining a strong, oriented stance toward the phenomenon; and (f) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole (van Manen, 1997).

Firstly, *turning to a phenomenon of interest* pertains to the orientation toward an enduring concern that initially drives the phenomenological inquiry and the commitment of facilitating a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Secondly, *investigating experience as it is lived* comprises the investigation of a particular human experience while ensuring that the basic aspects of the experience are not taken for granted. Thirdly, *reflecting on essential themes* refers to the research activity of going beyond the details of the experience of the phenomenon and

reflecting on the significant themes that constitute its true meaning. Fourthly, *describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting* requires the researcher to use language or text to document and share their interpretation of a lived experience. Fifthly, *maintaining a strong, oriented stance toward the phenomenon* pertains to the challenge of remaining committed to the exploration of the phenomenon in question without resorting to preconceived notions or opinions with respect to how to make meaning out of a lived experience. Sixthly, *balancing the research context by considering parts and whole* requires for the researcher to maintain awareness of the whole picture without getting lost in the details of the data, but also to understand how each of the details contribute to the purpose of the phenomenological inquiry (van Manen, 1997).

Relationship Between Epistemology and Methodology

Within the framework of this research study, it is clear that the philosophical underpinnings of hermeneutic phenomenology are well aligned with a feminist social constructionist epistemology. An underlying assumption of FSC is that a person's notions of reality are constructed from personal experiences. Similarly, hermeneutic phenomenology stresses that a person is situated within a particular social context and makes meaning of phenomena through their cultural, historical, and linguistic locations. Thus, both FSC and hermeneutic phenomenology promote a notion that people construct their views of reality through interpretation of their experiences, and that multiple interpretations or realities exist. In addition, FSC researchers assume that knowledge is co-constructed between the researcher and participants; in the same light, hermeneutic phenomenologists emphasize the notion of *fusion of horizons* (Gadamer, 1976), during which the researcher and participants co-construct the data to give new meaning to a particular phenomenon. In both FSC and hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher is not meant to be objective, but rather maintain awareness of their assumptions

and biases as they interpret meaning through the dialogue with their participants. Further, hermeneutic phenomenology well supports the anti-oppressive position of FSC, by giving voice to marginalized populations and allowing for contextualized meanings of their experiences. Finally, both FSC and hermeneutic phenomenology share a common objective to examine common or taken-for-granted aspects of experience that influence the interpretive process. Thus, applying a hermeneutic phenomenological method in tandem with an FSC epistemology results in a solid framework upon which to examine the influences of sexualization on immigrant girls.

Researcher Subjective Stance

As noted above, hermeneutic phenomenology is an interpretive method of inquiry, which emphasizes that a person is situated within a particular social context and makes meaning of their experiences through their cultural, historical, and linguistic locations. Accordingly, hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on the meaning that arises from the interpretive interaction between the researcher and the participants. The researcher's biases and assumptions are also embedded and essential in the interpretive process; therefore, the researcher must consistently and critically consider how their own experiences relate to the phenomenon in question (Laverty, 2003). Thus, in the context of the current research study, which takes a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, a consideration of the researcher's personal experiences and beliefs are merited.

I am a 36-year-old, White, Jewish, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-class, second generation immigrant who has the privilege of pursuing a doctoral degree in School/Applied Child Psychology at one of the highest-ranked universities worldwide. In conjunction with my salient identities, I have been significantly influenced by my family, in which the majority of individuals are first-generation immigrants to Canada and the United States. As such, my family's immigrant status has always been at the forefront of my reality and an integral part of

my upbringing, by merging traditional Russian-Jewish beliefs regarding family, education, and culture with North American attitudes and values. However, I became aware at a young age of my Jewish Canadian peers' negative attitudes with respect to my family's integrated Russian and Canadian traditions and beliefs that clashed with those upheld by themselves (e.g., putting up a tree for New Year's, eating traditional Russian foods during Jewish holidays). Consequently, I developed an awareness throughout my adolescence and young adulthood that my personal attitudes and beliefs were being shaped by notions and values upheld in various and often diverse societal and cultural backgrounds. My upbringing also led to an open stance to new ideas and experiences regarding sensitive subjects, including sex, sexuality, and sexual attitudes and beliefs. It is through such formative experiences of being the daughter of immigrant parents, while growing up in a country that holds more liberal views than those held in Russia, that incited my interest in research with immigrant adolescent girls. Thus, as I conducted this research study, my pre-conceived notions, beliefs, and values have been fundamentally informed by my life events and experiences, particularly the experience of simultaneously being both a privileged insider (Canadian-born) and an outsider (immigrant upbringing) in Canada.

Participants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, or the deliberate selection of individuals in order to provide information-rich data about the phenomenon in question (i.e., the influences of sexualization on the experiences of immigrant adolescent girls) (Morrow, 2005; Polkinghorne, 2005). The use of purposive sampling in this study aligns with the objectives of hermeneutic phenomenology, in which the researcher aims to collect detailed accounts of a phenomenon as experienced by individuals (Smith et al., 2009). Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) recommend including at least 8 to 15 participants in research employing qualitative

methodology; therefore, the goal was to recruit between 10 to 12 participants for this study. More specifically, young women between the ages of 20 to 25 years, who immigrated to Canada between the ages of 9 to 12 years from any country other than Canada and the United States, were recruited. Immigration during this time period reflects the time when most girls begin puberty, and become more aware of, and begin to, develop their views and attitudes regarding sexuality. This age range also reflects when girls begin to be inundated with sexualized merchandise and advertisements marketed specifically towards them (Levin & Kilbourne, 2009).

By interviewing women between the ages of 20 to 25 years, retrospective accounts of their experiences with sexualization and the impact of sexualization on their sexual attitudes and beliefs were collected. This method of data collection aligns well with an underlying assumption of hermeneutic phenomenology, in that experience cannot be directly grasped, but rather it is only interpreted (Hein & Austin, 2001). Specifically, hermeneutic phenomenology allows researchers to understand or comprehend meaning or an *interpretation* of an individual's lived experience (Polkinghorne, 1983). These experiences are understood when a person engages in a process of reflection, yet it is impossible to reflect on a lived experience while living through that experience (van Manen, 1997). Accordingly, van Manen (1997) stated that "phenomenological reflection is not *introspective* but *retrospective*. Reflection on lived experience is always recollective; it is reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through." (p. 10). That is, one must have some distance from an experience in order to fully reflect on and interpret meaning from it. Thus, a retrospective research design in which young immigrant women between the ages of 20 to 25 were interviewed complements a hermeneutic phenomenological method, in that it lends itself to highlight the subjective meanings and interpretations that these young women have made out of their experience.

To recruit participants, online advertisements were posted on a variety of websites (e.g., Craig's List, Kijiji) and social networking services (e.g., Facebook), around the McGill University campus (e.g., Stewart Biology building), and recruited through word of mouth (see Appendix A). The participants were offered a twenty-dollar gift card to a local movie theatre as compensation for their time. Funding for these gift cards was provided by the researcher's doctoral research scholarship.

Participant demographics. As a result of recruitment, 12 young women, whose ages ranged between 20 and 25, participated in this study. All participants identified as heterosexual. With regard to cultural heritage, five participants identified as Chinese, two identified as Sri Lankan, one identified as Indian, one identified as Iranian, one identified as Korean, one identified as Nigerian, and one identified as Russian. All of the participants immigrated to Canada with their families between 2002 and 2007, citing a variety of reasons for moving, such as better quality of life in the form of better political climate and better education, or to be closer to other extended family members in Canada. Three participants immigrated to Montreal, one immigrated to the Greater Montreal Area (Brossard), two immigrated to Toronto, two immigrated to the Greater Toronto Area (Mississauga, Markham), one immigrated to Peterborough, one immigrated to Ottawa, one immigrated to Calgary, and one immigrated to Vancouver. Therefore, participants represented four different provinces in Canada. With respect to religious affiliations, six participants identified as Christian, two participants identified as Hindu, one participant identified as Jewish, one participant identified as Muslim, one participant identified as agnostic, and one participant identified with no religion. All of the participants attended secondary schools in Canada and were completing a university degree at a Canadian university at the time of their interview.

Materials

The materials used in this research study included the following: an informed consent form, a contact information form, a demographic information form, and a semi-structured interview form. All documents were created in collaboration with the researcher's doctoral supervisor and supervisory committee. As well, the research study was evaluated and approved by McGill University's Research Ethics Board, which "promotes the highest ethical standards of research involving humans with the primary goal of protecting the rights and welfare of the individuals who are participants in research" (McGill Research Ethics Board Office, 2015) and adheres to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.

Informed consent form. The informed consent form (see Appendix B) was created to ensure that participants fully understood their rights, the limits of confidentiality, the purpose of the research study, the tasks involved in participation, and how data collected from the study would be used. More specifically, the form explained data collection procedure, participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time, how participants' confidentiality and privacy was protected, and any known risks with respect to involvement in the study. Once each participant was in agreement with the conditions of the consent form, she signed two copies, one to retain for herself and one for the researcher's records.

Contact information form. The contact information form was used to attain participants' home address, phone number, and email address (see Appendix C). Participants were given the option of future contact with the researcher with respect to the results of the research study. The form was kept separately from all other forms used in this study in order to uphold participants' confidentiality.

Demographic information form. The demographic information form was completed by participants (see Appendix D) prior to beginning the semi-structured interview. This form gathered information with respect to participant age, relational status, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, spoken languages, country of origin and how long they lived in this country before immigrating, year of arrival to Canada, reasons for moving to Canada, religious affiliation, education history, and employment status. The information collected in the demographics form assisted with hermeneutic phenomenological analysis in order to understand the specific contexts in which the participants' lived experiences with sexualization occurred.

Semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview was used as a guide to address the four research questions in the study and to conduct the interview with the participants (see Appendix E), while maintaining flexibility and allowing the participants to use their own language to discuss their experiences. Generally, participants were asked to reflect upon their experiences with sexualization, interpersonal and sociocultural influences of sexualization, the meaning they derived from these experiences, the impact of sexualization on their psychosocial development, and their perception of the needs of immigrant adolescent girls confronted with sexualization.

Procedure

Ethics. Preceding participant recruitment and data collection, the proposed research study was submitted for an ethics review by the Research Ethics Board-II, which serves the Faculty of Education at McGill University, for research involving competent adults (see appendix F). Following ethics approval, young immigrant women who met participant criteria and expressed interest in taking part of the research study were encouraged to contact the researcher via phone or email. After a brief phone interview to explain the study and confirm

that recruitment criteria were met, an in-person interview was scheduled at the participant's

convenience. Interviews were conducted in the office of the Social Justice and Diversity

Research Lab (McGill University, Education Building, B111/B112) and in a private conference

room in a library at the University of Toronto. Prior to beginning the interview, the researcher

outlined the purpose and goals of the study, as well as any potential risks involved in

participating in the study. After each participant agreed to participate, she read and signed the

consent form.

         To ensure the confidentiality and privacy of all participants, all audio-recorded

interviews, hard-copy data (i.e., consent form, contact information form, demographic form, and

transcribed interviews), and computer files of the transcribed interviews were stored in a locked

cabinet in the office of the Social Justice and Diversity Research Lab. All identifying

information was removed from the demographic forms and the transcribed interviews and were

coded with numbers. Following interview transcription and verification, the audio-recorded

interviews were destroyed. All computer files were encrypted and password protected.

         Data collection. After obtaining informed consent from the participant, each participant

was asked to complete the contact information form and the demographic information form.

Following the completion of both forms, the researcher conducted the interview using the semi-

structured interview form designed for the research study. Participants were interviewed by the

researcher, and all interviews were carried out in English. The interviews were audio-recorded

and data was subsequently transcribed and coded. Transcription services were sought from

Videoplus Transcription Services, which provided basic transcriptions of each interview. A

confidentiality agreement between the researcher and each transcription service provider was

signed (see Appendix G). The transcriber did not have access to the name of the participants;

however, they had access to information that has not yet been de-identified. Following

transcription, the information was de-identified by the researcher.

Data Analysis

Data collected in this research study was analyzed using Interpretive Phenomenological

Analysis (IPA), an approach put forth by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). This approach is

consistent with the FSC epistemological framework of this study, which highlights that

individuals construct meaning from social interactions and personal experiences (Sprague, 2005).

In addition, IPA is consistent with hermeneutic phenomenological methodology of this study,

since it is a phenomenological approach that involves a detailed examination of participants'

experiences and concerns itself with participants' perceptions of the phenomenon (Larkin &

Thompson, 2012).

Following transcription, the researcher verified the transcripts for accuracy to ensure that

non-lexical data, such as significant pauses, laughs, sighs, and other features worth recording

(Smith & Osborn, 2015) were included, and that all identifying information (e.g., names of

participants or institutions) was removed. Data analysis began by engaging in an "interpretive

relationship with the transcript" (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 38). Specifically, each transcript was

read a number of times in order for the researcher to familiarize herself with the account. The

researcher took notes to annotate "interesting or significant" statements made by the participant

(Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 41). Smith and colleagues (2009) argue that there are no general

rules about what is annotated upon; rather, comments that are made may include summaries or

paraphrases, associations or connections, or preliminary interpretations. The researcher also

noted comments regarding the use of language, the sense of the person themselves that comes

across during the interview, and amplifications or contradictions may also be made at this time (Smith et al., 2009). This process was continued for the entire transcript.

After the initial identification of salient areas within the transcript, the researcher returned to the beginning of the transcript and transformed initial notes into focus points. A table was then created that itemized each focus point and its corresponding line numbers from the interview. Subsequently, a judge checked the focus points identified by the researcher against the transcript to ensure accuracy. If there was disagreement regarding accuracy between the researcher and the judge, a discussion ensued until a consensus was reached. Next, the researcher reviewed all listed focus points to further examine their relationship to one another and converted them into themes. The statements from the transcript that exemplified each theme were entered into a data chart. The researcher then attempted to make connections between the themes; some themes could be grouped together, resulting in "superordinate concepts" or themes (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 43), or a reflection of the participant's lived experiences.

Once this analytic process was completed for each participant interview, the researcher searched for patterns across transcripts. The researcher's doctoral supervisor then judged the accuracy of the themes identified by the researcher for all participants, and any disagreement regarding accuracy between the researcher and her supervisor was discussed, until a consensus was reached. Similarities and differences that emerged between transcripts were examined. The researcher then wrote a narrative account of the phenomenon of the influences of sexualization on the experiences of immigrant adolescent girls, in which the similarities and differences were discussed (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

It is important to note that IPA is an iterative process, during which one constantly checks one's own interpretations of text with the actual words used by the participants (Smith et

al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015). Specifically, in keeping a detailed account of participants'

phrases in the transcript that support each emerging theme, the researcher then reflected on, or

modified, her own analyses of the data collected during the interpretive process as needed.

<div align="center">**Trustworthiness and Rigour**</div>

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the data analysis process, several techniques

were used to uphold rigour in this research study. These include sensitivity to context,

credibility, dependability, and catalytic validity (Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004).

Sensitivity to Context

Qualitative inquiry has been deemed to be a tremendously valuable approach, as it allows

the researcher to understand a phenomenon and analyze the interacting effects of context and

time (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003). There are numerous ways that qualitative inquiry

highlights its sensitivity to context throughout the process of a research study. Firstly, a

thorough review of extant research guided the formulation of this study's research questions that

address gaps in the current literature, and also provided explanations to help the researcher

interpret findings following the analytic process (Yardley, 2015). Secondly, good qualitative

inquiry must show sensitivity to the perspective and sociocultural contexts of the participants in

the study; at the design stage, the researcher showed sensitivity to participants' perspectives by

constructing open-ended questions that encouraged participants to respond freely and talk about

their significant experiences rather than being constrained by closed or narrowly-focused

questions (Wilkinson, Joffe, & Yardley, 2004). Thirdly, sensitivity to position and sociocultural

contexts of participants during the analysis stage allowed the researcher to consider views that

were/were not expressed and the ways in which views were expressed (Yardley, 2015).

Moreover, the researcher displayed sensitivity to the data during the interpretive process in order

to demonstrate openness to the complexity of the participants' experiences, and not just impose her own meaning on the data (Yardley, 2015). Aiming to remain sensitive to context was also facilitated by the research study's FSC epistemology, which entailed attending to the social contexts in which meanings were constructed (Sprague, 2005).

Credibility

The aim of credibility is to display that the qualitative inquiry was conducted in a manner that ensures that the topic was accurately identified and described (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This can be achieved in several ways, including the use of peer researchers for verification, researcher reflexivity, and member checking.

In order to verify the researcher's analysis of the data collected, an auditor reviews the interpretations made by the researcher to confirm that the inferences made were valid and that no other relevant information or experiences were overlooked (Cresswell, 2007). As noted above, one judge reviewed the focus points for each transcript as initially identified by the researcher. Next, the researcher's doctoral supervisor served as the auditor and reviewed the themes and conclusions made once data was analyzed across transcripts. Thus, employing auditors to verify the data analysis strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of this research study.

Furthermore, researcher reflexivity allowed for the researcher to understand how her own experiences and worldviews affect the research process (Morrow, 2005). In order to carry out reflexivity and remain aware of the biases and assumptions that came from her own life experiences, the researcher kept a self-reflective journal in order to retain an ongoing record of her reactions, experiences, and emerging assumptions or biases. A second reflexive strategy is consulting with a peer debriefer, whose role is to reflect the researcher's responses to the

research process. For this study, the researcher's doctoral supervisor filled this role and provided

time for ongoing discussion regarding the interview process and identification of themes.

Member checking can also strengthen a study's credibility, by involving the participants

to check the accuracy of the data collected. Member checking includes "on the spot" verification

during the interview, as well as verification of the emerging themes identified by the researcher

(Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, member checking allows for the participant to provide feedback

to the researcher with respect to how well the researcher's interpretations of the data reflected the

participant's meanings (Morrow, 2005). The researcher sent a password-protected narrative via

e-mail to each participant and asked her to provide feedback on the accuracy of the summary

recounting the influences of sexualization on her experiences in adolescence. If the participant

disagreed with the summary or wished to provide more details, the researcher made these

changes accordingly. For this study, seven of the twelve participants chose to provide feedback

regarding their interviews.

Dependability

Another method of ensuring trustworthiness is dependability, or the clear and

comprehensible explanation of the process in which study findings are derived (Morrow, 2005).

Dependability was accomplished in this study by keeping an audit trail, or a detailed record of

the research activities, which include the chronological processes by which data was collected

and analyzed, as well as any influences on data collection, analysis, and emerging themes

(Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). Others were then able to examine the audit trail, and gain

insight into how the research activities were conducted, therefore enhancing the trustworthiness

of the study.

Catalytic Validity

Catalytic validity refers to "the degree to which research moves those it studies to understand the world and the way it is shaped in order for them to transform it" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011, p. 324). In order to ensure catalytic validity, one of the research questions posed by the researcher investigated what young immigrant women whose experiences as adolescents were influenced by sexualization felt would help other immigrant girls who find themselves experiencing this phenomenon. In doing so, this research study gave the opportunity for participants to consider possible ways in which immigrant adolescent girls influenced by sexualization can be better supported.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

</div>

To summarize, this chapter outlined the rationale for employing feminist social constructionist and hermeneutic phenomenology as the epistemology and methodology, respectively, for this study, as well as their complementary relationship. Further, the design of this research study, the method of data analysis, and the way in which trustworthiness and rigour were upheld, was delineated. The next chapter presents a detailed overview of the results stemming from the interviews with the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Prior to delving into the results, it is important to situate the reader and describe participants' views in completing these interviews. For the most part, participants chose to share their experiences in order to advocate for, or give voice to, immigrant girls and women. They noted that the topic of sexualization is generally not discussed among immigrant youth or their parents and were therefore intrigued to discuss it explicitly. As one participant explained, "It's a topic that usually should [not] be talked about, especially for immigrant families. I think parents [and their children] are blinded to [the sexualization] aspect of it. It's interesting to see a study that actually addresses it head on." Further, some participants stated that they wanted to contribute to research at large and enjoyed helping others with their research studies. When asked why she chose to participate in this study, one participant responded,

It's a [topic] that I haven't heard [being talked] about before. We'll talk about sexualization, but not necessarily for women of ethnic background. I think that it's not spoken about, but there a lot of discrepancies from where we come from and what we learn here. I thought that's very interesting and I'm at this stage that I want to help. I remember when I was doing my Master's research and I was desperately looking for participants. I kind of wanted to give back in a way.

Regarding the topic of sexualization itself, several participants reported that they enjoyed participating in the interview, for it allowed them to not only reflect upon their experiences in childhood and adolescence, but to also reflect on how these experiences shaped them as women. For example, one participant commented, "It was good to go back from the beginning to now. Like I was on journey. Just to see how I've progressed since I came here, it was nice to think back on it." Similarly, another participant noted, "It helped [give a] little gradation, like how

things evolved." In some cases, while participants enjoyed sharing their stories, they found it difficult to discuss certain aspects of their experiences. As one participant stated,

> It was almost refreshing going back to my childhood and try to dig back my memories.
> It's good from time to time to reflect on our past experiences and especially your questions about how that has led to how I view myself now, those questions are important and I value asking those questions from time to time. When talking about [the] eating disorder, it's difficult, but it's something that I raised, so it's okay.

Despite these concerns, participants were fairly open and honest about their experiences with sexualization and were grateful to be able to share their stories of how sexualization shaped their experiences as adolescents.

Comprehensive analysis of the interviews with the twelve participants revealed five main areas of discussion. The first section outlines participants' reflections on parent expectations at home. Next, participants discussed messages and expectations that were held by peers and teachers, and reflected in formal school rules. The third section highlights participants' access to information regarding sex and sexuality, while the fourth section of the results illuminates participants' experiences with male peers, dating, and sex. Finally, participants discussed consequences to their mental health and well-being.

Parent Expectations and Rules

All of the participants reported that when they were adolescents, their parents placed certain expectations or rules on them with respect to their appearance, media consumption, and social interaction. More specifically, participants discussed that their parents held several expectations about appearance, including attire, personal grooming, appearing feminine, and body weight. In addition, participants recalled their parents' rules regarding media consumption,

with particular emphasis on limits for television viewing. Further, participants described their parents' expectations regarding social interaction, including rules about participating in extra-curricular activities, interacting with friends, and dating. Many of the participants who lived with their parents in young adulthood continued to have certain rules that they were expected to abide by as young adults.

Prior to discussing parental expectations, it is important to situate the reader into the context of the home environment; mainly, the participants' relationships with their parents as they matured and how their families maintained ties to their heritage culture, religion, and country of origin.

Relationship with Parents

For the most part, participants recalled that they had good relationships with their parents as adolescent. That is, they felt close with, and supported by, their parents and were able to share information about their day-to-day life with them. For instance, one participant noted that she had a "very open [relationship]" with her parents and was comfortable to talk to them about what she observed others were doing or wearing in school.

In particular, participants reported feeling closer to their mother than their father, and thus were able to discuss more personal details with them, such as worries about academics or trouble with friends; however, certain topics, such as puberty, sex, or dating, were not comfortable areas of discussion for any of the participants. For example, one participant stated, "I usually talked about most things. I guess I never really talked to them about, like, if I liked someone. I never really told them that stuff. But, yeah, I think we're pretty open."

Despite feeling comfortable with their parents, two of the participants discussed how their relationship was mired in conflict. That is, both participants often had arguments with their parents about how their personal appearance or behaviour. As one participant explained,

I think sometimes, I wore something to cover myself up just to make sure they would stop nagging me…they were angry…[but] more nagging I would say. I became more rebellious in grade nine. So, like whatever my parents said, I would do the complete opposite. Whatever they suggested, like I would not listen. Yeah, I still loved and respected them, but then during my rebellious phase, I kind of just didn't want to hear anything they had to say. But I still loved them.

As they matured into young adults and entered university, participants maintained positive relationships with their parents, as many of them continued to live in the family home while they attended post-secondary institutions. Though the relationship remained positive, they still chose not to discuss matters around sex and relationships.

Ties to Culture, Religion, and Country of Origin

For some participants, their cultural background remained firmly in place after their family moved to Canada, while other participants made less effort to stay engaged in cultural activities and traditions. In general, participants maintained some ties with their country of origin, with some returning once or twice to visit family and friends. Other participants would keep in touch with their family or friends through phone calls, e-mail, social networking sites, or Skype. For example, one participant stated, "We'd be in very close contact with our family in Iran. Just talking on the phone very often and celebrating the same [holidays]." Another participant described how she visited China every summer to see her father and other relatives and noted that she bought the majority of her clothes, toys, and movies in China; "Except for

boots and winter coats, I mainly [bought] all my clothes from China or from other country except

Canada."

Additionally, participants discussed other ways in which their families maintained ties to

their heritage. For example, participants typically continued to speak their mother tongue at

home with their family members or attended language school as young girls, in order to maintain

their language skills. As one participant reported, "We speak Sinhalese at home. So that was

something important for [my parents], that we don't lose the language." Other ways that

participants and their families preserved their cultural traditions included celebrating holidays,

attending the church or temple affiliated with their religion, watching television channels that

aired in their home countries, eating ethnic foods, and attending community events with others

who shared their traditions and cultural background.

By contrast, certain participants recalled that once they moved to Canada, they did not

engage in activities linked to their culture. For example, one participant recollected:

> The Jewish community is really good in the sense that they help a lot. They have
>
> community centers and lessons and like they had like events and things like that. But
>
> once we got settled and all that, I think I also just said I don't want to go anymore.

Another participant noted that although she and her family attended a Chinese-affiliated church

when they first moved to Canada, they did not associate with many Chinese families once they

moved to a much smaller town simply because there was no opportunity to do so. Other

participants remarked that they did not participate in any activities outside their home due to

their family's financial constraints.

Appearance

Participants reported that their parents held many expectations and conveyed varying messages regarding appearance, including facets such as participants' attire, personal grooming, appearing feminine, and body weight and shape. The degree to which the rules about appearance were explicitly stated and enforced varied between participants.

Attire. Participants discussed the limitations their parents placed on their clothing choices. Certain participants noted that their parents had few rules about attire, while others recollected that their parents were more explicit in stating what they could or could not wear. For instance, one participant stated, "Well, I couldn't wear inappropriate clothes. So, like really short skirts or deep neck or things like that."

For the most part, participants abided by these rules and did not wear these types of clothing; however, a few participants tested their limits and wore more revealing clothes to school or when their parents were not home. As one participant described:

Back then, the minis were in style…the shorts and the skirts. So, that was something my mom didn't want me to wear…and I mean I didn't wear it because I was trying to respect her, but if ever she wasn't home or she wasn't around, I would still wear it.

Participants remarked that there were no consequences for wearing such clothes (e.g., being grounded), but noted that their parents sometimes made critical comments or got into arguments with their daughters about their clothing choices.

As young adults, those participants who lived with their parents continued to feel pressure to follow rules about their attire. That is, they remained conservative in nature and chose not to wear more revealing clothing. However, a few of these participants felt somewhat

conflicted; that is, they wanted to take more risks in their attire, but worried about their parents'

disapproval. For instance, one participant explained:

> In terms of clothing, you know saris, right? They wear a blouse? So, the thing that I
>
> don't really like is that, [this] is okay. The blouse, if you wear a sari, it would be like [a
>
> crop top]. But if you wear it with anything else, it's judged. Especially in India, it's
>
> judged. Even at home, it would be judged [by my parents].

Other participants noted that their mothers put more pressure on them to wear certain types of

clothing (e.g., skirts, suits, heels) and dress more formally as a young adult. For example, when

asked if she experiences pressure to dress a certain way, one participant responded, "My mother

just tells me [to dress formally] because she thinks that I'm [at] an age to [do that]."

 Personal grooming. Participants reported that their parents mostly did not allow them to

wear makeup in middle school and even in their early years of high school. That is, their parents

thought that they were too young to wear makeup, and that it was particularly inappropriate for

them to wear makeup to school. When asked why she shied away from wearing makeup, one

participant recounted, "I think mostly [because of] my parents. They would be like, 'No, you're

going to school. You're not going to a party or anything.' So, it wasn't as necessary." A few of

the participants noted that their parents sometimes made comments or even made fun of other

girls their daughter's age wearing makeup.

 While several of the participants abided by their parents' requests not to wear makeup, a

few of the women recalled wearing makeup despite their parents' rules. For instance,

> [My parents] always said, 'Back in China, girls look more natural, they didn't wear
>
> makeup and they don't start wearing makeup until like 30s or something.' They always
>
> said things like that. I just told them, everyone at school is doing it. They said, 'Well,

you're still too young and you should follow good examples that your peers are giving

you and not bad examples.'

One participant reported that her mother did not place limits on the amount or type of makeup

she wore (e.g., eyeliner) because she felt that it was a "phase of adolescence" that she herself

remembered experiencing as a teenager.

In addition to makeup, a few of the participants stated that their parents showed

disapproval when they wanted to use other grooming methods to improve their appearance. For

example, one participant noted that at age 10 or 11, she was not permitted to shave her legs,

despite experiencing repeated bullying because she had darker and more hair on her legs than

other girls her age. Another participant discussed her parents' disapproval of tanning; "I went

tanning and my parents were super against it. They said it can lead to skin cancer and that fair

skin looks nicer on Asian people. But I did not want to hear it."

As they matured, most of the women reported that they began to wear light makeup

towards the end of high school and into post-secondary education, to which their parents did not

object, since they did not think it was inappropriate to do so at that age.

Femininity. Participants reflected on their parents' reactions when their daughters began

showing more interest in making themselves look more "feminine"; that is, wearing clothes that

were deemed to be conventionally feminine (such as sparkly and colourful tops) and styling their

hair. These participants recalled that their mothers in particular encouraged them to take time to

do their hair or to wear clothing that was more "girlish", and that they seemed happier when their

daughters started to care more for their appearance. As one participant recalled,

I think my parents, especially my mom, she was happy because around that age, I was

really a tomboy. I was always playing with guys, you know. So, she kept on saying,

'…Maybe you want to do your hair', and I wasn't really complying. And then I

started doing it [and] she liked it.

Another participant recollected that her mother associated her daughter's lack of interest in

appearing more feminine as a child with her future level of attractiveness and desirability as a

young woman. This participant explained,

My mom, she used to call me the Virgin Mary, like it was a thing (*laughs*). Because I

didn't like to push the envelope, I was very not interested in that and so she was scared

of that. She was scared that I wouldn't grow into this desirable woman, who likes to

try wearing dresses and like parties.

As they matured into adolescents and young adults, certain participants recalled that

their mothers made comments about their lack of conventional feminine behaviour.

Specifically, one participant stated:

The mainstream would be that a girl has to be very conservative. Like you have to cross

your legs and keep them like [that], you know, you have to be quiet, not loud. That kind

of thing. So, my mom has always told me, 'You're not like a girl' (*chuckles*), and I'm just

like, because I prefer when I'm watching TV, I'll have my legs up. Or I'd be sitting

[cross-legged], and my mom's like, 'No, you need to sit properly.' I'm very loud and I

like to talk and laugh a lot. But my mom is like, 'No, a girl shouldn't laugh too much.

That's not very girly.'

Further, participants reported that their mothers linked their lack of femininity to their suitability

for marriage. For instance,

My mom thinks there's something wrong with my personality. She tells me that. She's

like, 'Oh, you're so un-girly, you should act more ladylike…if you [are going to] behave

like this, who's [going to] marry you? You should clean after yourself, you're so dirty, you're so messy, who's [going to] like you?'

Similarly, one participant noted that her mother questioned her sexuality simply because she was not showing an interest in forming romantic relationship with male peers. This participant explained,

I think my mom was starting to doubt my sexuality. I think probably she was connecting my tomboy days to the fact that I'm not seeing anybody. I think she was starting to think I may be gay, and my dad really didn't comment about it because I think he thought I'm probably having boyfriends, I'm just not talking about it. But I guess they were happy in the way that they weren't worried, but at the same time, I was starting to see my mom like asking, 'Oh are you going out with that guy, is that guy interested in you?' And my answer was always no. So, I remember the first time I told her about my [current] boyfriend, my only first and only boyfriend, she was like, 'Oh my God, I was really starting to think you're gay (*laughs*).'

As demonstrated by the above quotes, participants' lack of interest in appearing or behaving more typically feminine resulted in significant concern from their mothers with respect to their attractiveness as a woman or their ability to be in a romantic relationship.

Body weight and shape. Participants shared about their parents' direct or indirect messages with respect to body image. Specifically, participants' parents were generally mindful in limiting their comments about their daughters' weight, and did not place any expectations on, or encourage, their daughters to lose weight. Participants commented that their parents felt it was inappropriate for their daughters to worry about their weight since they were still developing as adolescents. As one participant reported,

> My mom [said], 'You're a bit chubby', but she didn't pressure me to lose weight just
>
> because [I was] a growing child. That's why I never tried losing weight in middle school
>
> because they never made it seem like an issue. They [said], 'She's a growing girl, she
>
> needs food.'

Similarly, another participant reflected that even though her family doctor was concerned about

her weight in proportion to her height, her parents felt that she was a perfectly acceptable weight

and did not pressure her to lose weight, since it was culturally appropriate for girls to have

curves.

In some cases, participants remembered that their parents encouraged them to exercise

for the sake of their health, and not to lose weight. For instance, one participant described, "Like

my dad was always overweight. So, he brought me to gym, but for him, it was just so that I

could be [healthier]." Similarly, another participant recalled, "Even though I was chubby, my

mom's just like, I want you to do exercise to be healthy." When this same participant started to

lose weight in high school, she noted, "My mom noticed I was losing weight. She [asked], 'Why

are you doing this?' She was supportive that I was losing weight, but like not too much too

fast." In this case, the participant's mother encouraged her to lose weight slowly over time and

to achieve her weight loss goal in a healthy manner.

In contrast, one participant reported that their mother would make negative comments

about her appearance. This participant described,

> My mom, she kind of had this tough love approach. She wouldn't tell me that I look
>
> good. Like she would give me a nickname that's like 'Piggy' or something. In China,
>
> women are very, very thin. Especially actors, they are very, very thin. So, she would

just say, maybe I'm bigger than I should be. Like she'll [compare], 'Oh, she's thinner

than you and taller.'

However, when this participant attempted to lose weight and restricted her eating, she noted,

"They didn't really care [that I was dieting and losing weight]. They just thought I was wasting a

lot of time counting calories." Thus, even when she attempted to meet her mother's expectations

by trying to lose weight, this participant's mother was unsupportive of her efforts.

Media Consumption

In addition to expectations about appearance, participants recalled that their parents had

rules for the types of television shows and movies they watched as children and adolescents.

During elementary and middle school, participants were allowed to watch cartoons or television

shows deemed appropriate for young adolescents by media rating guidelines. One participant

noted that her parents did not allow her to watch cable television as a child, as she explained:

We didn't have a TV. Disciplinary [reasons]. I think partly, it's because of finances,

like there's no reason to buy an extra TV. We had a TV in Bahrain, but then me and

my brother were kind of addicted to it. [In Canada], we [didn't] have cable, so we just

watch DVDs. Because our parents didn't really allow [computers or TV]. So, [we

watched] stuff my parents would approve of, I guess.

As they entered high school, participants were generally not allowed to watch television

shows in which teenage characters were dating or that contained sexual content. However, while

some participants generally abided to their parents' rules, others noted that they often watched

these shows in secret when their parents were not home or when they were alone in their

bedroom. For instance, one participant described,

> My mom, she didn't like us to watch movies or TV series that had sexuality scenes. I would do it in my room and she wouldn't really check on me. I remember once I was watching something and there was a sex scene and my mom was just like, 'Oh this is so inappropriate', and I was really uncomfortable that she made the comment. She's like, 'Oh change the channel'…and you know after that, I [decided] I'm going to watch it on my own.

Other participants recalled that their parents did not place any limits on their media consumption, simply because there was a high level of trust in the home. That is, participants noted that because they generally followed the rules at home and in school, their parents trusted their judgement in the shows they selected. For instance, one participant commented,

> [My parents] used to work long hours. So, they weren't really home. There was a lot of trust in my household. We're all very quiet and shy and reserved, so they didn't really expect anything to happen…plus there wasn't cable TV, so it wasn't like we could watch whatever. It was just regular TV.

Moreover, certain participants chose not to watch television shows that their parents found inappropriate simply because they were not interested in those types of shows at that age or they were not in accordance with their family's religious values. One participant reported,

> I remember there were a few girls who were really into some TV shows. Like, *Gossip Girl* or *90210*. Those had very sexual scenes, especially *Gossip Girl*, and girls at my school were talking about it from time to time. My family never told me not to watch anything, but because of my own set of values and the teachings from my religion, I guess, I tried to stay away from it. I was into *Glee* just throughout high school. I was more into movies than TV shows. I liked (*chuckles*) *High School Musical*.

Participants stated that their parents did not place limits in the type of television shows or movies they watched as they entered post-secondary education. One participant observed, however, that her father continued to feel discomfort when watching media with sexual content with his children. She explained, "My dad still covers my eyes to this day when [there are] sex scenes on TV. He did [when I was a teenager] and he still does." Other participants noted that they continued to watch television shows with higher sexual content in the privacy of their own rooms, in order to avoid comments from their parents.

Social Interaction

Participants shared about their parents' expectations with respect to social interaction, particularly with respect to participating in extra-curricular activities, spending time with friends, and dating.

Extra-curricular activities. Participants reported that their parents were generally supportive if they wanted to participate in extra-curricular activities as children and/or adolescents. These activities included school clubs, student council, and sports teams, as well as activities offered in the community, such as dance, art, and Air Cadets. In some cases, parents would use the opportunity to connect their daughters with people who shared their heritage culture. For example, one participant stated,

> I went to a lot of art classes. I painted a lot. And that was [with] someone in the
> Chinese community [with whom we were] family friends. I mean, I'm obviously free
> to be friends with anyone, but sometimes, you get introduced to more people that are
> your own ethnicity, just through [your] parents.

For other participants, extra-curricular activities were only permitted if the participant kept their grades up. As one participant shared,

I noticed that parents were also encouraging their kids to participate in something

outside of school, whereas for my family, it was more academic focus. So, the

precondition [to participate in activities] was that I maintain my academic success.

Friends. Apart from their participation in extra-curricular activities, participants also

described their parents' rules with respect to socializing with friends. Although some

participants' parents were lenient about how much time they could spend with friends, others'

parents had strict rules on the amount of time spent socializing, as well as the types of activities

their daughters could engage in with their friends. For example, one participant stated, "I wasn't

allowed to have sleepovers at other girls' houses, so they would always be coming to my house,

and they were okay with it." Similarly, another participant recounted,

I went through a phase where everyone used to stay out late. I had a curfew. [This

was] grade seven and eight and up to high school. And then I was not allowed to sleep

over. My dad would come and pick me up [at] like 11. They didn't know the parents.

Even if they knew the parents, they would be like we know them briefly, like we don't

know them a lot. I would come home and they would ask me about my friends'

parents' jobs, what they do, about their family, and I was like, why is that important

(*laughs*). I did [try to change their mind], but they're like no, it's not happening.

Until university, no.

In contrast, certain participants stated that they did not have any restrictions on their social

outings because their parents had a high level of trust in them. For example, one participant

described,

My mom was, like, if I know where you are and who you're with and what you're

doing, then she would kind [agreeable]. I didn't have a curfew. But you know, okay,

I'm going to the movies with this friend, that friend and that friend, and you have my

phone number and check in like every hour or every two hours and she would be like

okay, go.

Participants reported that they generally did not push their parents' limits and felt that the

rules that were in place for them were fair. For example, one participant stated, "I never tried to

push limits because that's not how I was raised and not what I'm comfortable [with]. When

you're told to do something, I don't really question and I just do it because that's the rule." Even

the participants who were not allowed to attend sleepovers otherwise found their parents' limits

to be reasonable. When asked if she felt restricted by her parents, one participant responded, "In

terms of the sleepover, yes (*chuckles*). The rules were fair at home. I would never sneak out;

our own house wasn't like that. I respected my parents."

As young adults, participants noted that they largely had the freedom to do as they

pleased, without checking in with their parents. That is, their parents were unlikely to place

restrictions on the types of activities that their daughters wanted to do and approved of their

friends. In one case, however, a participant commented that her parents continued to want to

know her whereabouts at all times and her day-to-day activities. She described,

Even coming here today, [I thought] it may be too early to come – I have to be here by

11:00. Because if I had to wake up and try to tell them that I'm coming to this, they

will ask if it's a good use of my time, then they will ask all these questions. So, I kind

of have to schedule it. I have to plan it, so I'll be out for the specific amount of time,

so when I go out here, [I am] not questioned, [with] those kinds of questions. [They're

still] very much [involved].

Overall, however, participants felt that their parents had reasonable expectations on their social outings and time with friends.

Dating. With the exception of one participant, all of the other participants reported that their parents did not allow them to date while they were high school. Participants described that their parents felt they were too young to have romantic relationships, and that their focus should be on their academics. As one participant stated, "Going back to my cultural roots in Korea, [as] high school students, you really need to focus on your schoolwork. You just don't have the time to date or even think about sex." Further, a number of participants' parents held values that "dating leads to marriage"; that is, dating and romantic relationships are behaviours that adults engage in as part of planning for their future in the long-term and is not done casually. Moreover, some of the women who attended church with their family learned a strong value of chastity. For instance, one participant described, "Not only was I Chinese, I was a Christian, like, you know, no sex before marriage. That's a value I hold. No sex, because that what it states in the Bible and I abide by it."

Although dating was not permitted, participants recalled that their parents generally felt it was satisfactory for their daughters to maintain friendships with male peers. For one participant, however, she recalled her father's reaction after he learned that she went out in a group that included males:

My father just got angry. Because of that, it was a [turning] point in my life, in

relationship with boys. Because of that, I was like, oh, if I go out with boys, my father

will get angry [with] me. It doesn't affect me in term like my relationship with other

male friends, but I know that I should not tell to my father.

For the most part, while participants recalled having crushes on some of their male peers, they did not try to date in secret during high school. More specifically, these participants either did not feel that they were ready to date yet or knew their parents would not approve of it, and therefore, did not try to date their male peers. As one participant explained,

I wasn't really interested in dating. I mean, I was interested in going out, but when I realized that it's not the same type of going out as I had in my head. Because for me it was like, let's go to the movies, let's go play soccer. And when I was here, there was also the sexual aspect, which I wasn't into or ready for (*laughs*).

However, one woman noted that she hid her relationship with her high school boyfriend from her parents for several months because she knew they would not approve of her relationship. She further described,

[Dating was allowed] probably second year university, I would say. First year, I think it was more like about me getting my feet down. I always said, I was meeting friends from [my] old school, so that's where they thought I was. I think it was cultural [for my parents], because they were like, dating should be meant for marriage and you're not getting married that young. So, you're just fooling around, so there's no point. Like the relationship is not [going to] go anywhere. Also, if you date, then you'll take away from time from school.

For the sole participant who *was* allowed to date in high school, her parents were generally permissive of her spending time with her boyfriend in and outside of their home. However, she noted that her parents enforced certain rules for her within the context of the relationship:

They knew him. He would stay over, but we weren't allowed to sleep in the same

room. At neither house. Because he lived in [another city] so, if I wanted to stay the

weekend, then it would be fine, but we would have to sleep in separate rooms.

As the participants progressed into post-secondary education, some of their parents

continued to hold firm rules about dating. That is, these participants were encouraged to

focus on their academic performance and discouraged from dating. As one participant stated,

"[My friends] could always go out, dating-wise, [but] I wasn't allowed to date. [Even] now,

I'm not allowed to date." Because of their parents' limits, certain participants felt they needed

to keep their romantic relationships a secret from their parents because they worried about

their disapproval or about added pressure to get engaged. As one participant stated,

Because [my parents] see it differently. They want it to be like after I finish school,

when I'm working, but that could be too late. They want me to bring him, then he'll

bring his family, and then they'll all talk somehow, and then perhaps I'll still get along

with him and have some continued engagement. But I like the whole idea of being

relaxed and spending years with someone. Because I'm too young to do anything. I'm

not ready to get married.

In contrast, other participants' parents became more permissive and encouraged their

daughters to date in university, as they felt they were at an appropriate age to have romantic

relationships.

Overall, the women recollected a number of expectations and rules that their parents set

in the home. These rules guided the women's appearance, media use, and social interaction with

male and female peers. While some participants' parents were firm in their enforcement of these

rules, other participants' parents were less strict about their expectations. Participants reported

generally abiding to the rules, but also noted that they sometimes had to hide certain aspects of themselves in order to avoid conflict or disapproval.

Expectations and Rules in School

In addition to the expectations that were placed on participants at home by their parents, participants were further exposed to new and different expectations than they were accustomed to when they entered the Canadian education system. The next section is revealed in two parts: a) participants' experiences when they first transitioned into school in Canada; and b) the observations and experiences of participants after progressing through school over several years.

Initial Transition into Canadian Schools

Participants recalled that when they started elementary or middle school in Canada, they observed a variety of rules and customs that contrasted with the expectations they were used to at school in their home country. Participants noted that their cultural differences, such as language, interests, and race/ethnic backgrounds, made them targets for significant bullying or exclusion by their female classmates. In addition, those participants whose gender expression did not match that of their female peers were further teased or excluded by these girls.

Language. Certain participants recalled that when they initially began school, appearance was less of a focus for them as it was for their peers because they were new to Canada and had to learn one, if not two, new languages. For some of these participants, learning a new language was a struggle, as it took them one or two years to grasp the language in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes or *classes d'accueil* (a transition classroom for immigrant students in Quebec) before they were moved to a mainstream classroom. Their lack of language, in turn, affected their ability to speak to, or interact with, their peers. For instance, one participant recalled, "When we first come to Canada, since we [didn't] speak French, we needed

to learn French first. I think it was very, very difficult to communicate with each other because

of the language." Further, some participants were bullied or isolated by others, simply due to

their lack of language skills. As one participant described,

> I don't know if it's the case for all immigrants, but to me, those first couple of years were
>
> very traumatic. It was very lonely. When I came to Canada, I didn't speak English or
>
> French, so I had to learn both in the span of the *classe d'accueil*. And that was hard.
>
> Let's think about the fact that everyone's making fun of me for my accent. For a really
>
> long [time], mostly [at] the first high school, because I was standing out a lot.

Therefore, participants reported that language was a barrier for interacting with others and was a

factor that contributed to increased isolation and bullying.

Interests. In addition to a lack of shared language, participants observed that their

limited interest in clothing led to teasing and exclusion at the hands of their female peers.

Further, participants recalled that they lacked shared interests with respect to toys or

extracurricular activities that other girls their age were interested in at the time. For example,

one participant recounted

> When I was in Australia, we played a lot of netball and handball. On Fridays, it was
>
> sport days, so everyone's forced to play sports. So, I guess it was more enforced there,
>
> where if you wanted to play a game of basketball, almost every girl would be down for it.
>
> But here, I did feel left out, where I [say], 'Hey why don't you join' and they're like, 'Oh
>
> no, we're going to get our nails done in our spare time.'

This quote illustrates participants' shared experience of moving to Canada and being treated

unkindly by, and feeling isolated from, female classmates because of their differing interests.

Ethnic background. Adding to their difficulties with social isolation and experiences of bullying due to their accents or differing interests, participants discussed their experiences with discrimination and racism. For example, one participant stated,

People used to make fun of me because I had a lot of hair on my legs. Indians tend to have a lot of hair. But the people that I was around, they were a lot of blonde girls, so you couldn't really see [the hair on their legs]. They saw my hair and they were like, 'You should shave, like, what is this? You're so hairy.'

Similarly, another participant described that after moving to a small, predominantly Caucasian town in British Columbia, her peers perpetuated certain stereotypes about her ethnicity.

Because they said, 'Oh Asians, you guys are all nerds, all nerds.' In my second year [at the middle school], one of my Chinese friends, she was an immigrant but from the U.S., just visiting the town and she was incredibly smart. But then everyone's like, why are you so dumb, [participant name]? And she's so smart? Well, I then studied real hard to become an actual nerd (*chuckles*). To conform to what they thought.

These quotes are only two examples of the discrimination and racism that several participants faced not only when they moved to Canada, but as they progressed through high school and into university.

Attire. Compounding on the lack of shared language, interests, and ethnic background was a stark difference in attire between participants and their female peers. That is, participants felt that they did not pay as much attention to their clothing choices as other girls their age in Canada. One participant commented, "As a girl, even at a young age, it was a lot about my appearance, how I looked, what I wore, how I dressed. [My classmates] said I dressed like a homeless person." Another participant recalled that her clothing choices led to further isolation;

"I was trying to become friends with another group of girls, but they weren't happy with the way I was dressing. They wouldn't say things directly to my face, but they would exclude me."

Further, participants recollected that they were made to feel that their "tomboy" or conventionally masculine style of clothing was inappropriate. That is, these participants wore clothes that were deemed more masculine in nature due to style (e.g., baggier) and colour (e.g., black, red), and felt that they did not blend with their peers. In general, participants noticed that their female peers wore more clothing that was conventionally more feminine than their own clothing. As one participant recalled,

> I guess I dressed more relaxed.   Like, not as well as the girls in my class did. I think some of them wore more like stylish clothes. But I was more tomboyish when I was younger too, so I didn't care. They were wearing more chiffon-like tops. I just remember my favourite black shirt. With some graphic design. And I guess they wore brighter [clothes], yellow, pink.

Because these participants were viewed, or identified themselves, as tomboys, they struggled to form friendships with their female peers. For instance, one participant described a way in which her femininity was assessed by her peers:

> I remember that the first thing they did was they gave me a friendship test, and they're like (*chuckles*), 'If you want to be friends, then you have to do this.' They just made me answer questions and that's when they realized that I wasn't exactly the girly-girl type. They asked me what my favourite color was and the options were pink, baby blue, and purple…and mine was red and black (*chuckles*). So, I said none of the above, and I wrote red and black. I just remember the colour thing, being really weird.

Thus, participants' lack of femininity was often a hindrance in forming relationships with their female classmates.

Strategies used to fit in. Although participants faced exclusion and isolation as young girls, they employed a variety of strategies to eventually feel included by their female peers, and more importantly, form friendships with them. For example, one participant shared, "I brought a lot of toys from China, like Harry Potter stickers. When I [brought] those to class, it attracted a lot of friends. I think they have never seen those before. Those toys helped me to make friends." Others chose to befriend students who spoke their language of origin, thereby increasing interaction with Canadian peers:

> When I first came here, I could only befriend the Chinese speaking students because I
> didn't speak any English and I think the English-speaking students, they-, like, to my
> face, they were nice, but then I kind of had a feeling they were [saying] bad things about
> me behind my back. Or some of them just thought I was interesting, but because I didn't
> speak any English and I had an accent when I did speak English, they thought that was
> funny. I guess I didn't really try to befriend the other English-speaking students because I
> couldn't anyway, but then for the Chinese-speaking students, I did befriend them and they
> were inclusive.

Another strategy participants used was to befriend the boys in their class as a way to decrease feelings of isolation. That is, as young girls in elementary or middle school, many of them shared more interests with their male peers than their female classmates and would therefore connect with other boys in order to socialize and form friendships. As one participant noted, "I was really into airplanes and war movies (*chuckles*) because I think that's what my dad

and my brother were interested in. I think I made more friends with guys that year because of

that shared interest."

In middle school, certain participants recalled joining extra-curricular activities to make

friends or as a way to fit in better with others their age. For example,

I was focused on academics, but more so to actually make friends. Because when I

started school, everyone already [knew] each other either through their church

community or their elementary school, so I just [had] to just focus on making friends.

Participating in clubs was definitely a thing. I did a club called Social Justice Club. I did

field hockey.

As well, many of the participants befriended other peers who, like themselves, strived to

maintain their strong academic performance or shared academic interests. As one participant

stated,

I was so much into reading, sciences, and [around] people who were good in math and

sciences. All of a sudden, I was with people who were actually into this kind of stuff.

They were reading the books that I was interested in, they were talking about things that I

was interested in. For example, back then, I was into making planes and there were a few

people who were doing that, so we started doing that together. There were people who

were interested in biology, so we [liked] studying about that together. I think that really

helped me to be with people who had the same interests.

In order to better fit in with their peers, most participants took initiative to change their

appearance, by adapting their clothing style and experimenting with wearing makeup or styling

their hair. As one participant described,

I was just wearing, like a normal guy t-shirt and jeans and that was my outfit. And when

I came here, I was the only girl who was wearing that at school and I was seeing [that]

everybody is wearing pink shirts, light shirts. If you wear jeans, you wear specific kind

of jeans. I was seeing all this happening. Same thing for my hair, I never did my hair. It

was just like always in a ponytail or down and then I saw everybody is either

straightening or putting mousse in their hair. I could see the difference between me and

the other girls. I started putting mousse in my hair. I started wearing tight shirts. I

started wearing fitted jeans. Even my shoes, the style changed. I started wearing

accessories. I wore like girly stuff.

However, participants recollected thinking that they were too young to wear certain types of

clothing or to wear makeup. Yet, because of their desire to fit in with other girls, they

conformed to dressing in similar fashion as their female peers through middle school and the

early years of high school:

When I came here, people were free to dress how they want to and with that said, people

obviously chose to show a little more skin. Even the clothing stores that target age

groups, let's say ages 8 to 12...I remember, like, off shoulder [shirts], I remember tank

tops and very short shorts. Basically, just mini versions of what adults wear. I remember

really wanting to fit into that appearance, and I wanted to subscribe to that. I remember

just going through the trends in elementary school and middle school. People would be

wearing bra straps [that] would show and, you know, as young as 12, people would be

trying to do the push up bra thing. There was a horrible trend when I was in grade five

and six where people would [wear] low ride jeans. I think before, I had a lot of clothes

that my parents got for me, clothes that I brought over and they were more like clothes

for children. Whereas, in North America, clothes for children are smaller sizes of clothes

for adults. But yeah, I just adapted to my environment.

It is important to note that when certain participants moved to Canada, their families initially

faced financial difficulties. Therefore, when participants wanted to buy new clothing in order to

better fit in with their peers, they had to be mindful of shopping in stores in which their families

could afford clothing. Participants described, for example, that while their peers shopped in

higher end stores (e.g., Lululemon), they would try to find similar, but less expensive, styles of

clothing in lower end stores (e.g., Ardene). Additionally, participants wore hand-me-down

clothing or depended on their parents to buy them clothes, and thus, could not pick out clothing

that was similar to what their classmates were wearing. As one participant described,

> I think at that time, my parents were not in a financially good position, because it was
>
> hard for them to find a job. So, I think it [was] also hard for me to fit in, in that way too.
>
> Like I had my hand-me-downs and stuff. And, I wore a lot of masculine clothing, I
>
> guess, more masculine than what my peers would wear. I think I tended to wear baggier
>
> jeans. I think a lot of the clothing that I already had existing was what my parents picked
>
> out, so it was for me and my brother. So, I'd have the same hoodie as my brother.

Overall, participants used a variety of strategies to feel more included by their peers and form

friendships with them. Oftentimes, however, they felt they had to conform to the appearance and

interests of their female peers in order to avoid isolation and exclusion, rather than be accepted

for who they were, despite their differences.

Progression Through Canadian Schools

Participants reflected that once as they progressed through middle and high school, they

made further observations about their teachers' and school's expectations regarding academic

performance, classroom behaviour, and attire. At the same time, however, they also observed

that their peers did not necessarily follow these expectations, but rather tested limits or broke

school rules, which, in turn, influenced participants' decision-making regarding their own attire

and behaviour in school.

    Academic path and performance. Participants spoke about the expectations placed by

their schools with respect to their initial academic placements. Specifically, some of the

participants were placed in an ESL class or *classe d'accueil*. They recalled struggling to

maintain their interest in those classes, since they only learned core subjects (math, language,

history) or felt they were falling behind in other academic areas. As one participant explained,

> That was another bad thing that really bothered me – that they would place you based on
>
> obviously your [language skills]. We would have four classes per day, three of them are
>
> French, and something else. And because I didn't speak French, I kept on doing the same
>
> math class for first year of *d'accueil*, second year of *d'accueil*, even the third year when
>
> they placed me, I was still doing the same math. And that was really something that was
>
> bothering me – I felt like I was falling behind everybody else. I mean it's also a *classe*
>
> *d'accueil*, it's not really [material] that triggers your interest – I was into science and then
>
> stopped. I was learning French [and found it] so boring. So, that's why I found [*classe*
>
> *d'accueil*] pretty boring.

Another participant reflected that she felt frustrated that she could not participate in specific

academic programs due to her ESL status. That is, she was unable to begin the French

Immersion program, and therefore, perceived herself to be less competitive for university than

her peers. She described her feelings towards her ESL classes:

I hated it. I think it was useless. I feel like the structure of ESL is good, but I feel like it

interfered with my other classes. They usually take you out of another language class or

social studies and that really put me behind the other kids. That's why I don't know how

to speak French. Because I didn't start at Grade 5 – I was supposed to be in that class, but

I didn't get out of ESL and they [wouldn't] let me in. I wanted to do French Immersion

because I wanted to be at the top. French Immersion puts you at the top.

In addition, participants recalled that as they progressed through high school, they

frequently felt pressure to perform well academically because it was expected of their cultural

background. In particular, participants from China and Korea noted that their teachers and peers

often anticipated that they would achieve good marks. As one participant remembered, "As a

young immigrant from Asia, I was expected to excel in my academics. I think that's what people

just expected of me."

Behavioural expectations. In addition to expectations regarding their academic

performance, participants recalled that their teachers in Canada had different expectations of

girls' behaviour than to what they were used to in their home countries. That is, participants

aptly observed that girls in Canada behaved very differently than what was expected of girls'

behaviour in their old schools. For example, girls in Canada were more likely to be outgoing,

independent, and talkative, while girls in their home countries were more shy and quiet. As one

participant pointed out, "In Sri Lanka, you would feel like girls were supposed to be more

conservative and [quieter], not too extroverted and if you were too extroverted, too loud, that's

not [appropriate]. Here [in Canada], that's normal and that's actually encouraged." A Nigerian

participant recalled observing the equality between boys and girls in Canada; "Girls had a mind

of their own, girls could talk back to boys, girls could do whatever sport they wanted to do without being seen as odd or something like that."

Further, participants reported that girls in Canada were expected to verbally participate and be leaders in their classroom. For example, "I think how teachers promoted it was mostly not directly verbally saying, 'Oh, now you can speak up', but by doing different kind activities and doing a lot of group work and oral presentations. Speak out loud. Express yourself." Another participant commented that, in general, students in Canada are given a message to stand out from others:

> With any individualistic society, people want to stand out. In China, everyone has to conform to the same system. We want our school to do well, it's a collective attitude. Here, there's more pressure to be yourself, be amazing, you're a star."

However, this same participant expressed concerns with promoting individualism in schools; "There's a lot more like, I'm the best, so therefore, you're worse than me and, as a result, there's more bullying [in Canada]." In general, expectations regarding classroom behaviour of girls in Canada were contrasted to those in their home countries, where they were expected to work quietly and independently, and individual written assignments were promoted over group work and group presentations.

Additionally, participants observed that girls were expected to complete group work with females *and* males in their class. Certain participants recollected feeling strange to be in the same class, and working with, male students, as they had previously attended all-girl schools or had little interaction with boys in their home countries. For example, one participant stated, "Before, I went to an all-girls school. [In Canada], I think I was shy. I didn't affiliate that much

with boys at first." Another participant recalled initially feeling shy around her male classmates due to their appearance:

> All the boys in China, they [are] the same height, same colours, almost the same style. But in Canada, some of them are so big, some are so tall, some are so, so small and the colour of the skin is different. And I feel that I'm not a racist to any ethnicity. But when I see someone, when I was younger, with darker skin that was so tall, I [felt] scared (*laughs*). Because I [had] never seen anyone who looked like that. I think I was afraid of the difference because I have no idea what is their background. I didn't stay away from them, but I never tried to talk with them, either.

Participants also reported that they felt more inclined to appear the same as their classmates; in other words, they tried to copy their behaviour. For one participant, her behaviour changed when she observed what was acceptable for girls' behaviour; "Girls were taught to be meek and mild back home. Here, to see them be so outspoken and talking back, it really brought me out of my shell, to be honest, because I wasn't a talker back home." In some cases, however, the behaviour that they copied led to negative consequences. For instance, one participant recalled, "I started hanging out with the popular girls. So that kind of contributed to my attitude. Like I wouldn't really talk to people that I didn't know, and even if they tried talking me, I would brush them off." Another participant noticed her behaviour change after she and her friends started gossiping about other girls in their class; "We sort of created one of those [Burn Books from *Mean Girls*]. I wrote mean stuff in that book, but that wasn't something I would have done before."

Certain participants reported that they became more rebellious as they progressed through high school, by displaying truancy in school. As one participant described,

> I skipped a lot of school in high school. I would just like go downtown and go to the
> bookstore and do my homework and read and just talked to people and try different
> things and talk to different people older than me. Like I wanted to get a taste of the
> world.

Another participant noted that not only did she skip class, she sometimes got in trouble for breaking school rules:

> Yeah, sometimes I'd skip school. I wasn't a big attender, but this is actually why I ended
> up going to the third school because, well, the biology teacher didn't want me [in their
> class] because I was a troublemaker in class. I never wanted to participate in the
> dissections. I was against that. I showed up to the final exam without a uniform. And
> you're not allowed to write the exam without a uniform.

In general, participants were mostly respectful of school rules and authority figures; however, they observed that their peers frequently showed a lack of respect towards teachers and other figures of authority. More specifically, participants commented that they found students to show less respect towards their teachers than what was expected of students in their home countries. In the same vein, participants observed that teachers' expectations of appropriate student behaviour were more lenient than what may have been expected from their teachers in their country of origin. As one participant recounted,

> Well I remember in Iran, the relationship that we had with the teacher was a lot more
> respectful, they were a lot more authoritative, whereas here which it was like the students
> were the bosses and the teachers were just trying really hard, but it wasn't going through
> (*laughs*). So that was something that was interesting for me, but I didn't feel like they

had any power-, even if they send you home, you would come back, there's no going

home. In Iran, we were graded on discipline, and here there was no such thing.

Furthermore, some of the participants reported that they observed adolescents in Canada to have

more leniency and independence in their everyday activities. For instance, one participant

recalled that Canadian adolescents could use public transit by themselves or bring their friends

over to their homes without their parents' permission:

> If we would go to a friends' house, their parents might not be home. They wouldn't have
>
> to ask their parents [if I could come over]. If my friend wanted me to come over, I can just
>
> come over. We would have to ask [our] parents if our friends [could come over]. And
>
> when my friend would come to my house, my parents would always be home.

Interestingly, participants drew parallels between the behaviour they observed in their peers at

school and that of specific television characters. That is, when watching certain shows geared

towards teenagers, such as *90210* or *Gossip Girl*, participants observed adolescent characters to

speak disrespectfully to their parents or come and go as they pleased without limits or

consequences. As one girl described, "Very lenient parents, very free way of talking to parents

and adults. They could be rude, they could do just whatever. And it would still be fine,

somehow." Overall, participants observed a variety of differences in girls' behaviour and

contrasted it to expectations regarding behaviour at school in their home countries.

Regulation of appearance. Aside from the rules and expectations regarding girls'

behaviour, participants recalled receiving strong messages from their teachers and other school

personnel regarding their appearance. For example, "Our first day of grade ten, they gave us a

talk about [school rules], not about makeup, more about what you wear. Like, in terms of your

top, not too low. No belly showing." Other general rules were in place regarding their shirts (no

deep v-necks), pants (no low-rise pants), and shoes (no heels). Participants recollected that any

makeup was expected to "look natural" and that hair colour had to be appropriate.

While most of the participants reported specific rules regarding attire that their school

enforced, there was a clear difference between schools in the actual enforcement of these rules.

That is, certain participants remembered school personnel monitoring hallways and making

comments if they found a student's attire to be inappropriate, while other participants noted that

their teachers showed no concern about the clothing they wore. For example, one participant

stated, "It would depend on the class. It depends on the teacher. They used to wear very skin-

tight shorts [in gym class]. [Or you could get] asked to go change or detention."

A recurring observation by all participants was that their peers were more likely to wear

revealing or tight fitted clothing, much more so than participants themselves. Participants stated

that their peers sometimes pushed limits of certain school rules. For example, one participant

recalled the following about her grade 8 peers:

> [The skirt length would be] as short as you can imagine. Those [students] are kind of
>
> called the "cool kids" that would try to wear their skirts very short because some of the
>
> girls that they looked up to, I guess, in grade 11 or 12, would always wear their skirts
>
> very short and wear a nice cardigan as opposed to a sweater that we're supposed to wear.
>
> Our teachers told them to keep [their skirts] at length.

Participants mainly observed this trend of stretching the rules for clothing in middle school and

high school, with their peers taking more risks in their attire as they progressed through grades.

Generally speaking, participants reported that they, along with their close friends, wore

more conservative clothing and minimal to no makeup. These participants noted that they had

no interest in pushing the limits and accepted school rules regarding attire. For example,

My shorts tended to be pretty long, and also because in Cadets summer camps, we had

length restrictions on shorts. So, I'd generally buy all the shorts that were longer and

stuff. I didn't really wear tank tops. I don't even think I dressed like the majority of the

females. I wore baggier clothes. Like I [wore] unisex T-shirts, hoodies and stuff, versus

[what] they generally wore.

For those participants who wore uniforms to school, they noted that they did not feel pressure to

shorten their skirts or wear more conventionally feminine clothing (e.g., cardigans instead of

sweaters) like some of their female peers.

In contrast, certain participants recalled that because their peers wore revealing or tight-

fitted clothing, they felt that these clothing trends were normalized, and in turn, they also felt

comfortable wearing these types of clothing. These participants noted that they wore similar

clothing to their peers because they wanted to fit in, and assimilate with, their peers, and noted

that they had no qualms about trying to stretch the rules. For example, after she wore revealing

clothing, one participant noted; "[The teacher] would just kind of pull you aside and [say],

'Maybe you need to change into your gym clothes (*chuckles*). I was just like, oh, that's

embarrassing." Another participant stated that she often pushed limits in high school by being

more rebellious in her appearance. For instance, "I wore eyeliner and skulls. We weren't

allowed piercings, so I got a lip piercing and they said, 'It's not allowed to be visible', so I wore a

Band-Aid over my lip. They can't tell me what to do." In her case, however, her teachers did

not enforce any consequences for her attire or piercings.

To summarize, participants shared about their experiences with isolation and exclusion

when they first started school in Canada; although their differences in language, interests, and

attire led to feeling different or being bullied by their female peers, participants used multiple

strategies to decrease feelings of isolation and to form friendships with their female peers. As they progressed through middle school and high school, participants continued to observe various expectations held by teachers regarding academic performance, classroom behaviour, and appearance. However, participants noted differences in the degree of enforcement of school rules, as well as the disparity between themselves and their peers in following these rules.

<div align="center">**Access to Information Regarding Sex and Sexuality**</div>

In addition to the observations made in school regarding appearance and behaviour, participants discussed how they gained access about information regarding sex and sexuality. More specifically, participants recalled learning about these specific topic areas through formal education, such as sex education or health classes in elementary, middle, and/or high school. As previously discussed, participants also received messages about sex and sexuality through informal sources, such as their parents and peers. However, participants noted that media was the strongest informal source of information about sex and sexuality, and that it often conveyed contrasting messages about sex than what was taught at home or in school.

Formal Education

Most participants reported that they received formal education about sex and sexuality through specialized classes or as part of their health education classes in their school. Particular themes arose with respect to content areas covered in these classes, as well as the promotion of abstinence versus contraception use.

Regarding the content of these classes, several of the participants recalled that when they learned about sex, the information they received was focused on providing biological or anatomical details, and covered such topics as puberty, reproduction, and the mechanics of sex.

In some cases, participants also learned about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and the importance of using contraception. As one participant explained,

> In grade five, they just introduced us to the female system only. Puberty, and like, [the menstrual cycle]. Yeah, and we got free pad samples and stuff like that. They taught us about the guy stuff too, but just mostly the girls'. Same with grade six and grade seven, I believe. Just more about periods. In high school-, I think like end of grade eight or grade nine, they actually got into [the] topic [of sex]. So, we learned about actual sex, and condoms and birth control and all of that. They taught about abstinence. They were always enforcing about how that's like hundred percent safe, but just in case, here [are] other options.

However, participants noted that for the most part, their sex education classes often lacked information about other important topics. For example, when asked if her sex education classes covered issues around emotional intimacy or consent, one participant responded, "No, not really. It was very mechanical", while another participant stated, "The emotional aspect – not at all, I think."

Further, in talking with participants, it became clear that they received different messages about the use of contraception. Specifically, certain participants recalled that they were only provided with information about contraception use without any discussion of abstinence:

> They were showing how to put on condoms, like with like a banana. They didn't really talk about [abstaining from sex]. Just condoms. [In university], I had to take pharm and pathology and physiology for my prerequisite courses. So, they talked about the pill [only then].

For other participants, however, while the sex educators provided brief information about contraception, they often heavily promoted the notion of abstaining from sex in their classes. Moreover, the subject of abstinence was discussed at length in schools that held certain religious values of chastity, with participants recollecting that they were encouraged to abstain from sex until they were older and married. As one participant recalled,

> I don't know if it's because it was a Catholic school, maybe it was different, but that we shouldn't go around sleeping with different partners and making sure that you wear condoms or you're aware of what you're doing, more than anything else. Just sexual health I think that was more on the focus. And I think at my school, it was a very brief kind of moment on how to use condoms. And more focused more on how we should not have sex early on. But I know for other schools, that's not the focus. In other public schools, I think they teach you how to use condoms, where to buy, or where to seek help if you need to. But at my school, it was just more you should use it, but actually – don't do it. You should never have to resort to these options [birth control] because you will practice chastity. Or maybe that's how I interpreted it for myself. But I had thought that was the message and I took that as the message. It was chastity, chastity, chastity.

In some cases, participants commented that they had mixed feelings about when it was appropriate for them to learn about sex. For example, one participant felt that she was ready to learn about sex in high school because she had already heard about the topic informally:

> I was ready, just because I was hearing it already. I had started to hear it a while ago, so I was actually happy to get a professional or some experienced person talking about it, whereas my friend who's like twelve, you know? So, I was actually happy to hear about these things. They discussed things that I didn't know; for example, protection and

diseases I didn't know about that, and I didn't know about the emotional aspect like the

attachment after sex. I was really happy that this was something that was brought up.

Similarly, another participant noted that she felt sex education should begin at an earlier age

because it coincides with puberty and physical changes that girls are already experiencing:

> I feel like in grades five and six, like a lot of girls are finding out about it on their own.
>
> Girls have already spent time on the internet and girls were curious about their own
>
> bodies and trying different things and you're kind of confused. For me, it was right at
>
> that time where I was more exposed to it. I had my period. I definitely disagree with
>
> parent groups who think that school shouldn't teach sex ed in grade five. That's
>
> important.

In contrast, certain participants felt that they were not ready or interested in receiving sex

education. For instance, one participant reported,

> We [had] a teacher that [went] around to all the classes to talk about sexual stuff and the
>
> menstrual cycle. The sexual education that we had, I skipped all those class to go back
>
> home and play. I just asked my mother to write down a medical note. I [didn't] have any
>
> question about sex. I never asked my mother, where does a child come from. I was just
>
> not curious. In term of sexual education, I feel that Canada pushed [the topic of sex]
>
> more than in China.

Taken together, participants gleaned a great deal of information regarding sexual health from

their formalized classes through their schools. However, they differed in opinion about when

and how sex education should be offered to students.

Informal Sources

All but two of the participants reported that they received some form of formal sex education; however, participants also learned about sex and sexuality through other sources, including their parents and peers. For example, certain participants recollected that while they did not explicitly discuss the topic of sex with their parents, their parents promoted a message of abstinence through cultural and religious values. When asked if her parents discussed puberty or sex with her, one participant stated, "No, they didn't. But there are three things that my father taught me that I'm always going to obey and one of them is not having sex before marriage. That's the repeated message that I have from my dad." In addition, one participant recalled that she learned about her menstrual cycle and about sex from her first boyfriend:

> [I learned from] my first boyfriend. He [would] show me each step. And he'd explain to me and he also asked me, 'Is that fine for you?' And what is funny [is] that I never remembered when I'm going to have my menstrual cycle. So, when I met my first boyfriend, he was the one who remembers.

In general, however, participants noted that they struggled to, or felt uncomfortable with, discussing the topic of puberty or sex with their friends or family members. In fact, participants recalled that they felt it was inappropriate to be discussing these topics, given the private nature of the topic. For some participants, discussing sexual development or sexuality was deemed culturally inappropriate and was discouraged by their parents or other family members. As one participant shared, "I remember that when I got my first menstrual cycle, and I told it to my elder aunt in China, she was like, 'What? You cannot tell me that openly.'"

Media. As noted above, participants discussed that media was the most influential informal source of information to learn about sex and sexuality. That is, participants learned

about sex through various forms of media, such as pornography over the internet, television

shows, movies, or books. Interestingly, some of the participants noted that even when they

began watching shows targeted to adolescents, such as *Gossip Girl*, *90210*, or *One Tree Hill*,

they often did not fully understand when sex was being depicted on television shows or in

movies. As one participant described,

> I suppose for me, in high school, sex wasn't a big deal, it wasn't a big, main topic. So, it
>
> wasn't something that I had tried to look into a lot. I don't need it now, I'm not ready. On
>
> *Pretty Little Liars*, they would do it. Even then, I think there might have been hints [at
>
> sex], but I don't think I got them.

Another participant reflected that she missed a lot of the sexual content in television or movies

until she learned more about the act of sex itself; "I didn't know what [sex] was. A huge light

bulb went on, years later. I watched a lot [of pornography] on the internet. That's how it all

[made] sense. The TV shows with the sex scenes and everything."

Participants varied in their media consumption of television and movies with high sexual

content. That is, certain participants continued to watch highly sexualized television shows for

entertainment value, while maintaining their conviction of not engaging in sex during high

school. As one participant commented,

> I did still watch, I still listened to music, I still watched movies, or read magazines, read
>
> like books about these things, but, I started to like, see the difference between
>
> entertainment and real life. I started to differentiate between what is just an image, it's
>
> just for fun, whereas something that is real. In this country, in this culture, it's easy to be
>
> part of the both groups.

However, a few of the participants took initiative to limit the amount of television shows or books with romantic or sexualized content because it conflicted with their lack of interest in sex or values regarding sex. That is, they chose not to engage with media in which adolescent characters engaged in romantic or sexual relations with their peers. When asked what types of books she read as an adolescent, one participant stated, "Not Twilight. I read a book a day, so anything in the Young Adult section. Historical fiction, mostly. Teen books that aren't romantic. I think [my friends and I] were all more tomboys, so we weren't that interested."

In addition to learning about sex and sexuality, participants described what they generally took away from the media regarding expectations for girls' behaviour and appearance. That is, participants discussed media role models and identifying with media characters, as well as positive and negative influences of media on appearance and behaviour, thereby shaping their own viewpoints on how they looked and behaved.

Role models. Certain participants recalled that in some cases, they viewed female characters or the actresses who played them on television shows as role models. That is, they admired them for being witty, friendly, and attractive, and aspired to look or behave like these women. As one participant explained,

> I did admire Selena Gomez. I was obsessed with her just because she was really funny on [*The Wizards of Waverly Place*]. I did look up to her. If she did something, I would [think], I'm going to do that. I remember like there was this white outfit she wore, and I was trying to recreate that one.

Similarly, another participant discussed that certain female television characters were role models for her with respect to attitude and appearance; "I liked watching *Gossip Girl*. I liked Blair because she was really mean and sassy, but then I wanted to look like Serena."

In contrast, other participants struggled to identify with television female characters. More specifically, they commented that it was harder to relate to the adolescent girls on television because they were mostly Caucasian, and they were also older and having life experiences that were not similar to participants' own experiences at home and school. One participant of Indian descent reported,

The Proud Family was animated, right? But the other one [*Hannah Montana*] wasn't. They were a bit older, like they were in high school, but they still had the same [behaviours as the students] that I was seeing in [my] school. And, I wasn't White. I was watching That's So Raven. She's darker, I'm darker. But I still didn't [relate to her] because [of] the same content.

Another participant similarly noted that while she was unable to identify with Caucasian characters, she related to specific aspects of a female's character; "The girl in Gilmore Girls was similar to me. Reserved, school [focused], close to parents, very community aware." Therefore, while some participants aspired to look or behave like their celebrity role models, other participants struggled to relate to them or the characters they played on television.

Behaviour. Adding to their discussion on role models, many participants felt that media often portrayed girls and women in a negative manner and promoted damaging messages about their character and behaviour. For example, one participant described media's portrayal of women:

The women were usually ditzy, like they all follow the same formula. Like either a ditzy woman who can't think for herself or she's not strong enough, while the other-, a powerful woman who can't like slow down enough to [fall in love]. I was just seeing the stark differences, like in a movie, you see like a girl who is a brat, spoiled, whatever and

then you see the road she goes down. A lot of Black movies like, Waiting to Exhale –
these movies about black women pining after black men. Seeing how destructive it is, it's
kind of a reminder of, this is how I *don't* want to be.

Additionally, participants found that teenage girls were expected to behave or show interest in a
limited area (e.g., shopping, fashion, dating boys). While some participants recalled sharing
these similar interests with the female characters on television or in movies, other women
rebelled against these messages. For instance, one participant described,

It was *anti* the trajectory that the media was telling young women. [My friend and I]
were kind of anti that. Like from TV, chick flicks, [there was a message that] in high
school, just consume, go shopping, date boys, you know, be normal, be a girl, but we
weren't like [that].

Despite the negative way in which females were depicted in media, participants were able
to give examples of media portraying women's behaviour in a positive light. More specifically,
they named certain shows, such as *Grey's Anatomy*, that depicted women as smart and hard-
working, and being able to balance their career with their social lives. Participants also admired
female characters or celebrities who were able to achieve success without having to sexualize
themselves. For example, one participant reported, "I like Melissa McCarthy because I think
she's funny and she's not known for the way she looks." Other participants gave examples of
Emma Watson and Hilary Clinton, who have shown strong character, and did not exploit their
appearance in order to be successful.

In reflecting on media role models, participants described that the media had a strong
influence on their own behaviour. More specifically, participants explained that they sometimes
copied the behaviour of the girls that they saw on television or read about in books. For

example, one participant stated that not only did she find shows like *Hannah Montana*

entertaining, but that they also encouraged her to behave in a certain way:

> [The shows] had girl characters that are the main characters and they're doing all these
>
> crazy things. They're doing a lot of adventures and they're being bold and basically the
>
> message was follow your dreams, be yourself. I felt like they were very like leader-like.
>
> Very bold. So, I guess, that might have influenced me.

This participant went on to note that certain forms of media promote the idea of celebrating

uniqueness and differences:

> I feel like another message that media gives you is, be unique. Looking at TV shows, I
>
> feel there's very conventional girls who's the main character and then they would have a
>
> best friend who was very non-conventional. And I feel like that's okay, you know, that's
>
> how people are different. People are different. Like, for example, thinking about like,
>
> Hannah Montana, there is like Hannah Montana and the friend, Lilly, and she's very like
>
> crazy. Wizards of Waverly Place, her best friend wears very weird things…she's still
>
> accepted, she still has a really great best friend.

In sum, participants' engagement with various forms of media entertainment directly and

indirectly shaped their attitudes regarding their own behaviour.

   Appearance. When discussing the role of media influences on appearance, participants

shrewdly observed that advertising is especially targeted towards girls and women. Although

some corporations have tried to raise awareness of the superficial or unattainable beauty

standards in media, such as *Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty*, which promotes the natural

physical variation embodied by all women, participants generally felt that a narrow ideal of

beauty continued to be very prominent in advertising, and to a lesser extent, in other media forums. As one participant explained,

> I still think we're a little invasive on the ways a woman should be. Like there is this belief that it's just freedom, that you're advertising these images, it's because it's a free place, free country, people should be open to different things – Hijab or being naked. But I think, it does put a pressure on you. It does put a pressure on girls on how they want to be or what they should be, and the images that they're having of girls and what an ideal girl should be, which [are] pretty unrealistic.

In the same vein, another participant commented that media generally sexualizes girls and women's through their appearance; "Media is often more revealing. They portray girls in a sexual way. People wearing certain type of clothes that I wouldn't be wearing, such as very short skirt, revealing dresses. I think [media] still objectifies a lot of women."

Aside from the negative messages regarding appearance promoted by various forms of media, participants reported that they used these resources to help them learn more about clothing and makeup. For example, participants revealed that television shows geared towards teenagers were not only watched for entertainment, but also gave them more ideas about clothing trends and how to look put together. As one participant described,

> I think when I was watching TV, the girls in *Gossip Girl*, they all wore super stylish clothes. And I think for like *90210*, those girls, they wore super stylish clothes as well. And they all looked super nice. So, I thought like I wanted to look like them. I can still find like stylish things on sale. I set a ground rule to myself to like I wouldn't buy anything over $20.

In addition to television and print, one participant discussed that she often got ideas for her "Emo" style from watching music videos; "It was back in those days where MTV still played videos. I liked Avril Lavigne. We had the whole stripes and the skulls [look]. Probably music videos [were] like the biggest influence." In later stages of adolescence, participants recalled that they began to use the internet as a guide for their appearance. For instance, participants described watching online videos or referring to social media applications to learn more about how to apply different types of makeup; "YouTubers started going big. I was watching YouTubers, they all look fabulous. I prefer like Buzz Beauty, Michelle Phan. Her hair and makeup skills (*makes kiss noise*)." Similarly, when asked about how she improved her makeup skills, one participant stated, "I started watching YouTube videos. I started with watching makeup tutorials. To get ready for grad because I had no idea what to do. And my friend's like, start watching this, so I started watching it and I learned."

In summary, the women recollected that not only did they learn about sex and sexuality through formal sex education classes, they also gleaned much of their knowledge on these topics from their media consumption. While their formal education provided them with knowledge regarding topics such as sexual development, puberty, contraception, and abstinence, it was various media forums that led to further shaping their viewpoints on behaviour and appearance (in addition to the messages received at home and in school). As they progressed through high school and continued to receive messages about sex and sexuality from their parents, their teachers and peers, and media sources, the women shared about how these messages influenced their experiences with dating and sex.

Participants' Experiences with Dating and Sex

It is important to note that all participants in this study identified as heterosexual; therefore, participants' discussion on dating and sex was solely focused on gaining attention from males. Interestingly, participants spoke of both positive and negative attention that they received from their male peers. That is, when they first arrived to Canada, some participants were viewed to be a "friend" to their male peers, since they shared similar interests. As described in previous sections, participants made friends with their male peers when they felt socially isolated from their female classmates.

However, as certain participants progressed through middle school and began to take romantic interest in their male classmates, they recalled feeling unattractive to the boys in their class at that age. These participants further noticed that their male peers payed more attention to other girls in their class than to participants themselves. Therefore, a key reason that these participants chose to focus more on their appearance and invest in more conventionally feminine clothing was that they believed that they would receive more attention from their male peers. As one participant described,

> There were boys that I found cute and I wanted to be friends with them, but also like have
>
> their interests, and because I was more boyish, I was just becoming their friend. I could
>
> see the difference between me and the other girls and you're at that age you know you're
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> starting to want to hang out with boys, and I felt like it was like being treated a little bit
>
> like a boy, so that wasn't really nice. Before that, I always thought that's how you make
>
> your relationship with a boy. They like what you like, and you talk about things, and
>
> that's how it goes. Now, all of a sudden, that was not the [way]. I guess, especially at
>
> their age, you just see a pretty girl. I think that was one of the reasons that I started to

change a little bit just because I didn't understand why – I had long hair too – why wasn't

I given the attention? Just because I like to play soccer with them or dress like that.

That's what really bugged me.

Participants noted that once they began to spend more time caring for their appearance, they

received more attention from other boys: "The same people I was friends with before, all of a

sudden, wanted to spend their lunch time with me or they're asking me out. It was a big

difference for me and that was something that I enjoyed."

By contrast, even when they changed their appearance, other participants noticed no

difference in their attractiveness to their male classmates.

A girl would get a boyfriend and you notice that for years now, she's [been] wearing this

colourful lip gloss. So maybe that's the trick, so maybe that's the secret. I didn't know

what the huge deal was, I just thought that maybe if I wore this or wore that, I would feel

how I was supposed to feel, being [in] grade seven, grade eight. But it didn't work. So, I

thought maybe it's not my time.

Further, one participant noted that the reason she did *not* pay attention to her appearance during

high school was because she attended an all-girls school and knew that she would not run into

males during the day. However, when she talked with boys online, she would try to care for her

appearance. She stated, "I remember that I was trying to make my eyes bigger. I tried to put my

hair down, so my face looked smaller. When I had face to face time with them, I'd be trying to

find a dress."

In addition to discussing the way in which they attempted to change their appearance to

attract the attention of the opposite sex, participants shared their experiences, or lack thereof,

with respect to dating and sex. The next section is divided into three time periods: middle school, secondary school, and post-secondary education.

Dating in Middle School

All of the participants recalled that they knew of several peers who had romantic relationships, some of which began as early as middle school. For example, one participant recalled feeling shocked that her classmates were "dating" in grades 5 and 6:

I saw a lot of girls had boyfriends. [At] recess, they would hold their hands and then, they would go behind the bush and kiss, and I'm just like, oh, I've never seen this (*laughs*). I felt really shocked, actually because back home [in India], I was in a co-ed school too, but I wouldn't really talk to boys. Back home, you don't [date].

Similarly, when asked what dynamics changed as she and her peers entered middle school, one participant responded, "They were having boyfriends. That was the year for boyfriends, oh my God. I was seeing these girls getting boyfriends." Another participant recalled the girls in her class discussing "sleeping with boys" in grades seven and eight.

In tandem with entering romantic relationships, participants observed their female classmates' behaviour to change when they were around their male classmates during middle school. For example, one participant shared, "In grade seven, eight, all the girls are getting boyfriends, they're caring about boys. They're feeling, acting stupid when they see a boy. [*Mocking tone*] 'Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, look at him.'" Thus, participants attributed this change in behaviour as negatively reflecting on their female peers.

While a few participants desired to "have a boyfriend" during middle school, none of the them actually entered a romantic relationship during this time period.

Dating in Secondary School

Similar to how they felt about their peers dating in middle school, participants recalled an overarching feeling of being too young to date or have sex in high school. For example, one participant recalled feeling sorry for the girls in her class who felt they had to wear revealing clothing or makeup in order to attract attention from boys. She remembered thinking, "You're 15, why are you wearing a face full of makeup. It just looks bad on some of them-, there was one, she was real excessive. She honestly looked like full face made of make-up like the kind you see that takes like a long time every day." In similar fashion, another participant commented about her misunderstanding of why her female classmates were in a rush to grow up:

> I'll see a girl, she'll be wearing short shorts and that's it. I didn't know what she was doing outside of school. It was only until later years that I knew they wore short clothes [so] they could go see boys after. Even in grade twelve, I noticed that was the reason why they were dressing the way they were. When in grade nine, ten, I just saw them as people who wanted to grow up too fast.

One participant recollected that she felt happier not dating after observing her peers' experiences:

> I was really happy that I was away from that because I was starting to see the drama they were going through at that age, like a boyfriend breaking their heart and like somebody's pregnant. I was thinking oh my God, I have all my life to do all those things and be sad and be heartbroken (*laughs*). I don't want to start now!

As previously discussed, participants observed that their peers' parents had much more permissive attitudes about dating than their own parents. For instance, one participant recalled, "My friend was a mix of Canadian and Sri Lankan, her parents were okay with [her dating]. Her

parents bought her oral contraceptives and stuff. Imagine if I tell that to my parents – I would literally be dead (*laughs*)."

Although many of their friends and peers were dating, all but two of the participants did not date in high school. That is, most of the participants focused on their academic performance, extra-curricular activities, and spending time with their friends. These participants generally did not feel pressure from their friends to enter a relationship; rather, they would spend time talking about their crushes on other boys or their friends' relationships. When asked if she felt left out from the dating scene, one participant responded, "I think I was okay because people around me [were] dating, so I still got to gossip about that and be like, so how was your date? I still experienced it through my friends."

While dating was a common topic of conversation among participants and their friends, participants noted that the subject of sex was rarely, if ever, discussed. For example, one participant recalled hearing rumours around school about her friends or peers having sex, without confirmation of the truth. She explained,

> There were other girls that would [have sex]. Like they were my friends, but we weren't
> close, so they wouldn't tell me. But then rumours would escalate and I would [think],
> 'Oh, she did? No, she's not like that.' They would be like, she slept with her boyfriend
> who was apparently in college, or that girl and him at that party, they slept together. It
> was only after I graduated, when I learned that those rumours were true.

This same participant added that when girls were rumoured to have sex, they were judged to behave inappropriately; "Amongst my friend groups, they started to [say], 'Oh, they're slutty. They're not [going to] wait.' I didn't really think they were sluts because of it, but I did feel that they were not mature enough [to have sex]."

Further, participants reflected on their attitudes on dating in general. That is, participants had mixed feelings about whether or not they themselves wanted to date in high school. Similar to the thoughts they held regarding their peers, certain participants felt they were too young to date, and therefore, turned down offers for boys to take them out or limited their interactions with males entirely. When asked why she said no to dates, one participant explained,

> I always said no because I realized that's it's not just about-, oh let's have popcorn, let's play-, I wasn't ready for it – even if I was interested in somebody, I didn't want to. I [would] always say, okay let's have lunch at school or let's go play soccer after school, like I wouldn't let them choose what to do. I remember it happened sometimes that the boys came to be cuddly and stuff and I was always like pushing them away, running away from it (*laughs*). Again, I didn't want to go there because I was scared of that physical aspect that would come in, so I still avoided it. As soon as they became, oh let's go over to my place or let's go to beach together, it was a no.

Others took more indirect routes when male peers showed interest in them. For example, one participant recalled that she was often mean to boys whom she did not like romantically in order for them to stop having feelings for her:

> I was really close to my guy friend but then I only liked him as a friend. We would talk all the time. Because he was my friend, I was really nice to him. But then one day, someone told me that he likes me and then I was like, oh, that's awkward. So, then I [thought], okay, well, if he likes me when I'm nice to him, then he won't like when I'm not nice to him. I tried that for a week and it did work. So then once I noticed that he kind of stopped talking to me all the time, I knew that he stopped liking me, so then I went back to being nice to him.

Moreover, certain participants noted that their parents did not allow them to date in high school, which also deterred them from dating. That is, their parents' rules added to participants' feelings that dating in high school was inappropriate, since dating was not viewed as something one does casually in their heritage culture. For example, one participant reported that although she was asked out by boys several times in high school, she always turned them down:

> I knew that it was something that my parents didn't want and if I was to do anything with boys, they would be the first ones to know. [But] I knew it was all temporary. I wanted to [date] just for the experience, but I knew that it's not [the right time].

> In most cases, participants reported that they were interested in dating and had crushes on

their male peers; some participants, however, did not feel that they were attractive to the opposite sex, since they were not asked out on a date by them. As one participant stated, "No one was interested in me. Yeah, like it was a fact *(laughs)*. Like it wasn't like I didn't try…" Another participant noted that she did not try dating boys in her hometown because she had no interest in them; "I knew that the boys in my town are not the kind of guy I want to end up with. I [had] interest in dating, [but] that was my [rule] to myself." Overall, despite their initial desire to have a boyfriend in order to better fit in with their peers, most participants in this study did not have a romantic relationship in high school.

Dating During Post-Secondary Education

It is important to distinguish between the education systems in Quebec and in the rest of Canada. Those participants who attended high school in Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia finished grade 12 and subsequently began university. By contrast, participants who were educated in Quebec completed high school in grade 11 and then attended a two-year college program (CÉGEP) prior to beginning university. As they entered post-secondary studies,

participants continued to observe the dating habits of their peers. For instance, a few participants

recollected their feelings of shock during Frosh Week when they observed their female peers to

be much more flirtatious or display overt sexualized behaviour with male students:

> People [were] cutting their shirts really low – that was a surprise to me. I saw the
>
> attention that people [were getting from males], I wasn't really used to that, either,
>
> especially an engineering Frosh. I didn't really want that attention. It seemed really
>
> superficial. And they were grinding on the dance floor when they just met like two
>
> seconds ago.

 As they progressed through college and university, participants noted that their peers dated

regularly, with some entering long-term relationships and others dating casually. However,

participants generally felt that being in a romantic relationship, as well as discussing sex, became

more acceptable and appropriate given their age. As one participant described,

> I think maybe once you're in CÉGEP, you're just expected to be more responsible and
>
> more grown-up. Once you get to CÉGEP and everyone's older and more experienced,
>
> things are more acceptable at that age. I mean when I was in high school and I was in
>
> [grade 10] and I'd be like, oh, I had sex with this guy – that's a bit soon. But then when
>
> you're 19 [and say] I'm dating this guy and we're having sex, that sounds reasonable. I
>
> think age is a big factor. I guess psychological development, or whatever – things that
>
> you do when you're 19 and when 16, it's just looked at differently.

By contrast, certain participants only felt comfortable discussing sex or relationships with their

peers through the context of religion. For example, one participant stated, "I mostly talk to one

friend, but she's also Christian, so it's mostly on a Christian standpoint in discussing [sex]. I'm

in a Bible Study, and one night we talked about sexual immorality, as defined [by] the Bible."

For this participant, discussing sex or relationships was very uncomfortable and even during her interview, she was visibly uncomfortable saying certain words.

Several participants reported that they have been in long-term relationships with their significant other for two to three years or have become engaged to their partner. Within the group of participants who are dating and not engaged, while some have introduced their partner to their families, others have kept their relationship a secret from their parents, due to fears of disapproval. As previously mentioned, one participant is hiding her relationship due to worries about feeling pressure from her parents to get married. Another participant described that she is hiding her relationship due to differing cultural backgrounds between herself and her boyfriend. As she explained,

> So, he's from Sri Lanka, but not same-, like I speak Sinhalese, but he's Tamil. But there's still cultural differences. I feel like [my parents] wouldn't approve. I think they would approve if he was Sri Lankan and Sinhalese. But because he's Tamil, there's a language barrier and I feel like they would be more like, no, because my parents obviously don't speak that. And his parents don't really speak that much English or French. So, even [I think] oh, how am I supposed to speak with your parents. But, I guess eventually we'll figure that out.

For the remaining participants, some reported that they have enjoyed meeting new people and casually dating; "I like to get to know people and I wasn't able to do that before. I'm seeing people right now." Others noted that they have no interest in dating or were not actively seeking a relationship and are focused on their academic performance or future careers. For instance, one participant stated,

At this point, because of the kind of career path that I'm thinking for myself, I'm thinking
if I meet someone in university, but I want to live elsewhere, it might be very difficult. I
just genuinely don't believe that I'm going to meet someone that will stay with me or
wherever I go. Actually, it's more particular because I actually want to work in foreign
service. If I wanted to be a diplomat, I really need to find someone who can
accommodate, like in terms of their work as well, to accompany me to whatever posting I
get. As a diplomat, it's very different. Every four years, you move to a different
continent, different country, and I just don't see anyone that I meet in university to do that
with me. It's a big commitment for spouses. And I'm not ready to think about that for
myself and for my future spouse. I don't want him to commit to something like that
without thinking it through. I would prefer to have a long term [relationship]
immediately. Having fun is not my main thing and I think that's something that scares
away a lot of guys at this age. Because a lot of people just want to have fun.

Additionally, certain participants wanted to wait for someone who shared similar religious values
and did not feel they would meet them in university.

I think all of us in the group-, well most people believe that the purpose of having a
relationship is hopefully to marriage, and then, in that case, you want someone who is a
Christian. I think, generally, in the group compared to other people outside of the group,
I think a higher percentage of us haven't dated. I think there [are] less Christians in
university. Or, people steer away from their faith more.

Taken together, participants contrasted their dating experiences with those of their peers; while
participants generally became more open to dating as they matured, certain participants
continued to have reservations about dating due to their own future goals or religious values.

Engaging in Sex

For the twelve women who participated in this study, there was a clear disparity in their attitudes regarding sex. That is, certain participants believed in the importance of abstaining from sex until marriage. During high school, those participants who held strong values of abstinence and chastity struggled to understand why others did not share similar values. As one participant who attended a Catholic high school explained,

> Starting in grade 10, people started to question [the value of chastity], especially boys. Girls, as well, but mostly boys. Every year we have religion classes…we were told to write essays about chastity and how we should wait until marriage. And it was very difficult-, I did it. I was able to write an essay about that, but a lot of kids, especially boys, they had a bit of trouble writing content for that because starting at that point, they just didn't believe in it. And it was difficult for them to write a five-paragraph essay about how they should wait until marriage because that's something that they started to question.

Certain participants had mixed feelings with respect to religious values regarding sex, but maintained that sex is not something one engages in casually. As one participant stated,

> Like, I know in high school, everyone [said] you're not supposed to have sex before marriage. And I sort of agreed to that, to an extent. They were mostly basing it off religious purposes. But like a lot of times, I didn't really agree with that point of view, just because, well, the Bible says that you can't be homosexual, [and] I don't really think that's a bad thing. So, you can't really base that on that. But I was more under the impression that you should only have it with one guy.

One participant shared that while she felt somewhat burdened by her religious values, it may have helped her abstain from losing her virginity casually when she initially started university. She explained,

> Growing up in my church… it still had an impact on my psyche in the sense that like sex was-, if you're not a virgin, like you are going to hell. That was a value-, that was almost like an internalized fear. Like it wasn't a value, it was burden. Religion was still something that held me back maybe, like, in terms of losing my virginity. I definitely didn't try to do that. I know a lot of girls who felt the need to like lose their virginities during [Frosh] week.

However, this same participant rationalized why she felt she was able to continue to have sex without feeling guilt following a sexual encounter in which her hymen was broken, symbolizing a loss of virginity:

> It happened by accident (*chuckles*). In second year, I went to New York and I was fooling around with people. But it never [progressed to intercourse]. But then one morning, we saw blood on the sheets. Like nothing really happened – just some hand stuff. Friction. After that point, I was like, thank God. Like it was an accident, not my fault, God. I obeyed the rules per se, but it still happened. And then I've also met Christians who have sex. Nowadays, like every Christian has sex.

> By contrast, two thirds of the participants did not hold religious values regarding sex and were open to the possibility of engaging in sex before marriage or had already done so within their relationships. Participants who had engaged in sexual activity described taking the time to get to know their partners and discussing sexual health with them prior to having sex. For example, one participant shared,

[We had] been together for like maybe six or seven months before we had sex. There was

thought and planning that went into it. Because I mean there are a lot of cases where

teenagers, they're not thinking about it or talking. I was on the pill since I was 16.

For the most part, participants reported being in consensual sexual relationships and having

positive first sexual experiences.

Negative Attention from Males

While participants generally experienced positive attention from, and formed healthy

relationships with, males, it is important to highlight that not all of their experiences with boys

and men have been positive. For example, in high school, when some of the participants began

receiving attention from males when they changed their appearance, they initially felt positive

and more self-confident about themselves. For example, one participant recalled, "I think

because I was wearing revealing clothes, some cars would drive by and would honk at me. Or

wolf whistle. And then I think like at that time, I felt good about it." However, these

participants eventually began to dislike the attention they received from other boys or strange

men, and therefore, made a choice to begin wearing more conservative clothing. As one

participant reported, "I realized in grade 12, I didn't really like people staring at me. So, I wore

less revealing clothes. Like I didn't want to be treated like a piece of meat."

Additionally, certain participants discussed their personal experiences in which they felt

sexualized or objectified by other males. For some participants, these experiences of

sexualization occurred in high school; for example, one participant described her experiences as

the only girl on her school ping-pong team:

I would get comments, like I have big boobs-, they wouldn't tell me, but I would hear that

they were talking about it. I remember once we were filming how we're playing and they

were humping the air. I'm playing with boys, I have to just ignore these things, they're

going to talk about it. I [was] trying to put like a limit, but when I wasn't around, boys

are boys, they would say these things, you know. It would happen.

In this case, the participant tolerated the behaviour of her male peers and did not complain to her

coaches or teachers because in her mind, the boys were behaving in a socially prescribed and

acceptable manner. Other participants described ways in which they were stared at, or harassed

by, strange men in their neighbourhood. For instance, one participant recalled,

Right outside my apartment, there's a Coffee Time, and there's a pavement where you can

sit on and there are a lot of guys, usually out there smoking. People that I've known since

I came to Canada, since I was very young but now all of sudden they're leering. Not all

of a sudden, since I was in grade ten. They're leering, they're looking, they're looking

like-, you just know, you know? These guys, who live in my building, start making

comments. 'Hey mama, hey', it's just, it's uncomfortable.

For other participants, their experiences of negative attention from men occurred when

they entered university. For example, one participant recounted,

In university, there are guys who only date Asian girls. A lot of like White males who

only date Asian girls. There are guys who want to have sex with you for entertainment

value. Like checking it off their list or seeing what it's like. Like after sex, this guy who

I was seeing at the time, he was like, you know, I've never been with an Asian girl before

– I guess you can call this my yellow belt.

Another participant detailed several events of sexualization that she experienced in the first year

of university. More specifically, she described,

He would take me out at night and we would eat and then just like walk around. But the thing is, this guy was so weird. He would pull out my shirt and look down my shirt. In public, in a mall. But I was very innocent, I didn't know-, I was like okay, this just happened. And he would lie on my [breasts] a lot of the time. And then I told him I was very conservative, I was a Christian, like no sex before marriage. Even though I want a relationship, it means only dating. Kissing. Holding hands. [One night] I confronted him – he lied about his age, he lied about the fact that he already graduated from McGill. And that night he drove me home, it was like twelve or one. He tried to drag me up to my [residence]. He said, if you don't sleep with me right now, then you're-, he was blackmailing me to sleep with him. He was like physically dragging me to my room. And then, good thing someone from my [residence] came in and they were like, 'Oh, are you okay?' And then that guy forced me to kiss him in front of a building and then he dragged me back into his car. He locked the car door and [kept] me there until 4:00 a.m. [He kissed me] really forcefully.

This same participant also reported a second event in which one of her co-workers tried to sexually coerce her in her apartment. As she explained,

My co-worker, we started working around the same time and then I was moving out of my old place into my new place. I asked him to help me move a table. So, we went to [a coffee shop] and then we went to my house to get the table and moved it. And then he's like, aren't you going to invite me [back] up for some tea or something? Because I helped you. So, I invited him up. But then he pinned me down on my sofa and tried to kiss me. And then I pushed him off. But then, I know him – like I didn't feel as threatened as the first guy. So, I said, 'Sit down, like sit down. How dare you treat me with this kind of

disrespect, in my own house. Why would you ever think that I would sleep with

someone like you? Why would I degrade myself to sleep with a man that would pin me

down on my couch?' He said, 'Look at the way you dress. Look at the way you're

dressed, you're just asking for it.'

In this case, the participant became particularly upset by the fact that her clothing encouraged her

co-worker to sexualize her and to make assumptions about her willingness to engage in sex.

In sum, participants reported that in middle school, they initially received positive

attention from their male classmates, in the form of friendship and through their shared interests.

When they wanted to appear more attractive to the boys in their class, participants recalled

changing their appearance in order to look more conventionally feminine, similar to their female

peers. As well, participants discussed their observations of their peers' dating practices, as well

as their own experiences and views on dating and sex. Unfortunately, not all of their interactions

with males were positive, as some of the women highlighted the negative attention they received

from boys and men, in the form of objectification and sexual coercion. The next, and final

section of the results, addresses the negative consequences on participants' mental health and

well-being while navigating the expectations and messages of home, school, and media, and the

positive and negative experiences that these women had with their male and female peers.

Consequences to Mental Health and Well-Being

Participants reported that their experiences with sexualization in adolescence affected

their overall functioning; that is their mental health and well-being was negatively impacted in

multiple areas, such as body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and low mood and high anxiety.

However, participants revealed coping strategies they used to increase their self-confidence and

counter some of the issues they faced, and also illuminated ways in which immigrant girls need

to be socially supported through their adolescence.

Body Dissatisfaction

A common issue described by participants was the struggle with negative body image or

body dissatisfaction. Certain participants used words such as "chubby" or "fat and ugly" to

describe themselves as adolescents. For example, one participant stated,

> I was a bit chubby, so I was a bit like conservative [in my clothing choices], like, if I wear
>
> that, it's going to show my rolls. I remember when in grade nine, you would change at in
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> the locker room and everyone's backs are perfectly nice when they're wearing their bra,
>
> it's like all flat. But then, mine had rolls and I was always really embarrassed.

Moreover, these participants conflated their weight with their overall appearance. That is, they

felt that being thinner would make them more attractive. As one participant stated, "I was kind

of a chubby kid. All my friends were skinny and they were just more [attractive]."

Additionally, participants recalled feeling that they were unable to meet the standards

regarding physical appearance or weight that were promoted both interpersonally and through

media. As previously discussed, some participants had parents who drew attention to their

weight or made them feel unattractive, while others had parents who never brought up their

weight and noted that they were developing into their bodies. Certain participants reported that

while their parents did not make comments about their weight, their grandparents or friends of

their parents made comments about their physical appearance. For example, one woman

recollected that her mother never commented on her weight; "It was pressure from outside of my

family. A friend of my mom's saw me [and said], 'Oh, my God, you gained weight from the last

time that I saw you." In parallel, another participant stated, "I think it was my grandpa [who said]

you're a bit meaty (*chuckles*). I remember my mom's friend, she would always [say], 'She's really, really chubby.'" Others recalled that their peers influenced their desire to appear thinner;

> Because we wear skirts [at school], girls' legs are all skinny and long and nice. I think that's where I kind of got the idea from. Everyone looked skinny. That's one weird thing that I find about high school girls – they want to be twigs. As opposed to in university, like people start to value more curves or volume. But in high school, they really just want to be very thin.

Thus, not only did participants experience pressure to appear thin from family members, they also received a message from peers that "thin was in", and equated thinness with attractiveness.

In addition to interpersonal influences on their body dissatisfaction, participants reported that media promoted that girls and women should look a certain way. That is, women in television and movies, advertisements and magazines, and on the internet, were depicted as tall, thin, and attractive, and perpetuated an unrealistic image of how a girl or woman should look. One participant recalled, "I always thought the two girls in *Gossip Girl* were very pretty. They were very beautiful and they had nice physique. And I guess I would have wanted to look like them, but it was an unattainable goal." Likewise, another participant noted that media often promoted the idea of dieting as a way to manage appearance and maintain thinness:

> It was the norm to be on a diet and to think about what you're eating in terms of how it affects your appearance. You read all the magazines. *Seventeen* [magazine] is like, wow, this is what Ashley Olsen eats to stay fit and you [think], oh she's on a diet too.

> **Dieting.** As a result of interpersonal and media influences, and subsequently feeling that they did not look as they should, participants generally engaged in dieting to try to lose weight. More specifically, participants reported that they not only limited the amount of the food they

ate, but also stopped eating certain foods as well. For example, one participant recounted, "I [bought] all the low-calorie stuff, drink water, green tea only, ate rice crackers for dinner, lunch and breakfast."

Likewise, participants stated that their peers were fixated on losing weight, thereby normalizing the idea that the desire to lose weight is common for most teenage girls. For instance, one participant recalled that a collective focus on dieting and losing weight promoted bonding between herself and her friends:

I was pretty skinny in middle school, but I think everybody had body dysmorphia, so I was always on a diet, everyone else around me was on a diet always. Like even really skinny people would think, 'I'm really fat'. Like it's just a thing. It's just a hot topic [at school]. Like, how's your diet going? It was a negative thing to bond over.

Other participants remembered that their restrictive eating habits raised concerns amongst their friends. As one participant noted, "She noticed I wouldn't eat lunch, so she wasn't really supportive [of my diet]. She [said], 'You shouldn't skip lunch', but then I didn't listen to her just because she was chubby. What does she know?"

In terms of measuring their success, certain participants stated that their diets would only last for a few days, as they felt unable to sustain their efforts, while others succeeded in dieting for a longer period of time and subsequently lost weight. For those participants who lost weight, they initially felt positive about their weight loss, as they received more attention from the opposite sex and felt more confident in their appearance. As one participant recounted, "People would hit on me and that's something I never experienced before. It almost felt normal. My entire life, [I got] used to the feeling that who I am on the outside didn't reflect who I am inside." However, participants generally struggled to sustain their restrictive eating habits or strict

exercise regimen over a longer period of time (e.g., more than a few months), and eventually

regained some of the weight they had lost. For example, one participant reported,

> I think through the diet, I got thinner. Because I thought I looked better thinner. [But] I
>
> think [my weight] slowly went back up. Because I can't eat (*chuckles*) 950 calories
>
> forever. I can't count calories. I don't really want to count calories for the rest of my life.
>
> I think it's too time consuming.

Further, one participant began to experience physical symptoms as a result of her weight loss,

which prompted her to stop dieting; "In the summertime, I had more free time, right? I was

working as well at McDonalds, and then gym-ing forty hours a week. I fainted twice."

For one of the participants, her restrictive eating patterns led to the development of an

eating disorder. That is, her desire to look thinner resulted in her limiting her food intake and

eventually losing too much weight. She described her first term in university:

> I was in a residence hall – it was a 'party' residence. Girls wearing miniskirts and very
>
> tight tops. All looking very pretty. Very thin. I wanted to look as nice as them. Not that
>
> I tried to wear anything short or anything revealing, but I still wanted to have that body. I
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> didn't eat properly. It was my goal to lose weight. I just had one meal and that was
>
> enough for me during lunch time. I felt good about it the first two months and then when
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> I started to lose a little bit more than I was expecting, I could see that I was kind of
>
> disgustingly skinny and I didn't like that.

The participant reported that her parents expressed their concerns for her health, and that she

promised herself she would start eating again. However, in her second term, she continued to

struggle with a different form of an eating disorder. She explained,

I started eating properly, but my body was really looking for nutrients and when I started

eating, I started to binge because my body was really calling for more food to come in.

So, I went the opposite way. I gained 15 pounds in four months. I felt horrible. I hold

very strongly to my values, and I'm very disciplined. But [with an] eating disorder, the

main challenge was being disciplined because I kept binging. I kept eating more and

more knowing that I don't need more intake, but I couldn't stop. Like in one sitting, I

would eat twice or three times the amount that I would normally eat. I would feel very

sick in my stomach. But I wouldn't purge.

As evidenced by the quotes, this participant equated a thin physique with attractiveness, and

therefore attempted to change her own appearance by dieting. Unfortunately, she struggled to

maintain healthy eating habits and eventually sought support from her university's eating

disorder program.

As young adults, while most participants eventually accepted their weight as satisfactory,

certain participants felt they should lose weight through dieting and were generally conflicted

about their appearance. For example, one participant stated that she feels that her appearance

should align with the expectations regarding physique that are associated with her line of work as

a nutritionist:

I tried to [go on a] diet before being a nutritionist. But my diet lasted maybe like three

days. I'm a nutritionist, so for me, my perception of beauty is being fit. I think when I

look at a picture of a nutritionist from Nautilus, the gym, sometimes, I think maybe I

should be more fit. I feel a bit pressured to lose more fat. One of the standards [for a

nutritionist] is to be fit. You are choosing your [nutritionist] based on their physical

appearance.

Another participant noted that although she continued to be very mindful of her food choices and eats adequately, she struggled implicitly with her eating disorder. As she explained,

> If I feel like I had enough carbs for the morning and lunch, I [don't] have any for dinner. Which I think is still a little bit unhealthy. People say that it's better to be conscious of what you're eating, but I don't think stressing over that is helpful, at all. Like I think it's just a lot better if I don't have any idea of that and I actually just kind of let [my] body control itself, rather than your head thinking I need two ounces of this or two spoonsful of that.

Certain participants reported that while they were not dieting at the time of the interview, they still continued to struggle with their weight and shape. For instance, one participant stated, "Even though I'm okay with what I look like now, I'm still kind of fat, you know, like the fat girl inside were still a bit self-conscious." Despite her conviction that she was satisfied with her appearance, this same participant reported via the member checking process that she had sought out treatment for an eating disorder in the year following her interview.

Limiting attire. In addition to dieting, certain participants expressed concerns about their inability to wear certain clothing because of body dissatisfaction. For example, one participant detailed her conflicted feelings of covering her body versus blending in with her friends:

> I still find that I'm a bit different sometimes, like in the way I dress. Because even now, I'm not totally comfortable with showing my body that much. Like, if you go to the beach, you're expected to wear a bikini, and I always feel pressure every single time with my friends. I really don't want to wear a bikini and then I'm the only one not wearing a bikini, you know? [Then] I feel like I'm not dressed in style.

Similarly, another participant described her hesitation to wear certain clothes due to her body type: "Some days, I would like to wear [shorter] shorts and my mom says no. Even though I'm twenty-one. She [says] well, if you were slimmer, then your thighs don't look as though they're jiggly fat – they don't look attractive." Overall, participants were affected by lower body dissatisfaction as a result of sexualization, and therefore resorted to dieting in attempt to feel more satisfied with their appearance. While participants generally felt satisfied with their current weight, they felt uncomfortable wearing certain clothing because of their body shape.

Low Self-Esteem

Apart from their struggles with negative body image, participants reported having low self-esteem for a variety of reasons. When they first arrived to Canada, many participants recalled suffering from low self-esteem because of their appearance. That is, they did not feel as pretty as other girls because of the clothes they were wearing. As one participant explained,

Because I knew what I was wearing, it wasn't fitting in with the crowd, so I didn't [feel pretty]. I knew compared to people who wore makeup and stuff, like I wasn't that pretty…but I didn't want to wear it. I guess those tended to be the more popular girls, too. So then, you're a little bit jealous about that, everyone knew them. I started getting a bit [pickier] with the stores that I went to [for clothes]. I started wearing skinny jeans and more form-fitting T-shirts. I guess that made me feel more confident.

As they matured, certain participants continued to experience low self-esteem, despite adapting their clothing style, and never felt as pretty as their female classmates; "I felt like I was still not as like pretty as the average girl."

As already discussed, certain participants' low self-esteem in regards to their appearance affected their confidence in feeling attractive to the opposite sex. That is, participants reported

having crushes on boys in their social network, but never felt confident enough to ask them on a date because they did not feel attractive. Additionally, other participants recalled that they suffered from low self-esteem because they never felt attractive enough to meet the approval of their mothers. As one participant stated, "Like I never [thought]-, 'til this day, like I still don't think I look good. Just because like she always joked about my appearance."

Although some participants struggled to maintain high self-esteem due to their appearance, others recalled lacking confidence in themselves as adolescents, despite feeling positive about their body image and appearance. These participants recollected that they did not feel good about themselves when they were unable to perform in a situation as they thought they should. For example, one participant recalled feeling a lack of confidence in her ability to speak up in certain situations because she did not want to draw attention to herself or be excluded by her peers. As she explained,

> I had a low self-esteem. I just know I was not confident. I wouldn't put myself forth. I'd be really agreeable, so whatever anyone else said, I would be like, yes, that's right, even if I disagreed. I feel the only reason why I wouldn't get into fights and stuff is because I was too scared to say that's wrong or you're wrong. I would just go with the flow.

Similarly, another participant described her lack of confidence during high school:

> Like I was comfortable with myself, but I wasn't confident. I wanted to make myself better. If someone were to come up to me and do something that hurts me, I would stand up to myself. But I would still question if it's okay. Like I would stand up for myself, but I didn't feel confident from inside. I always doubted myself. I think maybe I was comparing myself to other people. With respect to academics. With respect to looks. I felt like I never had the knowledge of Canadian culture. I was always trying to be better.

Despite living in Canada already for several years, this participant's immigrant status constantly made her question her abilities and appearance, and greatly affected her self-esteem.

In other cases, participants recalled having low self-esteem because of their academic performance. For example, one participant remembered feeling intimidated by her peers when she initially began a gifted program in middle school,

> In junior high, I don't think my self-esteem was that good. I think when I came into the [gifted] program, I just assumed that I wasn't as smart as everyone else, and everything, because like you had to take a test. Compared to grade six – I think grade six I was really comfortable with myself. Plus, I was more outgoing for some reason. And then I just didn't speak in junior [high] (*chuckles*). When I came in, it's like I didn't want to speak because I didn't want other people thinking that I didn't talk right.

Another participant recollected that she often felt negative about herself because she was unable to achieve the grades that others expected of her; "[My parents], sometimes, they would say, 'Oh, like so and so has [an] advantage over you. She's better than you because her grades are better than yours." Because she consistently felt she was never good enough for her parents, her self-esteem suffered as a result.

Low Mood and High Anxiety

Participants reported experiencing difficulty with low mood or high anxiety, as a result of navigating expectations at home and in school. With respect to low mood, a few participants noted that they were often in conflict with their parents, particularly with respect to their choice of clothing, or the time they spent focusing on their appearance. As a result of the conflict between themselves and their parents, participants felt more irritable or moody. When asked if her mood changed as a result of her increased focus on appearance, one participant recalled,

I think it did in a way in a way because I wasn't [as] focused on my interests, I was just

doing something to blend in. I felt empty. Before, I was always somebody who'd talk

about and like things that were interesting to me. I think my behaviour did change. I was

probably more irritable if you will – really, really different. Sometimes, when I look

back at those two years of [*classe d'accueil*], I can literally refer to them as hell because I

wasn't myself, things weren't the way I wanted them to be, and I was just pushing myself

so hard to blend in. And once I realized…I wasn't enjoying the new self…because I had

the opportunity to explore the things that I liked, I spent so much less time on the

appearance part, and by then I had learnt how to you know be girly, but not too girly. I

found a little like a balance. So that really did improve my mood.

Apart from experiencing low mood due to their appearance or conflict with their parents,

one participant became significantly depressed during university, following her experiences with

sexual coercion. During her interview, this particular participant struggled to recount her

depressive symptoms following these events:

I started losing my values, I started losing who I was. I [started] drinking more, not

treating guys properly. There's guys that I [would] flirt with [at clubs], but then I would

never go out with them. It was very unethical, but I did everything I [could] to numb

myself. And I [felt] worthless. You know when that kind of thing happens to you, you

feel like you're garbage now. You're not worth anything. Like who could ever love me

again? I felt like that's the type of girl I was and that's [what] I deserved and that's how

I'm ever going to be treated by guys. It got worse, actually. I stopped going to clubs.

But I got really depressed. Everything I've worked up for now, gone. My academics

gone, my future gone, who I am as a person lost. I felt like I was just a slut, you know?

But then I stopped drinking and stopped numbing myself, all that started flooding back. I

was so depressed. I was crying every single night. Every single night, I would come

back from lecture. I wouldn't-, I didn't want to go to lectures, it was just depressing.

As a result of her depression, this participant's academic performance in her first and second

year of university greatly suffered. She was eventually diagnosed with post-traumatic stress

disorder, but she struggled to seek treatment due to her depression and trauma.

In addition to experiencing depressive symptoms, certain participants felt anxiety about

their romantic relationships. That is, participants described specific aspects of their relationship

which caused them anxiety, often rooted in the sexualized images presented in media. For

example, one participant stated,

I think about sex [and] relationships, because we have this idea of super wild intimate

women with this hot sex going on. You cannot have that all the time in your life

(*laughs*). [But] you're going to feel pressure to learn more, to experiment-, because of

what I'm seeing, I'm scared that I'm boring [my partner] sometimes, you know?

Another participant reported feeling anxiety due to her inexperience with dating. She

commented, "It does make me nervous. I'm afraid to go out if someone's interested. Sometimes

you're on the street and someone [asks for] your number – I give them a fake one just because I

have no experience in this, whatsoever."

Other participants reported feeling anxiety when they did not live up to their own

expectations as young adults. That is, they felt that they should be more skilled in certain aspects

of their lives because of their age. For example, one participant reported that after moving to a

large metropolitan city in Canada, she felt more anxiety about her appearance and her inability to

wear certain styles of clothing:

I like to go shopping, but I don't know how to [put together an outfit]. I don't think it will look good on me, or something, you know? Even now, it's not good. Because I should be transitioning [and stylish]. But I am always hard on myself, not just for this, for everything because I'm a perfectionist. And just to like style-, because if want to wear something, it has to be right.

Another participant reflected that her constant attempts to improve herself also caused anxiety:

I really think that if we didn't have this pressure on different areas of life, then I wouldn't be questioning myself. Because it's like you're always competing with yourself, all the time. Which is good – you're improving. But at the same time, it creates this anxiety and I did go through an anxiety phase that I was trying so hard to be good at school, at the same time I was trying to have a good relationship. At the same time, I was trying lose weight or be more fit. It does create anxiety and I still have that thing that I'm always making lists in my head and you know improving in different areas. But you know, we all have a limit. There are twenty-four hours in a day, so I try to tell myself that. But I do catch myself questioning myself, making lists, or doing things like that.

In some cases, participants discussed the anxiety they feel about trying to change something about themselves because they worry about being judged by their parents or friends. For instance, one participant stated,

I don't think I've changed too, too much. I think, that's the whole thing – I don't really change that much [because] I'm scared to change drastically. So, I don't really wear makeup in case my close friends start judging me. So, I change gradually. I still don't wear makeup, and I still wear pretty conservative clothing compared to women in general.

Taken together, these quotes illustrate the pressure participants experienced due to interpersonal and media messages regarding appearance, and the anxiety they felt when they could not meet these expectations.

Building Self-Confidence

Although body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, low mood, and high anxiety were negative consequences as a result of participants' exposure to sexualization, participants reported various ways in which they increased their self-confidence, such as academic involvement, maintaining their interpersonal relationships, and becoming more aware of their own interests and desires.

More specifically, participants reported that maintaining a strong academic record built up their self-confidence. For example, one participant described,

I really classed myself only on my grades. It wasn't like a beauty thing – I just wanted my external to be presentable so my hair was always made and my clothes were always tidy. But really, what I valued my self-worth with was my grades. I knew that if I leave high school, I have to do this. That was the only thing I thought about. Making sure that I was prepared for university.

In addition to maintaining a solid academic standing, participants increased their self-confidence by joining extra-curricular activities at school. Because they focused more on their grades and interests, they spent less time worrying about their appearance. As one participant noted,

Towards the end of grade ten, I started to do really, really well in school. I started to enjoy doing homework. And as grade 11 came, [I decided] I'm going to work hard and do well. I think that might be the reason why I put [the weight] back on…just because I

was a bit more focused on school. I joined more clubs. I'm having fun and I'm doing

well.

Further, participants reported that showing kindness towards their friends, in turn, made

them feel more confident in themselves. For instance, one woman described that helping her

friends with their studies or including others in activities made her feel better about herself:

I remember at a birthday party we had, there was this one girl sitting all by herself, and I

felt so bad for her. And then I just went up and I talked to her and I came back and I said,

'Oh she's really cool guys', and then everyone started talking to her. She was grateful for

that. And later, she became best friends with like my close friend, and I was like, I made

that happen, you know?

In similar fashion, another participant noted she felt more confidence in herself when she was

able to offer support and guidance to her friends by giving them her time and attention:

My friends tell me that I make a good counsellor, that I am a good listener. [One friend]

came to my room and she told me that she was having issues with her eating. I

appreciated that she was open with me and that she could confide in me and she told me

all her struggles and me being able to give support to someone else who was going

through similar struggles. It made me feel better and it made me feel like it was for a

reason. I could use my struggles to help other people. And I felt very good about that.

As well, participants reported that as they gained insight about themselves and developed

more of their own identity, they began to feel more confident in who they were as an adolescent

girl or young woman. That is, they tried to be less like their peers and appreciated their own

unique differences; they cultivated their own interests and spent time with people who shared

these interests. As one participant detailed,

I think by the time that I got to [grade 10], I had a good idea of who I was. I was starting

to [see] myself in the images that I was seeing in the media. I don't want to be just [an]

image. I did bond with some people when I started to [care more for my appearance], but

it was very superficial. [When] I had a solid understanding of myself and what I was

looking for, [I met] people [with the] same interests. We were put together [in the same

classes], so it was easier to meet.

Since this participant was more aware of her own interests and values, she felt more confident to

be herself and, therefore, formed friendships with others who shared her same interests rather

than with those individuals who only cared about their appearance.

Support for Immigrant Girls

Although participants experienced several negative effects on their mental health and

well-being, they also revealed several ways in which they were supported throughout their

challenging experiences and provided suggestions of ways that immigrant girls could further be

supported as they face sexualization in adolescence and young adulthood.

In general, participants reported that were initially well-supported by their family. While

they may have experienced exclusion at school, they always felt they had the support of their

parents and siblings at home. In most cases, participants discussed that they often preferred to

spend time with their families, enjoyed the activities that they did together, and felt they could

share about their day at school. As one participant stated, "I was comfortable at home, but in

school, I wasn't. I have a younger brother, I [took] care of him, and my parents were always

home because they weren't working yet. So, we seemed to have our own fun." Participants also

felt that more attention and support of family protected them better from sociocultural influences

of sexualization. For example, one participant stated,

> One of the factors is if you come from a family that's lower income, it could be that maybe you live with a single parent, you have a single mother, you don't have a father, you don't have a male role model. All these things, and also just like your mother's always working, there's less attention, so you turn to media to give you that role model and to give you social cues on how to behave.

However, participants frequently reported that their parents were as unaware about issues regarding sexualization as they were, and would, therefore, benefit from education about how sexualization affects young girls and women. As one participant explained,

> I think that we need to do something for the parents before providing support for the kids. Because young girls, they're more influenced by parents I would say. And I guess as immigrant parents, I would assume that they're holding closer to their cultural values as opposed to kids.   So maybe talking to the parents first [about how to] teach your children not to be heavily influenced or heavily stressed by something like body image. I think the support should go to the parents before reaching directly to the kids. And especially as a young immigrant, I think young immigrant girls would look more for their parents for support than outside [the home].

Even though participants generally felt supported at home, they also commented that they wished they had others to turn to in their school or community when they faced unique challenges as immigrants. Participants generally felt they may have benefited from speaking with a school psychologist or counsellor after immigrating to Canada, who could understand the difficulties that they faced when adapting to the cultural norms of a new country and when beginning school. As one participant explained, "I think [there's] a need to have someone understand their experiences. Someone they can look up to or talk to about how they're feeling

through adolescence. They want to do certain things, but then there are certain cultural

pressures." Participants further commented that it would be important for school personnel to

consider that the difficulties that immigrant girls face may not always relate to their immigrant

status or cultural background:

> When I look back, I think it would have been useful if we had somebody at school who
>
> we could go to and talk to like a psychologist or you know a counsellor or somebody.
>
> Even if we had, I wasn't aware about it. And I think a lot of times the impression that I
>
> got with our teachers [was] that they tried to be understanding, but they also point out at
>
> the differences, which is not very comfortable. At that age and where I was, I didn't want
>
> somebody to point out the differences that I was having. I didn't want them to relate it to
>
> my background. I wanted to be more about the person that I am. Even though I was in a
>
> school [with many immigrant students], I was still very aware that I'm not from [Canada]
>
> and I felt like the person that I was, was being ignored and the focus was on where I'm
>
> coming from.

In addition, participants suggested that it would have been helpful if someone connected

them with other immigrant peers, who shared the same values or who had experienced similar

challenges when they first moved to Canada:

> I found a lot of support with [other] immigrants. Like I tended to be closer to
>
> immigrants. I think having a community of people with the same cultural background
>
> can help you because you can feel uncomfortable in [certain] circumstances, but to help
>
> you with your self-confidence and stuff, you need to find people who share the same
>
> cultural values as you. To say that it's okay to act a certain way and not to like act the
>
> way that the mainstream is acting.

Similarly, another participant suggested that immigrant girls need peers who can empower them to appreciate their individual differences; "If you have a good support system, I feel like people wouldn't encourage you to do what *they* do, but encourage you to do what *you* feel comfortable doing."

In summary, because of the expectations at home and in school, participants struggled with their overall mental health and well-being. However, they also found ways to build up their self-confidence through academic involvement, interpersonal relationships, and increased understanding of themselves. In reflecting on how to better support immigrant adolescent girls, participants stressed that a strong network of social support is essential.

Overall, the results of this study highlighted the direct and indirect ways in which young immigrant women were influenced by, and experienced, sexualization as adolescents. As a result of the expectations at home and in school, exposure to sex education and media, and through dating and sexual engagement, participants' sense of well-being was both positively and negatively affected. The next section offers a deeper review of the results, as well as implications for research and practice.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The findings of this study elucidated the sociocultural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal influences on the sexualization experiences of adolescent immigrant girls. The four research questions posed are discussed below, employing the lenses of feminist social constructionist epistemology (FSC; Gergen, 1985; Parton, 2003; Sprague, 2005). Next, the strengths and unique contributions of the study, implications for clinical practice in schools, limitations of the study, and future directions in research are outlined.

First Research Question: How do young immigrant women construct their lived experiences with North American sexualization since adolescence?

Scholars have labelled immigrant youth as *third culture kids* (TCKs), or individuals who are raised in a culture different from that of their parents or primary caregivers (Limberg & Lambie, 2011; Pollock & van Reken, 2001). Walters & Auton-Cuff (2009) defined the third culture as "a created culture that is neither the 'home' culture not the 'host' culture; it is a culture in between cultures" (p. 755). Indeed, the findings of this study revealed that the participants had to navigate between multiple realities. That is, participants lived in a 'home' culture, which consisted of their parents' rules and expectations of girls that reflected their heritage culture's values, and traditions. However, participants simultaneously existed in a Canadian 'host' culture, which reflected more liberal expectations of girls held by peers, teachers, media, and society at large. Thus, the young immigrant women in this study found themselves living in a 'culture in between cultures'; in other words, participants moved in and out of both cultures, and created their own third culture, or their own viewpoints and attitudes on appearance, behaviour, and social relationships and practices.

In accordance with FSC epistemology, several discourses were identified in order to address how young immigrant women constructed their lived experiences with sexualization since their adolescence. Highlighting the discourses that emerged from the results parts from the extant literature and offers a unique perspective regarding how sexualization affects the experiences of immigrant adolescent girls. That is, the discourses identified provide a more comprehensive understanding of participants' negotiation between two cultures in order to obey their parents' expectations at home, and also fit in at school and in their community, as they cultivated their own identity and values. The discourses that emerged included: (a) Masculinity/Femininity; (b) Asexualized/Sexualized; (c) Obedience/Disobedience; (c) Respect/Disrespect; and (e) Abstinent/Sexual Exploration.

Masculinity/Femininity. The discourse of Masculinity/Femininity was critical to participants' overall experiences, particularly during their initial transition into the Canadian school system. That is, underscoring much of the social isolation and bullying that participants faced were judgements made by their peers about how masculine or feminine they observed the participants to be in their appearance or interests. Therefore, the Masculinity/Femininity discourse was utilized by the participants as a framework by which their appearance and interests were evaluated. Regarding appearance, for instance, participants whose clothing or hair styles were viewed to be masculine were considered to be different, and were consequently socially isolated or bullied, since having conventionally feminine appearance was expected. However, in order to reduce exclusion and bullying, participants conformed to appear more feminine and meet conventionally feminine ideals. This discourse is particularly highlighted, since it is the only one in which 'home' and 'host' cultures did not conflict; that is, not only were participants

evaluated at school for appearing more or less feminine, but some participants received similar pressure to appear more feminine from their mothers as well.

Asexualized/Sexualized. The Asexualized/Sexualized discourse was frequently evident within the findings in that the participants moved back and forth between their home context, in which girls were expected to look and be appropriately asexual as children and adolescents, and their host culture, in which adolescent girls were widely sexualized via sociocultural (e.g., media) and interpersonal (e.g., peers) influences. When participants initially paid less attention to their appearance, they were excluded or bullied for looking differently from their peers. However, when participants tried to imbue more sexuality, by wearing revealing clothing or more makeup, or showing romantic interest in boys, their parents generally disapproved of what they considered to be age inappropriate appearance or behaviour, which led to increased conflict between parents and their daughters. As a result, these young women struggled with internal conflict about how to navigate between fitting in within their host culture, while simultaneously obeying their parents at home.

Obedience/Disobedience. Similarly, the discourse of Obedience/Disobedience was present in the experiences of immigrant adolescent girls. That is, participants tended to follow their parents' rules that were in place for them at home, in order to behave as expected of them. However, in school, participants observed that their peers tested or broke school rules, mostly without comments or reprisal from their teachers. Therefore, given their desire to fit in with their peers, participants began to stray away from their parents' expectations regarding appearance or media consumption.

Within the larger discourse of Obedience/Disobedience, the discourse of Overt/Covert behaviour emerged. More specifically, some participants overtly tested their parents'

expectations, for example, by wearing tight-fitted clothing similar in nature to their peers, wearing makeup to school, tanning when told not to, or dieting to lose weight. Consequently, their parents would often make negative comments, thereby increasing conflicts between themselves and their daughters. Conversely, other participants chose to covertly test their parents' limits. That is, they elected to hide the way in which they broke their parents' rules, such as watching sexualized television shows in their room, wearing forbidden attire when their parents were not around or, later in university, dating someone without their parents' knowledge or approval. The participants constantly had to negotiate which rules they agreed with and could abide by, and which rules they felt were too strict and could break, either openly or secretly. While overt and covert behaviour is typically recognized as classic behaviour during adolescence in general, the exact nature of this behaviour exhibited by immigrant adolescents is likely to vary by culture and context.

Respect/Disrespect. Underlining the discourse of Obedience/Disobedience was the Respect/Disrespect discourse. The Respect facet of this discourse reflects that participants' parents expected them to show respect for authority (e.g., parents, teachers), by following rules and showing obedience at home and in class. The Disrespect aspect of this discourse is that participants consistently observed and interpreted their peers to be disrespectful of their teachers, by talking back to them or breaking school rules. As such, some participants became more comfortable mimicking their peers' behaviour, as they observed there was no consequences to do so. Therefore, it is difficult to discern whether peers were truly showing disrespect towards authority or if authoritative figures were not providing proper guidance and boundaries within the school context. Similarly, participants observed adolescents on television shows geared to teenagers and young adults disrespecting both parents and teachers, by showing little regard for

rules and speaking disrespectfully to people in positions of authority. As participants became more accustomed to the North American culture, some became more comfortable in displaying similar behaviour at home.

        Abstinence/Sexual Exploration. Another discourse that was evident in the results was that of Abstinence/Sexual Exploration, whereby participants unfailingly received mixed messages regarding engaging or abstaining from sexual activity from their 'host' and 'home' cultures. At home, heritage culture and religion were a driving force in encouraging immigrant adolescent girls to be chaste and abstain from sexual activity. In contrast, some parts of the sex education curriculum that participants received, as well as both peer and media influences, suggested that sexual exploration was permitted, albeit less encouraged, in adolescence. While participants mostly made the decision to abstain from sexual activity during high school, they often felt conflicted by their appropriate curiosity to learn about or discuss the topic of sex at home or with their friends, and about who to turn to with their thoughts or questions.

Summary and Implications of Discourses That Emerged

        Taken together, illuminating the discourses that emerged from the results revealed that as adolescents and young adults, immigrant women struggled to meet the expectations of their parents and heritage culture, while simultaneously trying to meet the expectations held by peers and reinforced by media in order to be accepted by their classmates. Moreover, this struggle to find a balance between home and host cultural expectations emerged over and over again through the above discourses in various situations and contexts, as the immigrant girls progressed through adolescence and into young adulthood. As a result, these young women felt extraordinary pressure to fulfill the expectations imposed on them in their home and host cultures and had to exert substantial cognitive and emotional energy to reduce this interpersonal tension,

while existing in their created culture of conflicting expectations and messages. In effect,

existing in their created culture was precarious, since they inevitably would not meet all of the

expectations set for them either their home or host culture. For example, navigating the ever-

changing societal expectations of girls and trying to conform to peer pressure to look or behave a

certain way may mean disobeying parent rules with resulting consequences. Alternatively,

abiding by parent or heritage culture expectations may mean appearing or behaving in stark

contrast to what is societally expected in the host culture, resulting in social isolation or even

bullying. The pressure to meet interpersonal expectations led participants to simultaneously

experience an enormous amount of *intrapersonal* tension. That is, participants placed immense

pressure on themselves to meet and find a balance of the contrasting expectations of different

contexts in which they found themselves. When they were unable to strike a balance in

negotiating the expectations from multiple contexts, they experienced internal angst and anxiety,

thereby leading to further attempts in conforming to interpersonal expectations. Thus,

emphasizing the discourses that arose elucidated both interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict

that resulted when immigrant adolescent girls were confronted with expectations from two very

different, and often opposing, cultures, leading to unavoidable confusion and anxiety about

where and how to fit in.

**Second and Third Research Questions: How do young immigrant women's sociocultural,
interpersonal, and intrapersonal contexts shape their experiences of sexualization?** and
**What meaning do young immigrant women derive from their experiences with
sexualization across time?**

To date, research exploring how sociocultural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal contexts

have shaped immigrant adolescent girls' experiences with sexualization has been extremely

limited; therefore, the second and third research questions posed in this study have not yet been comprehensively addressed by the extant literature. As such, the existing research on the sexualization of girls and women in general is referred to in order to improve the understanding the experiences of immigrant adolescent girls more specifically. As revealed by the discourse analysis, participants had to navigate between largely opposing contexts and try to find a balance between what was expected of them within each context, while developing their own viewpoints, desires, and values. Moreover, the complexity in trying to fit into both 'home' and 'host' cultures, in addition to exposure to direct and indirect messages of sexualization, took a significant toll on the physical and mental health of several participants as they progressed through adolescence and into adulthood. In addressing the second and third research questions posed in this study, the following discussion first describes the various interpersonal contexts in which participants' experiences were shaped, and then describes the intrapersonal consequences that the young immigrant women experienced as a result of the influences of sexualization.

Interpersonal Contexts

Consistent with previous research (e.g., Moore & Rosenthal, 2006), young immigrant women's parents had great influence over their daughters' beliefs and behaviour via the expectations that were set in place for them. For example, participants' mothers were noted to influence participants' behaviour and attitude towards their weight and shape, which has been reflected in past studies (e.g., Cooley et al., 2008; Field et al., 2005). However, findings from this study extended the literature by offering a comprehensive understanding of the underlying messages that parents from certain heritage cultures may pass onto their daughters with respect to appearance, media consumption, and social interaction. That is, participants were expected to maintain a conservative appearance, limit their consumption of media geared towards

adolescents, and focus their attention on developing friendships with females rather than engage in any platonic or romantic relationships with boys. In other words, these young women were encouraged to be asexual as adolescents, with no room to discuss issues related to sexual development and sexuality. Thus, participants struggled in finding a balance between following their parents' rules and developing their own sense of identity. When they went against their parents' expectations, it often resulted in conflict or feelings of guilt. When they abided by their parents' rules, they felt they were missing out on new experiences or opportunities for self-discovery.

Scholars have discerned that it is generally taboo to speak of sexuality and sexual practices for certain ethnic cultures (e.g., Fontes, 2012). Therefore, participants had to seek information outside of their family home regarding sex and sexuality. Through the sex education curriculum, participants were provided with answers to some of their questions regarding puberty, sexual development, and sex; however, they were not given the cognitive or emotional tools to navigate these topics as they progressed through adolescence. Moreover, they were not taught to recognize that certain sociocultural influences, such as media, and other interpersonal influences outside their home, such as their peers, would further expose them to sexualization.

More specifically, consistent with the extant literature summarized by Zurbriggen and colleagues (2010), media in its various forms further increased participants' exposure to the general sexualization of girls and women and contributed to their own desire to objectify themselves by copying the appearance and behaviour of females online, and in television, movies, and magazines. As seen in past research (e.g., Levine & Murnen, 2009), participants internalized the messages in media perpetuating the sexualization of girls and women and formed unrealistic expectations of themselves with respect to appearance and behaviour. As

well, participants' engagement with products, namely clothing and cosmetics, only increased their frequency of self-objectification and self-sexualization. That is, when they initially moved to Canada, participants quickly learned that their conventionally masculine clothing was unacceptable; therefore, in order to decrease bullying and social isolation, participants felt they had to dress in more traditionally feminine clothing. This clothing was often tight-fitting or revealing in nature, which is consistent with previous research that has shown teenagers wearing increased tight-fitting or low-cut clothing (e.g., Graff et al., 2013). Thus, sociocultural influences outside the home culture, such as media and products, provided multiple opportunities for both the direct and indirect sexualization of adolescent immigrant girls.

Moreover, participants were the victims of sexualization through their interpersonal experiences. Consistent with extant literature on marginalized women (e.g., Lerner, 2015), participants experienced bullying as a result of not ascribing to dominant social expectations for physical appearance or interests. Therefore, they conformed to conventionally feminine ideals and engaged in a form of self-sexualization, despite their conflicting feelings of being too young to look or behave in a certain manner. Unfortunately, while they mostly felt accepted by their female peers, the adolescent immigrant girls who participated in this study were not shielded from other forms of overt sexualization, including sexual harassment and attempted sexual assault by adolescent boys and men, which has already been well documented as a common consequence of sexualization in the literature (e.g., Hill & Kearl, 2011, Lindberg et al., 2007). These findings suggest that immigrant girls and young women are not exempt from interpersonal sexualization and, moreover, may be further at risk for negative consequences of sexualization, since they typically did not share about such events with family or friends.

Taken together, self-sexualization, as well as sociocultural and interpersonal influences, were not independent entities, but rather intersected and influenced one another, and contributed to experiences of sexualization of adolescent immigrant girls. While the sexualization of immigrant girls and women looks similar to the sexualization of girls and women in general, immigrant females may not have the requisite knowledge of Canadian culture to understand the indirect or implicit messages of sexualization. Moreover, these young immigrant girls and women lacked the support they needed to decode these implicit messages, since they were uncomfortable discussing indirect and direct experiences of sexualization with their parents and peers. Therefore, while they exist in the same 'host' culture as Canadian females, immigrant girls and young women described living in 'a culture between cultures', in which they do not have support in decoding sociocultural or interpersonal messages of sexualization. Thus, there is a need to recognize the limits of living in 'a culture between cultures' in order to mitigate the potentially harmful effects of sexualization.

Intrapersonal Consequences

Extant research has documented mixed results regarding the overall mental health of immigrant youth in Canada, with more recent findings indicating higher psychological distress in immigrant youth compared to the youth of other immigrant generations (Hamilton, Noh, & Adlaf, 2009; Hilario et al., 2014), while earlier studies indicated less or no differences in psychological distress between immigrant and Canadian-born youth (Beiser, Hou, Hyman, & Tousignant, 2002; Harker, 2001). However, a more detailed account of the negative effects of sexualization on the mental, cognitive, and physical functioning of immigrant adolescent girls, much less of Canadian girls and women, has not yet been addressed in the literature. Thus, this

study offers a more detailed account of the harmful consequences of sexualization on the health and well-being of adolescent immigrant girls and young women in Canada.

Extant literature has documented how sexualization affects girls and women in a variety of domains, such as cognitive functioning (e.g., Frederickson et al., 1998; Gay & Castano, 2010; Quinn et al., 2006), physical health and activity (e.g., Aubrey, 2010; Vartanian et al., 2012) and academic performance (e.g., McKenny & Bigler, 2014). Indeed, findings from this study revealed that the cognitive functioning and physical health of adolescent immigrant girls was impacted as a result of internalized messages of sexualization. Participants reported specific examples, such as struggling to maintain their academic performance, feeling negative effects of dieting (e.g., dizziness), and exercising to improve their appearance rather than for their health.

Further, scholars have linked how sexualization significantly influences the mental health and well-being of adolescent girls and women. Specifically, self-objectification has been linked to a host of negative emotions in adolescent girls and women, including shame, anxiety, and low mood (Fredrickson et al., 1998; Grabe et al., 2007; Grabe & Hyde, 2009; Jones & Griffiths, 2015; Roberts & Gettman, 2004; Slater & Tiggemann, 2002; Tiggemann & Slater, 2015). As well, higher body shame and appearance anxiety was shown to predict higher self-surveillance and lower self-esteem (Choma et al., 2010). Similarly, results from this study revealed that participants experienced appearance anxiety, which in turn affected their self-esteem, mood, and confidence in their level of attractiveness or in their ability to attract attention from their male peers. They also discussed feelings of shame with respect to their appearance or their behaviour that they displayed towards their peers.

Additionally, researchers studying sexualization and objectification have documented that girls are likely to show an increase in body dissatisfaction through adolescence (Bearman et

al., 2006; Bucchianeri et al., 2013; Calzo et al., 2012), and that increased media exposure is associated with greater body dissatisfaction and a higher drive for thinness (Botta, 2003; Frisby, 2004; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004; Turner et al., 1997). Exposure to media and self-objectification have also been shown to increase disordered eating in girls and women (Calogero, 2008; Grabe et al., 2008; Haines et al., 2008; Myers & Crowther, 2008; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). Akin to the extant research, participants in this study displayed growing dissatisfaction with their bodies as they progressed through adolescence, resulting in restrictive eating and over-exercising during high school and university. In some cases, their restrictive habits led to the development of disordered eating in young adulthood, which required extensive treatment and support.

While scholars have posited factors increasing the resilience of youth who have been victimized, existing research has not explored how immigrant adolescent girls perceive their own resilience following the influence of sexualization on their lived experiences. This study uniquely illuminated that following their exposure to direct and indirect influences of sexualization, and experiencing the subsequent negative effects, participants were able to identify coping strategies used, as well as areas of resilience (e.g., aspiration to help others) and greater awareness of sexualization as a prevalent problem affecting both immigrant and non-immigrant girls alike. Therefore, this study's findings further highlight the need to address factors that increase resilience in immigrant adolescent girls who may be influenced by, or be victims of, sexualization in order to foster their ability to find positive meaning from their experiences and mitigate the harmful effects of sexualization.

Fourth Research Question: What do young immigrant women perceive are the needs of immigrant adolescent girls who are confronted with sexualization?

The extant literature has shown that newly arrived immigrant students experience a multitude of concerns and challenges, including language acquisition, adjusting to new social contexts, lack of social support or social acceptance, racial or ethnic discrimination, and acquiring new approaches to schooling and learning, in addition to typical developmental issues in adolescence that all students face (Suárez-Orozco, Onaga, & Lardemelle, 2010; William & Butler, 2003). Researchers have illuminated ways in which school counsellors can help facilitate immigrant adolescents' transition into school (e.g., Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010; Williams & Butler, 2003). However, there are no first-hand accounts from immigrant women who have lived through this process with respect to *their* perspectives on how to best support them.

The participants in this study suggested a number of ways in which immigrant girls and adolescents could be better supported as they progress through middle school and high school, namely building their network of social support. In accordance with previous research (e.g., Goh, Wahl, McDonald, Brissett, & Yoon, 2007; Limberg & Lambie, 2011), participants proposed that immigrant girls be connected to immigrant peers, in order for their peers to serve as mentors and provide support for, and validation of, their difficulties. This connection would be especially helpful for newly-arrived girls, as most of the participants experienced isolation and bullying when they first moved to Canada due to their multiple differences from their Canadian peers. It would also be helpful for immigrant girls to connect with other immigrant peers during the transition into high school, as a number of participants began to particularly focus on their appearance at 13 or 14 years of age. With the added pressures that young immigrant girls face regarding their appearance, behaviour, and peer relationships, a peer mentor

who has also undergone the immigrant experience may help newly arrived girls navigate similar challenges they may face as they transition to a new country and school.

Additionally, findings from this study indicated that it would be important for schools to have a contact or point person that the immigrant could go to in times of difficulty. More specifically, they suggested that speaking with a school counsellor or psychologist would allow them to process their experiences with someone who understands or has knowledge about both sexualization and the immigrant experience, and the conflicts and tensions that emerge as a result of navigating this experience from a bi-cultural perspective. While past research has highlighted that mental health professionals should have a solid foundation of knowledge regarding the unique difficulties and pressures that girls may face in adolescence, including sexualization (e.g., APA, 2007; Curry & Choate, 2010; Zubriggen et al., 2010), these studies have not yet simultaneously attended to sexualization and immigration, and the implications for having bi-cultural struggles. As such, a school counsellor or school psychologist working with immigrant adolescent girls should not only have working knowledge of common challenges girls face during adolescence, but also understand how young immigrant girls are influenced by sexualization and the unique bi-cultural challenges that ensue.

In conjunction with support from immigrant peers and school professionals, participants reported that having strong family support was a key factor in their overall transition and acculturation to Canada. More specifically, although participants may have struggled with some of their parents' rules or expectations, they generally noted that they had close and open relationships with their parents and were able to discuss a variety of topics with them, including their observations of their peers' behaviour or attire, or concerns about school. While results suggest that participants did not feel comfortable discussing certain topics with their parents,

such as romantic interests or sex, they generally felt supported by their parents, creating an overall sense of positive adjustment to life in Canada.

Strengths and Unique Contributions of the Research

A significant amount of research has delineated the interpersonal, intrapersonal, and media influences, as well as the physical, cognitive, and psychological impact of sexualization, on girls and women (e.g., Zurbriggen et al., 2010; Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). However, detailed accounts of the influences of sexualization on immigrant adolescent girls and how they are uniquely affected by such influences have not been provided. Thus, this research study sought to address the dearth of research on immigrant girls in the extant sexualization literature and offered novel information on the phenomenon of the sexualization as it is experienced by immigrant adolescent girls, how the phenomenon unfolds, and its influences on this population.

In the report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls, Zurbriggen and colleagues (2010) put forth a number of recommendations for future research on the topic of sexualization. More specifically, they noted that previous studies had generally explored the effects of sexualization on women, and that a focus on research on girls specifically was needed. Additionally, they concluded that more "culturally competent, focused work was required to document the phenomenon of the sexualization of girls" (p. 41), with further investigation on the effects of sexualization on immigrant girls. As an answer to the call by the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls, this study offered a unique perspective in the transition and adjustment of girls and adolescents who immigrated to Canada as 'tweens', or between the ages of 9 and 12 years, and the subsequent influences of sexualization on their experiences throughout elementary school, secondary school, and post-secondary studies.

Another strength of this study is the diversity of heritage culture that is represented among the participants. More specifically, the women who participated in this study immigrated from nine different countries: Australia, Bahrain, China, India, Iran, Israel, Korea, Nigeria, and Sri Lanka. Findings from this study demonstrated that despite the vast differences between the cultures in these countries, the women shared a host of similar challenges, and also experienced analogous negative effects of sexualization, due to the intersection of other identities, including but not limited to, sex, gender, sexual orientation, and immigrant status.

In addition, this study clearly explicated what it means for immigrant adolescent girls to experience, and be influenced by, direct and indirect sexualization, revealing an intricate picture that departed from the exploration of sexualization in the existing literature. Upon their arrival to Canada, they were targets of bullying due to their differences in language, behaviour, ethnic background, and attire. Further, immigrant adolescent girls not only have to learn to navigate sociocultural and interpersonal influences of sexualization, but they also have to learn to negotiate conflicting messages in order to meet expectations with respect to appearance, behaviour, academic trajectories, media consumption, and social interaction and activities, that were placed on them in multiple contexts. Accordingly, the current study uniquely provides a data-driven, encompassing understanding of the influences of sexualization on immigrant adolescent girls, and critically contributes to the extant literature and promotes future research in this area.

Furthermore, this study offered information regarding how immigrant adolescent girls are affected by direct and indirect influences of sexualization. Findings revealed that immigrant adolescent girls who are influenced by sociocultural and interpersonal sexualization may face negative consequences on their mental health and well-being, such as body dissatisfaction,

disordered eating, low mood, high anxiety, and low self-esteem. Some of these negative consequences persisted into young adulthood and affected their physical health, academic performance, interpersonal relationships, levels of self-confidence, and sense of identity. Hence, this study sheds light to the increased awareness of the distress experienced by immigrant adolescent girls and offers imperative information to shelter other immigrant girls from such harmful effects.

Finally, given that immigrant adolescent girls have not yet been given a voice in research about how their experiences have been influenced and affected by sexualization, their strength and resilience have also remained invisible in extant research. Subsequently, the results of this study highlighted the ways in which they coped with the initial bullying they faced as newly arrived students, as well as the way they built up their self-confidence throughout adolescence via their academic performance, their involvement in extra-curricular activities, their social relationships, and through their development of insight and introspection about themselves. Therefore, by illuminating the resilience and agency of immigrant adolescent girls, this study focuses on reducing further marginalization of this population that would come from only highlighting negative effects of sexualization, and rather, raises awareness of the strength that immigrant adolescent girls possess in the face of sexualization.

Methodological Contributions. Research on the sexualization of girls and women has been mainly conducted using quantitative methodologies, which has permitted scholars to draw conclusions about the harmful effects of sexualization. However, this study endeavored to provide a more in-depth understanding of how the experiences of young immigrant girls are influenced by sexualization, and therefore addressed the scarcity of knowledge regarding this topic by employing a qualitative methodology. Quantitative methods seek to study associations

between predetermined variables, yet this study demonstrated that immigrant adolescent girls experienced negative effects of sexualization, such as bullying or social isolation, because they did not align with pre-supposed notions of what is conventionally expected of their appearance or behaviour by their peers and society at large. To this end, immigrant adolescent girls' experiences could not be fully illuminated through the use of quantitative methodologies that classify their experiences into predetermined variables. Thus, this study not only provided new information regarding the influences of sexualization on adolescent immigrant girls, but also emphasized the benefit of employing a qualitative methodology to conduct this research.

In tandem with utilizing a qualitative methodology, adopting a feminist social constructionist epistemology was also unique to this research study. The findings of this study allowed for the emergence of several discourses, which further elucidated how the expectations and mixed messages at home, in school, and through media sources were used to govern immigrant adolescent girls' appearance, behaviour, and dating practices, and to ensure their compliance with established gendered and cultural norms and expectations as they progressed through school. Thus, accounting for the spectrum of societal pressures that shaped immigrant adolescent girls' experiences not only contributed to better understanding this phenomenon, but also provided the groundwork for the use of qualitative methodologies and feminist epistemologies in future research.

Implications for Practice

In light of the adverse outcomes of sexualization on the experiences of immigrant adolescent girls and young women, efforts must be made to better support this population, reduce adverse consequences, and counteract the influence of sexualization. Given the amount of time children spend in an academic setting, mental health professionals working in school settings,

such as school psychologists, are uniquely positioned to offer a myriad of direct and indirect services to promote both the intervention and prevention of the effects of sexualization on immigrant adolescent girls. Therefore, findings from this study may be helpful in addressing some of the ways in which support may be offered, in order to contribute to existing literature, and better support female immigrant students.

Prior to beginning any form of intervention, it is imperative for school psychologists to first examine their own level of self-awareness, in order to gain a better understanding of how racism, oppression, discrimination, and stereotyping may affect them both personally and professionally (American School Counselor Association, 2004). Further, female professionals are encouraged to consider the biases and stereotypes they hold, as well as their own experiences with internalized sexualization and oppression, and how it may influence their professional work (Choate & Curry, 2009). However, it is not enough to be actively aware of personal biases; school psychologists must also take steps to understand the pressures that girls face as a result of living in a sexualized culture, as well as to understand the additional challenges that immigrants may encounter. Moreover, results of this study highlighted the importance of providing an explicit message of whom immigrant adolescent girls can turn to for support and information when experiencing challenges related to immigration *and* sexualization.

Additionally, findings from this study identified certain media sources, such as television, movies, and magazines, as strong influences on the appearance and behaviour of immigrant girls. Therefore, there is an urgent need to educate newly arrived immigrant girls in how to become active, rather than passive, in their consumption of media (Levine & Piran, 2001). Research on the effectiveness of media literacy with adolescents is scarce, but it has been shown to be helpful in reducing eating disorder risk factors (e.g., Wilksch & Wade, 2009). Through media literacy

group work, school psychologists may help students explore false stereotypes in the media, implicit media messages, and cultural media trends (Choate & Curry, 2009; Curry & Choate, 2010; Moloney & Pelehach, 2014). Moreover, findings of this study indicated that participants began to show increased concern for their appearance in middle school or in early years of high school. Thus, school psychologists may want to particularly focus on building media literacy with middle school girls, as previous research has suggested that tweens show an increase in their use of media during this particular stage of development (e.g., Rideout et al., 2010; Rideout, 2015).

Further, results of this study revealed that participating in athletics and other extra-curricular activities helped young immigrant girls improve their self-confidence, decrease isolation, and build relationships with their peers. Therefore, school psychologists may help bridge relationships between newly arrived immigrant girls and other immigrant peers in their school by connecting them with peer mentors or providing opportunities for group activities with other immigrants (Goh et al., 2007; Limberg & Lambie, 2011; Williams & Butler, 2003). Connecting newly arrived immigrant girls to positive role models in the school environment may then lend for further opportunities for immigrant girls to address specific concerns with respect to sexualization, and the challenges they face when navigating conflicting messages regarding sexualization from home and school.

In addition to group activities or small-group counselling, participants suggested that immigrant girls may benefit from individual therapy to further explore the meaning they have made from their own experiences. Indeed, findings of this study revealed that certain issues arose for younger immigrant girls, such as transitioning into Canadian schools, adjusting to a new style of learning and schooling, forming new relationships, and social isolation and bullying.

As they progressed through middle and high school, immigrant females faced a host of negative effects on their mental health and well-being, both as adolescents and in young adulthood, as a result of their direct and indirect experiences with sexualization. These issues included, but were not limited to, body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, low mood, and high anxiety, and should be monitored and addressed by the school psychologist. It will be important for school psychologists to show a high level of cultural sensitivity, in order to guide their students' exploration of how cultural values and influences intersect with their own set of values of how they should look and act. Moreover, school psychologists should take a strength-based approach and focus on immigrant girls' resilience and achievements, despite struggling with the negative effects of sexualization.

An important finding in this study suggested that immigrant adolescent girls do not generally talk to their parents about sensitive topics, such as sex, sexuality, and sexualization, nor do they tend to watch sexualized media content with their parents. While extant research has demonstrated that active discussion with parents may decrease the influence of sexualized images in the media (e.g., Collins, Elliott, Berry, Kanouse, & Hunter, 2003), immigrant parents may have a different set of values with regards to discussing such sensitive topics. In addition to working with immigrant adolescent girls individually and through group work, school psychologists are encouraged to collaborate with immigrant parents in order to broaden parents' knowledge on the influences of sexualization. This can be done through a variety of activities, including workshops that help parents understand their role in helping their children think critically about cultural and media messages, extra-curricular involvement, and providing other resources (e.g., books, websites) (Choate & Curry, 2009; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010), so that parents can help their daughters mitigate the harmful effects of sexualization (Zubriggen et al.,

2010). School psychologists may also want to explore what values parents hope to instill in their daughters and discuss any concerns the parents may have regarding their daughters' evolving appearance or behaviour through phone interviews or parent meetings. Given that language may be a barrier in communication between the psychologist and parents, school psychologists should make every effort to use an interpreter or connect newly arrived parents to other immigrant parents through a supportive parent group.

As well, results revealed that teachers and other school personnel varied in their degree of enforcing rules about appearance and behaviour. Therefore, it would be helpful for the school psychologist to work with school staff to ensure that there is consistency in how school rules about attire are enforced. Within the broad school system, teachers and other personnel can work in tandem to support immigrant girls in order to reduce bullying during unstructured times (e.g., lunch period, recess, between classes) and report critical incidents when they occur (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010).

Another important finding of this study suggested that immigrant adolescent girls learn about sex and sexuality through two main sources: formally through sex education in school and informally through the media. In addition to improving media literacy as discussed above, school psychologists can help inform teachers, nurses, and other sex educators about the importance of including and discussing topics that counter sexualization, such as cultural, peer, and media influences on sexual behaviours and decisions (SIECUS, 2004). Further, findings in this study suggested that some immigrant adolescents struggled to attend or participate in their sex education classes, since it conflicted with their family values regarding sex. Therefore, school psychologists may work with sex educators to find ways to include such students in their classes, by providing a safe and supportive space to share their opinions or values; using a

variety of learning techniques, such as individual and group work, or verbal and written assignments, to educate them on a variety of topics pertaining to sexual development; and not penalizing them if they do not share their views or opinions during a class discussion.

Finally, it is helpful for school psychologists to advocate for creating school climates that are welcoming to immigrant girls and their families, by taking small steps to build cultural awareness in their schools. For example, it has become common to have schoolwide culture appreciation weeks or months that can help staff and students become more aware of the customs, traditions, clothing, language, and so on, of a designated immigrant culture. Further, if not already in place, school psychologists may be helpful in establishing policies to address certain consequences of direct and indirect sexualization, including peer victimization or sexual harassment.

Limitations

While this study has several strengths and contributed a range of distinctive findings to the literature on the sexualization of girls and women, it is not without its limitations. One shortcoming of this study is that participants provided retrospective accounts regarding the influences of sexualization on their experiences during adolescence. Although these women were only between the ages of 20 and 25 at the time of their interviews, and therefore not far removed from adolescence, it is possible that their accounts do not fully reflect the experiences of immigrant girls currently attending middle and secondary schools in Canada. Another limitation of this study is that all of the participants in this study identified as heterosexual; therefore, immigrant adolescent girls of other sexual orientations may be influenced differently by sociocultural and interpersonal influences of sexualization. Further, all of the women were completing higher education at the time of the interview; thus, the experiences of immigrant

adolescent girls who did not complete high school and/or attend post-secondary institutions may be different. In addition, a limitation in methodology is that the process of member checking was carried out one year after the interviews were completed. However, seven out of twelve participants verified a narrative account of their interview, which is consistent with general member checking results in studies using qualitative methodology. Finally, given that the study was completed in Canada, findings from this study may not be transferable to adolescent girls who have immigrated to other countries or who have immigrated from other heritage cultures that may be more liberal in their views and beliefs regarding sexuality.

Future Directions in Research

Although this study provides some foundation in understanding of immigrant adolescent girls' experience as a result of the sociocultural and interpersonal influences of sexualization, the complexity of this phenomenon warrants further research. Findings from this study demonstrated that the immigrant adolescent girls' multiple identities influenced their experiences; therefore, it would be important to continue exploring this phenomenon from the perceptions of immigrant girls representing diverse ages, sexual orientations, heritage cultures, and other salient identities. In addition, given the increased use of social networking sites in the past five years, it would be prudent to conduct research with immigrant adolescent girls to further understand how these sociocultural mediums influence their experiences with sexualization. Further, researchers should strive to explore the experiences of immigrant adolescent girls who are currently attending middle and high school in order to explore how they make meaning of various influences of sexualization while they occur. Another important area of research is to explore the diverse cultural values and practices of immigrant adolescents and their families with respect to sex and sexual development, which in turn, would help with

developing a more inclusive sex education curriculum. Finally, in order to ensure the success of

any prevention or intervention programs designed to address the impact of sexualization on

immigrant adolescent girls, all programs should be carefully evaluated through research.

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Appendix A

Advertisement

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ARE YOU A <u>WOMAN</u> BETWEEN <u>20 AND 25</u> YEARS OLD?

DID YOU <u>MOVE TO CANADA</u> BETWEEN THE AGES OF <u>10 AND 12</u>?

IF YOU ANSWERED <u>YES</u> TO THESE QUESTIONS, THEN WE ARE LOOKING FOR YOU!!

Young women between the ages of <u>20 and 25</u> who <u>immigrated to Canada between ages 10 to 12</u> are wanted for a doctoral dissertation study conducted by Sarah Khayutin under the supervision of Dr. Ada Sinacore.

The goal of this study is to learn more about how adolescent immigrant girls make meaning of their perceptions and experiences with sexualization.

Participants will be offered a $20 movie gift card to Cineplex.

If you are willing to participate in a 60-90 minute confidential interview, please contact:

Sarah Khayutin, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate
Dept. of Educational and Counselling Psychology, McGill University
E-mail: sarah.khayutin@mail.mcgill.ca

Research Supervisor: Dr. Ada Sinacore
Dept. of Educational and Counselling Psychology, McGill University
E-mail: ada.sinacore@mcgill.ca
Phone: 514-398-3446

Appendix B

Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You have been invited to participate in the research project entitled:

THE INFLUENCES OF SEXUALIZATION ON ADOLESCENT IMMIGRANT GIRLS

Conducted by: Sarah Khayutin, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate, Dept. of Educational and Counselling Psychology, McGill University, sarah.khayutin@mail.mcgill.ca

Research Supervisor: Ada Sinacore, Ph.D., Dept. of Educational and Counselling Psychology, McGill University, (514) 398-3446, ada.sinacore@mcgill.ca

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact McGill Ethics Manager, Lynda McNeil, at (514) 398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca

The current study is being conducted by Sarah Khayutin for the purpose of completing a doctoral dissertation in School/Applied Child Psychology. This research project is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ada Sinacore from the department of Educational and Counselling Psychology.

Goals of Research Study:
- To examine the effect of cultural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal influences of sexualization on adolescent immigrant girls
- To obtain greater understanding of the unique needs of young, immigrant girls who have experienced sexualization

Process of Study:
- Participation in this study is voluntary
- Participants can withdraw from the study at any time within and up to 6 months of their interview transcript being verified
- Participate in a 60-90 minute audio recorded interview, conducted in English, at the Social Justice and Diversity Research Lab (EDUC B111/112) or in a private location selected by the participant (e.g., their home, library)
- Alternatively, interviews may also take place via a telehealth communication service (e.g., Doxy.me), which provides a secure method of communication and ensures participants' confidentiality
- Discuss participants' perceptions of how young girls and women are sexualized, their own exposure to various forms of sexualization, and how messages of sexualization influenced their cultural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal experiences
- Participants can refuse to respond to any questions they are not comfortable answering

- Participants will be provided with a $20 gift card as remuneration for their time and participation
- A password-protected one-page summary will be sent to each participant regarding the salient points of their interview to give them the opportunity to clarify, respond, reflect, and provide further information regarding what was said during interview

Risks of Participation:
- There are minimal potential psychological risks of the study, since participants have the right to choose the information that they wish to share during the interview and to refuse to answer any questions
- In case of any unforeseen psychological distress, the researcher will provide a list of referral sources to the participant

Confidentiality:
- The student researcher and her supervisor will both have access to identifiable data
- The interview will be audio recorded and the data will later be coded by the researcher and transcribed by a professional transcriber
- The transcriber will not have access to the name of the participants; however, since they will be listening to the tape, they may have access to information about the participants. Thus, a confidentiality agreement between the researcher and the transcription service provider will be signed
- Following transcription, the primary researcher will verify the transcription and at that time, take out all identifying information (e.g., names, names of cities and schools, etc.) and store transcripts in locked filing cabinets in the researcher's lab
- The informed consent and the data will be kept in separate, secure environments (i.e., locked cabinets) in the researcher's lab
- Throughout the process of communicating results, participants' confidentiality will be protected
- The data will be aggregated in such a way that it will not be able to link the participants' identity with the data.
- When quotes are used, all identifying information will be removed
- Audio recordings will be erased after the interview has been transcribed and verified

How Data Will Be Used:
- Disseminated in the researcher's doctoral thesis
- Disseminated at professional conferences and published in scholarly journals
- Develop materials to assist adolescent immigrant girls who have experienced negative consequences as a result of sexualization

I have read the above and I understand all of the above conditions. I freely consent and voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I agree that my interview can be audio recorded. By agreeing to participate in this study, I retain my rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harms.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Contact Information Form

CONTACT SHEET

DATE: _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____
          _____
          _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER(S):

	Number	OK to leave message (Yes/No)	Best time to be reached
(Home)	_____	_____	_____
(Work)	_____	_____	_____
(Cell)	_____	_____	_____

Appendix D

Demographics Information Form

Please answer all of the following questions by circling the appropriate response(s). Please fill in additional information where necessary.

Background Information:

1) Age: _____

2) Preferred pronoun (e.g., he, she, they): _____

3) Relational status:
    a) Married
    b) Common Law
    c) Partnered
    d) Single and dating
    e) Single and not dating
    f) Divorced/Separated
    g) Widowed/Widower
    h) Other: _____

4) Sexual Orientation:
    a) Heterosexual
    b) Gay
    c) Lesbian
    d) Bisexual
    e) Questioning
    f) Other: _____

5) Do you identify as a visible minority? No: _____ Yes (please specify): _____

6) Ethnicity/ies: _____

7) Nationality/ies: _____

8) Languages spoken: At home: _____
                           At school: _____
                           At work: _____
                           With friends: _____

9) Country of birth: _____

10) What country did you live in before you moved to Canada: _____

11) How long did you live in that country? _____
       If less than 5 years, what country did you live in before that? _____

12) Year of arrival to Canada: _____

13) Indicate your reason(s) for moving/immigrating to Canada:

14) Primary Religious Affiliation:
    a) Christian
    b) Jewish
    c) Muslim
    d) Buddhist
    e) Hindu
    f) Baha'i
    g) Agnostic
    h) Atheist
    i) None
    j) Other (specify): _____

Educational Information:

15) Use the table to indicate the secondary schools you attended by writing the name(s) of the schools.   For each secondary school you attended, indicate the grades included in each school, the location of your school, the type of environment in which it was located, whether it was a private or a public school, whether it was a same-sex or co-ed school, whether there was a sex education curriculum offered, and whether the school had a religious affiliation.

Elementary /Secondary Schools Attended (Name of school(s)	Grade levels Included	Location of School (city/town & province/state)	Environment (urban/rural/ suburban)	Private/ Public	Co-ed/ Same-Sex School	Sex Education Curriculum(Yes/No)	Religious Affiliation of School (e.g., religion, ethnic)

16) Month and year that you completed secondary school: _____

17) Highest educational degree obtained:
    a) High School
    b) Cegep
    c) Bachelor's
    d) Master's
    e) Doctorate
    f) Other: _____

   Specialization _____

16) Name of city where you received your highest degree: _____

Occupational Information:

17) Current occupation: _____

18) Employment status:
    a) Full-time (35 or more hours per week)
    b) Part-time (less than 35 hours per week)
    c) Unemployed
    d) Other _____

Appendix E

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Below are the research questions that will be explored in the semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews utilize an open format allowing for the participant to explore broad topic areas. In this protocol, each research question is followed by the specific overall topic in the question to be explored. These concepts are followed by the initial interview prompt that will be given to the participant to facilitate their exploration of the topic. This initial interview prompt is followed by a list of more detailed prompts related to the topic and its key concepts. At the end of the protocol, a list of process questions is provided. These questions will be used to elicit the participant's overall experience of the dialogue and to help them debrief.

The list of key concepts will be used by the researcher solely as a checklist to ensure that the participant fully explores the topic. If the participant naturally covers these key concepts then the researcher will take the role of "active listener" and will provide no additional prompts following the initial one. If the participant does not address the key topic's concepts, then the researcher will use a more detailed prompt to ensure that these concepts are addressed at some point in the interview. Thus, interview prompts are provided to illustrate what might be utilized to facilitate an exploration of the key concepts if needed. These detailed prompts are not intended to be used as a strict guide for the discussion, but as previously stated a means to ensure that the key concepts are discussed.

Research Questions:
1. How do young immigrant women construct their lived experiences with sexualization since adolescence?
2. What meaning do young immigrant women derive from their experiences with sexualization across time?
3. How do young immigrant women's cultural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal contexts shape their experiences of sexualization?
4. What do young immigrant women perceive are the needs of immigrant adolescent girls who are confronted with sexualization?

Introductory Questions:
- Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions or concerns about this process?
- What initially made you want to participate in this study?

Topics to be addressed include the participants' arrival to Canada, the three spheres of sexualization identified in the literature review, and the current positive and negative outcomes of sexualization on the participant. The three spheres of sexualization in which sexualization occurs include cultural (e.g., mass media, clothing, cosmetics), interpersonal (e.g., parents, peers, teachers), and intrapersonal (e.g., self-sexualization, self-objectification).

1) Arrival to Canada – Initial Impressions
- Describe what it was like when you first arrived to Canada
- What was expected of your behaviour as a girl? What stood out for you?

2) Interpersonal Aspects of Sexualization
- What messages did you receive or what expectations were set for you regarding your behaviour as a girl at your home/parents?
- Were there limits placed on your with respect to what you could do?
- How did your initial impressions fit with your family's cultural expectations regarding a girl's behaviour?
- Were you comfortable/uncomfortable talking to your parents about sex, their expectations of your behaviour, rules/expectations, etc.?
- Did parents encourage you to stay engaged in activities/events to maintain ethnic identity?
- Did you feel there was a difference between your family's cultural values and what messages you would be getting in the mainstream?
- What messages did you receive or what expectations were set for you regarding your behaviour as a girl at your school? Were there rules/limits regarding your behaviour, the way you dressed?
- What messages did you receive or what expectations were set for you regarding your behaviour as a girl from your friends? Did you agree/disagree with them? Did you act the same/differently than they did?
- Did you have any older peers/friends that you considered to be a role model?

3) Cultural Influences of Sexualization
- What messages did you receive or what expectations were set for you regarding your behaviour as a girl from mass media (e.g., television, music, Internet, magazines)
- Were there limits placed on your use of mass media by your parents/school?
- How did you access mass media/products?
- How did these messages fit with the way you thought or felt about how you should behave? Did you abide by or resist these messages? Did you agree or disagree with them?

4) Intrapersonal Influences of Sexualization
- Did you do things to make yourself feel attractive?
- How did you feel if you believed that others were becoming sexually attracted to you?
- As you progressed through adolescence and neared the end of high school, how did messages of sexualization change? How did your attitude change regarding these messages?
- Did you experience any physical, emotional, psychological, social consequences as a result of interpersonal and cultural messages of sexualization during this time? Towards the end of high school?

5) Positive and Negative Outcomes of Sexualization (as an adult woman)
- Here you are today and you have shared your story with me and the influences with respect to your behaviour as a woman – what did you take from all of these influences and how you present yourself as a woman today?
- Do you feel that your self-concept fits with the mainstream messages of sexualization – in what ways are they similar or different?

- Do you feel your self-concept fits with what is expected within your family's cultural background?
- Do you experience pressure to act in a way that does not fit with your self-concept?
- Do you have any role models of how women are to behave?
- Do you experience any physical, emotional, psychological, social consequences as a result of interpersonal and cultural messages of sexualization?

Closing Questions:
- What was this process like for you?
- What was helpful about the discussion? What was not?
- What was meaningful about the discussion? What was not?
- Was anything important missing from the discussion?
- Is there anything else about your experiences with sexualization that you think would be important for me to know?

Appendix F

Ethics Application

McGill

Applicable Research Ethics Board
___REB-I _**X**_REB-II ___REB-III

Application for Ethics Approval for Research Involving Human Participants
(please refer to the Application Guidelines [www.mcgill.ca/research/researchers/compliance/human/] **before** completing this form)

Project Title: The Influence of Sexualization on Adolescent Immigrant Girls

Principal Investigator: Sarah Khayutin   **Dept:** Educational and Counselling Psychology

Phone #: 438-820-8186   **Email:** sarah.khayutin@mail.mcgill.ca
                              (a McGill email MUST be provided)

Status: Faculty ___   **Postdoctoral Fellow ___**   **Other (specify) _____**
          Ph.D. Student _X__   **Master's Student ___**   **Undergraduate ___**

Type of Research: Faculty Research ___   **Thesis _X_**
                    Honours Thesis ___   **Independent Study Project ___**
                    Course Assignment (specify course name and #)_____
                    Other (specify) _____

Faculty Supervisor (if PI is a student): Dr. Ada Sinacore   **Email:** ada.sinacore@mcgill.ca

Co- Investigators/Other Researchers (list name/status/affiliation):

List all funding sources for this project and project titles (if different from the above). Indicate the Principal Investigator of the award if not yourself.

Awarded:

Pending: Fonds de Recherche du Québec-Société et Culture (FRQSC) (April 2016)

Principal Investigator Statement: I will ensure that this project is conducted in accordance with the policies and procedures governing the ethical conduct of research involving human participants at McGill University. I allow release of my nominative information as required by these policies and procedures.

Principal Investigator Signature: **Date:** March 6, 2016

Faculty Supervisor Statement: I have read and approved this project and affirm that it has received the appropriate academic approval. I will ensure that the student investigator is aware of the applicable policies and procedures governing the ethical conduct of research involving human participants at McGill University and I agree to provide all necessary supervision to the student. I allow release of my nominative information as required by these policies and procedures.

Faculty Supervisor Signature: **Date**: March 6, 2016

Respond directly on this form to each section (1-8). Do not re-order or omit any section or any of the questions under each section heading. Answer every part of each section. Forms with incomplete sections will be returned.

1. Purpose of the Research
a) Describe the proposed project and its objectives, including the research questions to be investigated (one-two page maximum).

North American culture is inundated with sexual imagery across various mass media outlets, suggesting that sex and sexually appealing bodies play key roles within capitalist consumer culture. However, there has been increased concern and evidence over the last three decades with respect to sexuality being imposed on girls of a younger age. Thus, the sexualization of young females and its consequences has increasingly become a concern for the general public. Presently, parents, psychologists, child advocacy groups, and journalists have acknowledged that the sexualization of girls specifically, and girlhood in general, is far more problematic than initially realized (Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013).

Sexualization takes various forms, and is often defined by one or more of the following criteria: (a) a person's value is determined only or primarily by sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics; (b) sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person; (c) a person is held to a standard that equates a narrow definition of attractiveness with "being sexy"; and (d) a person is sexually objectified; made into a tool for others' sexual use and pleasure, rather than treated as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making (APA, 2010). The presence of one or more of these conditions suggests sexualization (Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013).

Notable scholars conducting research on sexualization have suggested that sexualization transpires in three interrelated spheres: (a) sociocultural; (b) interpersonal; and (c) intrapersonal (APA, 2010). With respect to sociocultural influences, researchers have repeatedly provided evidence regarding the sexualization of girls and women in mass media, such as advertising (Nelson & Paek, 2008), television (Ward & Friedman, 2006), and music (Wallis, 2011), as well as the role of marketable products, including dolls (Boyd & Murnen, 2011), clothing (Goodin et al., 2011), and cosmetics (APA, 2010). Additionally, the interpersonal relationships of young girls, such as those with parents, teachers, and peers can also contribute to the sexualization of girls and women (APA, 2010; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Brown, 2003). Since the people in girls' lives are themselves influenced by the cultural messages that sexualize girls and girlhood, they may subtly or overtly contribute to conveying societal messages of sexualization of females (Roberts & Zurbriggen, 2013). The influence of a more destructive form of sexualization, such as sexual harassment, abuse, or assault, must also be acknowledged as ways in which individuals further contribute to the sexualization of girls and women (APA, 2010). Furthermore, Roberts and Zurbriggen (2013) argued that girls cannot be viewed as passive recipients of cultural and interpersonal messages regarding sexualization. Rather, they are their own agents of self-sexualization, by thinking of themselves in terms of their sexy appearance, equating sexiness with a narrow standard of attractiveness, or engaging in age-inappropriate sexuality.

The negative effects of sexualization on girls and women have been well documented in extant literature. More specifically, the impact of sexualization has been shown to affect a variety of domains, including cognitive and physical functioning (Fredrickson et al., 1998; Hebl et al., 2004) and physical health and activity (Lopez Khoury et al., 2009). In addition, scholars have linked conditions of sexualization, such as objectification, to a host of negative emotions in females regarding their physical appearance, including shame (Slater & Tiggemann, 2002), appearance anxiety (Munro & Huon, 2005), and disgust (Fredrickson et al., 1998), as well as additional consequences such as body dissatisfaction (Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004; Turner et al., 1997), low self-esteem (Rivadeneyra et al., 2007; Hawkins et al., 2004), disordered eating (Grabe et al., 2008; Ward & Hyde, 2008), and depression or depressive episodes (Mills et al., 2002; Tiggemann & Slater, 2015). Moreover, girls and young women have increased their frequency of cosmetic enhancement, as well as cosmetic purchases in order to attain

or maintain their notions of physical beauty, as a result of experiencing these negative emotions or mental difficulties (Ashikali et al., 2016). The sexualization of girls and women also leads to harmful effects on adolescents and women's sexual health and sexual expectations (Impett et al., 2006; Ward & Averitt, 2005; Weekes, 2002), as well as their attitudes and opinions about sexuality and sexual stereotypes (Ward, 2002; Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006). Finally, sexual victimization (e.g., sexual harassment, childhood sexual abuse) is an extreme form of sexualization, and always involves both the inappropriate imposition of sexuality and sexual objectification (APA, 2010).

　　　Although the sexualization of girls and women in North America has been studied extensively, considerably less is known about how adolescent immigrant girls who are new to North American make sense of the sexualized cultural and media representations of girls and women. That is, while they may be armed with certain cultural restrictions that keep them from engaging in sexual activity in their country of origin (e.g., virginity as a prerequisite for marriage) (Lalou & Piché, 2004), immigrant youth face the additional challenge of negotiating sexuality in a new context where they are seeking peer acceptance and acculturating to a new school and country (Rafaelli, Kang, & Guarini, 2012). Given the influx of immigrants, with 20 percent of Canadians being foreign born (Chui & Flanders, 2011), combined with the significance of adolescence as a period of sexual development (Tolman & McLelland, 2011), and the risks resulting from negotiating a highly sexualized culture, understanding how new immigrant adolescent girls make sense of their sexuality in a new context is imperative. Thus, the proposed research study seeks to qualitatively analyze the retrospective accounts of young immigrant women and their experiences of sexualization during adolescence.

　　　The goal of this research study is to examine the influence of sexualization on adolescent immigrant girls. This research will reveal how immigrant girls experience and are influenced by sexualization as they acculturate to Canadian society. The current study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How do young immigrant women construct their lived experiences with sexualization since adolescence? (2) What meaning do young immigrant women derive from their experiences with sexualization across time? (3) How do young immigrant women's cultural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal contexts shape their experiences of sexualization? (4) What do young immigrant women perceive are the needs of immigrant adolescent girls who are confronted with sexualization?

b) What is the expected value or benefits of the research?

This research will offer insight into adolescent immigrant girls' interpretations of cultural and interpersonal sexualization in Canadian society and how these factors shape their experiences. Study finding will also aid school personal in developing sex education programs within schools and community organizations working with adolescent immigrant girls and their families.

c) How do you anticipate disseminating the results (e.g. thesis, presentations, internet, film, publications)?

The results of the proposed research study will be shared through the primary researcher's doctoral dissertation. Furthermore, the results of this study will be disseminated at peer-reviewed national and international conferences (e.g., Canadian Psychological Association Annual Convention, Association for Women in Psychology) through poster presentation and symposiums. As well, the researcher plans to publish research findings in refereed journals (e.g., The Journal of Youth and Adolescence, Journal of Adolescent Research, Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies). Results may also be presented to guidance counsellors and teaching staff in high schools who are working with adolescent immigrant females. These presentations may assist in the development of school-based interventions and programming (e.g., workshops) that will better support and meet the needs to adolescent immigrant girls.

2. Recruitment of Participants/Location of Research
a) Describe the participant population and the approximate number of participants needed.

The aim of the recruitment process is to obtain 10 to 12 participants, as 8 to 15 participants are considered a satisfactory number for qualitative research (Hill et al., 2005). For the purpose of this study, young women between the ages of 20 and 25, whose origins are outside North America and who immigrated to Canada between the ages of 10 to 12, will be recruited. Immigration during this time period would reflect the time when most girls begin puberty, and become more aware of and begin to develop their views and attitudes regarding sexuality. This age range also reflects when girls begin to be inundated with sexualized merchandise and advertisements marketed specifically towards them (Levin & Kilbourne, 2009).

b) Describe how and from where they will be recruited. Attach a copy of any advertisement, letter, flier, brochure or oral script to be used to solicit potential participants (including information to be sent to third parties).

Participants will be recruited through on-line forums (e.g., Kijiji), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), flyers posted on the McGill University campus (e.g., Education Building), and word-of-mouth.

c) Describe the setting in which the research will take place.

All interviews will either be held face-to-face in the Social Justice and Diversity Research Lab (Education Building, B111/112) at McGill University or in a private location selected by the participant (e.g., their home, library). Alternatively, interviews may also take place via a telehealth communication service (e.g., Doxy.me), which provides a secure method of communication and ensures participants' confidentiality.

d) Describe any compensation subjects may receive for participating.

In order to compensate individuals for their participation in the study, each participant will be offered a twenty-dollar gift certificate.

3. Other Approvals
When doing research with various distinct groups of participants (e.g. school children, cultural groups, institutionalized people, other countries), organizational/community/governmental permission is sometimes needed. If applicable, how will this be obtained? Include copies of any documentation to be sent.

Not applicable.

4. Methodology/Procedures
Provide a sequential description of the methods and procedures to be followed to obtain data. Describe all methods that will be used (e.g. fieldwork, surveys, interviews, focus groups, standardized testing, video/audio taping). Attach copies of questionnaires or draft interview guides, as appropriate.

A hermeneutic phenomenological method will be employed for this purpose of this study. Hermeneutic phenomenology is used to capture participants' beliefs and viewpoints, gather contextual data on participants' experiences, and offer rich descriptions of the phenomena under investigation (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). In order to do this, a semi-structured interview protocol will be designed specifically for this study that focuses on the spheres of sexualization identified in the literature review. The interview protocol will be developed, whereby two members of the researcher's lab with knowledge regarding the subject matter will be invited to review the interview protocol, to assess how the

lab members understand and perceive the questions, to provide feedback on clarity and flow of the protocol, and to address what questions need to be added or omitted. The goal is to verify the content of the interview protocol (i.e., is the protocol getting at the information that the researchers wants to learn more about). This process will allow the researcher to get an idea of what the dialogue of the interview will look like since the interview will be slightly different with each participant.

Once the interview protocol has been verified, participants will be recruited through advertisements in online forums (e.g., Craig's List) and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), through flyers, and through word-of-mouth. Young immigrant women who meet participant criteria and express interest in taking part of the research study will be encouraged to contact the researcher via email. A designated McGill email will be set up for this study. Following a brief phone call to explain what is involved in the study and to verify that recruitment criteria are met (e.g., age of immigration, current age, female), if the participant remains interested in participating in the study, an in-person interview will be scheduled at their convenience. 90 minutes will be allotted for each interview. Interviews will be conducted face-to-face in the office of the Social Justice and Diversity Research Lab (Education Building, B111/B112) or in a private location selected by the participant (e.g., their home, library). Alternatively, interviews may also take place via a telehealth communication service (e.g., Doxy.me), which provides a secure method of communication and ensures participants' confidentiality. Interviews will be transcribed and de-identified and sent to each participant for member checking. A password-protected one-page summary will be sent to each participant regarding the salient points of their interview to give them the opportunity to clarify, respond, reflect, and provide further information regarding what was said during the interview. The password will be chosen by the participant during the interview.

Prior to beginning the interview, the researcher will outline the purpose and goals of the study, as well as any potential risks involved in participating in the study. Should the participant agree to participation, she will read and sign the consent form. Following the signing of the informed consent form, participants will be asked to complete the contact information form and the demographics questionnaire. Subsequently, the researcher will conduct the interview using the interview protocol that was designed for this study. Participants will be interviewed by the researcher. Interviews will be carried out in English. The sessions will be audio recorded and the data will be coded to protect the anonymity of the participants. Audio-recorded interviews will be transcribed by a professional transcriber who will not have access to the names of the participants; however, since they will be listening to the tape, they may have access to information about the participants. A confidentiality agreement between the researcher and the transcription service provider will be signed. Following transcription, the primary researcher will verify the transcription and at that time, take out all identifying information (e.g., names, names of cities and schools, etc.) and store transcripts in locked filing cabinets in the researcher's lab. Audio recordings will be erased after the interview has been transcribed and verified.

5. Potential Harms and Risk

a) Describe any known or foreseeable harms, if any, that the participants or others might be subject to during or as a result of the research. Harms may be psychological, physical, emotional, social, legal, economic, or political.

There are minimal potential psychological risks of the study, since participants have the right to choose the information that they wish to share during the interview and to refuse to answer any questions.

b) In light of the above assessment of potential harms, indicate whether you view the risks as acceptable given the value or benefits of the research.

I view the risk as acceptable, as they are minimal in nature. That is, their involvement in the study would cause no greater risk than what participants encounter with respect to the subject of sexualization in their day-to-day lives. Their experiences with sexualization will not expose them to any unnecessary risks or increase their vulnerability. As noted above, providing the participants with an opportunity to discuss

their experiences with the phenomenon under investigation may be beneficial, as it may be a validating experience for them.

c) Outline the steps that may be taken to reduce or eliminate these risks.

In case of any unforeseen psychological disturbances, the researcher will provide a list of referral sources to the participant. In addition, the data will be aggregated in such a way that it will not be able to link the participants' identity with the data.

d) If deception is used, justify the use of the deception and indicate how participants will be debriefed or justify why they will not be debriefed.

No deception will be used in this study.

6. Privacy and Confidentiality
a) Describe the degree to which the anonymity of participants and the confidentiality of data will be assured and the specific methods to be used for this, both during the research and in the release of findings.

All data collected from this research project, including the audio recorded interviews, the transcribed hard copies of the interviews, and the computer files of the transcriptions will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's lab (Education Building, B111/112). Other materials such as the consent form, demographics form, and contact information form will be kept in a separate locked cabinet in the researcher's lab.

b) Describe the use of data coding systems and how and where data will be stored. Describe any potential use of the data by others.

To protect the participants' anonymity, the demographics information forms and the transcribed interviews will contain no identifying information; instead they will be coded with numbers. The hired professional transcriber will not have access to the names of the participants of the participants. All of the data will be stored in locked filing cabinets. The contact sheet and coding key will be kept in a separate, locked filing cabinet.

c) Who will have access to identifiable data?

The researcher and her supervisor will have access to identifiable data, which will be stored in locked filing cabinets in the researcher's lab. The transcriber will not have access to the name of the participants; however, since they will be listening to the tape, they may have access to information about the participants. A confidentiality agreement between the researcher and the transcription service provider will be signed. Following transcription, the primary researcher will verify the transcription and at that time, take out all identifying information (e.g., names, names of cities and schools, etc.) and store transcripts in locked filing cabinets in the researcher's lab.

d) What will happen to the identifiable data after the study is finished?

Once the study is complete, the audio-recorded interviews will be destroyed. The contact sheet and coding key will continue to be kept in a separate, locked filing cabinet. Additionally, participants' anonymity will be further protected if quotes are used, in that all identifying information will be removed.

e) Indicate if there are any conditions under which privacy or confidentiality cannot be guaranteed (e.g. focus groups), or, if confidentiality is not an issue in this research, explain why.

Not applicable.

7. Informed Consent Process

a) Describe the oral and/or written procedures that will be followed to obtain informed consent from the participants. Attach all consent documents, including information sheets and scripts for oral consents.

Participants will be recruited through advertisements in online forums (e.g., Craig's List) and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), through flyers, and through word-of-mouth. Young immigrant women who meet participant criteria and express interest in taking part of the research study will be encouraged to contact the researcher via email. A designated McGill email will be set up for this study. Following a brief phone call to explain what is involved in the study and to verify that recruitment criteria are met (e.g., age of immigration, current age, female), if the participant remains interested in participating in the study, an in-person interview will be scheduled at their convenience. Interviews will be conducted face-to-face in the office of the Social Justice and Diversity Research Lab (Education Building, B111/B112) or in a private location selected by the participant (e.g., their home, library). Alternatively, interviews may also take place via a telehealth communication service (e.g., Doxy.me), which provides a secure method of communication and ensures participants' confidentiality. 90 minutes will be allotted for each interview. Each participant will meet with the researcher who will verbally review the consent form; that is, the researcher will go over the purpose of the study, how the participant's confidentiality and privacy will be maintained, and the potential risks involved for the participant. Should the participant agree to be in the study, they will sign the consent form. Participants will be told that they are able to withdraw from the study at any time within and up to six months of their transcript being verified (which will be communicated to the participants both verbally and in the informed consent).

b) If written consent will not be obtained, justification must be provided.

Not applicable.

8. Other Concerns

a) Indicate if participants are a captive population (e.g. prisoners, residents in a center) or are in any kind of conflict of interest relationship with the researcher such as being students, clients, patients or family members. If so, explain how you will ensure that participants do not feel pressure to participate or perceive that they may be penalized for choosing not to participate.

Not applicable.

b) Comment on any other potential ethical concerns that may arise during the course of the research.

Not applicable.

Appendix G

Contract for Transcriber

This is an agreement between _____and the Principle Researcher, Sarah
Khayutin, with regards to transcribing audiotapes for her research.
The Parameters of the Agreement are as follows:
1. _____ (to be referred as the transcriber) has agreed to transcribe audiotapes.

2. Roles and Responsibilities:
   a) Transcriber understands that data is extremely sensitive and will treat it with the
      utmost of care and confidentiality consistent with Ethical Requirements of the
      Tri-Council Policy and the Ethical codes of the American Psychological
      Association.
   b) The sole owner of the data is Sarah Khayutin (Principle Researcher) and
      transcriber understands that she/he is not to keep any data on her/his computer or
      is she/he to use it for purposes other than transcription. She/he will not make any
      copies of the data or of use it for her/his own purpose.
   c) No other individual should hear the tapes, read the transcript or have any
      interaction with the data without the written permission of Sarah Khayutin. No
      discussion about the data should occur with anyone other than those mentioned
      above.

I have read the agreement and understand the conditions therein and agree of my own free will
without coercion to all of the above conditions.

_____   _____
Transcriber   Principle Researcher

Date: _____