Development, Validation, and Exploratory Utilization of the Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging Measure

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The role of sexual socialization in determining individuals' future sexual attitudes and behaviors has been largely overlooked as a site for research and potential interventions to address sexuality-related social challenges in the United States, such as coercive, violent, or otherwise harmful sexual behavior. The few existing psychometric instruments that measure characteristics of sexual socialization focus primarily on communication content, without characterizing the nature of messaging in order to evaluate how the prominence of certain attitudinal perspectives conveyed through sexual socialization messaging (SSM) relates to outcomes of interest. Numerous existing measures of sexual attitudes focus on respondents' own perspectives rather than those which are embedded in and conveyed through SSM. An instrument that combines the functions of existing sexual socialization and sexual attitudes measures, in order to examine the prominence of attitudinal dispositions conveyed through SSM, has not previously been developed.

The purpose of this study was to develop, validate, and test the utility of the Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging Measure (SANSSMM), a new instrument to assess the nature of SSM U.S. young adults received from their parents and peers during adolescence. The study involved three phases. In Phase One, SANSSMM items were developed and selected, informed by theoretical and empirical literature, content expert feedback, and cognitive interviews. Phase Two involved testing the internal consistency reliability, factorial validity, and convergent/discriminant validity of the preliminary measure, using data collected in

an online survey of 18- to 33-year-old U.S. residents (*N* = 284). In Phase Three, the SANSSMM was utilized in exploratory analyses to test possible associations between Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating SSM prominence in participants' adolescence and their current levels of sex-positive and sex-negative attitudes, as well as past use of coercive sexual strategies.

The final SANSSMM consists of 17 items and exhibits good reliability and validity in the current study. Its use in exploratory analyses suggests it is a promising tool that can shed light on how the nature of SSM individuals receive during adolescence relates to the manifestation of global sexual attitudes and coercive sexual behaviors. Identifying these relationships can inform new understandings of and approaches to ameliorating sexuality-related social challenges.

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Preface

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, Kathleen (Kathy) and Barry Ballard. Without them I would not be here—in more ways than the mere obvious. Their unconditional love and support throughout the course of my entire life is perhaps the most important contributor to my accomplishments to date, including the milestone this project represents. They are my best friends, and I treasure them with all my heart. I hope my work up to now and into the future does justice to the incredibly loving, generous, selfless, and strong people they are. I love you, Mum and Dad.

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1.0 Introduction

Contemporary discourses in United States society concerning sexuality-related issues commonly involve discussions of the promises or dangers of *sex-positivity*, *sex-negativity*, or both. Yet these concepts remain inconsistently defined, conceptualized, and measured. To evaluate the benefits and risks of allowing either of these attitudinal perspectives to guide solutions to sexuality-related social problems we must move toward a common understanding of what constitutes *positive* and *negative* sexual perspectives. It follows that we need a means by which to examine the influences of sex-positivity and sex-negativity on human thought and behavior in order to determine its merits, deficits, and potentialities in identifying and addressing social challenges surrounding the sexual dimension of everyday life in the United States.

Sociologists and sexuality researchers Simon and Gagnon (1984) refer to the social context within which human beings develop understandings of sexuality's role in their lives as *cultural scenarios*. The means by which individuals learn the sexual norms for their cultural scenarios is known as *sexual socialization*—processes of transmitting, directly or indirectly, messages from social influences (socialization *agents*) regarding acceptable sexual conduct (Martin et al., 2007; Vandenbosch, 2018; Warner et al., 2020). The current study aims to advance scholarship and theory in social work, sexuality studies, and the social sciences by undertaking the development and validation of a measure to assess the prominence and influence of two types of sexual socialization messaging U.S. young adults recall receiving during their adolescence: sexuality-*affirming* and sexuality-*negating* sexual socialization messaging (SSM). I have elected to use the terms sexuality-*affirming* and sexuality-*negating* as alternatives to *sex-positive* and *sex-negative*

(respectively) for multiple reasons, which are discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.1.3. Chief among the reasons is the above-noted lack of consistent understanding and usage of the terms.

In the process of developing and validating the *Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging Measure* (SANSSMM), I sought to formulate a preliminary conceptualization of contrasting attitudinal perspectives regarding sex and sexuality, based on existing literature. The first perspective *affirms* sexuality broadly as a normative, legitimate, and even life-enhancing aspect of human experience. The second perspective *negates* the legitimacy of sexuality as a normative, expression-worthy aspect of human experience, except within specific restrictions and socially-sanctioned purposes. These explanations of sexuality-*affirming* and sexuality-*negating* perspectives will ring familiar to many who are already acquainted with the ideas of sex-positivity and sex-negativity, as they mirror descriptions often applied to those perspectives; however, as the current study illustrates, these descriptions are simplifications of multi-dimensional concepts that warrant more comprehensive conceptualization and operationalization.

The reason for developing and validating the SANSSMM is to provide a tool to assess individuals' recollections of sexuality-*affirming* and *-negating* messages they received during adolescence from social influences within their cultural scenario. The benefits of doing so are twofold: first, researchers (and potentially practitioners) can gain insight into the content and character of sexual socialization that adolescents who are coming of age in the U.S. experience, including the relative prominence of sexuality-*affirming* and sexuality-*negating* SSM in that process; second, people with an interest in addressing social challenges relating to sexuality can begin to substantiate (or refute) claims as to the impacts of sexuality-*affirming* or sexuality-*negating* values on individuals, communities, and society.

To begin exploring the utility of the SANSSMM in support of this last pursuit, I chose to analyze relationships between SANSSMM scores and measures of sexual attitudes and behaviors. In particular, I chose to test associations between sexual socialization messaging and (1) participants' own current sex-positive and sex-negative attitudes, and (2) participants' past use of coercive strategies to engage another person in sexual activity. Identifying such associations can preliminarily support (or refute) assumptions about the impact of socialization messaging, and sources of that messaging, on the sexual attitudes individuals hold, as well as possible links between predominant attitudinal perspectives conveyed through SSM and individuals' potential use of coercive strategies to obtain sex. Findings related to these analyses could inform the identification of sites where interventions should be targeted to revise or reorient messaging that contributes to sexuality-related social challenges, such as unabating rates of sexual harm perpetration.

1.1 Background

Since the time European colonizers breached North America's shores, forced themselves on occupied territory, and ultimately conceived and birthed a new nation, settlements and the society that developed in the land now known as the United States have wrestled with the nature and utility of sexuality in the lives of its inhabitants (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012; Zinn, 2013). Throughout this history, Eurocentric, Judeo-Christian notions of sexual morality and deviance have been used to reinforce inequality, injustice, intolerance, discrimination, violence, and denial of citizenship (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012; Murray & Tani, 2016; Rubin, 1984/1993; A. M. Smith, 2001). The U.S. has been described as a *sex-negative* society (Churchill, 1967/1971; R. W.

Smith, 1975)—that is, "intolerant of diversity in sexual tastes and aversions," or "erotically intolerant" (R. W. Smith, 1975, p. 85). Citing the philosophy of Austrian psychoanalyst, social critic, and sexuality theorist Wilhelm Reich (see Reich, 1931/1971, 1936/1974), to whom the first use of "sex-negativity" has been attributed, Johansson (1990) describes sex-negative cultures as "human groups [that] despise sexuality and are ceaselessly inventive in devising austerities and prohibitions as a means of social control" (p. 1182). (Definitions of *sex-negativity* and its counterpart, *sex-positivity*, are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2.) Over the past half-century, social movements, advances in biomedical, psychological, and social sciences, and increased public awareness of diverse sexualities beyond hetero-, cis-, phallo-centric traditions have contributed to gradual societal shifts toward greater tolerance of diversity in sexual activity, expression, identity, and depiction in media (Daugherty & Copen, 2016; Fitzgerald & Grossman, 2021b; Laumann et al., 1994). Whether these changes constitute a transformation to a sex-positive culture is subject to debate (Fahs, 2014; Horowitz, 2013; Millbank, 2012). What is evident is that sexuality-related social issues persist in the United States, as do starkly opposing viewpoints about their origins, impacts, and solutions. In the midst of this climate, questions loom regarding the role of sexual socialization in perpetuating society's conflicted relationship with sexuality, as well as the socializing effect of sexuality-*affirming* versus sexuality-*negating* messaging on individuals' beliefs and behaviors.

1.1.1 Illustrative Social Challenge: Harmful Sexual Behavior

While the central focus of this dissertation study was to address a research problem—the lack of scholarship on two contrasting types of sexual socialization and a measurement tool with which to pursue such inquiries—the ultimate purpose for doing so is to improve lives by addressing

social problems, in accordance with the social work profession's primary mission (National Association of Social Workers, 2021). In order to illustrate the relevance, significance, and potential contributions of this study's primary goal, I chose to focus on harmful sexual behavior as a social challenge of interest. I use the term *harmful sexual behavior* to refer to various acts with a sexual component that cause harm to others, including sexual assault, abuse, harassment, rape, and other forms of sexual violence and misconduct. Coercive sexual strategies, which are the focus of exploratory analyses in this study, can vary in severity, from subtle verbal cues to physical force, and may themselves cause sexual harm, or they may be indicators of risk for perpetrating sexual harm in the future (Z. D. Peterson et al., 2010; Strang et al., 2013; Struckman-Johnson et al., 2003; Testa et al., 2015).

My interest in addressing harmful sexual behavior through social work research and practice originates in my professional social work experience in a community-based mental health clinic. In this setting, I provided services both to voluntary psychotherapy clients and to clients accused or convicted of sexual offenses and mandated for group treatment. This work made me acutely aware of two phenomena. First, sex and sexuality commonly arose as salient topics in clients' experiences, even if they were not central to an individual's reason for seeking services; yet discussing such topics often seemed foreign to clients. Second, individuals presenting for treatment of sexual offending behaviors, (re-)offense risk, or other problematic sexual behaviors frequently described a lack of sexual communication and education (formal or informal) from social influences while growing up, or receiving messaging of questionable quality and value. For me, this sparked an interest in learning how the messages—including those conveyed through a *lack of* direct communication—factored into clients' past sexual experiences and current sexual attitudes and behaviors. Given my work with men accused or convicted of sexual harm, these

socializing messages struck me as particularly important considerations in understanding the manifestation of harmful sexual behavior risk, treating those who have engaged in it, and preventing it from occurring in the first place.

The negative impacts of sexual abuse, assault, harassment, and rape have been widely reported. Victims of harmful sexual acts suffer negative emotional, mental, physiological, and even long-term economic consequences (Arditte Hall et al., 2019; Institut national de santé publique du Québec, n.d.; Jina & Thomas, 2013; C. Peterson et al., 2017). These negative impacts extend to victims' and perpetrators' families (Levenson & Tewksbury, 2009; Tewksbury & Levenson, 2009; World Health Organization, 2010) and even more broadly to society (Institut national de santé publique du Québec, n.d.; Letourneau et al., 2018; World Health Organization, 2010). Despite the costs, the United States has managed to make little progress in curbing rates of various forms of sexual harm.

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (2020) shows that national rape and violent sexual assault rates fluctuated over the years between 2000 and 2019 but did not show an overall decreasing trend—in fact, rates in 2015, 2017, and 2019 were higher than all previous years except 2001 and 2006. 2018 saw a substantial increase in rates, likely due to higher incidence of reporting following the #MeToo movement's (Just Be Inc., n.d.) prominence in the media and U.S. culture starting in 2017 (Shugerman, 2017). The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2022) noted a similar increase in reports of workplace sexual harassment in fiscal years 2018 and 2019, which the agency attributes to #MeToo's cultural influence. Even putting aside this notable spike, accusations of sexual harassment reported to the EEOC between fiscal years 2014 and 2020 did not reflect an overall improving trend.

Data reported by the Administration for Children and Families (2022), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, shows that rates of child sexual abuse since 2012 have been even higher than violent sexual crimes against adults. The average number of child sex abuse cases between 2012 and 2019 was 668,737, compared to an average of 406,187 rape/sexual assault cases (BJS, 2020) over the same time period. More recently, studies have indicated that rates of multiple forms of domestic and intimate partner violence, including sexual harm, increased during lockdowns imposed to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, while reports of such incidents decreased, likely due to isolation of victims in homes with the perpetrators of those abuses (Kourti et al., 2023).

Rates of sexual assault and harassment on college and university campuses continue to reflect the "one in five" statistic—referring to rates of sexual violence against college women in the U.S.—that has been verified by research over the past decade (Cantor et al., 2017, 2020; Muehlenhard et al., 2017), despite federal and nation-wide institutional efforts to address the problem over numerous years (Dills et al., 2016).

The persistence of sexual harm rates in the U.S. suggests that new approaches to prevention are needed. Strategies for reducing sexual assault have expanded in recent decades to share the burden of prevention with bystanders, rather than leaving it solely to potential victims, particularly on college and university campuses (Katz & Moore, 2013; Kettrey & Marx, 2019). Programs focused on involving men and boys in preventing sexual assault against women have also emerged (e.g., Gidycz, Orchowski, & Berkowitz, 2011), and some of these involve efforts to intervene in the ways boys are socialized by their peers and male role models (e.g., E. Miller et al., 2012). The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC; 2004; Dills et al., 2016) have proposed comprehensive social-ecological models, using a public health approach to preventing sexual

violence, yet primary prevention strategies remain focused largely on individuals and their immediate social environment (Gidycz, Orchowski, & Edwards, 2011). Even parents and families have been largely overlooked as potential agents of prevention (Rossetto & Tollison, 2017). There remain opportunities to consider the roles social institutions, from families to the federal government to international faith communities, play in shaping individuals' understandings of sexuality and the sexual worldview through which they make day-to-day decisions. To move in that direction, greater understanding of the messages and influences that impact individuals as they move through stages of socialization is a necessary early step. The social work profession is uniquely situated to advance new, more promising solutions.

1.1.2 Opportunities for Social Work

Addressing sexuality-related social issues cutting across micro, mezzo, and macro levels requires a holistic approach (CDC, 2004; Dills et al., 2016; Laws, 2008; Williams et al., 2013). However, social and health sciences research and human services practice have traditionally failed to holistically address such issues in two key ways. First, researchers and practitioners have focused efforts on reducing negative outcomes of sexual behavior to the exclusion of increasing positive aspects of sexuality. In other words, sexuality-related challenges have been treated from a deficit or pathology perspective without recognizing potential benefits of maximizing positive outcomes by applying a strengths-based approach (Dodd & Tolman, 2017; Fletcher et al., 2015; Tolman & McClelland, 2011; Turner, 2016; Williams et al., 2013, 2016). Second, solutions to sexuality-related problems have tended to rely on studying, treating, or otherwise changing individual behaviors without consideration of structural, social-ecological factors that play a role in constructing, shaping, and regulating sexuality (Levin et al., 2012; Williams et al., 2013). Social

work's strengths-based perspective and holistic social-ecological lens can help remedy both of these deficits.

1.1.2.1 Strengths-Based Perspective

The social work profession has been criticized by scholars and practitioners within the field for its history of failing to address the sexual dimension of clients' lives (Dodd, 2020; Dunk, 2007; McCave et al., 2014; O'Neill, 2016; Roberts, 1992). Some have argued that the profession has, at times, even reinforced patriarchal, white, middle-class values regarding sexual morality and engaged in detrimental treatment of individuals and conditions perceived to be out of step with those ideals (Abrams, 2000; Abrams & Curran, 2000; McCave et al., 2014; O'Neill, 2016; Williams, 2015; Williams et al., 2013). In fact, key among the concerns of early social work pioneers was the sexual purity and propriety of young women and girls (Abrams, 2000; Abrams & Curran, 2000; Luker, 1998; Wahab, 2002). This priority was a reflection of Progressive Era social reformers' common belief that attending to moral deficits among the poor and foreign-born residents of large cities was a crucial component of improving living conditions for them (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012; O'Neill, 2016; Trattner, 1999).

Since its earliest days, however, social work has pursued a strengths-based approach to meeting clients' and society's needs (Trattner, 1999). Many of the scholars who have pointed out the profession's neglect of sexuality have also advocated for an application of the strengths perspective (Saleebey, 1992) to address sexuality-related problems in practice (Dodd, 2020; Dodd & Tolman, 2017; McCave et al., 2014; Williams et al., 2016). Within the past decade, social workers have proposed *sex-positive* frameworks to be applied in social work practice (Dodd, 2020; Dodd & Tolman, 2017; Williams et al., 2013, 2016). Key among the features of sex-positivity is a strengths perspective informing how clients, the sexual aspects of their lives, and associated

problems are understood and addressed by social workers (Dodd, 2020; Dodd & Tolman, 2017; Turner, 2016; Williams et al., 2013, 2016).

1.1.2.2 Holistic Social-Ecological Lens

Social work's holistic perspective of social challenges and sites of intervention to ameliorate problems can provide valuable insights for addressing sexuality-related concerns. Simultaneously, incorporating sexuality into holistic assessments of micro-, mezzo-, and macro-level problems and potential solutions might enhance social work practice by forming a more complete picture of the person-in-environment (i.e., the client(s) and their social context; Kondrat, 2008). Roberts (1992) argues that sexuality is an important part of psychosocial assessment, as clients' sexual histories, identities, and practices can provide insights into their interpersonal relationships, health behaviors, self-image, and other factors salient to overall wellbeing. Others (e.g., Dodd, 2020; Turner, 2019) have added that sexuality fits within the various components of the biopsychosocial model of client conceptualization. Still others have argued for sexuality's relevance in the spiritual dimension of human experience (Hernandez et al., 2014; Satterly & Ingersoll, 2020), suggesting that it is essential to an even more expansive model embraced by many social workers, the biopsychosocial-*spiritual* model (Cornett, 1992; Saad et al., 2017).

1.1.3 Need for a New Measure

Currently there are limited tools for assessing the nature of sexual socialization. Over the past quarter-century, researchers have pursued important sexual socialization research (e.g., Epstein & Ward, 2008; Martin et al., 2007; L. Ward, 2003; P. J. Wright, 2009), and their work provides a foundation for the current study. Measures that exist to explore sexual socialization

focus primarily on the topical content of messaging, covering limited themes. The Sexual Socialization Instrument (SSI; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994) assesses levels of sexual *permissiveness* and *restrictiveness* of messages respondents receive from their parents and their friends. Permissiveness and restrictiveness refer to the relative acceptance of sexual activity outside of marriage or committed relationships and with multiple casual partners (Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994; Westerlund et al., 2012). Another measure, attributed to Caruthers and Ward (2002) and later dubbed the Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure (SSDM; Day, 2010; Fletcher et al., 2015), inventories the extent to which respondents' sexual socialization from various agents (e.g., parents, peers, media) involved communication of messages on a variety of themes. These themes include gendered sexual roles, expectations about sex within or outside of marriage and committed relationships, and the legitimacy of engaging in sex simply for pleasure. The SSDM's breadth of themes goes further than the SSI in capturing contrasting attitudes about multiple aspects of sex and sexuality, but it stops short of explicitly characterizing messages or themes as positive, negative, affirming, or negating.

Measures that assess attitudes about sex and sexuality are far more common than sexual socialization measures; however, attitudinal measures assess respondents' own attitudes, not the perspectives conveyed in messaging from socialization agents. I identified only one scale that purports to measure sex-positivity and sex-negativity, the Sex Positivity-Negativity (SPN) scale (Hangen & Rogge, 2022). A second instrument emerged in the time since I started this research, the Sex Positivity Scale (Belous & Schulz, 2022), designed to measure respondents' levels of sex-positivity. Like attitudinal measures that were developed to assess similar constructs, such as *erotophobia* and *erotophilia* in the Sexual Opinion Survey (W. A. Fisher et al., 1988), these

recently developed measures that use the language of sex-positivity and -negativity are focused on respondents' own thoughts and feelings about sex and sexuality.

The Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging Measure (SANSSMM) is meant to fill a gap left by these two types of instruments, combining assessment of the extent to which respondents received certain messages in the course of sexual socialization and the attitudinal orientation of that messaging—sexuality-*affirming* and/or sexuality-*negating*.

1.2 Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this study is to develop, validate, and test a measure of the sexuality-affirming and sexuality-negating attitudinal perspectives conveyed through sexual socialization messaging (SSM) individuals receive during adolescence. The measure will build on existing instruments developed to assess SSM by identifying messaging that contributes to worldviews which *affirm* or *negate* sexuality and, in turn, contribute to creating, perpetuating, or ameliorating sexuality-related social challenges. The study and new measure seek to contribute to innovations in understanding, addressing, and preventing sexuality-related challenges by helping identify untapped sites for intervention not only at the micro (individual, family, and interpersonal) level but also at the mezzo (institutional, community) and macro (societal) levels.

1.3 Aims and Hypotheses

To achieve the above-stated research purpose, I pursued three primary aims as a means of testing corresponding hypotheses. The hypotheses I outline here will be supported by literature discussed in Chapter 2 and summarized in section 2.2.2.

1.3.1 Aim 1

Generate a set of measure items that comprehensively encompass key dimensions of affirming and negating attitudes toward sex and sexuality that may be conveyed through sexual socialization.

1.3.1.1 Hypothesis 1

Items selected through a systematic process, informed by theoretical and empirical literature and by field expert feedback, will comprise a set of items that comprehensively encompasses key dimensions of sexuality-affirming and sexuality-negating sexual socialization messaging.

1.3.2 Aim 2

Test reliability and validity of the new measure, using primary data collected through an online survey of emerging and young adults from across the U.S.

1.3.2.1 Hypothesis 2

The set of face- and content-valid items selected through the processes followed for Aim 1 will exhibit acceptable or better psychometric properties on measures of internal consistency reliability, factorial validity, and convergent and discriminant validity.

1.3.3 Aim 3

Conduct exploratory analyses of relationships between prominence of Sexuality-Affirming and -Negating SSM, participant characteristics, and participants' self-reported global sexual attitudes and past use of coercive sexual strategies.

Aim 3 consists of three specific sub-aims and associated hypotheses.

1.3.3.1 Aim 3A

Examine differences in prominence levels of Sexuality-Affirming and -Negating SSM participants received during adolescence based on demographic and personal background characteristics.

1.3.3.1.1 Hypothesis 3A

Statistically significant mean score differences will be observed between cisgender female and cisgender male participants and between participants from families that identified with a religious/spiritual belief tradition and participants from families that did not.

1.3.3.2 Aim 3B

Explore relationships between Sexuality-Affirming and -Negating SSM prominence and participants' self-reported current global sexual attitudes (levels of Sex-Positivity *and* Sex-Negativity*).*

1.3.3.2.1 Hypothesis 3B

(a) *There will be positive directional relationships between Sexuality*-Affirming *SSM prominence and participants' global sex*-positivity *level (i.e.,* higher *SASSM will be associated with* higher *sex-positivity) and between Sexuality*-Negating *SSM prominence and participants' global sex*-negativity *level (i.e.,* higher *SNSSM will be associated with* higher *sex-negativity)*. **(b)** *There will be negative directional relationships between Sexuality*-Affirming *SSM prominence and participants' global sex*-negativity *level (i.e.,* higher *SASSM will be associated with* lower *sex-negativity) and between Sexuality*-Negating *SSM prominence and participants' global sex-*positivity *level (i.e.,* higher *SNSSM will be associated with* lower *sex-positivity)*.

1.3.3.3 Aim 3C

Explore relationships between Sexuality-Affirming and -Negating SSM prominence and the number of coercive sexual strategy types participants reported using in the past to convince someone to engage in sexual activity with them.

1.3.3.3.1 Hypothesis 3C

(a) *There will be* negative *directional relationships between Sexuality*-Affirming *SSM prominence and the number of coercive sexual strategy types participants have used in the past (i.e.,* higher *SASSM will be associated with* fewer *coercive sexual strategy types used)*. **(b)** *There will be* positive *directional relationships between Sexuality*-Negating *SSM prominence and the*

number of coercive sexual strategy types participants have used in the past (i.e., higher *SNSSM will be associated with more coercive sexual strategy types used.*

1.4 Overview of Chapters

The remainder of this dissertation proceeds as follows.

Chapter 2 presents support from theoretical and empirical literature for the premises on which this study, its aims, and its hypotheses are based. The reviews of theoretical and empirical literature establish the current state of thought and scholarship that is the foundation on which my research is built and to which this study seeks to contribute.

Chapter 3 provides an accounting of the research and data analytic methodologies I employed to pursue the aims and test the hypotheses of the study. Three phases of the study are outlined, with explanations of the sources used or participants involved, the measures employed, the procedures followed, and the analysis performed.

Chapter 4 summarizes results of the processes and analyses I undertook toward the purpose and aims of the study, as laid out in Chapter 3. Results are arranged again by study phase, in alignment with Aims 1, 2 and 3.

Chapter 5 summarizes the study’s findings, including the outcomes of procedures and analyses that address the study’s hypotheses, in particular. In addition, I propose implications for social work, the social sciences, and human services scholarship and practice. I explicate limitations of the study and conclude with directions for future research.

2.0 Review of the Literature

2.1 Theoretical Foundations

Theories of human behavior underlying the rationale for this study and motivation for the measure I set out to develop emphasize the roles social influences play in shaping individual thought and behavior. I begin this section by introducing the concept of *sexual worldview*, which will serve as a core idea around which I will discuss the relevance of two theoretical perspectives, *social learning* theories and *symbolic interactionism*, to understanding how social sources of information contribute to sexual values and attitudes development and sexual behavior. I will then discuss how the idea of attitudinal perspectives, or *dispositions*, toward sex and sexuality can be applied in characterizing sexual worldviews and the nature of sexual socialization messaging as *negating* versus *affirming*.

2.1.1 Sexual Worldview

Sexual worldview refers to the understanding individuals have of the sexual norms of their culture or society and how they are meant to think, behave, and express themselves in sexuality-related aspects of their lives. The concept of sexual worldview is borrowed from Sitron and Dyson (2012), who introduced the term *sexological worldview* to refer to "the often unexamined but changeable perspective held by each person about the world around them with regards to sexuality"

(p. 11).[1] According to Sitron and Dyson, sexological worldview consists of knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, values, and opinions individuals hold about sexual acts or behaviors, intimate relationship types and structures (e.g., monogamous, non-monogamous, polyamorous, etc.), sexual identity and expression, and gender roles, identity, and expression. This enduring system of cognition and affect relating to sex and sexuality in one's own life and in the lives of others naturally influences subsequent sex- and sexuality-related thought and behavior. Sitron and Dyson's (2012) motivation for conceptualizing sexological worldview (see footnote) serves as an example of this, as they contend that the knowledge, thoughts, and feelings sexologists bring with them to professional practice influence their effectiveness in providing culturally competent, diversity-conscious, and client-sensitive sexological services. The authors suggest that increasing the sexologist's self-awareness of their own sexological worldview is an important step in recognizing cognitive-affective barriers to providing this type of care and identifying areas for professional self-improvement that will facilitate doing so. While in this example professionals are challenged to recognize their own *sexological* worldview as a means to improve services and benefit clients, social scientists and practitioners in fields beyond sexology can apply the concept to understanding the role *sexual* worldview plays in shaping the behavior of others.

As a sort of internal template, or sexual *schema* (Carillo, 2017; Seal et al., 2007), by which one understands the functions and expectations of sexuality within their social context, sexual

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[1] Sitron and Dyson's use of the term *sexological* reflects their particular focus on the individual worldviews of sexologists and sexologists-in-training, and on how those views may influence professional sexological practice. While the authors frame the concept in terms of its application to sexology practitioners and students, the basic premise and specific definition of it is broadly applicable. I am therefore simply substituting *sexual* for *sexological*, while the construct is attributable entirely to Sitron and Dyson (2012).

worldview is similar to Simon and Gagnon's (1969, 1984) concept of *sexual scripts*. *Sexual scripts* are sets of pre-established guidelines by which individuals conduct themselves and expect others to conduct themselves in sexual situations or when dealing with sexual matters. This includes not only direct sexual interactions but also examples as varied as how friends talk to each other about sex, how one goes about pursuing romantic interests, what role courtship, dating, relationships, marriage, reproduction and childbearing play (or don't play) in a person's life, and whether sex education is an appropriate topic to be covered in public schools. Sexual scripting theory conceptualizes three levels of scripts: *cultural scenarios*, *interpersonal scripts*, and *intrapsychic scripts*.

Simon and Gagnon (1984, 1986) describe *cultural scenarios* as "instructional guides" (1984, p. 53) that impress upon members of a society or culture the ways interpersonal roles should be enacted. This includes broad ideals, such as normative gender roles as they apply to sexual relations (e.g., men are sexual aggressors, women are sexual gatekeepers). Simon and Gagnon (1986) note that cultural scenarios are generally too broad and abstract to consciously dictate people's behavior in day-to-day life. Thus, people develop *interpersonal scripts* to guide their expectations and actions in sexual interactions. As noted above, this may include but is not limited to physical sexual acts. Finally, *intrapsychic scripts* are the internalized understandings of sexual norms and expectations one develops largely through personal experience and social learning, and these directly inform the individual's interpretation of sexual cues and determine their responses to those cues.

2.1.2 Sexual Socialization

The means by which individuals learn sexual scripts and develop a sexual worldview are processes known as *sexual socialization*. *Socialization* refers broadly to processes by which individuals learn the norms of a community or society to which they belong in order to function successfully and thrive within their social context (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991; Maccoby, 2015; Schneewind, 2015). DeLamater and Collett (2019) explain that socialization consists of four components: (1) *agents*, which are sources of information regarding social norms and expectations; (2) *learning processes*, or the means by which information is conveyed and received; (3) a *target*, referring to the individual undergoing socialization; and (4) *outcomes*, or the intended results of socialization. Among the outcomes of socialization in most cultures are shared understandings of the role sexuality plays in the lives of the society's (or a particular community's) members, along with guidelines for acceptable sexual behavior and expression (Shtarkshall et al., 2007; Spanier, 1977; Warner et al., 2020). Processes of sexual socialization involve "acquiring knowledge, norms, attitudes, cultural symbols and meanings, codes of conduct, and values about a wide range of topics concerning sex and sexuality" (Warner et al., 2020, p. 160). Shtarkshall and colleagues (2007) note that sexual socialization, like other types of socialization, differs from *education*, in that education entails "an intentional, structured process to impart knowledge and skills" (p. 116); socialization, on the other hand, frequently entails a variety of processes through which targets glean information from agents, and these may be formal or informal, direct or indirect, explicit or implied, and accomplished through language or action (Martin et al., 2007; Shtarkshall et al., 2007; Spanier, 1977; Warner et al., 2020).

Martin and colleagues (2007) summarize sexual socialization's function by describing it as the means by which people learn about sexuality, as well as:

> what meanings they make out of the information they receive from others, how they navigate through various partial and potentially conflicting sources of meaning, how they understand and interpret the structures of sexuality in society, [and] how these issues might vary across and within different socio-cultural contexts. (p. 232)

As this statement suggests, sexual socialization is complex and involves numerous processes beyond a straightforward transmission of information from agent to target. To understand how these processes take place to form a sexual worldview and influence behavior, we can look to theories of social learning and symbolic interaction.

2.1.2.1 Social Learning

Theories of social learning posit that human behavior is determined not only by internal drives (i.e., psychoanalytic perspective), problematic thought patterns (cognitive perspective), or habituated responses to external stimuli (behaviorist perspective), but also through dynamic interactive processes between a person and their social environment (Bandura, 1977; Rotter et al., 1972). In separate theories of social learning, psychologist Rotter (1954) and sociologist Bandura (1977) each suggest that it is necessary to consider social factors to understand human behavior. This is because social influences—especially parents and/or other caretakers on whom humans are dependent during infancy and childhood—provide critical information to the developing person about how to get needs met, what behaviors are acceptable and will facilitate connection with others versus those which will lead to negative social consequences, and other lessons about thriving in a social environment formed by human interpersonal relationships. Rotter (1954), in particular, emphasizes the role of relationships with significant others in early childhood as a basis

for behavior throughout life, contributing to personality formation (i.e., predisposing tendencies toward certain understandings of the world and patterns of behavior).

Bandura (1977) points out that, because individuals do not behave in the same manner under all circumstances, or toward all people with whom they interact, it is evident that social context factors into *what* people do and *how* they do it. Adolescent boys, for example, are likely to speak much differently with male peers about objects of sexual interest or sexual activities than they would with female peers, or with their parents or a teacher (if they chose to speak about sexual topics with any of these social contacts). Social learning theories understand the social environment, or the social situations in which people are involved, to be one among multiple factors that contribute to choices people make (Bandura, 1977; Rotter et al., 1972); furthermore, the relationship between an individual and their social environment is bidirectional, so the individual is not only *acted upon* by the social environment, they also influence elements within the social environment (e.g., other people, settings) and thereby actively contribute to shaping their social surroundings. Bandura (1977) refers to this as *reciprocal determinism*. An example of this would be shifting the dynamic of an intimate encounter that seems to be moving toward unwanted sexual activity by standing up and moving across the room (changing the circumstances), leaving altogether (changing the setting), striking the other person in the genitals (causing change in the other person), or passing gas (changing the state of the environment and probably the mood).

Bandura (1977) highlights the significance of *observational learning* processes, achieved through *modeling*, in shaping human behavior. An underlying assumption of observational learning is that humans do not learn most life skills through entirely independent processes of trial-and-error, isolated from social sources of information. Bandura argues that an expectation for humans to learn how to drive or perform brain surgery without guidance from the accumulated

knowledge and experiences of others would be unreasonable and potentially catastrophic. Others within the social environment *model* behaviors that individuals undergoing learning either imitate or at least observe in order to choose their own approach to a behavior. The processes of modeling, observation, and the application of new knowledge often entail intentional efforts to impart information and engage in supervised practice (e.g., a parent telling a child the rules of driving, demonstrating basic operation of a vehicle, and then allowing the child to practice driving themselves); on the other hand, behavior can be modeled unintentionally, by simply being observed. Observations of the consequences others experience from their own actions can become data the observer applies to their own future behavior, rather than always having to experience consequences first-hand in order to learn from them.

Children's learning about sexuality effectively illustrates both intentional and inadvertent social learning processes that can take place. Regarding childhood sex and sexuality education, sociologist and sex researcher Reiss (1997) argues, like Bandura (1977) does about driving and brain surgery, that it is absurd to expect children to grow up and make healthy, positive choices regarding sexual relationships and behaviors without processes of learning on which to base their choices, or even awareness of their options (Reiss, 1997). Children commonly learn about their own and others' sexual anatomies through developmentally appropriate play with peers and/or through observing the nude bodies of their parents or siblings in the home; however, parents' own shame surrounding sexuality commonly keeps them from acknowledging children's inherent sexual natures and leads to imposing shame on children by negatively reinforcing expressions of sexuality—for example, slapping a child's hand away from their own genitals, insisting a child always cover themselves with clothing, or scolding children who are caught exploring each other's bodies (Reiss, 1997). Whether it is learning that curiosity about human bodies or positive

sensations in one's own genitals are okay, or that sexual exploration and expression are shameful, these lessons are conveyed to people through social processes. Social learning theories (Bandura, 1977; Rotter et al., 1972) also illuminate how observations of parents' shame about sexuality, demonstrated even through their failure to speak about it or expressions of disgust if they overhear others doing so, can contribute to social learning about the rights and wrongs of sexual expression and behavior.

2.1.2.2 Symbolic Interactionism

Beyond simply receiving information and applying it in daily life, socialization further entails development of the capacity to interpret and utilize cultural symbols (e.g., language, customs), make meaning of information that is received, and *internalize* these data by retaining them as mental references to draw on later, guiding future behavior (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991; G. H. Mead, 1934/1972; Schneewind, 2015).

According to symbolic interactionism, humans gain a sense of self by forming mental images of a socially-acceptable ideal, against which they evaluate themselves (G. H. Mead, 1934/1972). This ideal is referred to as the *generalized other*, representing the individual's understanding of who society expects them to be. The generalized other takes shape in the individual's mind based on interactions with their social environment and feedback they receive from social-environmental elements. As with social learning, these elements are most often other people, particularly during childhood development when caretakers, family members, and a localized circle of significant social influences largely comprise the individual's social environment. Data that inform the mental construction of the generalized other come largely in the form of *gestures*—verbal or nonverbal signals exchanged between the individual and social-environmental agents (G. H. Mead, 1934/1972).

Gestures take on meaning not in the "sending" of the message or the gesturer's intent, but rather in the *response to* the gesture (G. H. Mead, 1934/1972). An example of this would be a scenario in which one person (A) stares intently at someone they're attracted to (person B), waiting for person B to make eye contact with them. The act of staring at another person, in itself, is meaningless—or, rather, it can hold any number of meanings, depending on how it is interpreted; however, the stare takes on meaning when person B "receives," then interprets and responds to it. If person B is frightened, they might run away because, to them, the stare means they are being preyed upon. If they're disgusted because they interpret the stare as an indication they're being sexually objectified, they might give an angry look in return. On the other hand, if person B interprets person A's stare as an alluring invitation, they might make friendly eye contact back at person A or even approach person A to pursue conversation.

In any of these cases, the gesture (a stare) holds no meaning until it is received, then responded-to. The response of person B is what signals the meaning of person A's stare, regardless of person A's intent, and this meaning is reflected to person A through person B's response gesture (e.g., running away, scowling back, or returning a friendly look). This then initiates a new exchange of gestures, as person A assigns meaning and responds accordingly to person B's gesture—e.g., they chase person B, believing the gesture of running away means person B enjoys being pursued, or they scoff and mutter an insult toward person B because they interpret the dirty look as a rejection. The exchange of gestures can continue and progress in any number of ways, depending on the interpretations and responses of both parties.

Exchanges of gestures and processes of sense-making often occur interpersonally, as the example above illustrates; but it also occurs *intra*personally, between the individual and the generalized other (G. H. Mead, 1934/1972). On one level, the gestures are external to the person,

as the individual gathers information from interactive processes like social learning. That information, however, becomes *internalized* and applied to the mental representation of who and what a person should be (i.e., to the generalized other). *Internalization* refers to the person's integration of understandings gleaned from interactions with their social environment, which inform mental representations of one's self, of others, and of the dynamics between self and others (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991; G. H. Mead, 1934/1972). The individual's internalized sense of the generalized other then serves as a model against which the individual self-evaluates and constructs their sense of *self* in relation to who or what they believe the generalized other dictates a person should be. The individual chooses behavior accordingly, in alignment with, or in resistance against, the status quo represented by the image of the generalized other. In effect, the individual enters into a symbolic exchange of gestures with the generalized other, modeled after interactions that originally played out in external interactions between the person and their social environment, and they choose behaviors (i.e., counter-gestures) in response to the generalized other.

Symbolic interactionism helps explain how sexual socialization entails more than mere information-sharing between agents and targets. It further illustrates how learning through interactive social processes leads to an integrated mental representation of the social world, which informs human behavior. A sexual worldview takes shape through these processes and subsequently guides an individual's interactions with others. This idea is the basis for Simon and Gagnon's (1969, 1984) concept of sexual scripts, the internalized templates that guide external sexuality-focused interactions and individual behaviors, as described above.

2.1.3 Dispositions toward Sexuality

The application of theories of social learning and symbolic interaction to sexual socialization relies on a social constructionist understanding of sexuality. A social constructionist perspective applied to sexuality would suggest that sexual norms are established, widely adopted, and perpetuated by members of a culture or society (Gagnon & Simon, 2005), in the same way all other sociocultural norms proliferate in human civilizations (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991; Bourdieu, 1972/2013). This understanding of human sexual behavior contrasts with historically predominant theories that largely attributed motivations for sexual behavior to innate drives or biological imperatives (Gagnon & Simon, 2005). Feminist, Black Feminist, and Queer theorists add a critical lens to the social constructionist perspective, highlighting ways that sexuality and gender are constructs established and utilized by dominant factions of society to exercise social control and justify oppression of those who fail (or are perceived to fail) at meeting the dominant culture's ideals (Chodorow, 1978; Collins, 2000; D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012; Foucault, 1978; hooks, 1981/2015; McClintock, 1995; Rubin, 1984/1993, 1975/2011). Based on socially constructed norms, beliefs about the roles and proper expressions of sexuality for oneself and others become internalized and integrated into people's individual and collective ways of life.

The sexual worldviews people adopt are filtered through what Satterly and Dyson (2010, as cited in Satterly & Ingersoll, 2020) label *values lenses*—general principles that guide people's sense of right and wrong, thereby influencing their choices and behaviors. Satterly and Ingersoll (2020) distinguish *values* from *beliefs* and *attitudes*. *Beliefs*, they explain, are conscious or unconscious ideas a person accepts as true. These ideas often serve as a basis for values. *Attitudes* are positive or negative judgments or evaluations about objects, ideas, people, etc. Social psychologist Byrne (1977) describes a set of attitudes a person holds as an "enduring attitudinal

system in which *positive and negative predispositions* are expressed with respect to masturbation, nudity, adultery, homosexuality, pornography, censorship, sex education, birth control, and everything else related to sex" (p. 17; emphasis added). Byrne characterizes positive attitudinal dispositions as those which view sexuality as "the source of varying degrees of joy, curiosity, and entertainment," while negative predispositions characterize sexuality as a source of "disgust, nausea, and hostility" (p. 16).

Sexuality researchers Fisher and colleagues (1988) draw on Byrne's (1977) proposal of contrasting positive and negative *affective* and *evaluative response dispositions* to conceptualize *erotophobia* and *erotophilia* (W. A. Fisher et al., 1988). Affective response dispositions (relating to physiological and emotional "gut" feelings) and evaluative response dispositions (relating to thoughts and judgments) refer to the ways an individual is predisposed to respond to particular stimuli (Byrne, 1977)—in this case, a range of stimuli with a sexual component, from a word with sexual connotations used in conversation to explicit sexual acts. This is reflected in Fisher and colleagues' reference to *erotophobia* and *erotophilia* as "disposition[s] to respond to sexual cues along a negative [erotophobic]-positive [erotophilic] dimension of affect and evaluation" (p. 124). Hangen and Rogge (2022) cite Fisher et al.'s (1988) conceptualization of erotophobia and erotophilia as a basis for conceptualizing sex-negativity and sex-positivity, which Hangen and Rogge (2022) similarly characterize as *trait dispositions*—generalized, relatively fixed attitudinal orientations toward a subject or object (C. Miller, 2013).

Part of Hangen and Rogge's (2022) motivation for developing a measure of sex-positivity/-negativity illuminates an important distinction regarding attitudinal dispositions toward sex and sexuality, compared to specific opinions about certain sexuality-related topics. They point out that their measure, the Sex Positivity-Negativity (SPN) scale, is designed to assess respondents' *global*

attitudes toward sex and sexuality, as Fisher and colleagues' (1988) measure of erotophobia/erotophilia, the Sexual Opinion Survey (SOS), was meant to. Hangen and Rogge (2022) contend that the SOS sought to do so by assessing respondents' reactions to statements regarding a wide range of sex- and sexuality-related topics (e.g., sexually explicit media/pornography, homosexuality, masturbation, non-marital/casual sexual relations); however, because numerous validated attitudinal measures focused specifically on such topics have been developed in the quarter-century since the SOS was developed, Hangen and Rogge identified the need for a measure that assesses individuals' broader perspectives regarding sex and sexuality, *in general*. They therefore set out to create a measure of "affective reactions, evaluations, and attitudes, toward not only sexual behavior but other more global aspects of sex and sexuality" (p. 523).

Distinguishing global attitudes about sex and sexuality from opinions about specific sexuality-related topics is important to understanding attitudinal dispositions as *values lenses* through which sexual socialization messages are filtered to socialization targets and through which socialization targets' sexual worldviews filter information from social-environmental sources and impact sexual decision-making and behavior. In the next section, I expand on the broad characterizations of attitudinal dispositions as negative and positive (Byrne, 1977), erotophobic and erotophilic (Fisher et al., 1988), and sex-negative and sex-positive (Hangen & Rogge, 2022), by outlining definitions and descriptions of sex-positivity and sex-negativity from literature. I examine these conceptualizations in an effort to frame characterizations of sexual socialization messaging in terms of current discourses of sex-negativity and sex-positivity. Finally, I will provide an explanation for considering the alternative, yet related, terms *sexuality-affirming* and *sexuality-negating* to characterize sexual socialization messaging.

2.1.3.1 Sex-Positivity and Sex-Negativity

Conceptualizations of sex-negativity and sex-positivity have limited grounding in formal social-scientific theory. Despite usage dating back nearly a century (Johansson, 1990; Reich, 1931/1971), definitions of the terms, as well as contexts for their application, vary. In the past decade, conceptual frameworks for *sex-positive* research (Harden, 2014; Williams et al., 2015) and professional practice (Dodd, 2020; Kimmes et al., 2015; Williams et al., 2015) have been proposed, as advocacy for the benefits of sex-positivity has gained momentum in health and social sciences since the 2000s (Fahs, 2014; Ivanski & Kohut, 2017). These frameworks are limited in certain key ways, however. First, conceptualizing sex-positivity does not automatically construct sex-negativity—in other words, sex-negativity cannot be understood simply as the opposite of, or inclusive of all perspectives outside of a standard definition for, sex-positivity (Ivanski & Kohut, 2017); therefore, a conceptualization of sex-negativity is omitted from any sex-positive framework that does not explicitly define it as a distinct construct. Second, existing frameworks focus on sex-positivity as an orientation from which researchers or service providers may approach their work, rather than applying it to understanding research participants' or practice clients' experiences and behaviors. While the aforementioned authors acknowledge the potential benefits of sex-positive perspectives to clients, communities, and/or society, their frameworks generally apply to researcher and/or clinician approaches to practice rather than theorizing participant or client behavior and experience.

Within only the last few years, greater attention has been paid to conceptualizing sex-positivity and, to a lesser extent, sex-negativity. Literature reviews (e.g., Ivanski & Kohut, 2017; C. M. Mosher, 2017; Nimbi et al., 2022), content and discourse analyses (e.g., A. N. Kearney, 2019), and measure development studies (e.g., Belous & Schulz, 2022; Hangen & Rogge, 2022)

have sought thematic consensus as to what sex-positivity entails. In some cases (Hangen & Rogge, 2022; Ivanski & Kohut, 2017) sex-negativity is addressed, but aside from these exceptions, definitions or descriptions of sex-negativity are under-developed. The term seems to be used often simply to describe an absence of sex-positivity, or the taken-for-granted *status quo* sex-positivity advocates seeks to disrupt. The under-development of *sex-negativity* as a construct may merely reflect limited public or scholarly interest, given the mass appeal of sex-positivity as a trait to be cultivated within a culture broadly characterized as sex-negative (Fahs, 2014; Horowitz, 2013; Massey, 2015; Millbank, 2012).

2.1.3.1.1 Sex-Positivity

Current understandings of *sex-positivity* are often attributed to a movement that emerged during the 1970s and 1980s when the role of female sexuality in women's liberation was disputed among feminist thinkers and activists (Fahs, 2014; Glick, 2000; Ivanski & Kohut, 2017). These disagreements are alleged to have originated in opposing viewpoints regarding the role of pornography as a means to either uphold men's subjugation of women or to disrupt patriarchal oppression by empowering women to embrace their own sexual expression and behavior. Beyond disputed representations of female sexuality in pornography, a *sex-positive movement* (Fahs, 2014; Glick, 2000; Ivanski & Kohut, 2017) came to represent efforts of women to exercise self-determination in sexual behavior, expression, and identity, rather than relying on oppressive and restrictive traditions of phallocentric, heteronormative, and male-supremacist sexual relations. For many feminists, women's sexual empowerment coincided with the gay rights movement, or at least sought similar ends on the sexual front, such as self-determination, freedom from sexual and social oppression, and independence from America's "traditional" *sex/gender system* (Glick, 2000; Queen, 1997/2001; Rubin, 1984/1993). Rubin (1975/2011) defines a sex/gender system as the

ways in which a society transforms biological sexuality into behaviors that serve the needs of the society, through its customs regarding gender roles, sexual relationships, and other "systematic ways to deal with sex, gender, and babies" (p. 40).

The notion of sex-positivity has a history that extends back decades prior to second-wave feminism's movement to assert female sexual empowerment and resistance to sexual oppression. Austrian psychoanalyst, social critic, and sexuality theorist Wilhelm Reich (1931/1971, 1936/1974) has been credited with first using the terms *sex-positive* and *sex-negative* to describe a society's broad values regarding sex and sexuality, which informs how the society will regulate sexual behavior and the availability of information about sexuality to its members (Johansson, 1990). A *sex-positive* society, according to Reich's philosophy, will place limited restrictions on sexual expression and allow a free flow of information and education about sex and sexuality to inhabitants of the society. Johansson (1990) succinctly paraphrases Reich's notion of a sex-positive/-affirming society as one that "accept[s] the inherent value of sexual expression and indeed insist[s] on it," (Johansson, 1990, p. 1182).

Regardless of the origins of the term, both scholarly and non-academic authors have sought to enumerate characteristics of sex-positivity since around the turn of the 21st century (e.g., Glick, 2000; Glickman, 2000; Queen, 1997/2001). Nimbi and colleagues (2022) provide a useful framework for synthesizing themes found in literature on sex-positivity. They summarize the characteristics of sex-positivity in six *sex-positive pillars*: (1) *openness*, (2) *respect*; (3) *self-determination*, (4) *access*, (5) *pleasure*, and (6) *consent*. (See Nimbi et al., 2022, Table 2, p. 899.) Descriptions of these pillars are provided below, along with additional characteristics of sex-positivity, and these are also summarized in Appendix Table A-1.

Openness. According to Nimbi et al. (2022), openness refers to the way in which sex-positivity "empowers…curiosity toward sexuality" (p. 6), fostering learning, exploration, and discussions with both partners and healthcare providers. The openness pillar is supported by Williams and colleagues (2015), who assert that openness to broader understandings of sexuality and perspectives that differ from one's own is a crucial component of sex-positivity. This includes engaging in straightforward communication about a broad range of sexual values and behaviors (Williams et al., 2015). In order to engage in open communication, a level of comfort with one's own sexuality and with diverse possible sexualities of others is necessary (Burnes et al., 2017; Donaghue, 2015). Some authors readily pair openness with non-judgment, refraining from shaming the sexual practices or identities of others, and being accepting of one's own sexuality as well as the sexualities of others (Burnes et al., 2017; Donaghue, 2015; International Society for Sexual Medicine, n.d.; Ivanski & Kohut, 2017). Tobin (1991, as cited in Kearney, 2020) also includes non-judgment in a list of qualities of sex-positivity, along with "challenging *narrow* social constructs (e.g., the myth that sex = intercourse)" (p. 1; emphasis added), a choice of words that arguably suggests a call for *widening*, or making more *open*, notions of what sexuality entails.

Respect. Closely related to the non-judgment and acceptance aspects of openness is the sex-positive pillar of respect (Nimbi et al., 2022). Numerous authors suggest that respect for the sexual choices of others (provided they involve consensual expression) is foundational to the concept of sex-positivity (Donaghue, 2015; Nimbi et al., 2022; Queen, 1997/2001, 2014). Respect involves the recognition that human sexualities are diverse (Dodd, 2020; Nimbi et al., 2022; Queen, 2014; Tobin, 1991; Williams et al., 2015) and that "all consensual expressions of sexuality are valid" (Kimmes et al., 2015, p. 289).

Self-determination. The pillar of self-determination refers to the freedom of every individual to make sexual choices, express their sexuality, and engage in sexual activity that is right for them, without interference from others (Nimbi et al., 2022). Nimbi et al. (2022) describe self-determination in terms of goal-setting and attainment, enabling people "to set goals for themselves and to take the initiative to reach these goals in their sexual experiences and health" (p. 6). Some authors (e.g., Ivanski & Kohut, 2017; Queen, 2014) have also emphasized that a sex-positive perspective honors the self-determination of individuals to choose abstinence at a given point in time or throughout the life course, and even to decide that sex is *not* a positive part of life (e.g., source of pleasure) for them.

Access. Access entails the availability of information and services necessary to make informed choices that are part of self-determination (Nimbi et al., 2022). Age-appropriate, comprehensive sex(uality) education is considered by many to be a human right (Lowe, 2018; Queen, 2014; Williams et al., 2015; World Health Organization, 2015). Access to sexual and reproductive health services, including abortion, contraception, and STI screening and treatment are also recognized by many as essential resources to which all people are entitled (Dodd, 2020; Ivanski & Kohut, 2017; A. Kearney, 2020; Nimbi et al., 2022). Ivanski and Kohut (2017) further noted that a quality of the services for which sex-positivity advocates is *trauma-informed* care, taking individuals' personal histories into account in the process of providing services. A sex-positive perspective understands access to knowledge and services related to sex and sexuality to be an indispensable element of overall sexual wellbeing (Ivanski & Kohut, 2017; A. Kearney, 2020; Nimbi et al., 2022).

Pleasure. The pleasure pillar validates sexuality as a source of pleasure and not merely a means of reproduction (Nimbi et al., 2022). The World Health Organization (WHO; 2006) even

acknowledges pleasurable aspects of sexual activity and expression as essential components of sexual health, noting that "Sexual health requires…the possibility of having pleasurable…sexual experiences" (p. 5). The WHO includes this in their description of what constitutes "a positive, affirming approach to sexuality," which they note "addresses both the pleasure and safety aspects of sexuality and sexual health" (p. 20). Ivanski and Kohut (2017) found, in their survey of sexuality professionals, that *sex for pleasure* was a noteworthy theme of respondents' understandings of sex-positivity, along with caveats from some participants noting that a sex-positive perspective must honor the reality that sexual activity is not a source of pleasure for everyone, and refraining from sex as a result does not constitute sex-negativity. Nimbi et al. (2022) and Williams et al. (2015) further assert that the aspects of sex and sexuality that individuals find pleasurable can change from day to day and across the life course, and even experiencing sex as an enjoyable activity can change over time.

Consent. The consent pillar contends that all sexual activity requires consent from all parties involved (Nimbi et al., 2022). Carol Queen (1997/2001, 2002, 2014; Queen & Comella, 2008), a prominent feminist proponent of sex-positivity, considers consent to be foundational, writing that sex-positivity is "an idea that can't be fully expressed outside of an atmosphere/context of consent. Informed, non-coercive consent. *CONSENT*" (Queen, 2014, para. 2). The centrality of consent to understandings of sex-positivity is corroborated by several authors (e.g., Dodd, 2020; Ivanski & Kohut, 2017; Satterly & Ingersoll, 2020).

In addition to these six pillars, other characteristics commonly found in discussions of sex-positivity include *equity and justice* and *holistic health and wellbeing*. While these additional themes are not unrelated to Nimbi et al.'s (2022) pillars and arguably overlap with some or all of

the pillars, their prevalence in literature make them worthy of consideration as distinct dimensions of sex-positivity.

Equity and Justice. Equity and justice are foundational to conceptualizations of sex-positivity, particularly given origins of a sex-positive movement in feminist and LGBTQ rights activism (Glick, 2000). Certain sex-positive pillars (Nimbi et al., 2022) name or allude to matters of equity and justice. For example, *access* refers to all humans' rights to information and services that promote sexual health and wellbeing. Equity and justice further encompasses freedom from discrimination or violence on the basis of sexual identity or expression (WHO, 2006, 2015) and from abuse or coercion within intimate relationships (Ivanski & Kohut, 2017; Queen, 2014; WHO, 2006, 2015).

Holistic Health and Wellbeing. Holistic health and wellbeing refers to the idea that sexuality is an indispensable facet of human physical and psychosocial health, and it should be understood and treated as an important part of people's lives (Dodd, 2020; Williams et al., 2015). Proponents of sex-positivity commonly emphasize that the sexual dimension of human experience deserves to be considered in understanding the whole person and, when applicable, providing them with competent care (Dodd, 2020; Nimbi et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2015). Furthermore, honoring people's sexuality as a shame-free, integral part of human experience and self-expression supports increased physical, mental, emotional, and social wellbeing (Burnes et al., 2017; Dodd, 2020; Ivanski & Kohut, 2017; Turner, 2020; Williams et al., 2015).

2.1.3.1.2 Sex-Negativity

Drawing on Marxist and Freudian ideas, Wilhelm Reich (1931/1971, 1936/1974) was concerned with the use of sexual morality as a form of social control by Fascist regimes. Reich characterized values that discouraged sexual expression and sex education for children as *sex-*

negative or *sex-negating*. Johansson (1990) describes a Reichian view of sex-negative or sex-negating societies as those which “despise sexuality” and are “ceaselessly inventive in devising austerities and prohibitions as a means of social control” (p. 1182). While the terms sex-negative and sex-negativity have continued to be used to describe societal and individual attitudes about sex and sexuality since Reich’s (1936/1974) introduction (e.g., Bullough, 1976; Glickman, 2000; Johansson, 1990; R. W. Smith, 1975), few concrete definitions or descriptions of sex-negativity can be found in literature. Most commonly, sex-negativity seems to be an implied construct against which sex-positivity is held up in contrast, as the more noble, desirable alternative.

Glickman (2000) states that sex-negativity is simply “the belief that sex is inherently bad” (para. 1). Jorgensen (2016) describes sex-negativity as “a mind-set that sex is inherently dirty, dangerous, risky, pathological or deviant” (para. 2). Jorgensen also stipulates that sex negativity treats sex as “an activity that taints the people who engage in it, resulting in stigma for people like single mothers, sex workers, nonheterosexual folks and people who participate in sexuality subcultures such as swinging, polyamory and kink” (para. 3).

In their qualitative survey exploring definitions of sex-positivity, Ivanski and Kohut (2017) sought participants’ understandings of *sex-negativity* in order to better distinguish it from sex-positivity and determine how the two concepts relate to one another. Through their thematic analysis of response data, they observed that, “in general, discussions of sex negativity revolved around feelings of shame or guilt, the reinforcement of the idea that sex is bad or negative, or the promotion of limited self-expression” (p. 222). The researchers quote one participant who stated:

> Sex negativity is a worldview or philosophy that sexuality must be controlled and that only very limited sexual behaviour is acceptable. Sex negativity holds that there are amounts of sex that are too much. Sex negativity holds that young

people should be taught to be ashamed of their sensual and sexual responses. Sex negativity often supports sex only for procreation and not for pleasure. (p. 222)

Underlying these descriptions of sex-negativity, and central to several sociological, anthropological, and social psychological distinctions between sex-negative and sex-positive societies (e.g., Bullough, 1976; Churchill, 1967/1971; Malinowski, 1927/2001; M. Mead, 1928, 1935/1977; R. W. Smith, 1975) are religious grounds for restricting sexual expression and behavior. Christianity, in particular, is most often implicated as a source of sex-negativity, dating back to the religion's early history (Bullough, 1976). The influence of English Puritan and European Protestant and Catholic values established cultures of sexual restrictiveness and austerity in early colonial America, which have remained ingrained in U.S. society to the present day (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012). Religious restrictions on acceptable sexual behavior and expression have contributed to widely-held perspectives of sexuality as shameful and even dangerous to the moral fabric of society, apart from limited functions such as reproduction and, for some, the expression of affection between married individuals (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012; Francoeur, 1991).

Religious grounds also justified violence and other forms of mistreatment of indigenous people in the eras of American settlement and colonization, based on Europeans' perceptions of sexual practices among Native peoples as immoral (D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012). Similar logic later justified oppression and social control over African slaves, whose traditions were viewed as uncivilized, savage, and immoral, which inexplicably led to the perpetration of sexual exploitation and violence against them at the hands of white colonizers (Collins, 2004; D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012; hooks, 1981/2015; McGruder, 2010). The sexual behaviors of ethnoracial minority groups have continued to be used by the dominant culture in the U.S. to perpetuate social oppression and

material disadvantage throughout the nation's history, even as the U.S. has become a more secular society (McGruder, 2010; Murray & Tani, 2016; A. M. Smith, 2001). Where religious influence became less directly involved in regulating sexuality, beginning in the nineteenth century, science and medicine took over by pathologizing sexual behavior that deviates from a heterosexual, monogamous, Euro- and phallo-centric ideal (De Block & Adriaens, 2013; D'Emilio & Freedman, 2012; McGruder, 2010). Dangers associated with sexual pathologies and deviance became scientifically- and even judicially-supported reasons for placing limits on sexual expression and behavior. Turner (2020) summarizes these risk-oriented perspectives of sexuality characteristic of sex-negativity as "the three Ds: disease, disaster, and dysfunction" (p. 308). The *three Ds* represent deficit- and pathology-oriented perspectives that are counter to social work's strengths-based approach to addressing client and societal needs (Saleebey, 2006). This contrast calls for sex-positive approaches to social work (Dodd, 2020; Turner, 2020; Williams et al., 2016) and highlights the importance of understanding how such perspectives reinforce social inequity and oppression that are targets of social work intervention.

2.1.3.1.3 Expanding on Sex-Positive and Sex-Negative: Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating Perspectives

For various reasons, including inconsistencies in terminology usage and understandings of the concepts, as discussed above, I sought to identify language that minimizes potential misinterpretations of "sex-positive" and "sex-negative" viewpoints regarding sexuality, and which more accurately represents the functions of sexual socialization and the nature of messaging that serves those functions.

First, relating to the obfuscating effect of inconsistent understandings of terminology, arguments have been made against embracing sex-positivity as inherently "positive" or sex-

negativity as inherently "negative" (Fahs, 2014; Horowitz, 2013; Ivanski & Kohut, 2017; Massey, 2015; Millbank, 2012). These arguments commonly involve observations that the terms *sex-positive* and *sex-positivity* have been coopted by popular media and even commercial business as catch-phrases to promote discourses about sexuality that are ultimately harmful and capitalize on consumption of sex-related products and services (Fahs, 2014; Millbank, 2012; Queen, 2014). Furthermore, self-identified "sex-negative feminists" (Horowitz, 2013; Massey, 2015; Millbank, 2012) and critical sexuality scholars (Fahs, 2014) have argued that popular contemporary discourses regarding sex-positivity, in certain ways, reproduce patriarchal power dynamics that promote men's access to women's bodies by pushing messaging that suggests greater sexual availability and adventurousness makes women "sex-positive" rather than, as they once might have been disparagingly labeled, "easy" or "slutty."

Further complicating a pursuit of unified definitions of sex-positivity are questions about whether sex-positivity is a single concept that can be applied universally or whether that which is sex-positive for some people is not sex-positive for others. For example, engaging in casual sexual relationships (i.e., having sex outside of married or otherwise monogamous, committed relationships) represents a break from traditional expectations of women to be chaste and manage, or even protect themselves from, male sexual desire. *Respect* for women's choice to exercise sexual agency, without judgment or interference from others, and endorsement of women's *self-determination* arguably make engagement in casual sexual relationships a sex-positive prospect. (This, of course, is not a universally held belief; see Ivanski and Kohut, 2017.) Endorsing heterosexual men's pursuit of casual sex, on the other hand, may be viewed as a reinforcement of traditional sex/gender roles that subjugate and exploit women, dynamics that arguably underlie the need for a feminist sex-positive movement in the first place. Some may argue that fortifying men's

sexual dominance by condoning their pursuit of casual sex is, if not sex-negative, certainly not sex-positive. While debatable and potentially controversial, this example simply illustrates that certain messages may be subject to differential interpretation and applicability across groups of people, challenging attempts to universalize definitions of what qualifies as *sex-positive* and what qualifies as *sex-negative*.

A second reason for opting to use alternative terminology is a desire to honor the historical significance of "sex-positive movements" among feminist and queer activists and scholars (Fahs, 2014; Glick, 2000; Queen, 1997/2001; Queen & Comella, 2008). I wish to preserve the importance of those movements by avoiding the potential conflation of their intent with recent commodified, commercialized, and often debated (mis)uses of the terms *sex-positive* and *sex-positivity*.

Third, the subjective nature of valuative terms like *positive* and *negative* complicates the operationalization of concepts, given that ideas of what is "positive" versus "negative" are subject to interpretation and debate, as the preceding paragraphs have demonstrated. Furthermore, as a series of active processes, sexual socialization can be most effectively understood in terms of its effect—i.e., what it *does*, in the form of *verbs*—rather than by descriptive characterizations of socialization processes or messages, in the form of *adjectives*. I therefore find it fitting for the purposes of a measure of sexual socialization messaging to return to language Reich (1936, 1936/1974) used, reflecting the actions of *affirming* and *negating* sexuality. Translations of Reich (1936/1974) use sex-*affirming* and sex-*negating*, as well as sex-positive and sex-negative, to describe societal values toward sex and sexuality, so to determine whether these were simply word choices made by translators, I consulted Reich's (1936) original German text. Although I do not read German, I located within the text, using the English translation as a guide, the terms *sexualverneinenden* (Reich, 1936, pp. 5, 22, 38, 49), *sexualverneinung* (Reich, 1936, p. 7),

sexualbejahung (Reich, 1936, p. 22), and *sexualablehnend* (Reich, 1936, p. 18). I then consulted the *Oxford German Dictionary* (Clark & Thyen, 2008), which revealed that the root words of these terms mean (respectively): “a) say ‘no’ to…answer in the negative;…c) negate” (p. 768); “a)…negative answer to a question;…c) negation” (p. 768); “a) an affirmative answer…b)…approval” (p. 106); and “negative (reply, attitude);…a rejection” (p. 8). In each of these instances, the term used refers to an action (saying “no,” answering in the negative/affirmative, approving, or rejecting), rather than a quality, such as *negative* (“negativ” or “verneint”; Clark & Thyen, 2008, p. 1348) or *positive* (“positiv”; Clark & Thyen, 2008, p. 1422).

While it is beyond the scope of this study to establish definitively the motivations of Reich’s (1936) word choice, I settled on *affirming* and *negating* as alternatives to *positive* and *negative*. I further justified this choice by consulting the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2003, 2012), which included the following applicable definitions of *affirm* and *negate*.

> **affirm**, *v.* To confirm the validity of; …to support, uphold (Sense 1.c.); To give a positive meaning to (Sense 6.b.); To assert or reinforce the value of…; to endow…with value (Sense 7.a.) (Oxford University Press, 2012)

> **negate**, *v.* To render ineffective or invalid, to nullify, cancel out; to destroy. Also (esp. in early use): to deny the existence or truth of; to deny (Oxford University Press, 2003 Sense 1)

Finally, I elected to use the word *sexuality* rather than *sex* (as in *sex-positive* and *sex-negative*), simply to reflect the broad relevance of terms to matters beyond only the act of sex. This broad understanding of *sex* is implied in the literature on sex-positivity and sex-negativity cited

above, but I chose to make it explicit in selecting the terminology I am using in order to be as accurate as possible.

2.2 Empirical Support and Limitations

2.2.1 Sexual Socialization Measurement Research

Few validated instruments exist that focus on measuring characteristics of sexual socialization aside from the topical content of messaging. Measures that focus on topical content generally ask respondents to rate the amount of messaging they received (usually from parents and sometimes from friends and/or school) about sexual health and relationship-related topics, such as reproductive anatomy and physiology, sexually-transmitted diseases or infections (STDs/STIs), HIV/AIDS, menstruation, pregnancy, contraception, and intimacy in heterosexual dating relationships (e.g., Bennett & Dickinson, 1998; T. D. Fisher, 1987, 2020; Sales et al., 2008). Darling and Hicks (1982) developed an early measure of message themes conveyed by parents to their adolescent children, including characterizations of sex as a “dangerous,” “dirty,” or “positive” experience. Two measures explicitly identify sexual socialization as their focus: the Sexual Socialization Instrument (SSI; Lottes et al., 2020; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994) and the Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure (SSDM; Day, 2010; Epstein & Ward, 2008; Fletcher et al., 2015; Trinh et al., 2014).

2.2.1.1 Sexual Socialization Instrument

The Sexual Socialization Instrument (SSI; Lottes et al., 2020; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994) measures the level of sexual permissiveness (acceptance of non-marital sexual activity and casual sex with multiple partners) reflected in socialization messages respondents received from parents and peers. The SSI consists of two subscales corresponding to these agents, providing a *parental* and *peer sexual socialization* score, as well as a combined score (Lottes et al., 2020). The full SSI (i.e., long form) consists of 20 items (nine parental sexual socialization items, 11 peer sexual socialization items); a nine-item short form consists of four parental and five peer items. Respondents are provided with a list of statements and asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement, based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("Strongly agree") to 5 ("Strongly disagree"). Examples of *parental sexual socialization* items include, "My father would have felt okay about my having casual sexual encounters," and "My mother would only have approved of me having sex in a serious relationship." Examples of *peer sexual socialization* items include, "My friends disapprove of being involved with someone who was known to be sexually easy," and "My friends and I enjoy telling each other about our sexual experiences." The measure is scored by adding the ratings, resulting in two subscale scores and a total score (the sum of the two subscales). The possible ranges of scores for the short form are 4 to 20 for the parental subscale, 6 to 30 for the peer subscale, and 10 to 50 for the full scale. For the long form, possible scores range from 8 to 40 for the parental subscale, 12 to 60 for the peer subscale, and 20 to 100 for the full scale.

Lottes and Kuriloff's (1994) original scale consisted of only the 10 short form items, which resulted in Cronbach's alpha values of .60 for both the parental and peer subscales in a survey of 557 first-year college students in the U.S. The researchers added items to improve scale reliability,

and the long form version was administered to 303 of the same students in their senior year of college. This version of the SSI resulted in Cronbach's alphas of .73 for parental and .70 for peer subscales. A later study by Wernersbach (2013), involving 63 university students, found an unacceptably low Cronbach's alpha of .40 for the parental subscale, a result which the researcher attributed to a floor effect; for the peer subscale, however, they found a strong alpha score of .87. The peer sexual socialization subscale was also used by Westerlund et al. (2012) in a survey of 9,534 adults from Finland, and they found strong support for factorial validity of the subscale using confirmatory factor analysis.

The SSI has a few notable weaknesses. First, it is measuring a particular focus of sexual socialization—the communication of permissive or non-permissive (i.e., restrictive) attitudes—without considering a host of other topics and attitudes that sexual socialization might involve. Second, it uses fixed statements relating to specific socialization agents, limiting its use for assessing sexual socialization respondents receive from other sources. Relatedly, these specific agents include "mother" and "father," which can make some items irrelevant if a respondent has only one parent, has more than one parent of the same gender, or has one or more gender-nonbinary parent(s). Third, the time period for which respondents are meant to rate items is not specified, and it is made more unclear by the fact that items in the parental subscale are worded in the past tense, while items in the peer subscale are worded in the present tense. Finally, one item in the peer subscale, "I am uncomfortable around people who spend much of their time talking about their sexual experiences," does not address the attitudes espoused by peers through sexual socialization; rather, it addresses the respondent's own feelings about other people's (and not even clearly "peers'") behavior.

While these observations would not make the SSI irrelevant or unusable in all circumstances, its limitations make it a measure that is useful for only select purposes.

2.2.1.2 Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure

A measure attributed to Caruthers and Ward (2002) has been utilized in various forms in sexual socialization research (e.g., Epstein & Ward, 2008; Fletcher et al., 2015; Foust et al., 2021; Kim & Ward, 2007; Smiler et al., 2005; Trinh et al., 2014; Trinh & Kim, 2021). Kim and Ward (2007) refer to the measure as the Childhood and Adolescent Sexual Messages scale. Others (Day, 2010; Fletcher et al., 2015; Foust et al., 2021; Manago et al., 2015) refer to it as the Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure (SSDM). For clarity, I use the latter throughout the remainder of this review and subsequent chapters to refer to any version of the instrument, including those which use another title (e.g., Kim & Ward, 2007) or no title at all (e.g., Epstein & Ward, 2008).

The SSDM (Caruthers & Ward, 2002; Epstein & Ward, 2008; Fletcher et al., 2015; Kim & Ward, 2007; Levin et al., 2012; Trinh et al., 2014) is a questionnaire designed to have respondents indicate the extent to which certain values about sex and sexuality were communicated to them between the ages of five and 18, by select socialization agents. Authors who have used the SSDM and contributed to its development over time (e.g., Kim & Ward, 2007; Smiler et al., 2005) have indicated that the instrument is adapted from the measure by Darling and Hicks (1982) mentioned above, which assesses the amount of communication individuals recall receiving from parents about sex and sexuality. The SSDM borrows its structure and scoring scheme from the Darling and Hicks (1982) measure, with a 4-point range representing the following degrees of message emphasis by socialization agents: *none* (0), *a little* (1), *some* (2), and *a lot* (3).

Versions of the SSDM vary in the message themes, specific sexual values, and socialization agents they ask about. They also vary in length, so while they all use the four-point 0 to 3 scale,

possible outcome ranges for as many as six subscales (Day, 2010) and as few as four (Trinh et al., 2014), and for the full measure of up to 60 items (Levin et al., 2012) vary accordingly. Epstein and Ward's (2008) version, which is commonly cited as the basis for subsequent adaptations, consists of 37 items in five categories of sexual socialization discourses, which the authors identified through principal components factor analysis. The categories include *sexual stereotypes about men* (e.g., "Men want as much as they can get on a first date"); *sexual stereotypes about women* (e.g., "It is not appropriate for women to be too interested in sex or to plan for sex"); *sex is for marriage* (e.g., "Sex outside of marriage is a sin"); *importance of love* (e.g., "Sex is best when the partners are in a loving and committed relationship"); and *sexual freedom* (e.g., "No sexual act should be considered immoral as long as both parties are consenting adults"). For their study, Epstein and Ward (2008) asked 286 undergraduate males to indicate the extent to which three socialization agents communicated messaging that conveyed the listed values: parents, peers, and media (TV/movies). Cronbach's alpha scores for each of the subscales, across the three agents, ranged from .74 to .90, indicating good reliability.

Other versions of the SSDM (Day, 2010; Kim & Ward, 2007; Levin et al., 2012; Trinh et al., 2014) ask about values categorized as *sexual double standard* (Day, 2010; Levin, 2012) or *gendered sexual roles* (Kim & Ward, 2007; Trinh et al., 2014), comprised entirely or partially of a combination of items from Epstein and Ward's (2008) *sexual stereotypes about men* and *sexual stereotypes about women* categories. Also common across versions are the themes of *sex is for marriage* (labeled *abstinence* in some cases; Kim & Ward, 2007; Levin et al., 2012; Trinh et al., 2014) and *importance of love/relationships* (Epstein & Ward, 2008; Trinh et al., 2014), or "sex is relational" (Day, 2010; Kim & Ward, 2007).

One limitation of the SSDM versions discussed here is their emphasis on sexuality- and gender-normative identities and relationships, potentially restricting their relevance to only certain populations. While individuals could receive any of the messages from socialization agents, regardless of their current identities, research participants might find emphases on messages about male/female sexual stereotypes, for example, off-putting if they are not heterosexual or cisgender. Several of the SSDM versions also ask about messaging from parents without distinguishing messaging from multiple parents, or only asking about mothers and fathers (e.g., Kim & Ward, 2007). The challenges and limitations of asking respondents about non-traditional (i.e., heterosexual, cisgender, two-parent) families and diverse friend groups are discussed later in this paper, as they are also relevant to the measure I developed for this study.

No version of the SSDM explicitly characterizes any of the discourse themes (i.e., subscales) as sex(uality)-positive or -affirming, or as sex(uality)-negative or -negating. The exception to this is a subscale in Levin and colleagues' (2012) version, named *positive sexuality*. This subscale combines select items from Epstein and Ward's (2008) *importance of love* and *sexual freedom* categories, as well as some original items. Levin et al.'s (2012) *positive sexuality* scale also overlaps with categories used in other SSDM versions, such as *acceptance of casual sex* (Trinh et al., 2014), *acceptance of premarital sex* (Kim and Ward, 2007), and *sex [is] natural* (Day, 2010). Levin and colleagues (2012) do not put forth a *negative sexuality* subscale to correspond with the *positive sexuality* one. It is unclear whether the authors mean to imply that five other subscales (of which they report on two—*sexual abstinence* and *sexual double-standard*) all reflect *negative sexuality* discourses.

While they do not label any subscales as such, some researchers using the SSDM describe certain message themes as *sex-positive* or *sex-negative* in their discussions of the measure and/or

their study findings. Epstein and Ward (2008), for example, summarize *sex-positive* messaging as "characterizing sex as desirable, natural, and casual; encouraging sexual freedom and exploration; sanctioning both relational and nonrelational sex; and validating sexual stereotypes about men and women" (p. 123). (Given the incompatibility of items in their *sexual stereotypes* subscales with characteristics of sex-positivity discussed in an earlier section, it is unclear why the authors consider validating such stereotypes "sex-positive.") In addition, Epstein and Ward contrast sex-positive messages with "risk-related" (p. 116) messages, including those "focused on abstinence and contraception" (p. 113). Among themes the authors identified in qualitative analyses of responses to open-ended survey questions were peer endorsements of "positive" aspects of sex, such as "'Sex is cool' and 'Sex is the best feeling in the world'" (p. 121). The authors also label aspects of media messaging about sex as positive, such as "'Sex is typically glorified on TV' and 'Sex is popular/cool'" (p. 121). Although they use the terms (sex-) *positive* and (sex-) *negative*, Epstein and Ward do not provide concrete definitions, and readers are left largely to infer meanings based on how the terms are counterposed with contrasting concepts—as in the above example of "risk-related" being contrasted with "positive" (p. 116), suggesting the two represent opposing values.

Fletcher and colleagues (2015) are somewhat more direct in suggesting a definition for *sex-positive* messages by using the term as a label for a discourse described as *sex is recreational*.[2] The authors explain that the discourse refers to "notions regarding sexual activities being

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[2] Fletcher et al. (2015) did not publish the SSDM version they used but reference the Trinh et al. (2014) version as the one they employed in their study. By referencing Trinh et al.'s published version, it is clear Fletcher et al.'s (2015) *sex-positive*, or *sex is recreational*, discourse corresponds with Trinh et al.'s "Acceptance of casual sex" subscale, which was used in the current study and is outlined in Chapter 3, section 3.3.2.2.

acceptable and normative outside of relationships (e.g., 'Having sex is just something fun to do')" (p. 204). Like in Levin's (2012) version of the SSDM, Fletcher et al. (2015) do not propose a sex-negative subscale, possibly implying all subscales other than the sex-positive one are sex-*negative*.

The lack of clarity regarding definitions of sex-positive and sex-negative discourses in each of the studies utilizing the SSDM (Epstein & Ward, 2008; Fletcher et al., 2015; Levin et al., 2012) is reflective of the inconsistent conceptualization of and use of the terms sex-positive/-positivity and sex-negative/-negativity described earlier in this chapter. This does not necessarily represent a weakness of the SSDM as a tool for particular purposes, as none of the researchers who have used it and contributed to its development over time have stated or implied that its purpose is to distinguish between sex-positive and sex-negative sexual socialization discourses. While authors such as those noted above employ the language of sex-positivity and sex-negativity, their approach to identifying discourse themes (i.e., principal components factor analysis) and to subsequently analyzing SSDM outcomes data (e.g., comparing amounts of messaging participants received representative of each discourse) suggests more of a focus on topical content than on the attitudinal nature of messaging. In other words, the SSDM has been used to gauge how much messaging respondents have received relating to topics like abstinence, sex within and outside of marriage/committed relationships, and gender-based norms relating to sexuality; aside from labeling some topics sex-positive and others sex-negative, the SSDM has not been designed or used in such a way that it quantifies the extent to which contrasting attitudinal orientations toward sex and sexuality are conveyed in sexual socialization messaging.

2.2.1.3 Other Measures of Constructs Relevant to Sexual Socialization

There are a number of existing measures designed to assess parent-child communication about sex and sexuality. Some of these inventory the topics respondents learned about from their

parents (e.g., The Weighted Topics Measure of Family Sexual Communication, T. D. Fisher, 1987, 2020; Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale, Sales et al., 2008, 2020). Others include additional agents along with parents, such as friends and dating partners (e.g., Adolescent Sex Communication Scale, Widman et al., 2014; Widman & Stewart, 2020). As the names of some of these examples indicate, these measures are designed for use with adolescent samples and focus on current or recent communications they have had with agents. For example:

> In the past 6 months, how often have you and your parent(s) talked about the following things…
>
> 1. …sex. […]
>
> 3. …protecting yourself from STDs. […]
>
> 5. …protecting yourself from becoming pregnant (Sales et al., 2020, p. 227)

> In the past year, how much have you talked to your best friend about the following topics?
>
> a. Using condoms. […]
>
> d. HIV/AIDS. […]
>
> f. Waiting to have sex until you're older or sexual abstinence" (Widman & Stewart, 2020, p. 253).

These measures, as illustrated here, commonly focus on topics related to sexual health, pregnancy/contraception, and abstinence.

Going beyond topic coverage, other instruments assess aspects of the social environment within which individuals learned about sex, including the nature of attitudes expressed or demonstrated by agents in the process. The Sex Education Inventory (SEI; Bennett & Dickinson,

1980, 1998) is a 57-item questionnaire designed to gather information from college students regarding the sources of education they received about sex-related topics. It also asks respondents about which sources they prefer (or would have preferred) to learn about sex from and which sources they believe should provide education to children regarding particular sex-related topics. The SEI lists a number of possible sources, including mother, father, female friends, male friends, and various influential adult figures, such as healthcare providers, teachers, and religious leaders. Thirty-three items are devoted to the role of parents (i.e., mother and father) in respondents' sexuality education, including scaled items about the general nature of the respondent's relationship with each parent. Bennett and Dickinson (1998) explain that this section focuses on the "family environment for sexual learning" (p. 196). While the SEI asks respondents to indicate which agents they learned about specific sexuality-related topics from, and who they think young people *should* learn about those topics from, the instrument does not seek to quantify *the amount of* communication they received about each topic, as those mentioned above do; furthermore, it goes further than other measures to assess qualities of the social contexts within which learning about sex and sexuality takes place.

The Sexual History and Adjustment Questionnaire (SHAQ; Lewis & Janda, 1988, 2011) is a 30-item measure that similarly assesses aspects of the familial environment within which respondents witnessed or learned about sexuality-related norms, including nudity, bed-sharing, physical affection, and having conversations about sexuality. The SHAQ also uniquely assesses respondents' feelings about discussing sex and sexuality with parents (e.g., "Over the course of your childhood, please rate the degree of comfort you felt in talking about sexual matters with your mother [or father]"; "While you were growing up, please rate the degree of comfort you think your mother [or father] felt when talking about sexuality"). The SHAQ also asks respondents about

their sense of their parents' attitudes about sexuality (e.g., "How would you characterize your mother's [or father's] attitude toward sexuality when you were growing up?"). Response options for parental attitudes correspond to a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("extremely negative") to 5 ("extremely positive"). The SHAQ also differs from other measures mentioned here by not asking at all about specific topic coverage in sexual communication, instead focusing on the attitudes and values respondents perceived in the words and actions of their parents and other family members.

2.2.2 Sexual Attitudes Measurement Research

Opinions, values, and attitudes about sexuality have been a focus of research for several decades, as evidenced by a substantial body of validated measures addressing the topic. I reviewed several such measures in the process of developing and selecting items for the current project (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1.1, and Chapter 4, Section 4.1.1.1). A full list of the measures I reviewed is shown in Table 1. Given the sizeable selection of sexual attitudes-related measures that can be found in scholarly literature, I will focus in this section primarily on two identified measures which strive to operationalize sex-positivity (and, in one case, sex-negativity, as well).

2.2.2.1 Sex Positivity-Negativity Scale

Hangen and Rogge (2022) developed the Sex Positivity-Negativity (SPN) scale to assess respondents' global attitudes regarding sex and sexuality, or "the degree to which thinking about sex and sexuality have generally negative and/or positive connotations for individuals" (p 523). The authors credit a widely-utilized existing instrument, the Sexual Opinion Survey (SOS; W. A. Fisher et al., 1988), as an important precursor to scales designed since the SOS's development to

Table 1 Existing Measures Reviewed

Measure	Author(s)
Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale	Hendrick & Hendrick (1987; 2020)
Comfort with Sexual Matters for Young Adolescents	Rye et al. (2012), Rye & Traversa (2020)
Darling & Hicks Parental messages measure	Darling & Hicks (1982)
Multidimensional Measure of Comfort with Sexuality	Tromovitch (2020; 2000)
Revised Attitudes Toward Sexuality Inventory – Attitudes Toward Sexual Issues subscale	Patton & Mannison (2020)
Sexual Conservatism Scale	Burt (1980)
Sexual History and Adjustment Questionnaire – Parental Attitudes subscale	Lewis & Janda (1988, 2011)
Sexual Importance Scale	Dossett (2020)
Sexual Liberalism Scale	Rye et al. (2015, 2020)
Sexual Opinion Survey	W. A. Fisher et al. (1988) Rye & Fisher (2020)
Sexual Scripts Scale	Sakaluk et al. (2014, 2020)
Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure	Based on an unpublished measure attributed to Caruthers & Ward (2002)—Versions reviewed: Day (2010), Epstein & Ward (2008), Kim & Ward (2007), Levin et al. (2012), Trinh et al. (2014)
Sexual Socialization Instrument	Lottes & Kuriloff (1994), Lottes et al. (2020)

assess attitudes regarding a wide range of specific sexuality-related topics (e.g., homosexuality, pornography, masturbation). The SOS, Hangen and Rogge (2022) point out, combines items on a variety of such topics in order to generate scores representing respondent levels of *erotophobia* and *erotophilia*. Hangen and Rogge describe erotophobia and erotophilia as *trait dispositions* to have "positive and/or negative affective reactions, evaluations, and attitudes" (p. 523) in response to sex- and sexuality-related stimuli. They conceptualize sex-negativity and sex-positivity as component elements of erotophobia and erotophilia, along with affective, evaluative, and attitudinal responses regarding specific sexual topics. They thereby justify their development of a new measure of global sexual attitudes to be used in combination with a battery of topic-specific measures that, combined, serve to measure the broader concepts of erotophobia and erotophilia.

Measures of global and specific attitudes used in combination would be useful, for example, to distinguish between a person's level of sex-positivity and their opinions about specific topics that might vary from a generally sex-positive perspective. An individual could have generally positive affective and evaluative responses to friends or their children raising sexuality-related topics in conversation; at the same time, the person could hold restrictive views about sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage, or they could find pornography upsetting. Ultimately, determining the person's trait disposition toward matters of sex and sexuality would entail an overall assessment of global and specific perspectives, taken together.

The SPN scale (Hangen & Rogge, 2022) measures respondents' levels of sex-positivity and sex-negativity, based on ratings of agreement with descriptive words completing the statement, "IN GENERAL, sex and sexuality are…" The original SPN scale contains 16 items (eight representing sex-positivity, eight representing sex-negativity), and a short form contains eight total items (four sex-positivity, four sex-negativity items). Respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement formed by combining the sentence root with each word, according to a six-point scale, ranging from "Not at all" to "Extremely." For example, the sex-positive subscale (short form) consists of the following: "IN GENERAL, sex and sexuality are…" [1] "fun"; [2] "pleasant"; [3] "invigorating"; [4] "positive." The sex-negative subscale (short form) includes: "IN GENERAL, sex and sexuality are…" [1] "miserable"; [2] "unpleasant"; [3] "negative"; [4] "upsetting." Additional details about the SPN scale's design and psychometric properties are discussed in Chapter 3, since I included the measure in the data collection survey for the current study and conducted certain analyses using SPN outcomes. To date, the relatively new SPN scale has not been used in studies other than Hangen and Rogge's measure development study, so further insights about its utility are unavailable.

2.2.2.2 Sex Positivity Scale

The Sex Positivity Scale (SPS; Belous & Schulz, 2022) is a measure of respondents' endorsement of 26 statements reflecting sex-positive attitudes. According to its developers, items were generated and selected based on reviews of relevant literature. The SPS follows a format similar to existing attitudinal measures (see Table 1), with respondents indicating on a 5-point scale the extent to which they agree with a series of statements. Response options are *completely disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *neither agree nor disagree* (3), *agree* (4), and *completely agree* (5). Belous and Shulz (2022) identified three subscales through an exploratory parallel analysis, which were confirmed through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. The subscales representing the three identified factors are Behaviors and Attitudes (10 items; $\alpha = .83$), Talking about Sex, Communication (8 items; $\alpha = .83$), and Personal Beliefs, Knowledge, and Exploration (8 items; $\alpha = .79$). A Cronbach's alpha score of .87 for the full SPS provides evidence of internal reliability. Convergent validity of the measure is supported by a moderate-to-strong Pearson's r correlation coefficient ($r(520) = .662$, $p < .001$) calculated between the SPS and the Sexual Opinion Survey (W. A. Fisher et al., 1988; Gilbert & Gamache, 1984). The SPS holds promise for making an important contribution to research and clinical practice by providing an instrument that measures sex-positivity as a personality trait, similar to the SPN scale (Hangen & Rogge, 2022) but in a more common, and perhaps more respondent-friendly, format. As with the SPN scale, the Sex Positivity Scale's (Belous & Schulz, 2022) aim is to assess respondents' own sex-positivity, not the positivity (or negativity) of messages respondents may have received from various agents through sexual socialization. Furthermore, as its name indicates, the Sex Positivity Scale does not include items to measure sex-negativity as a construct contrasting with sex-positivity.

2.2.3 Summary of Limitations of Existing Research and Measures

As demonstrated in this review of research literature focused on measuring sexual socialization and attitudinal dispositions toward sex and sexuality, instruments that assess each of those constructs exist, yet none simultaneously assess attitudinal dispositions as they characterize sexual socialization messaging. The SSI (Lottes et al., 2020; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994) measures a single attitudinal orientation of sexual socialization messaging, *permissiveness*, and is therefore limited in the dimensions of sexuality-affirming and sexuality-negating perspectives that could be conveyed in sexual socialization messaging. Multiple similar yet varying versions of the SSDM (Caruthers & Ward, 2002; Day, 2010; Epstein & Ward, 2008; Trinh et al., 2014, etc.) cover a greater breadth of topics commonly found in sexual socialization messaging, but developers and researchers using the SSDM have generally stopped short of characterizing the messages explicitly as sex-positive, sex-negative, sexuality-affirming, or sexuality-negating. Instead, they summarize messages in terms of thematic content.

The SPN scale (Hangen & Rogge, 2022) serves as a rare example of an approach to measuring sex-positivity and sex-negativity specifically; however, like other sexual attitudes and values measures, including the SOS (W. A. Fisher et al., 1988) and others that Hangen and Rogge (2022) used for testing the SNP scale's construct validity[3], the scale's focus is on respondents' perspectives, not on respondents' perceptions of others' views or the character of sexual

[3] These include the Comfort with Sexual Matters for Young Adults (Rye et al., 2012); the Sexual Anxiety Scale (Fallis et al., 2020); and the Multidimensional Measure of Comfort with Sexuality Scale (P. M. Tromovitch, 2000).

socialization messaging they have received from others. This is also true of the SPS (Belous & Schulz, 2022), which is further limited by its focus only on sex-positivity.

While all of the instruments discussed here have been shown to effectively measure the constructs they are interested in, their distinct foci leave a gap for a measure that assesses both sexual attitudes and sexual socialization or, more specifically, sexual attitudinal perspectives represented in the sexual socialization messaging individuals receive from key socialization agents, like parents and peers, during key developmental stages, like adolescence.

2.3 Synthesis of Literature

Sexual attitudes and behaviors are not spontaneous, random phenomena. In order to consider solutions to sexuality-related challenges society and individuals face, we must understand the ways in which sexual attitudes and behaviors develop. By doing so, social workers and other social problem-solvers will be able to identify potential new sites for intervention to prevent problematic sexual behaviors and transform perspectives that support them. Based on the assumption that individuals' sexual worldviews inform the values they hold and the behavioral choices they make with regard to sex and sexuality, we can look to social learning theories (Bandura, 1977; Rotter, 1954) and symbolic interactionist perspectives (Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1991; G. H. Mead, 1934/1972) to understand how sexual worldviews are formed and, in turn, how they inform affective, evaluative, and attitudinal dispositions toward sex and sexuality, contributing to problematic outcomes like incidents of sexual harm.

Informing sexual worldview development are processes of sexual socialization (Sitron & Dyson, 2012). Key socialization agents contribute to the beliefs, values, attitudes, and other

elements that comprise one's sexual worldview, so identifying the types of messages that sexual socialization agents convey and how they relate to socialization targets' attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, opens opportunities to identify problematic messaging that can be addressed at the socialization agent level—or, on the other hand, beneficial messaging that can be reinforced and built upon to prevent sexuality-related challenges and to cultivate holistic wellbeing. While researchers have developed measures to facilitate the study of respondents' sexual attitudes, on one hand, and sexual socialization respondents have experienced from various agents on the other hand, no existing measure assesses the nature of sexual perspectives conveyed through messaging individuals receive through processes sexual socialization. Based on disparately conceptualized notions of sex-positivity and sex-negativity, I drew from language used by Reich (1936, 1936/1974) in early writings on similar foundational ideas to conceptualize *sexuality-affirming* and *sexuality-negating* perspectives that characterize sexual socialization messaging. The instrument developed from the current study, the Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging Measure (SANSSMM), fills gaps in both theory—by preliminarily conceptualizing its focus constructs and thereby moving social and sexual science fields toward standardized definitions of affirming/positive and negating/negative sexual perspectives—and in research, by introducing a means of measuring attitudinal perspectives embedded in sexual socialization messaging, in order to understand their impacts on sexual worldviews and outcomes.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This measure development study consisted of three phases: item generation, scale validation, and exploratory analyses. Phase One focused on selecting items for the Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging Measure (SANSSMM). This process entailed: (a) identifying applicable items from existing validated measures; (b) generating new items, based on theoretical and empirical literature, to fill thematic gaps among existing measure items; (c) eliciting feedback on potential items for the new measure from an expert panel; and (d) conducting cognitive interviews about the final draft measure with individuals who share characteristics with the population from which a sample would be recruited for measure validation. Phase Two involved reliability and validity testing of the SANSSMM using survey response data from a cross-sectional online survey of 284 U.S. residents, aged 18 to 33. Finally, Phase Three utilized the SANSSMM in exploratory bivariate and multivariate analyses, including mean comparisons for Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating SSM prominence scores across participant characteristics; mean comparisons between SANSSMM scores for messaging participants received from parents and messaging they received from peers; and logistic and multiple linear regressions to assess relationships between SANSSMM scores and participants' current global sexual attitudes (sex-positivity and -negativity) and past use of coercive sexual strategies to engage someone in sexual activity.

3.2 Phase One: Development and Selection of Items for the SANSSMM

3.2.1 Content Validation

For the content validation component of this study, I engaged Lynn's (1986) two stage procedure: (1) *Development* and (2) *Judgment-Quantification*. The *Development* stage entails (a) identifying domains which encompass key aspects of the construct the instrument is intended to measure; (b) generating measure items; and (c) constructing the measure. The *Judgment-Quantification* stage involves gathering feedback from a panel of individuals with expertise in the focus construct or in one or more of the dimensions of the construct. This feedback includes panelists' assessments of content validity both of the measure's items individually and of the measure as a whole.

3.2.1.1 Content Validation Stage 1: Development

3.2.1.1.1 Sources

Lynn (1986) indicates that the first step in the Development stage of measure design is a thorough review of literature to identify domains, subdomains, and dimensions that encompass a comprehensive conceptualization of the instrument's measurement target. For the SANSSMM, the measurement target is sexual socialization messaging—specifically, *sexuality-affirming* SSM and *sexuality-negating* SSM. These two types of SSM therefore served as the domains under which I broadly categorized measure items. Much of the literature I reviewed for this step was discussed in Chapter 2. Sources included empirical research, theoretical scholarly writing, reports from national (U.S.) and international organizations (e.g., World Health Organization), existing

validated measures, and non-academic literature. Given limited attention to operationalizing concepts such as *sex-positivity*, *positive sexuality*, and *sex-negativity* in scholarly literature, I looked to magazine articles, blog posts, and other resources outside of scholarly literature for perspectives that would inform identification of dimensions of Sexuality-Affirming SSM or Sexuality-Negating SSM. I identified many of these resources by reviewing references cited in the relevant scholarly literature.

My first step in item development was to compile a pool of existing validated measure items relevant to sexual socialization messaging and/or to attitudinal dispositions toward sexuality. I started with all items from five versions of the Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure (SSDM) printed in scholarly literature (Day, 2010; Epstein & Ward, 2008; Kim & Ward, 2007; Levin et al., 2012; Trinh et al., 2014). I also included items from a measure of parental sexual communication messages by Darling and Hicks (1982), which developers of the SSDM (Epstein & Ward, 2008; Smiler et al., 2005; Trinh et al., 2014) cite as a model upon which the SSDM was based. Next, I added all items from the Sexual Socialization Instrument – Long Form (SSI; Lottes et al., 2020; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994). I began my item pool with the SSDM and SSI because they were the only measures I identified that explicitly focus on sexual socialization. For a similar reason, I included items from the only measure I identified that explicitly names sex-positivity and sex-negativity as its focus, the Sex Positivity-Negativity (SPN) Scale (Hangen & Rogge, 2022). I subsequently reviewed items from four measures Hangen and Rogge (2022) cite as resources from which they drew guidance in developing the SPN Scale and which they used in testing convergent validity of their original instrument: the Sexual Opinion Survey (W. A. Fisher et al., 1988; Rye & Fisher, 2020); the Comfort with Sexual Matters for Young Adolescents scale (CWSMYA; Rye et al., 2012; Rye & Traversa, 2020); the Sexual Anxiety Scale (SAS; Fallis et al., 2020); and the

Multidimensional Measure of Comfort with Sexuality scale (MMCS1; P. Tromovitch, 2020; P. M. Tromovitch, 2000).

In addition to measures I identified through the literature review I conducted, I consulted three editions of the *Handbook of Sexuality-Related Measures* (Davis et al., 1998; T. D. Fisher et al., 2011; Milhausen et al., 2020) to identify other instruments designed to measure constructs similar or closely related to sexual socialization, communication, attitudes, and values. I also searched two databases of psychometric instruments for the health and social sciences for relevant measures: Health and Psychosocial Instruments and Mental Measurements Yearbook (EBSCOhost).

3.2.1.1.2 Procedure

I assembled items from instruments with greatest relevance to the SANSSMM's purpose into a single list. I then proceeded with a process of *binning and winnowing* (DeWalt et al., 2007). This refers to grouping items of similar content or intent into thematic "bins" (*binning*), then narrowing items within the bins to those most representative of the concept they are meant to collectively represent (*winnowing*). I began with the Sexuality-Affirming SSM domain, given a more sizeable literature I was able to draw from related to sex-positivity, positive sexuality, and sexual health and wellbeing. Nimbi et al.'s (2022) *sex positive pillars* and the additional themes discussed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.1.3.1.1, beginning on p. 31) served as the set of dimensions according to which I organized items. Once I had assembled a pool of items from existing instruments that represented the dimensions, I identified characteristics of sex-positivity, positive sexuality, and sexual health and wellbeing that seemed inadequately captured among existing items. Based on findings of the literature review I conducted, I formulated draft items to more completely capture dimensions of Sexuality-Affirming SSM where doing so was warranted.

I took two approaches to identifying Sexuality-Negating SSM dimensions and representative items, since definitions of the construct are vague in literature. First, I considered subscales that researchers have identified within the Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure, generally through factor analysis (Epstein & Ward, 2008; Trinh et al., 2014) or exploratory inclusion of theory-supported original items (Day, 2010; Levin et al., 2012). Second, I considered ideas that would represent opposites to those dimensions of Sexuality-Affirming SSM I had identified, even though negative dispositions toward sexuality are not necessarily direct opposites to positive ones (Ivanski & Kohut, 2017). I followed the same process as that described above for the Sexuality-Affirming SSM domain to compile a list of existing and original items for the Sexuality-Negating SSM domain.

3.2.1.2 Content Validation Stage 2: Judgment-Quantification

3.2.1.2.1 Expert Panelists

For the panel of expert advisors, I approached scholars, educators, and practitioners who specialize in topics including sex-positivity/-negativity, positive sexuality, sexual health, sex and relationship therapy, clinical practice with sexual and gender minority populations, critical feminism, and gender, sexuality, women's, and masculinity studies. I identified some experts through their published work and others through my own or mentors' professional and academic networks. Three members of the committee overseeing this dissertation (SJD, REG, SAG) were among the experts who provided feedback.

3.2.1.2.2 Measure

Grant and Davis (1997) provide guidelines for a questionnaire to elicit expert panel feedback, which allows a scale developer to measure feedback quantitatively and thereby report

statistics that support (or refute) claims of content validity. The basic questionnaire format they propose assesses measure items and the measure as a whole on three qualities: *representativeness*, *clarity*, and *comprehensiveness*. *Representativeness* refers to how well panelists believe individual items reflect various *dimensions* of the construct the instrument is intended to measure. Dimensions refer to all the aspects of a construct that, taken together, comprise the construct. *Clarity* refers to how likely respondents are to comprehend the statement or question and that their understanding aligns with the intended meaning of the item. *Comprehensiveness* refers to how well the full set of items encompasses the dimensions of the construct(s) being assessed.

First, the feedback survey through which I collected expert feedback provided panelists with a list of the dimensions of each domain (Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating perspectives), along with descriptions of each dimension. Appendix Table A-1 lists the proposed dimensions for each domain and brief descriptions, along with additional details that are discussed in Chapter 4. The survey asked experts to rate the level of importance of each dimension to comprehensively conceptualizing the domain's focus (i.e., "How important is each of the following dimensions in a comprehensive conceptualization of positive or affirming sexual perspectives? …of negative or negating sexual perspectives?"). Ratings were based on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("Not at all important") to 4 ("Very important"). Free-text response questions allowed panelists to indicate what additional dimensions should be included and which of the proposed dimensions should be altered or omitted due to inaccuracy, redundancy, irrelevance, or any other reasons.

Next, expert panelists were asked to rate each draft measure item on how well it represented a dimension of the Sexuality-Affirming or Sexuality-Negating domain. Following Grant and Davis's (1997) questionnaire format, ratings were based on a four-point Likert scale that reflected

a respondent's impression of an item as "Very" (4), "Somewhat" (3), "A little" (2), or "Not at all" (1) representative of the intended construct. Ratings of 3 or 2 indicated that an item needed *minor* or *major* revisions (respectively) in order to make it representative. A rating of 1 suggested that the item should be removed or replaced, while a 4 indicated no changes were necessary. Experts rated the level of clarity for all items on the same scale.

3.2.1.2.3 Procedure

Once content experts agreed to provide feedback on draft items for the SANSSMM, I emailed them an overview of the measure's purpose and format. I also provided an explanation of the constructs the SANSSMM is meant to measure, following a process recommended by Grant and Davis (1997). The email contained a link to the Qualtrics survey described above.

3.2.1.2.4 Analysis

An advantage of collecting expert panelist feedback through a quantitative instrument is that it allows the measure developer to assess properties of responses that support content validity, such as inter-rater agreement (Grant & Davis, 1997; Lynn, 1986), along with quantitative statistics to back up subjective interpretations of experts' feedback. I followed the following analytic steps, outlined by Grant and Davis (1997).

First, I calculated inter-rater agreement across experts' responses regarding, (a) the comprehensiveness of proposed dimensions of Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating perspectives, and (b) the representativeness and clarity of draft measure items. Grant and Davis (1997) suggest calculating percent agreement to establish inter-rater agreement. The use of percent agreement to establish inter-rater reliability in measure development, however, has been critiqued by scholars for being an inadequate measure of reliability, since it fails to account for the possibility of inter-rater agreements occurring by chance (Gwet, 2014; Lombard et al., 2002;

Neuendorf, 2017). The Cohen's kappa (κ) statistic is a common chance-corrected test utilized for calculating inter-rater reliability (Gwet, 2014; Lombard et al., 2002); however, Cohen's κ is appropriate only for use with two raters (Neuendorf, 2017). I therefore chose Gwet's (2008, 2014) AC_1 (agreement coefficient), which is acceptable for use with more than two raters and is also robust to high levels of inter-rater agreement, avoiding misleadingly poor agreement scores known as the *kappa's paradox* (Gwet, 2008). Since some have argued that both percent agreement and a chance-corrected statistic provide useful information to establish inter-rater reliability, I calculated both using the *kappaetc* package (Klein, 2018) for Stata (version 16.1). Seventy to 80 percent is considered acceptable percent agreement (Grant & Davis, 1997), and chance-corrected coefficients, like the AC_1, of .60 and higher are broadly considered acceptable, with coefficients of .75 or .80 and above typically considered an indication of very good inter-rater reliability (Neuendorf, 2017).

Once acceptable inter-rater agreement has been established, Grant and Davis (1997) suggest calculating the content validation index (CVI) for each item of a measure and for the overall measure. CVI represents the proportion of expert ratings of 3 or 4 (i.e., "Somewhat" or "Very" representative), relative to ratings of 1 or 2. Grant and Davis (1997) suggest a CVI of .80 or higher to indicate content validation.

Finally, to quantify expert ratings on representativeness and clarity, I calculated mean scores for each item in Microsoft Excel. Aligning with the 4-point scale on which experts rated items, higher mean scores for representativeness signal greater content validity than lower mean scores. While clarity ratings are not used to determine content validation, I calculated mean clarity scores in the same manner and used the 4-point rating scale to guide decisions regarding item modification or omission.

Taking into consideration CVI scores, mean expert ratings on representativeness and clarity, and experts' free-response feedback, I revisited items and retained, modified, or eliminated them accordingly. I also engaged in further binning and winnowing (DeWalt et al., 2007) to reduce the number of items by combining similar items or eliminating redundant ones. This process culminated in selecting a set of 22 items for the SANSSMM—10 Sexuality-Affirming SSM items and 12 Sexuality-Negating SSM items.

3.2.2 Response Process Validation: Cognitive Interviews

In addition to utilizing expert feedback to bolster content validity, measurement developers often conduct cognitive interviews with individuals who share characteristics with the measure's target population to help ensure comprehensibility of items and of other elements such as instructions, layout, and flow of the instrument (DeVellis, 2017; DeWalt et al., 2007; C. H. Peterson et al., 2017; Streiner et al., 2015; Willis, 2005). A joint committee convened by the American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), and National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME; 2014) classifies cognitive interviewing as *evidence of response processes*. To assess response process validation of the 22-item SANSSMM, I conducted online cognitive interviews and elicited feedback on the measure and its items via email from individuals with whom I was unable to schedule live interviews.

3.2.2.1 Cognitive Interview Participants

I recruited individuals to participate in cognitive interviews by directly contacting people I know whose demographic and personal identity characteristics align with inclusion criteria for the survey conducted in Phase Two of the study. I also asked colleagues and personal contacts for

referrals to others who might be willing to participate in a cognitive interview. In total, I conducted cognitive interviews with eight individuals.

3.2.2.2 Measure

Cognitive interviews followed a semi-structured format, which I developed based on Willis's (2005) guidelines for conducting cognitive interviews as part of measure development. The semi-structured interview guide I created utilized two interviewing techniques Willis (2005) describes: *think-aloud interviewing* and *verbal probing*. Think-aloud interviewing involves having a participant read the instructions and each of the items of a measure and verbalize their thought process in reaching their final response. Verbal probing entails a variety of prompts the interviewer uses to elicit the interviewee's perspective on various aspects of the measure or specific question. *Comprehension/interpretation* probes ask the participant to explain their understanding of a concept, which helps ensure that measure respondents are likely to understand the focus of the measure and intent of items, thereby providing responses relevant to the construct under investigation. *Paraphrasing* probes ask the interviewee to restate an item or instruction in their own words, helping the interviewer determine accurate comprehension. Willis (2005) also provides examples of "general probes," such as "How did you arrive at that answer?" and "Was that easy or hard to answer?" (p. 48).

3.2.2.3 Procedure

I conducted five cognitive interviews via Zoom. I chose to conduct the interviews virtually, since the SANSSMM would be administered online, and I was interested in receiving input from interviewees regarding the layout and functionality of the measure, in addition to its content. Interviewees were provided with a link to a preview version of the measure, which allowed them

to navigate the survey in the same manner study participants later would. Cognitive interviews lasted 50 to 90 minutes, depending on the amount of feedback interviewees had to share.

I conducted four of the cognitive interviews before making any changes to the measure. After the fourth, I made minor changes based on interviewees' feedback, then conducted a fifth interview using the revised version. I had planned to conduct three more cognitive interviews, but scheduling difficulties and time constraints made this unfeasible. I therefore elicited feedback on the measure from three additional individuals via email, providing them with specific questions to answer and prompts to respond to, similar to those in the cognitive interview guide. For example, I asked "After reading the instructions, what questions did you still have about what you were supposed to do?"; and, "Which items did you have trouble answering? What made them challenging?" While the written format of these final communications did not allow me to utilize strategies like think-aloud interviewing or verbal probing, I used open-ended questions to encourage respondents to consider and provide substantive critiques about the measure.

3.2.2.4 Analysis

Standard procedures for analyzing cognitive interview responses and incorporating feedback are lacking (C. H. Peterson et al., 2017). Feedback provided by interviewees (including those individuals who provided responses via email) was predominantly positive and suggested very few, minor changes to language or wording were warranted. I was therefore able to incorporate these small changes with confidence that they did not significantly change the items or other elements of the measure expert advisory panelists or earlier interviewees had endorsed.

3.2.3 Final Revision and Selection of Items

Taking content validation and response process validation results into account, I selected items for the SANSSMM based on three main considerations. First, I prioritized inclusion of items that experts rated high on representativeness of a dimension, particularly for dimensions they also rated high in importance. Second, I considered levels of item clarity, striving to include items with greatest clarity and, where necessary, making wording changes to improve clarity, according to expert and/or cognitive interviewee feedback. Third, I engaged in a final round of binning and winnowing (DeWalt et al., 2007) in order to reduce the number of items in the measure and avoid redundancy. As part of this final step, I also checked to make sure every dimension of the two domains had at least one item representative of the dimension.

3.3 Phase Two: Reliability and Validity Testing of the SANSSMM

3.3.1 Survey Participants

Data for reliability and validity testing of the SANSSMM were collected through an online survey of U.S. adults, aged 18 to 33.

3.3.1.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria for the survey sample include: (a) current age of 18 to 33 years; (b) current U.S. residency; (c) U.S. residency from ages 10 to 17; and (d) current and/or previous sexually-active status. The age range of 18 to 33 represents the latter half of the Millennial generation (born

between 1989 and 1996, currently aged 26 to 33; Pew Research Center, 2015) and the first half of Generation Z, which includes individuals over 18 (born between 1997 and 2004, currently aged 18 to 25; Dimock, 2019). This 16-year range allows for comparison between individuals coming of age during the early era of widespread internet use (late 1990s-early 2000s) and those who have been immersed in the digital age most or all of their lives. On the other hand, it avoids potentially incomparable differences in experience between adults approaching middle or older adulthood and those entering or currently in early adulthood. Furthermore, individuals who went through adolescence relatively recently may provide more reliable recollections of sexual socialization experiences than those further removed from adolescence.

While sexual socialization experiences may share characteristics across societies, and they may also differ substantially within the U.S., I opted to focus on individuals socialized within U.S. society in order to identify elements of sexual socialization common to the U.S. adolescent experience.

In order to gather information regarding respondents' sexual experiences, behaviors, and strategies, I limited participation to individuals who are, or have previously been, sexually active. *Sexually active* was described in the screening question as:

> *engaging consensually (willingly and without force) in one or more of the following, as "giver" and/or "receiver."*
>
> - Penetrative intercourse (vaginal or anal sex)
> - Oral contact with another person's genitals, anus, or breasts
> - Digital (finger) or manual (hand) contact with another person's genitals
> - Other genital-to-genital or genital-to-skin contact

3.3.1.2 Recruitment

I utilized an online research panel aggregation service, Prime Panels (Prime Research Solutions, Flushing, NY), to recruit survey participants. Prime Panels contracts with numerous online research panel platforms that recruit research participants from around the world (Chandler et al., 2019). Each platform notifies its users of study participation opportunities via their own communications. (See 0 for notification examples provided by CloudResearch; B. Wardrop, personal communication, October 14, 2022.) These communications provide potential participants with general information, including the estimated length of the survey and the incentive amount being offered for participation (B. Wardrop, personal communication, October 14, 2022).

Incentives for completion of a survey vary according to the panel recruitment platform participants use to take part in studies. According to CloudResearch:

> When using Prime Panels, CloudResearch is not able to specify the exact payment each participant receives. This is because different platforms have different ways of incentivizing participation and compensating participants for their time. For example, SurveyMonkey donates to a charity of the participants' choice. Other online panels give people gift cards, reward points, or small amounts of money. The vast majority of the time, market research platforms leave compensation options up to the participants themselves (i.e., letting people choose between reward points, gift cards, or cash). Given that participant payments are decentralized and often vary, CloudResearch is unable to quantify exactly how much each participant is compensated. (https://go.cloudresearch.com/knowledge/how-are-participants-on-prime-panels-compensated; "Compensation on Prime Panels," paras. 1-2)

No additional incentives were offered beyond those to which participants were entitled based on their arrangements with the panel platform through which they accessed the study. Participants receive their incentive following completion of the survey, according to the terms of their arrangement with platform through which they enter the survey.

3.3.1.3 Protection of Human Subjects

All procedures involving survey participants were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Pittsburgh. The potential harms of participating were possible breach of confidentiality or mild distress associated with answering questions about sex and sexuality, which can be a sensitive topic for some.

The potential for breach of confidentiality was minimal, as no identifying or sensitive data, including internet IP address, were collected in the course of participants completing the survey. Furthermore, I had no access to participant information apart from the responses they provided, as this is maintained by the panel platforms through which participants were recruited. Since neither those platforms nor Prime Panels had access to participant responses, which were collected in a university-licensed, password- and dual authentication-protected Qualtrics account, there was virtually no way responses could be linked to participants' personal information.

To minimize the risk of potential distress, participants were informed prior to beginning the survey of the subject matter and nature of the language used relating to sexuality. This disclosure also included a "trigger warning" alerting participants to a small number of questions about sexual coercion. This trigger warning was repeated prior to the sections that contained those questions, with an option to skip the sections and proceed to the next. Other than screening questions that determined a respondent's eligibility to participate in the study based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, participants were able to skip any questions they were not comfortable

answering. There was no time limit for completing the survey, so participants could step away from the survey and return later if they experienced distress and needed to take a break. Both at the beginning of the survey and at the conclusion, contact information for 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, a national suicide and crisis prevention phone and online chat service, was provided.

3.3.1.4 Power Analysis

I sought a sample of 250 participants, which would provide ample cases to achieve adequate statistical power for the planned analyses. In using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test measure reliability and validity, a sample of 8 to 10 cases per scale item is generally considered adequate for testing model fit (DeVellis, 2017; Kelley & Lai, 2018). I estimated that the scale I was developing and testing for would consist of a maximum of 24 items, making CFA feasible with adequate power using a total sample of 192 to 240. The target sample size of 250 would achieve a ratio of approximately 10 cases to each scale item and allow for some flexibility in the event of data missingness or the need to omit any cases from analyses. The target sample size would also adequately power planned analyses, including one-way ANOVA with up to eight groups, paired- and independent sample *t*-tests, and multiple linear regression models with up to 15 predictor variables. Based on calculations performed using G*Power software (Buchner et al., 2020), estimating moderate effect sizes, a sample of 250 participants would achieve power for all tests at levels ranging from .82 to .99.

3.3.2 Variables and Measures

Table 2 provides a listing of the variables used in reliability and validity testing, the instruments used to measure the variables, and properties of each measure. Demographic and

individual background variables collected in the survey are discussed under the methodology for Phase Three of the study.

Table 2 Variables and Measures Used for Reliability and Validity Testing

Variable	Measure
Sexual Socialization Messaging (SSM)	Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging Measure–Preliminary version (SANSSMM-p) • Developed for the current study, with items based on concepts from literature or adapted from existing measures • 22 items • 2 subscales: ◦ *Sexuality-Affirming SSM* (SASSM) subscale (10 items; Parents, α = .94; Peers, α = .92) ◦ *Sexuality-Negating SSM* (SNSSM) subscale (12 items; Parents, α = .88; Peers, α = .90) • Scale: 4 points; 0 = Not at all; 1 = A little; 2 = A fair amount; 3 = A lot • Reference period: Adolescence (age 10-17)
Acceptance of Casual Sex and *Abstinence* Sexual Socialization Discourses	Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure (SSDM) (Trinh et al., 2014) • 10 items ◦ *Acceptance of Casual Sex* subscale (6 items; Parents, α = .81; Friends, α = .85) ◦ *Abstinence* subscale (4 items; Parents, α = .83; Friends, α = .82) • Scale: 4 points; 0 = None; 1 = A little; 2 = Some; 3 = A lot • Reference period: Adolescence (ages 10 through 17) [a]

[a] Trinh and colleagues (2014) use a reference period of age 5 to 18 in their study. To reflect the same period of time as that which the SANSSMM-p asks participants to reference, 10 through 17 was used in the survey for the current study.

3.3.2.1 Sexual Socialization Messaging

3.3.2.1.1 Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging Measure

The preliminary version of the measure developed for the current study, the Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging Measure (SANSSMM-p), consisted of 22

items—10 Sexuality-Affirming SSM items and 12 Sexuality-Negating SSM items. Appendix Table D-1 contains the complete SANSSMM-p, including instructions, cued recall prompt, and all 22 items. While these two groups of items are broken out by subscale in Appendix Table D-1 for organizational purposes and clarity, the SANSSMM-p appeared to participants in the data collection survey as a single set of items. The items were ordered as they appear in the table, so all Sexuality-Affirming SSM items were grouped together, as were Sexuality-Negating SSM items, but there was no deliberate break in the presentation of items to indicate a shift from one SSM type to the other.

The design of the SANSSMM is based on the structure of the Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure (Caruthers & Ward, 2002; Epstein & Ward, 2008; Trinh et al., 2014), described in more detail below. Participants are provided with a cued-recall prompt, asking them to reflect on the time from when they were around 10 years of age through age 17 (a broad approximation of the ages of adolescence, prior to legal adulthood at 18). They are then instructed to rate the extent to which they received messaging (directly or indirectly) that reflects the provided value statements regarding sex- and sexuality-related topics, both from their primary parent(s)/caregiver(s) and from their friends/peers during adolescence. The instruction reads, "Indicate below each statement the extent to which you received that message (directly and/or indirectly) from your: [1] Parent(s)/Caregiver(s); [2] Friends/Peers." Items are rated on a four-point scale, with scores representing "Not at all" (0); "A little" (1); "A fair amount" (2); and "A lot" (3). Example items include, "Healthy sexuality is part of overall health and wellbeing," and "Sex education gives kids ideas that will get them into trouble."

Psychometric properties of the SANSSMM-p are discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.2, beginning on page 99.

3.3.2.2 Sexual Socialization Discourses

As part of testing convergent and discriminant validity of the SANSSMM, I utilized two subscales from Trinh et al.'s (2014) version of the Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure (SSDM): the *Acceptance of Casual Sex* (ACS) subscale and the [Sexual] *Abstinence* (SA) subscale. While these two subscales do not cover the full range of Sexuality-Affirming and Sexual-Negating SSM dimensions, I chose them for three reasons. First, they are both succinct subscales, containing a total of 10 items (six ACS items; four SA items), minimizing response burden for survey participants. Second, both subscales contain items used across most or all other versions of the SSDM (Day, 2010; Epstein & Ward, 2008; Kim & Ward, 2007; Levin et al., 2012). Third, items in the two other subscales of the Trinh et al. (2014) SSDM—*Gendered Sexual Roles* and *Importance of Relationships*—do not as clearly align with sexuality-affirming or -negating perspectives. For example, the Importance of Relationships item, "Sex is best when partners are in a loving and committed relationship," does not necessarily affirm or negate sexual expression, it simply reflects an opinion about the circumstances under which sex is "best." Furthermore, items in the Gendered Sexual Roles subscale primarily address binary male/female and heterosexual relationship dynamics, limiting relevance to diverse sexualities, gender identities, and relationship types. For example, the Gendered Sexual Roles item, "Men want sex; women want relationships," does not convey an opinion that affirms or negates sexuality; rather, it reflects generalizations about motivations for intimacy between cisgender men and women.

Trinh and colleagues' (2014) full version of the SSDM contains 22 items, across four subscales (Gendered Sexual Roles; Importance of Relationships; Acceptance of Casual Sex; and Abstinence). Respondents are provided the following prompt:

> During our formative years (i.e., ages 5-18), we receive many messages about how men and women should behave in sexual relationships. These messages come in many forms, and can be both verbal or nonverbal, direct or implied, true or false. Two prominent sources for these early messages about sex are our parents and our friends. Sometimes they send the same messages, and sometimes their messages conflict. Who told you what about sex? (p. 212)

Respondents are then asked to rate on a scale of 0 ("None") to 3 ("A lot")[4] the extent to which they received a series of messages about sex and sexuality. Mean scores are then calculated across items in each subscale, with higher scores indicating greater exposure to that sexual socialization discourse theme. Trinh et al. (2014) report good internal consistency reliability for both the ACS and SA subscales, across responses for two agents, parents (ACS Cronbach's α = .81; SA α = .83) and peers (ACS α = .85; SA α = .82). Factor loadings from a principal components analysis the authors conducted ranged from .49 to .75 for the ACS subscale, and from .70 to .82 for the SA subscale.

3.3.3 Procedure

I created the data collection survey in Qualtrics and included design features compatible with Prime Panels. These features included embedded data fields that would be generated when participants entered the survey via links from the recruitment platform they use and redirect links back to Prime Panels upon survey completion (or exclusion). The survey was launched on

[4] Trinh et al. (2014) do not provide descriptive labels for scores of 1 or 2. However, others (Epstein & Ward, 2008; Foust et al., 2021; Kim & Ward, 2007; Trinh & Kim, 2021) specify 1 = "A little" and 2 = "Some."

November 17, 2022, and closed December 2, 2022. Participant responses were logged directly in my university-licensed Qualtrics account, from which I exported data to Microsoft Excel for cleaning and visual inspection. Once data preparation was completed in Excel, I imported data into Stata (version 16.1) for most analyses, with the exception of Confirmatory Factor Analysis, which I conducted in R statistical software (version 4.0.3), using the *lavaan* package (Rosseel, 2012).

3.3.4 Analysis

3.3.4.1 Preliminary Analyses

To begin, I examined data visually, first in raw table format in Microsoft Excel for both categorical and continuous variables, then in histogram and scatter plot format in Stata for continuous variables. I calculated frequencies for categorical variables and ran tests of central tendency and distribution for continuous variables in order to determine whether any cases should be dropped, to identify outliers, and to assess levels of missingness.

I performed initial reliability and validity testing using Parent/Caregiver (“Parent[al]”) SANSSMM scores. Because I included Friend/Peer (“Peer[s]”) SANSSMM scores in Phase Three exploratory analyses, I repeated the internal consistency reliability procedures described below using Peer SANSSMM score data to ensure reliability was acceptable when using the measure to assess SSM from a different socialization agent. Conducting initial reliability and validity testing based on Parent data, then proceeding to utilize the validated scale to measure messaging from other agents (e.g., peers and media) is the approach Epstein and Ward (2008) used in an early published study testing item performance for the Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure. I used only Parental SANSSMM data in the other reliability and validity analyses described in the

paragraphs that follow (i.e., confirmatory factor analysis and convergent/discriminant validity testing).

3.3.4.2 Internal Consistency Reliability

The first step of reliability and validity testing involved examining internal consistency reliability by running Spearman's rho correlation analyses for: (a) the full SANSSMM; (b) the Sexuality-Affirming SSM subscale; and (c) the Sexuality-Negating SSM subscale. Spearman's rho correlation coefficient (r_s) is a nonparametric rank-order correlation suggested for testing interitem correlations for ordinal-level variables such as measurement scales (Gravetter et al., 2021). The only assumption that must be met in order to calculate Spearman's rho is that the variables being correlated are both ordinal-level variables (Verma & Abdel-Salam, 2019). A parametric equivalent of Spearman's rho is Pearson's r, a correlation coefficient often used to test internal consistency reliability when a scale is treated as an interval- or ratio-level measure. However, given the relatively small 0-4 range of the SANSSMM, I opted to treat it as an ordinal scale in analysis. As a nonparametric test, the assumption of normal distribution does not need to be met in order to proceed with use of Spearman's correlation (Verma & Abdel-Salam, 2019).

Standards for interpreting correlation coefficients generally consider values of .50 to .70 to be moderate to strong associations, with some identifying scores as low as .30 as moderate and .50 as strong (Kotrlik et al., 2011). In assessing item performance, correlation coefficients that are too low tend to indicate too weak a correlation with other items to serve as an indicator of the construct being measured, while values above a certain threshold suggest redundancy between items and increase the risk of inflating other internal reliability coefficients, such as Cronbach's alpha (DeVellis, 2017; Ponterotto & Ruckdeschel, 2007; Streiner et al., 2015). Based on varied ranges of acceptable interitem correlation values outlined by DeVellis (2017), Ponterotto and

Ruckdeschel (2007), and Streiner et al. (2015), I determined that interitem correlations between .30 and .80 would be acceptable. I used these as guidelines by which I would consider retaining or removing items for the SANSSMM based on Spearman's rho values for interitem correlations.

In the subsequent step of testing internal consistency reliability—calculating Cronbach's alpha—the *alpha* package for Stata (Weesie, 2021) is able to calculate "item-test" and "item-rest" correlations when the "item" option is included in the command (i.e., "alpha [variables], *item*"). Item-test refers to correlations between an individual item and the sum of all other test items. Item-rest refers to correlations between an individual item and the average of all other test items. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) suggest that item-test and item-rest correlations should be similar for all items, and items that stray from a pattern of scores may be a poor fit with other items. As the package name implies, the *alpha* command produces an overall Cronbach's alpha value for a complete scale, along with alpha scores for the scale if each individual item were to be omitted. The purpose of this final calculation is to consider whether eliminating an item would improve the overall scale's alpha score. Literature indicates that an overall alpha value between .70 and .90 is desirable for a psychometric instrument (Ponterotto & Ruckdeschel, 2007; Streiner et al., 2015).

3.3.4.3 Factorial Validity

I conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test factorial validity of the SANSSMM, with its theory-informed two-factor structure. CFA is valuable in measure development as a means of conceptualizing latent factors underlying related sets of indicator variables that are intended to represent the constructs being measured (Brown, 2015; DeVellis, 2017; Streiner et al., 2015). In the case of the SANSSMM, these latent constructs are two contrasting but related types of sexual socialization messaging, Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating SSM. CFA is often preceded by exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which serves to suggest a factor structure based on

the covariances of observed indicators, and models are then tested using CFA. Streiner and colleagues (2015) describe EFA as a *hypothesis-generating* technique, while CFA is a *hypothesis-testing* technique. Based on the *a priori* theory- and literature-informed hypothesis that affirming and negating sexual socialization messaging are two distinct constructs, and because indicator items were intentionally developed to represent facets of these concepts, CFA allowed me to test the soundness of the hypothesis, as well as the suitability of indicator items to represent the constructs of Sexuality-Affirming SSM and Sexuality-Negating SSM.

For each model tested, I examined fit indices to determine how well the model fit the observed data. Threshold values for acceptable model fit were as follows, according to widely-cited guidelines suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999): non-significance of a Chi-square goodness of fit test, comparing the theoretical model and observed model; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) of $\geq .90$; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of $< .08$; and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) of $< .07$.

3.3.4.4 Convergent and Discriminant Validity

To test convergent validity of the SANSSMM, I calculated Spearman's rho correlations between each of the measure's subscales and existing validated instruments that measure similar constructs. I ran Spearman's correlation tests between the Sexuality-Affirming SSM subscale and Trinh et al.'s (2014) *Acceptance of Casual Sex* subscale, and between the Sexuality-Negating SSM subscale and Trinh et al.'s *Abstinence* subscale. I looked for Spearman's rho correlation coefficient scores of at least $r_s \geq |.50|$ to indicate a moderate relationship between each SANSSMM subscale and its counterpart, with a score of $r_s \geq |.70|$ indicating a strong relationship that would support convergent validity. I tested discriminant validity following the same process and guidelines but did so by calculating Spearman's correlations between the Sexuality-Affirming SSM and

Abstinence subscale, and between the Sexuality-Negating SSM and *Acceptance of Casual Sex* subscale (opposite subscale pairings from those used in convergent validity testing). In this instance, I considered scores of $r_s \leq |.30|$ to be weak, suggesting a distinct difference between the constructs being measured.

3.4 Phase Three: Exploratory Utilization of the SANSSMM

3.4.1 Participants

For the exploratory analyses laid out in Aim 3 of the study, I used data from the same participants whose survey responses were used in Phase Two for SANSSMM reliability and validity testing. Details regarding recruitment and selection of the survey sample can be found in section 3.3.1, above.

3.4.2 Variables and Measures

3.4.2.1 Participant Demographic and Identity Characteristics

Standard demographic survey questions asked participants their age, ethnoracial identity, gender identity, sexual identity, and education level. I consulted reviews of demographic survey questions to select these, including Fassett et al. (2022), Hughes et al. (2016), and, for questions about gender and sexual identities in particular, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's (2022) report, *Measuring Sex, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation*. I elected to collect information on these personal identity characteristics, since each may have bearing on

the nature of sexual socialization one receives (for example, norms within one's ethnoracial community) or on how an individual interprets and internalizes sexual socialization messaging based on exposure (or lack thereof) to certain information or resources, based on factors such as educational achievement, socioeconomic background, and geographic location (see Fitzgerald & Grossman, 2021a). Two questions about U.S. residency (current and during adolescence) served as screening questions for eligibility to participate in the survey, along with age, based on the study's inclusion criteria.

3.4.2.2 Personal Background Characteristics: Childhood and Adolescent Micro- and Macro-Level Social Environmental Factors

The survey contained several questions regarding social-environmental characteristics of the family (or families), home(s), region, and state within which participants primarily resided during adolescence. Micro-level factors included family structure (i.e., who primarily raised them during the time they were an adolescent), household eligibility for government-sponsored assistance (a proxy for socioeconomic circumstance), and family's religious affiliation and religiosity. Macro-level factors included their state of primary residency during adolescence and rurality/urbanicity of the area where they lived. Rurality/urbanicity was assessed using a single item from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program Freshman Study (Higher Education Research Institute, University of California Los Angeles, 2022), which asks respondents to select the type of setting that best describes where they grew up (Remote, Rural, Suburban, or Urban). Based on state information, I was able to group participants by U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.) region and the predominant political ideology of the state they lived in (i.e. "Red" [Republican-leaning] state versus "Blue" [Democratic-leaning] state), based on state-level outcomes of presidential elections since 1996 (MIT Election Data and Science Lab, n.d.).

3.4.2.3 Global Sexual Attitudes

The first outcome variable of interest in exploratory analyses was participants' own attitudinal dispositions toward sex and sexuality, *in general*. This was measured using the short-form (SF) version of Hangen and Rogge's (2022) Sex Positivity-Negativity (SPN) scale. The SPN-SF is an 8-item measure developed to assess respondents' sex-positive and sex-negative attitudes, based on the level to which they agree with statements about sex and sexuality. While I chose to use the terms *sexuality-affirming* and *sexuality-negating* as alternatives to *sex-negative* and *sex-positive* (see Section 2.1.3.1.3), there is still considerable overlap in the conceptualization of the two sets of terms; furthermore, as noted in the review of empirical literature in Chapter 2, the SPN is the only instrument I was able to identify that is intended to measure respondents' global attitudinal perspectives regarding sex and sexuality, using the language of sex-positivity/sex-negativity. It was therefore appropriate to utilize the SPN, despite my own choice to refrain from using "sex-positive" and "sex-negative" in the development of the SANSSMM. Following the sentence root, "IN GENERAL, I feel that sex and sexuality are…," a series of words are listed to complete the statement. For the sex-positive subscale, these words are "fun," "pleasant," "positive," and "invigorating." For the sex-negative subscale, the words are "miserable," "unpleasant," "negative," and "upsetting." Responses correspond to a 6-point scale, with scores representing "Not at all"; "A little"; "Somewhat"; "Quite a bit"; "Very much"; and "Extremely." Hangen and Rogge (2022) do not specify the score values for these scale points; however, the mean results they report suggest a lower score corresponds to *less* sex-positivity or -negativity, a higher score corresponds to *greater* sex-positivity- or -negativity. In the data collection survey for the current study, I used point values of 0 ("Not at all") to 5 ("Extremely").

To test the scale's convergent and discriminant validity, Hangen and Rogge (2022) tested correlations between the SPN subscales and subscales of four other existing measures: the Sexual Opinion Survey (W. A. Fisher et al., 1988; Rye & Fisher, 2020); the Comfort with Sexual Matters for Young Adolescents scale (CWSMYA; Rye et al., 2012; Rye & Traversa, 2020); the Sexual Anxiety Scale (SAS; Fallis et al., 2020); and the Multidimensional Measure of Comfort with Sexuality scale (MMCS1; P. Tromovitch, 2020; P. M. Tromovitch, 2000). The SPN Scale demonstrated moderate discriminant validity alongside existing measures, with Pearson's correlation coefficients of $r = .42$ to $r = .46$ among male participants and $r = .48$ to $r = .56$ among female participants for the Sex-Positive subscale. Specific outcomes for the Sex-Negative subscale were not reported, but the authors state that the Sex-Negative subscale showed even greater discriminant validity than the Sex-Positive subscale. They further concluded that, in relation to each other, the Sex-Negative and Sex-Positive subscales were appropriately related yet distinct from one another, with correlations ranging from $r = -.46$ to $r = -.50$ among men and $r = -.54$ to $r = -.60$ among women for both the short- and long-form subscales.

3.4.2.4 History of Using Coercive Strategies to Obtain Sex

To measure respondents' past use of coercive strategies to obtain sex, I used a set of modified items from the Sexual Strategies Scale (SSS; Z. D. Peterson, 2020; Strang et al., 2013). The selection of these items was guided by a study in which Testa et al. (2015) compare properties and outcomes of the SSS and a related measure, the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES; Abbey et al., 2007). The SSS (Strang et al., 2013) is an instrument designed to inventory the number of coercive sexual strategies college men have previously used to obtain sex from a woman after the woman initially said no to sex. The SSS lists 22 coercive strategies and asks respondents to indicate which ones they have used by placing a checkmark next to those which apply. The prompt reads,

"In the past, which if any of the following strategies have you used to convince a woman to have sex (oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse) *after she initially said 'no'*?" The listed strategies fall into one of five categories: *use of enticement*, *verbal coercion*, *use of older age or authority*, *use of intoxication*, and *threats or force*. The SSS is scored by simply tabulating the number of strategies respondents indicate they have used at least once in the past, resulting in a score between 0 and 22.

In order to collect more nuanced information regarding use of coercive sexual tactics, I adapted the SSS to apply a frequency rating like those used by Mosher (2011) and Struckman-Johnson et al. (2003), which ask *how often* or *how many times* respondents have previously used various strategies to convince another person to engage in sexual activity. I reworded the SSS (Strang et al., 2013) prompt to read, "For each tactic, indicate how often you have used the tactic to try and get someone else to have sex after they said no or showed disinterest in other ways." This wording also made the prompt gender-neutral, since the sample being surveyed would include all genders. Response options corresponded to a scale of 0 to 3 (0 = Never; 1 = Rarely; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Often). Based on the survey Testa et al. (2015) used to explore the effectiveness of coercive sexual behavior measures, I included a total of 11 strategies, with at least one item corresponding to each of the strategy types Peterson and colleagues (2010) had identified and Strang and colleagues (2013) later labeled *enticement* (3 items); *verbal coercion* (4 items); *use of older age or authority* (1 item); *use of intoxication* (1 item); and *threats or force* (2 items). For the Aim 3 analyses I planned, any item score greater than 0 for one or more of the items representing a strategy type was converted to a binary value (0 = No past use of the strategy type; 1 = Any past use of the strategy type). Possible scores for the modified SSS (SSS-m) therefore ranged from 0 to 5.

3.4.2.5 Social Desirability

Because the data collection survey asked respondents about personal attitudes and behaviors of a personal nature, including behaviors they may believe cast them in a negative light or implicate them in punishable offenses, I included a social desirability scale to detect and control for social desirability bias in responses. The Social Desirability Response Set (SRDS; Hays et al., 1989) is a five-item scale that assesses respondents' self-evaluation on statements relating to their relationships with others (e.g., "There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone"). Hayes et al. (1989) developed the SRDS as a brief alternative to a widely used instrument, the 33-item Marlowe-Crowne social desirability scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). The SRDS (Hays et al., 1989) showed lower internal consistency ($\alpha = .68$) than the full Marlowe-Crowne scale ($\alpha = .88$; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) and shorter forms of that measure ($\alpha = .63$-$.79$; Reynolds, 1982); however, the SRDS (Hays et al., 1989) shows acceptable consistency, and its brevity is beneficial for use within a long survey. The SDRS has been used with university and community samples of men to control for social desirability bias that may result from respondents being asked about sexual and potentially objectionable or illegal behaviors (Carvalho & Sá, 2020; Zurbriggen, 2000).

SRDS (Hays et al., 1989) items are rated according to a five-point scale that reflects the extent to which participants believe each statement applies to them, ranging from 1 ("Definitely true") to 5 ("Definitely false"). Two items are reverse-coded. Scoring for the SRDS is accomplished by assigning a value of "1" to any items participants rate 5 (or 1, for reverse-coded items) and a value of "0" to any other rating, then adding together the recoded values. Possible scores therefore range from 0 to 5, with lower scores indicating lower social desirability and higher scores indicating higher social desirability.

3.4.3 Analysis

3.4.3.1 Univariate and Bivariate Analyses

For variables that would be used in exploratory analyses, I conducted the same preliminary analyses as those described in Section 3.3.4 for reliability and validity testing variables. I then generated descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, range) for participant SANSSMM scores (Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating SSM from both Parents and Peers); SPN-SF scale (Hangen & Rogge, 2022) scores; and scores for the modified Sexual Strategies Scale (Z. D. Peterson, 2020; Z. D. Peterson et al., 2010). I conducted a series of means-comparison analyses to test for statistically significant differences in SANSSMM scores across demographic/personal background characteristic groups. Before conducting the analyses, I tested for assumptions that must be met in order to conduct bivariate means-comparison tests. These included tests of normal distribution (skewness and kurtosis) and homoscedasticity. Variables met the assumption of normality if skewness values were between -2 and +2 (Garson, 2012; West et al., 1995) and kurtosis values were between -7 and +7 (West et al., 1995). Variables met the assumption of homoscedasticity if results of Levene's test were non-significant (Verma & Abdel-Salam, 2019).

For dichotomous categorical variables (childhood household eligibility for government assistance and state political ideology), I tested the significance of mean differences using independent samples *t*-tests. For the remaining polychotomous categorical variables, I tested the significance of mean differences using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) analyses. Where ANOVA results indicated the presence of significant between-group differences, I conducted Tukey's HSD and/or Bonferroni's post-hoc tests as a means of identifying the groups between which mean score differences were statistically significant. I used the results of means-comparison tests to later determine which categorical variables to include in regression models as control

variables (described below). To assess mean differences between Parent and Peer scores for both Sexuality-Affirming SSM and Sexuality-Negating SSM subscales, I conducted paired-sample *t*-tests.

A final step in bivariate analyses was to run zero-order correlations between continuous variables that would be used in multivariate tests. Zero-order correlations test the statistical significance of the linear relationship between two continuous variables, without simultaneously testing for covariates. Statistically significant bivariate correlations justify the inclusion of variables in a multivariate regression model, since non-significant bivariate relationships are unlikely to contribute to the variance explained in multivariate models.

3.4.3.2 Multivariate Analyses

Prior to running all multivariate analyses, I conducted tests for assumptions necessary to proceed with each type of analysis.

3.4.3.2.1 Multiple Linear Regressions

Assumptions that must be met to conduct ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple linear regressions include: linearity of relationships between continuous variables, normal distribution of residuals, non-multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. To assess linearity of relationships between predictor variables (SANSSMM scores) and dependent variables (SPN scale and SSS-m scores), I generated and visually inspected scatter plots and fitted value line graphs. I tested normal distribution of residuals by examining kernel density plots, standardized normal probability plots, and plots of variable quantiles against quantiles of a normal distribution, followed by the Shapiro-Wilk W test for normality. A non-significant Shapiro-Wilk result would confirm the assumption of normal distribution is adequately met. I tested for multicollinearity by examining variance

inflation factor (VIF) values, establishing a VIF value of over 10 as an indication of excessive multicollinearity (Norman & Streiner, 2014). I determined homoscedasticity by visually examining scatter plots of residuals and ensuring no apparent patterns were visible.

If assumptions were met, I proceeded with OLS multiple linear regressions with SANSSMM scores as predictor variables for Sex-Positivity/-Negativity and for prior use of coercive sexual strategies, while controlling for demographic and personal background characteristics that had shown statistically significant mean score differences between groups in bivariate analyses.

4.0 Results

4.1 Phase One: Development and Selection of Items for the SANSSMM

4.1.1 Content Validation

4.1.1.1 Content Validation Stage 1: Development

Through the Development process of content validation, I identified a total of 13 dimensions comprising two conceptual domains, (I.) Sexuality-Affirming and (II.) Sexuality-Negating attitudinal perspectives. These two domains represent the contrasting nature of messages about sex and sexuality that individuals might receive through processes of sexual socialization. The dimensions of each attitudinal perspective emerged from the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and provided a framework for grouping draft measure items, in order to capture the most comprehensive conceptualizations possible of Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating sexual socialization messaging. I identified eight dimensions of Sexuality-Affirming perspectives and five dimensions of Sexuality-Negating perspectives. Appendix Table A-1 provides (1) the dimensions grouped under each domain, (2) brief explanations of their proposed operational definitions, and (3) citations for sources which support inclusion of the dimensions as part of comprehensive conceptualizations of Sexuality-Affirming or Sexuality-Negating attitudes that may be conveyed in sexual socialization messaging.

To identify dimensions of Sexuality-Affirming perspectives for Domain I, I started with Nimbi and colleagues' (2022) six sex-positive pillars: (1) Openness; (2) Self-Determination; (3) Access; (4) Pleasure; (5) Consent; and (6) Respect. In order to capture additional aspects of

Sexuality-Affirming perspectives (as discussed in Chapter 2), two additional domains were added: (7) Equity and Justice; and (8) Holistic Health and Wellbeing.

Because I identified no existing measures or frameworks explicitly conceptualizing sex-negativity, I set about generating dimensions for Domain II by first considering terms that represent direct opposites of the labels assigned to Sexuality-Affirming dimensions—for example, *Withholding/Restricting Access* in contrast to the Sexuality-Affirming dimension of *Access*; and *Inequity and Injustice* in contrast to the Sexuality-Affirming dimension of *Equity and Justice*. Because a direct opposite to some of the Sexuality-Affirming dimensions would be illogical or inaccurate, based on my review of literature, I adjusted some terminology to better reflect dimensions that would *contrast with*, yet not necessarily *directly oppose*, Sexuality-Affirming dimensions—for example, rather than using *Disrespect* as a direct opposite of the *Respect* dimension, I chose *Judgment and Moralization*. Similarly, I selected *Shame and Disgust* in contrast to a combination of *Openness*, *Pleasure*, and *Respect*. As Ivanski and Kohut (2017) point out, *sex-positivity* and *sex-negativity* do not necessarily reflect directly opposite concepts, so dimensions of Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating perspectives were not matched dimension-for-dimension across the two categories. Furthermore, emphases on ideas such as *Risk and Danger*, which are widely noted as inconsistent with sex-positive perspectives, only partially contrast with *Holistic Health and Wellbeing*, a dimension of Sexuality-Affirming perspectives.

I compiled a set of 63 draft items across the 13 dimensions for content experts to rate in the subsequent Judgment-Quantification stage. This set consisted of a combination of items drawn directly from existing measures, items modified from existing measures, and entirely original items based on salient themes identified in the Development stage.

4.1.1.2 Content Validation Stage 2: Judgment-Quantification

Expert panelists first rated the level of importance of each dimension I proposed to represent an aspect of the overarching conceptual domain. Interrater agreement on dimension importance ratings was excellent, with 94 percent overall agreement and $AC_1 = .94$ ($p < .001$). All mean scores for the level of importance experts assigned to the proposed Sexuality-Affirming dimensions were 3.8 or higher, indicating very high importance. One Sexuality-Affirming dimension, *Respect*, was unanimously rated *very important* (4 out of 4) by experts. All mean scores for the level of importance experts assigned to the proposed Sexuality-Negating dimensions were 3.7 or higher, also indicating very high importance. The Sexuality-Negating dimensions of *Inequality and Injustice* and *Withholding/Restricting Access* were unanimously rated *very important* (4 out of 4) by experts.

Because I was treating the dimension importance scale as a measure of content validity (i.e., as a means to ensure each proposed dimension's *representativeness* of the conceptual domain it was meant to represent), I calculated Content Validation Indices (CVIs) for expert panelist ratings using the formula described by Grant and Davis (1997). I performed CVI calculations both for each individual dimension and for the full sets of dimensions that comprised each domain. Importance and CVI scores for each dimension are shown in the last column of Appendix Table D-1. Average CVI for Sexuality-Affirming dimensions ranged from .88 to 1.00, with an overall CVI of .95. CVI values for Sexuality-Negating dimensions were all 1.00, indicating that all experts assigned importance ratings of 3 or 4 for every proposed dimension.

In free-text responses, some content experts provided suggestions for combining domains that they believe overlap, and some suggested ideas for concepts that might be worth considering for separation into their own additional dimension. However, experts generally noted these were

minor suggestions that were not crucial and could be reserved for consideration in the future. Since the dimensions I asked expert panelists to rate and respond to were intended only for organizational purposes, to help ensure comprehensiveness of the constructs represented by each domain, rather than representations of explicit constructs in and of themselves, I noted these suggestions but did not add or remove any dimensions.

For representativeness and clarity ratings, interrater agreement was also very good. Across all SANSSMM draft items, percent agreement for representativeness ratings was 86 percent, and AC_1 was .83 (for Sexuality-Affirming: 82% agreement, AC_1 = .78; for Sexuality-Negating: 90% agreement, AC_1 = .89). Percent agreement for clarity ratings across the full set of SANSSMM draft items was 86 percent; AC_1 was .83 (for Sexuality-Affirming: 85% agreement, AC_1 = .82; for Sexuality-Negating: 88% agreement, AC_1 = .86).

Mean representativeness scores for draft measure items under the Sexuality-Affirming domain ranged from 2.4 to 4.0. There were five Sexuality-Affirming items that scored below 3.0, signaling that those items were "a little" representative and major changes should be made in order to make them more representative. Based on expert panelists' comments explaining why the items fell short of representativeness, I determined that the content of these items was adequately captured in other, higher-rated items and was able to simply eliminate them from consideration for the final measure. Mean ratings for Sexuality-Negating domain items ranged from 3.0 to 4.0, indicating that they all demonstrated acceptable representativeness and any suggested changes were minor.

CVI results for representativeness of individual items ranged from .40 to 1.00. Only one item had a CVI score of less than .60, and an additional 5 items had CVI scores of less than .70, indicating that 57 of 63 items (90.5%) showed high levels of content validation according to

experts' ratings of item representativeness. Thirty-six items (57.1%) had a CVI of 1.00, indicating that all experts rated the items 3.0 or 4.0 out of 4.0, which Grant and Davis's (1997) guidelines consider full endorsement of an item's content validity.

Grant and Davis (1997) do not specify guidelines for interpreting item clarity scores. I simply used mean ratings for each item as a gauge of whether the item required minor or major changes to achieve clarity (scores of 3.0 to 3.9 or 2.0 to 2.9, respectively), or whether items required no changes (scores of 4.0) or, on the other hand, should be reconsidered entirely (scores below 2.0). Other than two items that earned clarity scores of just below 3.0 (2.9 in both cases), Sexuality-Affirming item clarity scores ranged from 3.0 to 3.9, and Sexuality-Negating item clarity scores ranged from 3.0 to 4.0. Eight of 27 Sexuality-Affirming items achieved clarity ratings of 4.0.

4.1.2 Response Process Validation: Cognitive Interviews

4.1.2.1 Cognitive Interview Participants

Participants in cognitive interviews reflected diversity in the following ways: age range of 24 to 35; varied gender identities (cis woman, cis man, transman, non-binary); varied ethnoracial identities (Black, LatinX, white); varied sexual identities (gay, straight, bisexual); and education level range from high school diploma to Master's degree.

4.1.2.2 Outcomes

Cognitive interviewees indicated high levels of comprehension of items by restating instructions and item content in ways that reflected the intent of the language. Overall, they suggested small enhancements to wording but did not find any items unclear, confusing, or

objectionable. The most substantial changes interviewees suggested were related to the layout of the measure, and their feedback provided insights into how changes to the visual presentation could make the measure easier to follow and complete. In particular, the original measure was laid out in what Qualtrics labels as "side-by-side" format, with items listed in the far-left column and scales for Parents, Friends, and Self shown side-by-side in three separate columns alongside each item. This is illustrated in the left panel of Figure 1. Interviewees shared that this was a lot to take in visually and could be difficult to follow, particularly the further down a respondent scrolled. This was partly because it would require a respondent to scroll back up to see which column corresponded to which agent. I therefore modified the layout of items so the item text was shown above the two response scales for Parents and Friends (see right-hand panel of Figure 1). This layout also allowed me to repeat the sentence root under each statement, so respondents would not have to scroll up to remind themselves of the question they were being asked to respond to. These adaptations proved to be particularly valuable in improving the visual presentation and ease of survey navigation on mobile devices.

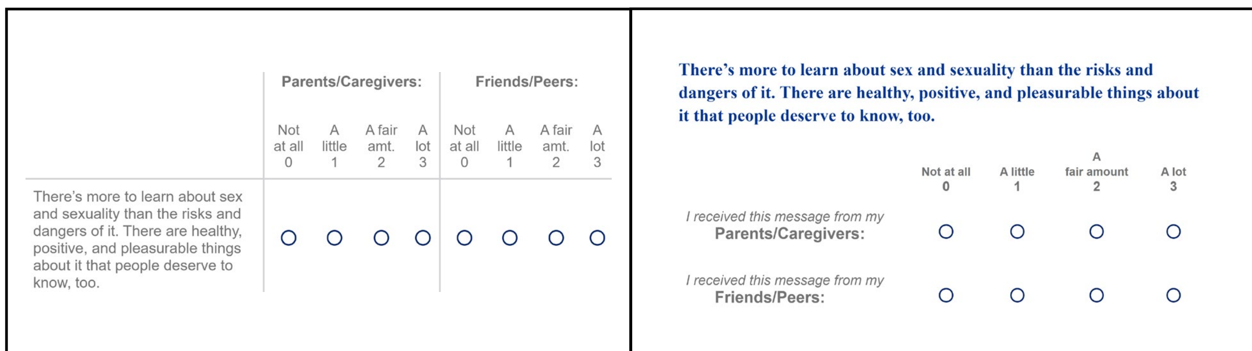

Figure 1 Layout of SANSSMM Items, Before and After Modifications Based on Cognitive Interviews

4.1.3 Final Revision and Selection of Items

I revised wording, combined items covering similar ideas, and omitted items based primarily on content expert feedback. Cognitive interview responses led to making very few, non-substantive changes to item wording and adding clarifying language to the measure's instructions. The preliminary SANSSMM (SANSSMM-p) used in data collection consisted of 22 items—10 Sexuality-Affirming SSM items and 12 Sexuality-Negating SSM items. The final items appear in Appendix Table D-1. As discussed in the next section, not all SANSSMM-p items were retained after reliability and validity testing was completed. Those items that were ultimately removed are shaded in Appendix Table D-1.

4.2 Phase Two: Reliability and Validity Testing of the SANSSMM

4.2.1 Survey Participants

Table 3 provides an overview of the demographic and personal background characteristics of the sample of 284 U.S. adults surveyed. The mean age of participants, ranging from 18 to 33, was 25.8 years (*SD* = 4.5). A little over half the sample identified as cisgender female (*n* = 155; 54.6%), with 41.9 percent (*n* = 119) identifying as cisgender male and 3.5% (*n* = 10) identifying as gender minority or questioning. Forty percent of participants self-identified as ethnoracial minority (*n* = 120; 42.3%); 21.9 percent (*n* = 62) as sexual minority; nearly half (*n* = 128; 45%) educated at the high school level or below and a substantial majority (*n* = 214; 75.4%) with less than a 4-year college degree. The majority of participants (*n* = 157; 55.3%) indicated that they

were raised in a home that had qualified for one or more government assistance programs, an indicator of socioeconomic disadvantage.

Table 3 Sample Demographic and Personal Background Characteristics

Variable	n	%
Age (*M* = 25.8 years, *SD* = 4.5)		
18-21	62	21.8
22-25	76	26.8
26-29	69	24.3
30-33	77	27.1
Gender identity		
Cisgender female	155	54.6
Cisgender male	119	41.9
Another gender identity	10	3.5
Ethnoracial identity		
Asian/Asian Amer./Pacific Islander	11	3.9
Black/African American	56	19.9
Latina/o/e/x [a]	26	9.2
White/Caucasian	162	57.4
Multiple ethnoracial identities	21	7.4
Another ethnoracial identity	6	2.1
Sexual identity		
Bisexual	29	10.2
Gay/Lesbian	15	5.3
Straight/Heterosexual	221	78.1
Another sexual identity	18	6.4
Education level		
Middle or Junior high school	24	8.5
High school diploma or equivalent (GED)	104	36.7
Some college	58	20.5
Associate’s degree or Vocational training	28	9.9
Undergraduate (4-year)/Bachelor's degree	53	18.7
Graduate/Master’s or Doctoral degree	16	5.7

(continued)

Table 3 (continued)

Variable	n	%
Childhood home eligibility for government assistance		
Qualified for gov't. assistance	157	60.2
Never qualified for gov't. assistance	104	39.8
Childhood family's religious/spiritual affiliation		
Catholicism	31	11.4
Christianity (Protestant/Not Catholic)	122	44.7
Another religion/spiritual belief system	22	8.1
Family was spiritual but not religious	32	11.7
Family did not belong to or identify with a religion/spiritual belief system	66	24.2
Primary parent(s)/caregiver(s) during adolescence		
1 maternal, 1 paternal (e.g., mother and father)	161	56.9
1 maternal (e.g., single mother)	76	26.9
1 paternal (e.g., single father)	22	7.8
2 maternal (e.g., mother and female partner)	4	1.4
More than 2 parents/caregivers (e.g., biological parents and step-parents)	20	7.1
Dominant political ideology of U.S. state of residency during adolescence (Red state vs Blue state [b]), and:		
- Rurality/urbanicity of adolescent residency setting		
Blue state (all areas)	160	58.2
- Remote or Rural/Small town	55	14.2
- Suburban/Small city	60	15.5
- Urban/Large city	44	11.4
Red state (all areas)	115	41.8
- Remote or Rural/Small town	49	12.7
- Suburban/Small city	37	9.6
- Urban/Large city	27	7.0

Note. *N* = 284.

[a] Represents participants who selected only Latina/o/e/x as their ethnoracial identity. Due to small cell sizes, participants who selected Latina/o/e/x and one or more other racial identity(-ies) (*n* = 11) were combined included under "Multiple ethnoracial identities." [b] Based on political party of Presidential candidate who won state's Electoral College votes in majority of Federal elections since 1996. "Blue" = Democrat; "Red" = Republican. Source: MIT Election Data and Science Lab (n.d.)

4.2.2 Preliminary Analysis and Univariate Outcomes

4.2.2.1 Measures of Missingness, Central Tendency, and Distribution

Levels of missingness for variables used in data analysis were minimal. The most notable levels of missingness were attributable to the option provided to survey respondents to skip SANSSMM items related to sexual harm and violence if they would find reading and answering questions on the topic upsetting. This applied to three Sexuality-Negating SSM items (SNSSM items 10, 11, and 12). Seventy-five participants (26.4%) opted to skip these items. I ran one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) analyses (for polychotomous variables) or independent samples *t*-tests (for dichotomous variables) to determine whether continuous variable outcomes for the subsample that had skipped the optional items differed significantly from those of the rest of the sample. No statistically significant differences were identified, suggesting missingness was at-random and not a cause for concern (Norman & Streiner, 2014; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Missingness across the remaining variables with any missing data ranged from one case (0.35%) to 11 cases (3.87%), all falling below the common threshold of around five percent for acceptable levels of missing data to proceed with analysis (Norman & Streiner, 2014; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

4.2.2.2 Sexual Socialization

4.2.2.2.1 Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging Measure

I examined descriptive statistics and measures of central tendency and distribution for the preliminary 22-item version of the SANSSMM (SANSSMM-p), including means, standard deviations (SD), skewness, and kurtosis. Analyses for Phase Two, testing reliability and validity

of the SANSSMM-p, were conducted using *Parental* SSM data. The sample mean score for Parental Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM was 1.47 (*SD* = .91) and for Sexuality-*Negating* SSM, *M* = 1.02 (*SD* = .85). Number of observations, sample means, and SD values for individual items are shown in the last three rows of Table 5 (page 105). Cases were omitted from analyses using pairwise deletion, resulting in fewer observations for certain items, namely SNSSM items 10, 11, and 12 (numbered 20, 21 and 22, respectively, in column headings). As noted above, the levels of missingness for these items is attributable to participants opting to skip items related to topics of sexual harm and violence. Pairwise deletion for analyses involving these items was appropriate, since missingness was determined to be at-random. Psychometric properties of the SANSSMM-p are discussed in detail throughout the remainder of Section 4.2.

4.2.2.2.2 Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure

I examined the same descriptive statistics and outcomes for measures of central tendency and distribution for the two SSDM (Trinh et al., 2014) subscales being used to test convergent and discriminant validity of the SANSSMM. No violations of assumptions of normal distribution were identified in this process, so analysis could proceed without the need for data transformation.

Both subscales of the SSDM (Trinh et al., 2014) showed good internal consistency for the study sample (ACS subscale for Parents $\alpha = .89$, ACS for Friends $\alpha = .87$; SA subscale for Parents $\alpha = .91$, SA for Friends $\alpha = .91$). Table 4 shows univariate sample outcomes of both subscales, for messaging received from *Parents* and from *Friends*. The sample mean score for parental ACS discourses was 0.97 (*SD* = .90), suggesting low prominence of ACS discourses from parents (i.e., between “None” and “A little,” represented by scores of 0 and 1, respectively on the SSDM scale). The sample mean score for parental SA discourses was 1.30 (*SD* = 1.07), falling between “A little” (1) and “Some” (2). Sample mean scores for ACS and SA discourses from friends were 1.78 (*SD*

= .85) and .82 (*SD* = .94), respectively. Paired *t*-tests showed that all mean differences between parent and friend ACS discourses were statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level, as were mean differences between parent and friend SA discourses.

Table 4 Sample Mean Scores and Paired *t*-test Results Comparing Parental and Friend Mean Scores on *Sexual Abstinence* and *Acceptance of Casual Sex* Discourse Subscales

	Parents			Friends			
Variable	***M***	***SD***	**Range**	***M***	***SD***	**Range**	**Diff. in Means** [a]
Sexual Socialization Discourses (Trinh et al., 2014)							
Sexual Abstinence subscale	1.30	1.07	0-3	0.82	0.94	0-3	0.48***
Acceptance of Casual Sex subscale	0.97	0.90	0-3	1.78	0.85	0-3	-0.81***

Note. *N* = 284

[a] Values shown are calculated by subtracting mean for Peer messaging from mean for Parent messaging. Therefore, positive value indicates Parent messaging mean is *higher* than Peer messaging mean; negative value indicates Parent messaging mean is *lower* than Peer messaging mean.

***$p < .001$

4.2.2.3 Internal Consistency Reliability

As an initial step in testing internal consistency reliability of the SANSSMM-p, I conducted Spearman's rho correlation tests. The correlation matrix for these inter-item correlations is shown in Table 5. Scores within the boxed area of the table represent correlation coefficients between Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating SSM items. As expected, these results indicated poor correlation between the subscales, providing preliminary evidence for discriminant validity (i.e., the two subscales appear to be assessing constructs that are uncorrelated with each other). Scores above the box are interitem correlation scores for the Sexuality-Affirming SSM subscale, and those to the right of the box are interitem correlation scores for the Sexuality-Negating SSM subscale.

Table 5 Spearman's Rho Inter-Item Correlations for 22-item Preliminary SANSSMM(-p)

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	**11**	12	13	**14**	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1. SASSM 1	1.00																					
2. SASSM 2	.55	1.00																				
3. SASSM 3	.55	.56	1.00																			
4. SASSM 4	.59	.56	.65	1.00																		
5. SASSM 5	.50	.44	.62	.63	1.00																	
6. SASSM 6	.67	.53	.65	.64	.68	1.00																
7. SASSM 7	.61	.55	.63	.65	.62	.61	1.00															
8. SASSM 8	.57	.47	.46	.46	.41	.50	.60	1.00														
9. SASSM 9	.52	.56	.47	.50	.56	.49	.53	.49	1.00													
10. SASSM 10	.62	.51	.59	.55	.57	.67	.66	.67	.52	1.00												
11. SNSSM 1	**.36**	**.36**	.20	.15	.21	.29	.21	**.33**	.29	**.36**	1.00											
12. SNSSM 2	.12	.15	-.02	.02	-.11	.00	.02	.13	.09	.11	.49	1.00										
13. SNSSM 3	.16	.11	.01	.01	-.06	-.01	.07	.13	-.01	.08	.44	.70	1.00									
14. SNSSM 4	**.34**	**.33**	**.31**	**.34**	**.31**	**.34**	**.34**	.24	.22	.29	.31	**.13**	**.11**	1.00								
15. SNSSM 5	.18	.16	.05	.00	-.07	.01	-.04	.06	.08	.09	.45	.58	.61	.30	1.00							
16. SNSSM 6	.16	.10	.02	-.01	-.14	.01	-.01	.04	-.08	.06	**.29**	.60	.57	**.20**	.53	1.00						
17. SNSSM 7	.17	.15	.06	.00	-.04	.10	.06	.06	.00	.06	**.25**	.38	.45	.30	.52	.48	1.00					
18. SNSSM 8	.10	.11	-.05	-.05	-.09	.02	-.01	-.05	-.01	.02	**.27**	.47	.44	.34	.51	.42	.52	1.00				
19. SNSSM 9	.15	.05	.02	.06	.01	.04	.08	-.07	-.11	.09	**.17**	.42	.53	.31	.43	.59	.51	.51	1.00			
20. SNSSM 10	.06	.06	-.03	-.05	-.08	-.13	-.10	.06	.03	-.02	**.27**	.46	.47	**.01**	.48	.38	.32	.35	**.21**	1.00		
21. SNSSM 11	.26	.23	.13	.10	.11	.17	.14	.21	.10	.23	.34	.34	.37	**.26**	.38	.33	.32	.29	**.21**	.44	1.00	
22. SNSSM 12	.04	-.02	-.09	-.07	-.11	-.06	-.04	.03	-.01	-.04	**.16**	.37	.32	**.26**	.36	.38	.34	.43	.38	.45	.44	1.00
n	283	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	284	283	284	284	284	210	210	210
Mean	1.26	1.40	1.64	1.47	1.57	1.55	1.49	1.34	1.48	1.47	1.02	0.87	0.85	1.66	0.92	1.01	1.15	1.05	1.27	0.66	0.98	1.04
SD	1.08	1.16	1.13	1.10	1.17	1.17	1.16	1.17	1.18	1.16	1.17	1.13	1.12	1.03	1.07	1.15	1.11	1.11	1.20	1.01	1.02	1.09

Note. Area within box represents intercorrelations between Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM and Sexuality-*Negating* SSM items. Shaded values indicate unexpected patterns in item behavior (i.e., worse than expected item correlations with other items in the same subscale and/or better than expected item correlations with items in the other subscale), which factored into item selection and omission. Values in bold text are particularly noteworthy, as they indicate either poor correlations (< .30) with items in the same subscale or moderate correlation (> .30) with items in the other subscale.

Spearman's rho correlation coefficients for the Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM subscale indicate that inter-item correlations are moderate to good (r_s = .41 to .68). Sexuality-*Negating* SSM items are less consistently correlated with each other, given rho scores as low as .01 yet as high as .70.

Shaded scores in Table 5 highlight items that behaved somewhat unexpectedly, either by correlating poorly with other items in the same subscale or better than expected with items in the other subscale. In particular, a pattern of low correlation scores suggested that Sexuality-*Negating* SSM (SNSSM) subscale items 1 and 4 fit poorly with most other items in the SNSSM subscale. SNSSM item 1 (numbered 11 in the table) reads, "Getting and giving clear consent through every step of a sexual encounter gets in the way of enjoying sex," which primarily represents an aspect of the *Inequity/Injustice* dimension (i.e., individual pleasure outweighs the need to consider partners' limits or desires). Interitem correlations for SNSSM 1 with other items in the subscale ranged from r_s = .16 to .49, with over half the scores falling below the cutoff for acceptable interitem correlation of r_s = .30. SNSSM item 4 (numbered 14 in the table) reads, "Having sex puts you in serious danger of getting HIV or a sexually-transmitted disease (STD)," which primarily represents an aspect of the *Risks, Danger, and Dysfunction* dimension. SNSSM 4 interitem correlations within the subscale ranged from r_s = .01 to .34, with half the scores falling below the cutoff of r_s = .30. These Sexuality-Negating SSM items showed correlations with items in the Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM subscale comparable to—and in some cases stronger than—correlations with other Sexuality-*Negating* SSM items. The mean correlation coefficient between SNSSM item 1 and Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM items was r_s = .28, compared to r_s = .31 with other SNSSM items. Correlation coefficients between SNSSM item 4 and Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM items averaged r_s = .28, compared to r_s = .25 with other SNSSM items.

To further test internal consistency reliability of the SANSSMM, Cronbach's alpha (α) was calculated for the full measure and for each of its subscales. Using the "item" option in combination with the *alpha* command in Stata (Weesie, 2021) produces Pearson's *r* correlation coefficients between individual scale items and the scale as a whole (*item-test* correlations) and between individual items and the scale that is formed by all other items when the item is removed (*item-rest* correlations). With general guidelines offered by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) and by Weesie (2021) in mind, I examined both item-test and item-rest correlations to look for patterns in item behavior and for deviations from those patterns. For the full 22-item SANSSMM-p, I noted lower item-test and item-rest *r* values for Sexuality-*Negating* SSM items 10 and 12, relative to patterns among other items in the SNSSM subscale. SNSSM item 10 (numbered 20 in Table 5) reads, "When someone claims they were sexually abused or assaulted, they're probably exaggerating the details of what actually happened to get attention." SNSSM item 12 (numbered 22 in Table 5) reads, "Girls who go around dressing and acting 'slutty' are just asking for trouble." Both of these represent aspects of the *Inequity & Injustice* dimension (i.e., disregard for victims' experiences and victim-blaming). Among the other SNSSM items, item-test correlations ranged from r = .46 to .59, and item-rest correlations ranged from r = .40 to .52. For SNSSM item 10, item-test and item-rest values were r = .41 and r = .35, respectively; and for item 12, r = .37 and r = .29, respectively. These differences were not extreme, so I noted them but did not make a determination about retaining or omitting them from the scale based on these criteria alone.

In addition to providing these Pearson *r* correlation coefficient calculations, the "item" option for the *alpha* command in Stata provides a Cronbach's α value for the scale as a whole, as well as α values alongside each item that represent what the scale's overall alpha score would be if the item were omitted. I ran the alpha command for each of the subscales separately. The

Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM subscale showed excellent internal reliability, with an overall Cronbach's alpha of α = 0.94. Overall Cronbach's alpha for the Sexuality-*Negating* SSM subscale indicated good internal reliability with a coefficient value of α = .88. In the process of examining alpha results for the Sexuality-*Negating* SSM subscale, I noted further inconsistencies among SNSSM items. In this instance, SNSSM items 1, 4, 10, and 12 showed noticeably lower *r* values for item-test and item-rest correlations than the other subscale items. These were the same items identified as inconsistent with other subscale items in the examination of alpha values for the full SANSSMM. In addition, SNSSM item 11 (numbered 21 in Table 5) showed a similar pattern of poor fit with the majority of other subscale items. SNSSM item 11 reads, "Guys who engage in casual hookups are likely to get falsely accused of rape at some point," which primarily represents the *Risks, Dangers, & Dysfunction* dimension. While the majority of items showed item-test *r* values of .69 to .78 and item-rest *r* values of .60 to .72, these values for the above-referenced items ranged from $r = .50$ to .63 and $r = .39$ to .55, respectively. Again, subjectively, some of these were not substantially different from the lowest scores among all other values (e.g., $r = .63$ versus $r = .69$, or $r = .55$ versus $r = .60$); I simply noted the differences as possible considerations for retaining or omitting items, pending results of further analyses.

At this stage I decided to drop SNSSM items 1 and 4 and to proceed with confirmatory factor analysis using all ten original Sexuality-Affirming SSM items and ten of the original twelve Sexuality-Negating SSM items.

4.2.2.4 Factorial Validity

To test factorial validity of the SANSSMM, I ran a 2-factor CFA model, using weighted least square means and variances (WLSMV) estimation. Sexuality-Affirming SSM items served as indicator variables for the first factor, and Sexuality-Negating SSM items serving as indicator

variables for the second factor. I allowed the two factors to covary, based on an assumption that Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating SSM represent facets of a higher-order latent factor, *sexual socialization messaging.* Since individuals are unlikely to receive strictly one type of SSM (i.e., entirely sexuality-*affirming* or entirely sexuality-*negating*), and affirming/negating perspectives are only one aspect of what sexual socialization messaging, broadly defined, is likely to entail for most people, allowing for shared variance between the two types of messaging is reasonable.

Factor loadings resulting from an initial CFA model in which I included all ten preliminary Sexuality-Affirming SSM items and ten of the original twelve preliminary Sexuality-Negating SSM items, showed strong support for concluding that Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM items represented a common latent construct, with factor loading values ranging from .74 to .87. Some factor loadings for Sexuality-*Negating* SSM items onto the second factor were somewhat weaker, though still within acceptable range. In particular, Sexuality-Negating SSM items 11 and 12 showed weaker factor loadings (.60 and .63, respectively) than the other items, which had factor loadings ranging from .72 to .86. Furthermore, multiple model fit indices for this model suggested poor model fit. I generated modification indices (MI) to assist with identifying local areas of strain on model fit and reviewed expected parameter change (EPC) values. I inspected item pairs with high MI ($\geq$ 10) and EPC ($\geq$ .20) values to consider whether allowing any pairs to correlate might improve model fit indices.

In this process, I identified Sexuality-Negating SSM items 11 and 12 among several pairs that MI indicated were potential sources of model strain. No other item pairs that MI indicated might benefit model fit by being allowed to correlate were theoretically justifiable. Given that SNSSM items 11 and 12 had behaved somewhat poorly in internal consistency reliability analyses,

I decided to test separate models with each of those items removed (i.e., a model with SNSSM item 11 removed and a separate model with SNSSM item 12 removed). I repeated the process of generating and reviewing model fit and modification indices after each model was tested. Modification indices suggested in each case that SNSSM items 11 and 12 were each a source of strain in the model where the other item was removed (i.e., SNSSM item 11 was problematic in the model with SNSSM item 12 removed, and vice versa), so I tested a model with both items removed. While model fit indices improved with each of these changes, they continued to fall short of acceptable fit. In a final review of model fit and modification indices for the model with SNSSM items 11 and 12 both removed, SNSSM item 10 showed a pattern similar to those 11 and 12 had shown in previous models. Since that item had also behaved worse than other SNSSM items in internal consistency reliability analyses, I decided to run another model with SNSSM item 10 also dropped, in addition to 11 and 12. After making these changes, all model fit indices except the Chi-square goodness of fit (GOF) test reached acceptable levels (CFI= .98; TLI= .98; RMSEA= .06; SRMR= .06). Brown (2015) points out that the Chi-square GOF test is one of the most stringent tests for model fit and has frequently been criticized for being excessively stringent. Therefore, while GOF results should not necessarily be ignored summarily, satisfaction of other model fit index criteria can offer adequate justification to conclude that model fit is acceptable. Figure 2 illustrates the final CFA model for a 17-item Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging Measure. Cronbach's alpha for the final Sexuality-Affirming SSM subscale is $\alpha = .94$, and for the final Sexuality-Negating SSM subscale, $\alpha = .88$.

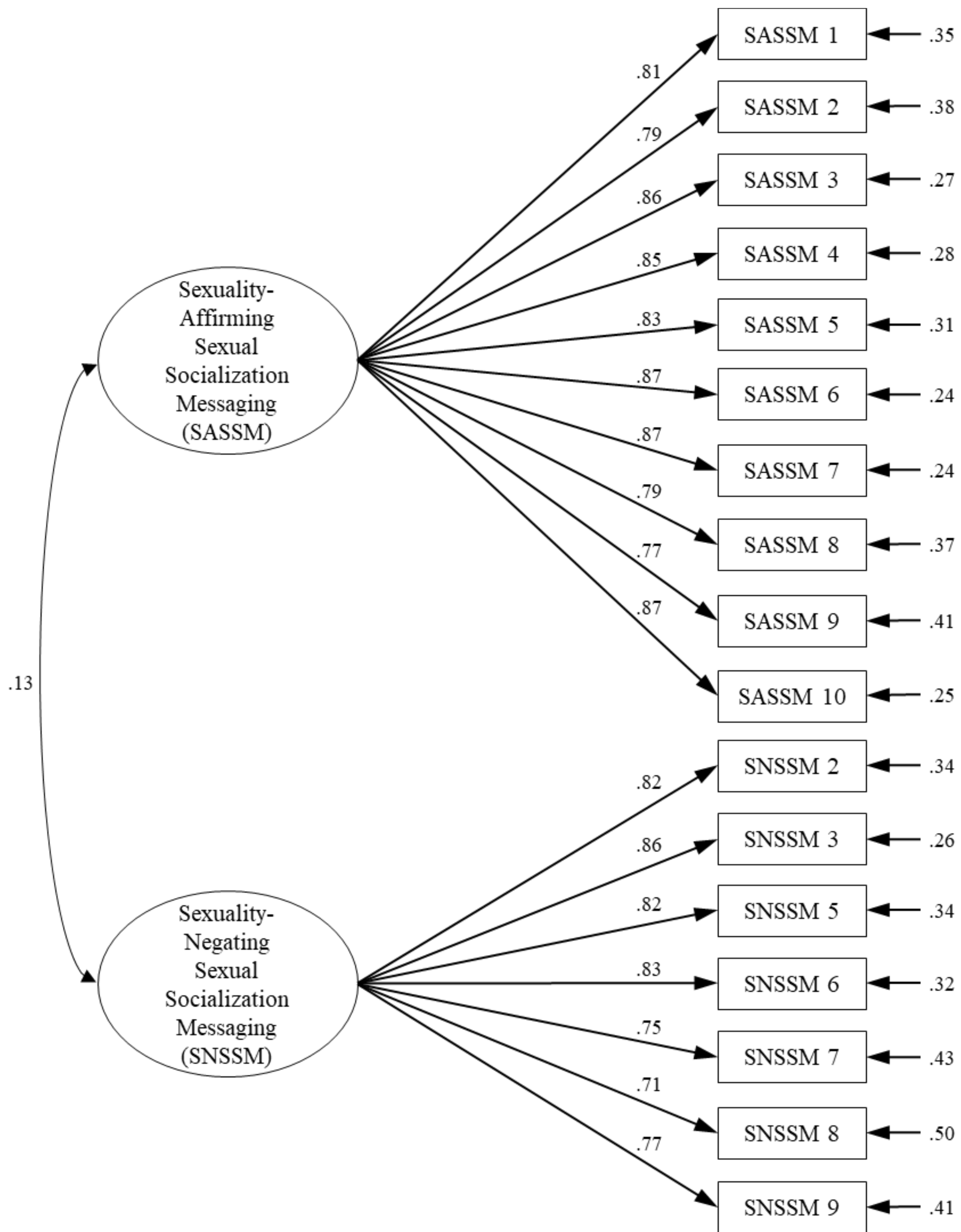

Figure 2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model for Final 17-Item SANSSMM

Note. ***N*** **= 283. Model Fit Indices: CFI= .98; TLI= .98; RMSEA= .06; SRMR= .06**

4.2.2.5 Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Spearman's rho correlations were calculated to test the relationship between each of the subscales of the SANSSMM and scales measuring similar constructs from existing validated instruments. Average parent scores from the Acceptance of Casual Sex (ACS) subscale of the Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure (SSDM) utilized by Trinh et al. (Trinh et al., 2014) were compared to average scores on the Sexuality-Affirming SSM subscale. Spearman's rho was r_s= .62 (p < .001), indicating a moderate correlation between the scales. Average parent scores from the Abstinence (SA) subscale of Trinh et al.'s version of the SSDM (2014) were compared to average scores on the Sexuality-Negating SSM subscale. Spearman's rho was r_s= .74 (p < .001), indicating strong correlation between the scales.

To test discriminant validity, Spearman's rho correlations were calculated for the same subscales, but this time SSDM-ACS (Trinh et al., 2014) subscale outcomes were compared to Sexuality-Negating SSM, and SSDM-SA subscale outcomes were compared to Sexuality-Affirming SSM. Results supported discriminant validity between SSDM-ACS and Sexuality-Negating SSM, based on a low correlation between the subscales (r_s = .03; p < .001). SSDM-SA and Sexuality-Affirming SSM also indicated support for discriminant validity, with a low correlation between the subscales of r_s = .25 (p < .001).

4.3 Phase Three: Exploratory Utilization of the SANSSMM

4.3.1 Sample

For the exploratory analyses laid out in Aim 3 of the study, I used data from the same sample of survey respondents I described for Phase Two. An overview of the sample's composition, including descriptive statistics, can be found in Section 4.2.1, above.

4.3.2 Univariate and Bivariate Outcomes

Findings reported in this section include results for Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating SSM participants received both from *Parents* and from *Peers*. To verify the internal consistency reliability of the SANSSMM when using it to assess *Peer* messaging in the same way the measure was used to assess *Parental* messaging in Phase Two, I ran Cronbach's alpha interitem correlation tests on Peer SSM results. Cronbach's alpha (α) for the Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM subscale when used to assess Peer messaging was .92; for the Sexuality-*Negating* SSM subscale, α = .91; and for the full SANSSMM, α = .90. These results suggest excellent internal consistency reliability of the SANSSMM for assessing Peer SSM.

Table 6 shows descriptive statistics for full sample outcomes on each of the predictor and outcome variables assessed in Phase Three. These include results from measures of Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating SSM; participant Sex-Positivity and Sex-Negativity (SPN-SF; Hangen & Rogge, 2022); and prior use of coercive sexual strategies to engage another person in sexual activity (modified SSS[-m], based on Z. D. Peterson, 2020; Strang et al., 2013). Additional

sample mean scores for individual SANSSMM items and for each of the measure's subscales can be found in the last two columns of Appendix Table C-2.

Table 6 Descriptive Statistics for Sample Outcomes on Exploratory Variable Measures

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Range
Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging			
Sexuality-Affirming SSM			
-From Parents/Caregivers	1.47	0.91	0-3
-From Friends/Peers	1.68	0.85	0-3
Sexuality-Negating SSM			
-From Parents/Caregivers	1.02	0.85	0-3
-From Friends/Peers	0.77	0.86	0-3
Sex-Positivity/-Negativity			
Sex-Positivity	3.46	1.07	0-5
Sex-Negativity	0.89	1.09	0-4.8
Use of Coercive Sexual Strategies			
Number of CSS types ever used			
None (n = 163; 57.4%)	—	—	0
One or more (n = 121; 42.6%)	3.29	1.60	1-5

Visual inspections of data and results of univariate analyses indicated that the assumption of normal distribution was violated for Sex-Negativity and for number of CSS types used in the past. Positively skewed data in both cases was due largely to high percentages of participants indicating little to no endorsement of sex-negative attitudes (i.e., scores of 0 or less than 1) and no prior use of CSS of any type. More than one-third (33.8%; n = 96) of participants endorsed *no* sex-negative attitudes (i.e., total score of 0), and over half of participants (55.6%; n = 158) had scores at or below the median 0.5 out of 5. I therefore recoded Sex-Negativity scores to make the variable binary, with scores of 0 representing the *absence* of sex-negative attitudes and any score greater than 0 (coded 1) representing the *presence* of sex-negative attitudes. In the case of past CSS use, over half (57.4%; n = 163) of participants indicated no use of CSS in the past (i.e., total score of 0). I therefore recoded number of CSS types to make the variable binary, with scores of 0 representing *no* prior use of CSS and any score greater than 0 (coded 1) representing *any* prior use

of CSS. Given these data transformations, I tested necessary assumptions for conducting logistic regressions (linearity of the logit of binary outcome variables with predictor variables, non-multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity). After confirming assumptions were met, I proceeded with those analyses instead of correlation tests between the affected variables.

4.3.2.1 Means-Comparisons for Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging

Bivariate analyses of SANSSMM outcomes included two main approaches to means-comparison testing. First, I tested between-group means comparisons for both *Parental* and *Peer* SANSSMM scores, across demographic and personal background characteristic groups. This involved conducting one-way ANOVA tests for polychotomous categorical variables, along with post hoc tests as appropriate, and independent samples *t*-tests for dichotomous categorical variables. Second, I tested within-subject mean differences between scores for *Parental* and *Peer* SSM scores, using paired-sample *t*-tests.

Tests of assumptions for conducting means-comparison analyses (i.e., independence of observations, normality, homoscedasticity, and non-multicollinearity) indicated no violations of assumptions. Appendix Table C-2 provides a detailed breakdown of mean scores, standard deviations, and observed score ranges for both Parental and Peer Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating SSM, by demographic and personal background characteristic groups. Table 7, below, provides a summary of statistically significant mean differences identified between participant demographic and personal background characteristic groups on scores for Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating SSM, from Parents and Peers.

Table 7 Statistically Significant Mean Differences Identified between Groups on Parental and Peer SANSSMM Scores

Variable / Characteristic	Group 1 Mean	Group 2 Mean	Diff. in Means [a]
Parental Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM			
Gender identity	Cis female	Cis male	
	1.36	1.63	-0.27^{*}
Rurality/Urbanicity	Remote/Rural	Urban	
	1.37	1.79	-0.42^{*}
	Suburban	Urban	
	1.30	1.79	-0.49^{**}
Peer Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM			
Family's religious/spiritual affil.	Not relig./spiritual	Other religion	
	1.51	2.15	-0.64^{*}
Parental Sexuality-*Negating* SSM			
Age range	18-21	22-26	
	0.77	1.19	-0.41^{*}
Family's religious/spiritual affil.	Not relig./spiritual	Christian [b]	
	0.71	1.22	-0.51
	Not relig./spiritual	Other religion	
	0.71	1.62	-0.91
	Catholic	Other religion	
	0.83	1.62	-0.79
	Spiritual/Not relig.	Christian	
	0.52	1.22	-0.70
	Spiritual/Not relig.	Other religion	
	0.52	1.62	-1.10
Peer Sexuality-*Negating* SSM			
Gender identity	Cis female	Cis male	
	0.60	1.03	-0.43^{***}
	Cis male	Other gend. ident.	
	1.03	0.38	0.68^{*}
Ethnoracial identity	White	Black/Afr. Amer.	
	0.68	1.15	-0.48^{**}
Rurality/Urbanicity	Remote/Rural	Urban	
	0.66	1.01	-0.35^{*}
Childhood home gov't assistance	Never qualified	Qualified	
	0.59	0.88	-0.29^{**} [c]

Note. Except where noted (see note "b," below), statistical significance was identified by running one-way ANOVAs, followed by post-hoc analyses, which included Tukey's HSD and Bonferroni's tests.

[a] Values shown are calculated by subtracting mean for Group 2 from mean for Group 1. Therefore, negative values indicate Group 2 mean is *higher* than Group 1 mean; positive values indicate Group 2 mean is *lower* than Group 1 mean. [b] *Christian* refers to various non-Catholic denominations of Christianity. [c] Based on independent samples *t*-test for means-comparison between dichotomous categories.

$^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$

To test whether participants' mean scores on Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating prominence scores differed significantly between SSM they had received from Parents and that which they had received from Peers, I conducted paired sample *t*-tests. Results indicated significantly higher Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM prominence scores for Peers (M = 1.68), compared to Parents (M = 1.47; difference in means = 0.22; $t(283) = 4.85$, $p < .001$). Sexuality-*Negating* SSM prominence scores were higher for Parents (M = 1.02) than for Peers (M = 0.77; difference in means = 0.25; $t(283) = 6.24$, $p < .001$).

4.3.2.2 Between-Group Comparisons for Global Sexual Attitudes (Sex-Positivity and Sex-Negativity)

The SPN scale (Short Form; Hangen & Rogge, 2022) showed good internal consistency reliability based on participant responses, with an overall Cronbach's α of .82; Sex Positivity subscale α = .77; and Sex Negativity subscale α = .87.

Because the assumption of normal distribution was met for Sex-Positivity scores, I tested the remaining assumptions for means-comparison analyses and, after verifying they were met, conducted between-group means-comparisons across demographic/personal background characteristics and participants' Sex-Positivity, using one-way ANOVA (for polychotomous variables) and independent samples *t*-tests (for dichotomous variables). There were statistically significant mean score differences between groups within the age range and ethnoracial identity categories. A Tukey's HSD post-hoc test identified the 18 to 21-year-old (n = 62) and 30- to 33-year-old (n = 77) age groups as having significantly different Sex-Positivity mean scores. The 18-21 age group's mean level of Sex-Positivity was 3.24 (SD = 1.02), a near half-point (0.48) *lower* mean than those in the 30-33 age group (M = 3.72; SD = 0.99). The statistically significant mean difference among ethnoracial groups was between white participants (n = 162), whose mean

Sex-Positivity level was 3.63 (*SD* = 0.97), and Black participants (n = 56), whose mean Sex-Positivity level was over a half-point (0.54) lower at 3.09 (*SD* = 1.18).

To test for significant associations between demographic/personal background characteristics and Sex-Negativity, I conducted Chi-square tests of association. A statistically significant association was identified between sexual identity and Sex-Negativity (χ^2 (3) = 17.17, $p < .01$). Particularly noteworthy was the greater-than-expected number of participants identifying as bisexual who endorsed *no* sex-negative attitudes (n = 19), relative to bisexual participants who endorsed *some* sex-negative attitudes (n = 10).

4.3.2.3 Between-Group Comparisons for Past Use of Coercive Sexual Strategies

To test for significant associations between demographic/personal background characteristics and past use of CSS, I conducted Chi-square tests of association. Statistically significant associations were identified between CSS use and the following characteristics: gender identity, $\chi^2(2) = 31.00$, $p < .001$; rurality/urbanicity of adolescent social environment, $\chi^2(2) = 6.40$, $p < .05$; and family eligibility for government assistance, $\chi^2(1) = 7.37$, $p < .01$. Characteristics associated with greater-than-expected frequencies of past CSS use included cisgender male identity, living in an urban environment during adolescence, and being raised in one or more household(s) that qualified for government assistance.

4.3.2.4 Zero-Order Correlations and Logistic Regressions between SANSSMM Scores and Exploratory Outcome Variables

Zero-order correlations indicated that both Parental and Peer Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM had statistically significant, though only slight, positive linear relationships with participant Sex-Positivity ($r = .15$, $p < .05$; and $r = .21$, $p < .001$, respectively). This result supports the hypothesis

that greater prominence of Sexuality-Affirming SSM, from both Parents and Peers, is associated with higher levels of Sex-Positivity. Binary logistic regressions testing associations between Sexuality-Affirming SSM and the presence of sex-negative attitudes indicated no statistically significant relationships, either for SSM from Parents or from Peers. While I was unable to test the original hypothesis of a negative linear relationship between Sexuality-Affirming SSM and Sex-Negativity because of transforming the latter to a binary variable, the results of this alternative analysis do not support the hypothesis of a relationship between the variables.

To explore whether Sexuality-Affirming and/or Sexuality-Negating SSM, from either Parents or Peers, is associated with likelihood of past coercive sexual strategy use, I conducted bivariate logistic regressions. Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM from neither Parents nor Peers was significantly associated with likelihood of reported CSS use. While I was unable to test the original hypothesis of a negative linear relationship between Sexuality-Affirming SSM and past use of CSS because of transforming the latter to a binary variable, the results of this alternative analysis do not support the hypothesis that a relationship between the variables is statistically significant. Both Parental and Peer Sexuality-*Negating* SSM, however, were significantly associated with likelihood of having used CSS in the past. Participants were twice as likely to report having used CSS in the past for every one-point increase in *Parental* Sexuality-Negating SSM (OR = 1.99; $p < .001$; 95% CI 1.48, 2.67). Participants were 2.5 times more likely to report past CSS use for every one-point increase in *Peer* Sexuality-Negating SSM (OR = 2.56; $p < .001$; 95% CI 1.87, 3.49). Although this does not address the hypothesis of a positive linear relationship between Sexuality-Negating SSM and number of CSS types used, the result indicates a relationship between the variables and suggests that a greater prominence of Sexuality-Negating SSM from either Parents or Peers during adolescence may increase the likelihood an individual will utilize CSS at some point.

4.3.3 Multivariate Outcomes

4.3.3.1 Relationships between SSM and Global Sex-Positive/Sex-Negative Attitudes

4.3.3.1.1 Sexuality-Affirming Sexual Socialization Messaging and Sex-Positivity

To further test the relationship between Sexuality-Affirming SSM and Sex-Positivity, I included in a multiple linear regression model *Parental* Sexuality-Affirming SSM score, *Peer* Sexuality-Affirming SSM score, and, as control variables, the demographic/personal background characteristics that had shown statistically significant between-group differences for Sexuality-Affirming SSM in bivariate analyses. These demographic/personal background characteristics included gender identity, childhood family's religious affiliation, and rurality/urbanicity of adolescent social environment. Social desirability was also included. The model and results are shown in

Table 8. The model was non-significant (p = .23), though it suggests a possible relationship between prominence of *Peer* Sexuality-Affirming SSM and participant Sex-Positivity (see values in bold text).

Table 8 Multiple Linear Regression Model: Sex-Positivity and Sexuality-Affirming SSM

Variable	β	SE	t	p	CI Lower	CI Upper
Gender identity *(Ref. Grp.: Cisgender female)*						
Cisgender male	0.11	0.14	0.81	0.42	-0.16	0.38
Other gender identity	-0.14	0.36	-0.39	0.70	-0.84	0.56
Family religious/spiritual affil. *(Ref. Grp.: No relig/spirit affil.)*						
Catholicism	0.09	0.15	0.57	0.57	-0.21	0.39
Christianity (Protestant/Not Catholic)	-0.05	0.17	-0.31	0.76	-0.39	0.28
Another religion/spiritual belief system						
Family was spiritual but not religious	0.08	0.23	0.36	0.72	-0.38	0.54

(continued)

Table 8 (continued)

Variable	*β*	SE	*t*	*p*	CI Lower	CI Upper
Rurality/Urbanicity of adolescent social envir.	0.07	0.17	0.41	0.68	-0.26	0.39
(Ref. Grp.: Remote/Rural or small town)						
Suburban/small city	0.03	0.27	0.09	0.93	-0.51	0.56
Urban/large city	0.38	0.23	1.63	0.10	-0.08	0.84
Social Desirability	0.01	0.05	0.12	0.90	-0.10	0.11
Sexuality-Affirming SSM - Parents/Caregivers	0.01	0.10	0.13	0.90	-0.18	0.21
Sexuality-Affirming SSM - Friends/Peers	**0.24**	0.10	2.33	**0.02**	0.04	0.45
Constant	2.90	0.21	13.89	0.00	2.49	3.31
Model Statistics	$N = 269$; $F(11, 257) = 1.29$; $p = .23$; Adj. $R^2 = 0.01$					

4.3.3.1.2 Sexuality-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging and Sex-Negativity

In order to test the relationship between Sexuality-*Negating* SSM and odds of a participant holding sex-negative attitudes, while controlling for other factors, I conducted a multivariate logistic regression. In this instance, a greater number of demographic/personal background characteristics had shown statistically significant between-group differences in Sexuality-*Negating* SSM prominence scores, so included in the model as control variables were: age group, gender identity, ethnoracial identity, childhood family's religious affiliation, rurality/urbanicity of adolescent social environment, and childhood home eligibility for government assistance. Social desirability was also included. The model and results are shown in Table 9.

Results of the logistic regression indicate a statistically significant relationship between prominence of Sexuality-Negating SSM from *Peers* during adolescence and likelihood of endorsing sex-negative sexual attitudes. Controlling for other factors, a one-point increase in prominence of Peer Sexuality-Negating SSM was associated with participants being more than twice as likely to hold sex-negative attitudes (OR = 2.41, $p < .001$). Participants in the 30- to 33-year-old age group were also 64 percent less likely than participants in the 18- to 21-year-old age group to endorse sex-negative attitudes (OR = 0.36; $p < .05$). The relationship between *Parental*

Table 9 Logistic Regression: Sexuality-Negating SSM and Likelihood of Holding Sex-Negative Attitudes

Variable	OR	SE	*z*	*p*	CI	
					Lower	Upper
Age range *(Ref. Grp.: 18-21)*						
22-25	0.76	0.35	-0.59	0.55	0.31	1.87
26-29	0.52	0.23	-1.46	0.15	0.22	1.25
30-33	**0.36**	0.16	-2.31	**0.02**	0.15	0.86
Gender identity *(Ref. Grp.: Cisgender female)*						
Cisgender male	0.75	0.25	-0.86	0.39	0.39	1.44
Other gender identity	0.72	0.61	-0.39	0.70	0.13	3.83
Ethnoracial identity *(Ref. Grp.: White/Caucasian)*						
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	6.90	7.84	1.70	0.09	0.75	63.88
Black/African American	0.66	0.29	-0.97	0.33	0.28	1.54
Latina/o/e/x	1.43	0.83	0.61	0.54	0.46	4.48
Multiracial/Multiple ethnoracial identities	1.68	1.02	0.85	0.40	0.51	5.55
Another ethnoracial identity	0.60	0.60	-0.51	0.61	0.08	4.29
Family religious/spiritual affil. *(Ref. Grp.: No relig/spirit affil.)*						
Catholicism	1.06	0.58	0.11	0.91	0.37	3.07
Christianity (Protestant/Not Catholic)	1.34	0.52	0.76	0.45	0.63	2.85
Another religion/spiritual belief system	1.03	0.69	0.04	0.97	0.27	3.86
Family was spiritual but not religious	0.84	0.43	-0.35	0.73	0.30	2.29
Rurality/Urbanicity of adolescent social envir. *(Ref. Grp.: Remote/Rural or small town)*						
Suburban/small city	0.93	0.33	-0.21	0.84	0.47	1.86
Urban/large city	0.86	0.35	-0.38	0.71	0.38	1.92
Childhood home qualified for gov't assistance *(Ref. grp.: Did not qualify for gov't assistance)*	0.90	0.28	-0.32	0.75	0.49	1.67
Social Desirability	0.89	0.11	-0.87	0.38	0.70	1.15
Sexuality-Negating SSM - Parents/Caregivers	1.14	0.28	0.52	0.60	0.70	1.86
Sexuality-Negating SSM - Friends/Peers	**2.41**	0.67	3.16	**0.00**	1.40	4.16
Constant	1.96	1.01	1.31	0.19	0.71	5.37
Model Statistics	N = 248; $\chi^2(20) = 39.3$; $p < .01$; Pseudo $R^2 = 0.12$					

Sexuality-Negating SSM and Sex-Negativity level was not significant. While not directly addressing a linear relationship between Sexuality-Negating SSM and Sex-Negativity, the logistic regression provides evidence which partially supports the hypothesis that there is a relationship between receiving Sexuality-Negating SSM from *Peers* during adolescence and currently holding sex-negative attitudes; the results do not provide evidence of a relationship between Sexuality-

Negating SSM from *Parents* during adolescence and currently holding sex-negative attitudes. The model explains about 12 percent of the variance in participants' likelihood to endorse sex-negative attitudes.

4.3.3.2 Relationships between SSM and History of Coercive Sexual Strategy Use

To further examine the relationship between prominence of Sexuality-Negating SSM during adolescence and likelihood of ever having used coercive sexual strategies to get another person to engage in sexual activity, I tested a multivariate logistic regression model, which contained the same predictor and control variables as those described above for the previous logistic regression. The model and results are shown in Table 10.

Results of the logistic regression indicate a statistically significant relationship between prominence of Sexuality-Negating SSM both from *Parents* and from *Peers* during adolescence and likelihood of past CSS use. Controlling for other factors, a one-point increase in prominence of *Parental* Sexuality-Negating SSM was associated with participants being almost twice as likely to have used CSS in the past (OR = 1.85, $p < .05$); similarly, a one-point increase in prominence of *Peer* Sexuality-Negating SSM was associated with participants being almost twice as likely to have used CSS in the past (OR = 1.92, $p < .01$). Also significant was a three times greater likelihood of having used CSS in the past among cigender male-identifying participants, compared to cisgender female-identifying participants (OR = 3.00, $p < .001$). While not directly addressing a linear relationship between Sexuality-Negating SSM and past CSS use, the logistic regression provides evidence which supports the hypothesis that there is a relationship between receiving Sexuality-Negating SSM, both from *Parents* and from *Peers* during adolescence and ever having used CSS to engage another person in sexual activity. The model explains about 26 percent of the variance in likelihood of participants' past CSS use.

Table 10 Logistic Regression: Sexuality-Negating SSM and Likelihood of Past CSS Use

Variable	OR	SE	*z*	*p*	CI Lower	CI Upper
Age range *(Ref. Grp.: 18-21)*						
22-25	1.11	0.53	0.22	0.83	0.43	2.85
26-29	0.61	0.30	-1.02	0.31	0.23	1.58
30-33	2.11	0.97	1.63	0.10	0.86	5.19
Gender identity *(Ref. Grp.: Cisgender female)* [a]						
Cisgender male	**3.00**	1.03	3.20	**0.00**	1.53	5.88
Ethnoracial identity *(Ref. Grp.: White/Caucasian)*						
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	2.87	2.61	1.16	0.25	0.48	17.10
Black/African American	0.71	0.33	-0.74	0.46	0.28	1.77
Latina/o/e/x	1.38	0.87	0.52	0.61	0.40	4.76
Multiracial/Multiple ethnoracial identities	0.72	0.47	-0.50	0.62	0.20	2.61
Another ethnoracial identity	4.37	5.71	1.13	0.26	0.34	56.55
Family religious/spiritual affil. *(Ref. Grp.: No relig/spirit affil.)*						
Catholicism	0.99	0.61	-0.02	0.99	0.30	3.29
Christianity (Protestant/Not Catholic)	0.48	0.20	-1.73	0.08	0.21	1.10
Another religion/spiritual belief system	0.59	0.44	-0.70	0.48	0.14	2.55
Family was spiritual but not religious	1.40	0.79	0.60	0.55	0.47	4.22
Rurality/Urbanicity of adolescent social envir. *(Ref. Grp.: Remote/Rural or small town)*						
Suburban/small city	0.81	0.32	-0.52	0.60	0.38	1.77
Urban/large city	1.34	0.59	0.67	0.50	0.57	3.16
Childhood home qualified for gov't assistance *(Ref. grp.: Did not qualify for gov't assistance)*	1.84	0.63	1.77	0.08	0.94	3.61
Social Desirability	0.75	0.11	-1.98	0.05	0.56	1.00
Sexuality-Negating SSM - Parents/Caregivers	**1.85**	0.53	2.15	**0.03**	1.06	3.24
Sexuality-Negating SSM - Friends/Peers	**1.92**	0.51	2.46	**0.01**	1.14	3.24
Constant	0.18	0.10	-2.99	0.00	0.06	0.55
Model Statistics	N = 240; $\chi^2(19) = 84.1$; $p < .001$; Pseudo $R^2 = 0.26$					

[a] *Other gender identity* was excluded from the model, due to no participants in that group indicating any use of CSS in the past.

5.0 Discussion

5.1 Overview of Key Findings

The purpose of this research study was to develop, validate, and utilize in preliminary analyses a new measure that assesses the prominence of dispositions toward sex and sexuality that are embedded in the sexual socialization messaging young adults receive during adolescence. Over the course of the study's three phases, I compiled a set of measure items based on theoretical and empirical literature, existing measures of related constructs, content expert feedback, and cognitive interview findings; I tested the reliability and validity of a preliminary measure, administered through a survey of 18- to 33-year-old U.S. residents, and made changes to the composition of the measure based on psychometric testing; and I put the final Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging Measure (SANSSMM) to use in exploratory analyses as a predictor variable in relation to participants' global sexual attitudes and use of coercive sexual strategies. The SANSSMM demonstrates good reliability and validity, and its use in exploratory analyses suggests that it is a promising tool that can shed light on how the nature of sexual socialization messaging individuals receive during adolescence relates to the manifestation of global sexual attitudes and coercive sexual behaviors. Identifying these relationships can inform new understandings of and approaches to ameliorating sexuality-related social challenges.

In this final chapter, I summarize key findings from each phase of the study and discuss their contributions to advancing prior knowledge, as well as implications for future research and practice.

5.1.1 Phase One, Aim 1: SANSSMM Item Development and Selection

Development and selection of items for the SANSSMM followed a more rigorous process than those described in the literature for existing measures such as the Sexual Socialization Instrument (SSI; Lottes et al., 2020; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994) and the Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure (SSDM; Day, 2010; Epstein & Ward, 2008; Fletcher et al., 2015; Trinh et al., 2014). For example, developers of those measures do not indicate that they engaged outside content experts for input on item and measure development, nor do they mention engaging cognitive interviewing or similar strategies to support content validity. It is also not clear from the literature on either measure how items were drafted, although in the case of the SSDM, some authors (Epstein & Ward, 2008; Kim & Ward, 2007; Smiler et al., 2005) reference existing measures upon which the SSDM is partially based. It is apparent, based on my own review of those precedent measures (e.g., Burt, 1980; Darling & Hicks, 1982), that some SSDM items were adapted or drawn directly from those sources. The developers also drew on theoretical literature and prior research, such as the work of one of the original measure developers, Ward (1995), who analyzed themes of messaging about sexuality in popular media in the mid-1990s.

The SANSSMM is unique in its contribution to explicitly conceptualizing and measuring two contrasting types of sexual socialization messaging, *sexuality-affirming* and *sexuality-negating*. While existing measures characterize certain subscales or particular items as (*sex-*) *positive*, (*sex-*) *negative*, *permissive*, or *restrictive*—reflecting qualities similar to those I am calling *sexuality-affirming* and *sexuality-negating*—the contrasts are not explicitly drawn by the factors identified as subscales or the content of items themselves. The SSI (Lottes et al., 2020; Lottes & Kuriloff, 1994) comes closest to doing so with its binary classification of "permissive" versus "restrictive" messaging, but it suffers from other limitations (see Section 2.2.1.1). Most

notably, as it relates to the current study, those two message types reflect only a portion of the dimensions of sexuality-affirming and sexuality-negating perspectives. Some researchers who use the SSDM (Caruthers & Ward, 2002; Epstein & Ward, 2008; Fletcher et al., 2015; Levin et al., 2012) characterize some message themes as "sex positive," yet they don't contrast that type of message with ones that are sex-negative, unless they mean to imply that all message themes that are not characterized as sex-positive are understood to be sex-negative. This is not necessarily a shortcoming of the SSDM, as no authors have claimed that the measure's intent was to distinguish between *negative* and *positive* sexual socialization discourses; rather, it is simply a characteristic that sets the SANSSMM apart, as I strove to deliberately draw contrasts between messaging that reflects of two distinct types of attitudinal dispositions, *sexuality-affirming* and *sexuality-negating*.

In addition to building on existing measures by seeking to capture more comprehensive conceptualizations of sexuality-affirming and sexuality-negating perspectives, this study contributes to both theoretical and research literature by starting to formulate and operationalize constructs that can inform standardized definitions of *sexuality-affirming* and *-negating* perspectives. This is particularly true in the case of sexuality-*negating* perspectives, given the scant attention to defining similar concepts such as *sex-negativity* in prior literature. As I discuss in section 5.1.2, below, conceptualizing sexuality-negating SSM presented certain challenges and therefore warrants further attention in future research, though the SANSSMM provides a reasonably solid foundation upon which these efforts can build.

Hypothesis 1 of this study stated that items selected through a systematic process, informed by theoretical and empirical literature and by field expert feedback, would comprise a set of items that comprehensively encompasses key dimensions of sexuality-affirming and sexuality-negating sexual socialization messaging. This hypothesis was largely supported, as evidenced by feedback

from content expert panelists. Experts indicated that there were no major omissions among the set of proposed dimensions for sexuality-affirming and sexuality-negating perspectives I provided, based on existing literature; furthermore, experts rated all proposed dimensions high on level of importance. On measures of representativeness, clarity, and content validation, I was able to identify items for the measure that related to each dimension, requiring little or no modification to maximize their representativeness and clarity. Responses of cognitive interview participants reinforced the feedback of content experts by anecdotally confirming that the final content and wording of items were clear and appropriate.

During reliability and validity testing in Phase Two, items that represented one dimension, *Risk and Danger*, were among those dropped from the SANSSMM due to poor fit with other items and with the scale as a whole. In this respect, the hypothesis that the literature- and expert feedback-informed set of items would comprehensively encompass key dimensions of sexuality-affirming and -negating SSM was partially undermined, unless further testing of the measure and its constructs determines that *Risk and Danger* items represent an entirely separate but related domain (factor) or should remain left out altogether. Possible implications of these options are discussed in the next section.

5.1.2 Phase Two/Aim 2: Reliability and Validity of the SANSSMM

Hypothesis 2 stated that the set of face- and content-valid items selected through the processes followed for Aim 1 would exhibit acceptable or better psychometric properties on measures of internal consistency reliability, factorial validity, and convergent and discriminant validity. Reliability and validity testing was performed using Sexuality-Affirming and -Negating

SSM prominence scores for messaging respondents received from *parents/caregivers* during adolescence.

Reliability and validity testing showed that the Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM subscale, in particular, boasts strong psychometric properties. It exhibited consistently good internal consistency reliability throughout testing and fit the two-factor CFA model with all original items retained. Convergent and discriminant validity analyses further supported the subscale's utility in measuring the construct it is intended to measure. Properties of the Sexuality-*Negating* SSM subscale, while demonstrating somewhat less consistency, are also very good. Some of the original Sexuality-*Negating* SANSSMM-p items were dropped from the measure due to weak interitem and item-scale correlations and Cronbach's alpha statistics, or because of weak-to-moderate internal consistency in combination with a detrimental impact on CFA model fit. The final Sexuality-*Negating* SSM subscale, with five items removed from the original, showed good reliability and validity, only slightly below the same outcomes for the Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM subscale. Additional considerations in decision-making about items to retain or omit, such as examining modification indices for residuals in CFA model testing, as well as modification indices for parameter values, could help improve psychometric performance of the Sexuality-Negating subscale even further in future analyses.

The difference in performance of the Sexuality-*Negating* SSM subscale, relative to the Sexuality-*Affirming* subscale, may be indicative of a reason sex-negativity has been under-conceptualized and under-researched: that is, it may be less easily operationalized than sex-positivity or sexuality-affirmation. After all, if a society like the United States is predominantly sexuality-negating, and affirming attitudes toward sex and sexuality are the exception, capturing the attitudes which permeate an entire culture is a far greater task than defining preferred

alternatives. On the other hand, it may simply be that the lack of solid conceptualization to date means that the process of testing reliability and validity of the SANSSMM is an early-stage effort to operationalize an idea that has been simply taken for granted and unrecognized as a worthy focus of research in its own right. This parallels Karioris and Allen's (2019) contention that male heterosexuality has been treated as the "rule" in Western cultures, such that it is overlooked as a worthwhile focus of research. Perhaps the pervasiveness of sexuality-negating attitudes, like the centrality of male heterosexuality, has served merely as the universal reference against which desirable alternatives are imagined, designed, implemented, and ultimately judged.

Once I performed reliability and validity testing on the preliminary SANSSMM(-p), I dropped five items from the Sexuality-Negating SSM subscale, which left no items representing the *Risk and Danger* dimension. One of these, "Having sex puts you in serious danger of getting HIV or an STD" (SNSSM item 4), had earned a unanimous score of four out of four from content experts for representativeness of the *Risk & Danger* dimension. However, as noted in the Results section, this item consistently correlated poorly with other Sexuality-Negating subscale items. Also noteworthy was the ultimate elimination of all Sexuality-Negating subscale items related to sexual coercion, consent, and sexual assault-supportive attitudes, because of those items' weak-to-moderate internal consistency scores in combination with their negative impact on CFA model fit indices.

This pattern of lower consistency among risk- and sexual harm-related items relative to other Sexuality-Negating SSM items raises questions for further consideration and possible future research, such as whether any or all of the poorly performing items suggest that an additional factor is needed to capture important messages about risks associated with sexual behavior. As previous literature has suggested, a *risk* orientation of messaging about sexuality is commonly contrasted

with a "positive" or "strengths-based" orientation, implying (if not explicitly stating) that risk-oriented messaging is "negative" or "deficit-based." However, the unexpectedly anomalous performance of a sexual health risk-oriented item compared to other items in the Sexuality-Negating SSM subscale illuminates the possibility that warning messages about risk potentially associated with sexual activity does not necessarily accompany a broader sexuality-negating perspective. In fact, some might consider it a sexuality-affirming perspective to promote risk-awareness as part of healthy, fulfilling sexuality. Kink and BDSM communities commonly advocate such a perspective through broad implementation of guidelines for safe, consensual engagement in sexual activities, such as RACK (Risk-Aware Consensual Kink) and 4C (Caring, Consent, Communication, Caution; Williams et al., 2014). Furthermore, warning about HIV and STI transmission might very well accompany messages validating sexual activity as a source of pleasure or the legitimacy of sexual expression beyond the bounds of committed and/or monogamous relationships—for example: "It's OK to have sex simply because it feels good—*just know that you're at greater risk of contracting an STI if you do it.*" A parent conveying this double-barreled message to their teen child might be perceived as generally sexuality-affirming because they're engaged in open communication with their child about sex and not necessarily saying "don't do it"—yet they simultaneously provide cautionary disclaimers to ensure their child learns to make informed decisions. It is unclear from this study whether risk-oriented messages about other sexuality-related issues, such as unwanted pregnancy, sexual coercion and assault, or sexuality-based discrimination and violence, would correlate more strongly with other Sexuality-Negating SSM items than risk-oriented messages related to physiological sexual health, in particular. Further exploring this area is an opportunity for future research.

It bears noting that existing measures from which I drew or adapted items for the SANSSMM do not contain any items representing messages explicitly addressing sexual coercion or harm. The items I included on these topics were entirely original, with the exception of SNSSM item 12, "Girls who go around dressing and acting 'slutty' are just asking for trouble." This item is adapted from the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA; McMahon & Farmer, 2011; Payne et al., 1999). I had not included measures of rape myth acceptance among those from which I drew or adapted items for the original pool, as I considered them to be focused on a specific subset of sexual attitudes; and, like other attitudinal measures, they assess respondents' own thoughts and feelings rather than values conveyed in messaging from others. Future development of the SANSSMM should take into consideration two possibilities: (1) whether messaging about consent and/or sexual harm differs from other dimensions of Sexuality-Negating SSM to an extent that it might warrant the addition of a separate factor, or perhaps remain left out altogether; and (2) if appropriate, whether items from existing measures of rape myth acceptance or similar sexual harm-supportive beliefs and attitudes could be adapted to represent a relevant dimension of Sexuality-Negating SSM.

5.1.3 Phase Three/Aim 3: Exploratory Utilization of the SANSSMM

Results of hypothesis testing to address Aim 3 of the study reflected findings of prior research that has shown higher levels of Sexuality-*Negating* attitudes reflected in SSM from *Parents* than from Peers and, conversely, higher levels of Sexuality-*Affirming* attitudes reflected in SSM from *Peers* compared to SSM from parents (Epstein & Ward, 2008; Trinh et al., 2014). As expected, gender and religion contributed to differences in the prominence of Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating SSM participants received. Cisgender males received more

Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM from *Parents* and less Sexuality-*Negating* SSM from *Peers*, relative to cisgender females. Compared to participants whose families did not identify with a religious or spiritual belief system or were spiritual but not religious, those whose families were affiliated with Protestant or other non-Catholic Christian faith traditions received more Sexuality-*Negating* messaging from *Parents*. Participants whose families identified with another religion not listed also experienced a higher prominence of Sexuality-*Negating* SSM from *Parents*; however, because "another religion" combined diverse religious and spiritual belief systems (e.g., Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Wicca), due to small cell sizes, it would be important to conduct further research, with larger subsamples, in order to determine whether one or more of the religions/belief systems in the "other" category account for observed differences, relative to others.

Results also suggested that the rurality/urbanicity of the area in which participants lived during adolescence was related to prominence of *Parental* Sexuality-*Affirming* SSM (more prominent in the experiences of participants raised in urban areas compared to those living in suburban and rural/remote areas during adolescence) and prominence of *Peer* Sexuality-*Negating* SSM (more prominent among participants living in urban areas compared to those living in rural/remote areas during adolescence). In addition, significant mean score differences in prominence of *Peer* Sexuality-*Negating* SSM between white and Black/African American participants, and between individuals whose childhood household(s) qualified for government assistance compared to those that did not, suggest possible impacts of ethnoracial and class differences on the nature of SSM adolescents receive from their friends and peers.

Associations between Sexuality-*Negating* SSM from *Peers* and past use of coercive sexual strategies aligns with research that has identified peers as significant influences on men's risk of perpetrating sexual harm (Greathouse et al., 2015; Knight & Sims-Knight, 2011; Tharp et al.,

2013). While the particular influence of peers identified in reviews of sexual violence perpetration risk research (e.g., Tharp et al., 2013) have not pinpointed sexual socialization messaging, per se, as the relevant risk factor in peer relationships, this study's exploratory analysis suggests this is a worthwhile focus for further research.

Results of Phase Three analyses illustrate the potential utility of the SANSSMM to help researchers predict sexual attitudes and coercive sexual behaviors that may be linked to social challenges related to sexuality, such as harmful sexual behavior. Of particular note is the evident salience of Peer SSM in influencing sexual attitudes (especially sex-negativity) and the potential to employ coercive sexual strategies to obtain sex. Further research to explore these associations in greater depth holds the potential to enhance sexual harm prevention strategies, such as bystander and peer socialization-focused interventions, by helping identify the types of messages that contribute to sexual harm perpetration risk and/or those that can be transformed or amplified to protect against harmful sexual behavior.

5.2 Limitations and Future Directions

5.2.1 Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research

Limitations of this research study include aspects of its design and other threats to external and internal validity. The survey through which data was collected to test the reliability and validity of the SANSSMM (Aim 2) and to pilot the final measure's use in exploratory data analyses (Aim 3) was a cross-sectional online survey of 18- to 33-year-old, sexually-active young adults from the United States. These parameters of the study limit generalizability of findings to other age groups,

individuals who grew up and/or are living in other countries, and individuals who have not become sexually active to this point in their lifetime. The cross-sectional nature of the design also limits generalizability to other points in time, even for an identical sample. I used a convenience sampling method, recruiting participants for the survey through a corporation whose function is, in part, to recruit research study participants. It is possible individuals who opt-in to participate in online research studies for the incentives they earn by doing so were motivated to complete the survey hastily in order to maximize the number of studies in which they are able to participate and thus earn incentives. Furthermore, those who self-selected to participate in a study like this one, on sexuality-related themes, may be more likely to come from a background or hold certain views affirming of sexuality than individuals who chose not to participate due to lower levels of comfort with the subject matter. Finally, recruiting participants and administering a survey entirely online restricts participation only to individuals who have internet access.

5.2.2 Limitations of the Measure and Directions for Further Development

In addition to the issues noted above regarding the need for items to represent the Risk and Danger dimension of the Sexuality-Negating SSM subscale, the SANSSMM has certain other areas for improvement and further development.

5.2.2.1 Quantitative Method

Researching a phenomenon like sexual socialization presents certain challenges that impact response bias. As theories of symbolic interaction and social learning tell us, a significant component of socialization processes is intrapersonal, as individuals interpret and integrate messaging from socialization agents, often pre-consciously. Furthermore, the recipients of

socialization messages themselves play a role in affecting the social environment and sources from which they glean messaging, and they may influence the content of what is conveyed or the means by which it is conveyed. While socialization takes place throughout the life course, childhood and adolescence are key developmental stages during which socialization is acutely targeted and during which it is arguably most impactful, before individuals have developed the capacity to critically analyze and filter messages from social influences, and while their life experiences are limited by dependence on caregivers. These are just some of the reasons it would be difficult to study socialization as it unfolds, whether through observation or immediate feedback from those experiencing it. Retrospective approaches to understanding socialization are more feasible, in part because, particularly where topics of sexuality are concerned, recruiting adult participants presents fewer potential barriers than conducting research with minors about sexuality. However, research that relies on retrospective information is subject to recall bias, and recollections of socialization processes may be particularly skewed, not only by the passage of time but also by the fact that the experience itself entailed subjective understanding.

Because of the subjectivity of socialization experiences, qualitative and mixed methods studies would add significant value to understanding sexual socialization, by allowing for the exploration of nuances in individuals' sexual socialization experiences, within and across populations. The SANSSMM can be further developed and refined using qualitative and mixed methods approaches, and it also holds potential as a tool for researchers to utilize in such studies. It can be incorporated into a quantitative survey or adapted and integrated into qualitative questionnaires, interviews, or focus groups. In a similar vein, clinical practitioners may find a measure like the SANSSMM valuable to use in practice, helping to enhance holistic assessments and provide additional insights into clients' backgrounds and influences that inform their

worldview. For this reason, future adaptations of the SANSSMM for clinical applications may be worthwhile.

5.2.2.2 Scale

I modeled the design of the SANSSMM after the Sexual Socialization Discourses Measure (SSDM), given the similarity in its intended function to that of the SSDM. While I adapted some of the wording of the introduction prompt, I retained the four-point 0 to 3 scale (0 = Not at all; 1 = A little; 2 = A fair amount; 3 = A lot). It may be helpful to consider using a scale of greater range to detect more nuanced differences in message prominence. For example, respondents may find it useful to have a rating option between "A little" and "A fair amount," or beyond "A lot" (e.g., "All the time"). It became evident in cognitive interviews that the response option "Not at all" held multiple meanings for respondents. Several interviewees found rating an item challenging if their parents or friends had never conveyed *any* message to them related to the item's content. They articulated a desire to have a "Not applicable" option, as they saw a lack of communication about a topic as different from "not at all"; several of them interpreted "not at all" as applicable if they received messages *contrary to* the item, or if they believed their parents or friends would have *disagreed with* the statement. However, instead of making an item "not applicable," a lack of communication is simply another reason a message was received "not at all." In an effort to clarify this, I added language to the SANSSMM instructions explaining that "Not at all" could indicate either (a) "disagreement with a message or endorsement of a contrary message," *or* (b) "that a message was absent."

In future versions of the measure, it may be worthwhile to consider the addition of a response option that somehow reflects a distinction between receiving *no* messaging related to an item versus receiving messaging that *contradicts* the item. Conveying nothing at all relating to a

message like “Sex outside of marriage is sinful” could be justified for a variety of reasons. For example, “sin” might not be a barometer of morality within a family that does not subscribe to a religious belief system; or addressing the topic may be perceived by a parent or friend as irrelevant to someone who has come out as gay, lesbian, polyromantic, disinterested in sex, or averse to marriage. Silence on topics for these and countless other possible reasons would likely have a very different impact than the presence of a contradictory message. For instance, saying or doing nothing to convey the message “Healthy sexuality is a part of overall health and wellbeing” is not the same as instead conveying, “Having sex will result in unwanted pregnancy, STIs, or other hazards to your health.” Given that incorporating new response options could have implications for the scale (e.g., where would those two separate options fall in the ordinal scale?) and scoring (e.g., what would the value of each option be?), I chose not to undertake this effort as part of the current study.

I developed the SANSSMM based on a theoretical and logical assumption that sexuality-affirming and sexuality-negating perspectives are two distinct, though related, constructs. As noted in an earlier section, it is likely that most individuals receive at least some SSM reflective of both sexuality-affirming and sexuality-negating attitudes, even if the prominence of one type is greater than the other. This raises questions of whether the subscales of the SANSSMM should be treated and scored as two separate measures or as a single measure, combining scores to obtain an overall score of relative sexuality-affirming/-negating SSM prominence (e.g., a total score that rates predominant attitudes conveyed through SSM along a continuum of “entirely/mostly sexuality-affirming” to “entirely/mostly sexuality-negating”). The CFA model depicted in Figure 2 (page 111) and discussed in Section 4.2.2.4 indicates that SASSM and SNSSM factors were allowed to correlate, suggesting that scores on the two subscales could logically be combined to represent a

higher-order factor. Yet it is unclear, given the scope of the current project, how combining the two subscale scores should be approached (e.g., adding them together or subtracting one from the other) and interpreted. Based on the premise that, while representing distinct perspectives, the factors are related by their likely combined influence on individuals' sexual socialization experiences (see Section 4.2.2.4, beginning on page 108), my decision to allow the factors to correlate arguably justifies combining subscale scores for an overall measure score. A next step in further SANSSMM development should be to compare CFA outcomes for a model in which SASSM and SNSSM factors are not correlated and thereby determine whether separate subscale scores should be interpreted as entirely independent of one another.

5.2.2.3 Agents and Reference Period

For the purposes of developing and validating the SANSSMM, I elected to ask respondents about SSM they received during adolescence from two agents, *parents/caregivers* and *friends/peers*. This was motivated in part by wanting to compare features of the SANSSMM to features of similar measures, and parents and peers have frequently been agents of interest in sexual socialization research that has utilized these measures. For reliability and validity testing, I followed precedent found in the literature for establishing psychometric properties based on *parental* sexual socialization scores, then applied the same scale to assess messaging from other agents, such as peers (e.g., see Epstein & Ward, 2008). It should not be taken for granted, however, that the same set of items would behave identically for SSM from peers as it does for SSM from parents. Differences in item performance in psychometric testing of Parent and Peer SSM scores, for example, could lead to different items being omitted or retained and result in only partial overlap between the scales measuring SSM received from each agent. In order to determine whether it is appropriate to use the same set of items to measure SSM from parents, peers, and/or

other agents, reliability and validity-testing procedures like those followed in this study should be performed on data for SSM from each agent of interest independently. It follows that results of some of the comparison analyses reported for this study could differ, depending on whether *Peer* SSM is adequately measured by an identical scale to the one validated for *Parent* SSM.

There are other potential problems with asking participants to recall messaging they received from parents/caregivers and friends/peers, however. Two or more parental figures could convey very different types of messages from the other(s) about sexuality. This same could be true of friends or peers, which might also vary by context (e.g., friends at school versus friends at a church youth group). Furthermore, the people an individual considers "friends" may very well differ from those they consider "peers," and each of these groups could convey strongly contrasting messages about sexuality. Friend groups are subject to change over time, and because the SANSSMM asks participants to reflect on adolescence (defined in the measure as approximately age 10 through age 17, or around fifth through twelfth grade), some could find it challenging to identify the most prominent messaging across shifting friend or peer groups over time. Even parental figures can change over time, both in composition of relationships and families (e.g., married parents getting divorced, remarried, or dating after separation or the death of a partner, etc.) and in the attitudes they espouse. I tried to minimize this challenge for participants by asking only to reflect on adolescence, while the SSDM asks respondents to reflect on their "formative years," ranging from age five to 18. Even over the course of ages 10 to 17, significant developmental and social transformations take place for most adolescents. For these reasons, additional testing of the SANSSMM focusing on recollections from narrower age ranges may be worthwhile.

Researchers have used the SSDM to assess levels of communication respondents received from agents other than parents and peers, including media, religion, and school. While the SANSSMM maintained good reliability and validity when used as a measure of friend/peer SSM after initial testing with parent/caregiver SSM, it should be assessed further as a measure of messaging received from other agents. This is particularly the case for agents of interest that are mezzo- and macro-level institutions or entities (e.g., education, religion, media), rather than other people within the individual's immediate social environment, as messaging content, modes of message transmission, and scope of influence may differ across these varied agent types.

5.3 Applications, Implications, and Conclusion

This research study contributes to social work research by providing preliminary evidence of the reliability and validity of a measure to assess the prominence of sexuality-affirming and sexuality-negating sexual socialization messaging individuals received during their adolescence. The SANSSMM builds on previous sexual socialization messaging measures by encompassing dimensions of two contrasting types of SSM, sexuality-affirming and sexuality-negating. This enables SANSSMM users to assess and compare the prominence of each SSM type in the socialization respondents recall receiving from parents, peers, and potentially other agents. The quantification of sexuality-affirming and sexuality-negating SSM prominence can then be used to examine relationships to other sexuality-related variables, such as the respondent's own current sexual attitudes or their previous sexual behaviors. I illustrated this in exploratory analyses of associations between SSM types and participants' global sex-positivity/sex-negativity, as well as between SSM types and participants' past use of coercive strategies to engage someone in sexual

contact. Use of the SANSSMM in this way holds promise for better understanding how the sexual socialization experienced by individuals growing up in the United States impacts their sexual attitudes and behaviors, particularly based on the prominence of sexuality-affirming or sexuality-negating SSM they received and from whom they received it.By identifying such relationships, social work researchers, as well as practitioners, may consider interventions to be implemented throughout the course of adolescents' sexual socialization, by various socialization agents, to increase positive outcomes or decrease negative ones. Since processes and agents of socialization are largely untapped sites of intervention for preventing or ameliorating social challenges associated with sexuality, the SANSSMM is meant to help social workers and professionals in allied fields explore new possibilities for lasting solutions.

Use of the SANSSMM to inform understandings of individuals' sexual behaviors and attitudes has potential applications in social work practice. In my past experience as a clinical social worker, for example, the SANSSMM would have provided me with a tool that could increase my insight into the nature of SSM individuals had received and how that might relate to past or present attitudes and behaviors. In a manner similar to the way in which the SANSSMM could enhance qualitative research by providing a basis for discussions of participants' subjective experiences of sexual socialization, the SANSSMM can serve as a useful tool for conducting clinical assessments and interviews. The process of completing and reviewing results of the SANSSMM could help identify messages that contribute to problematic behaviors or cognitions. It could present clients and clinicians with sites for targeted interventions, such as psychoeducation and challenging core beliefs or automatic thoughts, to address such concerns. In the spirit of the strengths perspective (Saleebey, 2006), it might also highlight beneficial messages that can be amplified and reinforced as protective factors against detrimental manifestations of problematic

internalized messaging about sex and sexuality, such as perpetration of sexual harm. The lack of communication and education about sex and sexuality that clients often indicated to me they had received during their upbringings could be met with psychoeducation to enhance their knowledge and to normalize open, affirming communication about sexual topics.

Sitron and Dyson's (2012) call for sexological professionals to examine their own sexual worldviews in order to enhance the client care they provide also applies to social workers faced with sexuality-related challenges in micro, mezzo, and macro practice contexts. Social workers can extend this exploration of sexual worldviews to those held by clients and socialization agents to better understand how attitudinal perspectives regarding sex and sexuality shape individual and collective behavior. The SANSSMM provides a tool with which to begin examining these phenomena in both research and practice contexts, with particular focus on distinguishing between the effects of *sexuality-affirming* and *sexuality-negating* attitudes conveyed through sexual socialization messaging individuals receive during adolescence. Increasing our understanding of the differential impacts of sexual perspectives embedded in sexual socialization messaging holds promise for transforming the internalized social learning and attitudinal dispositions toward sexuality that uphold and perpetuate persistent social challenges like sexual mistreatment, coercion, and harm perpetration.

Appendix A Proposed Dimensions of Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating Perspectives Conveyed through Sexual Socialization Messaging

Appendix Table A-1, beginning on the next page, lists dimensions of two conceptual domains, (I.) *Sexuality-Affirming* Perspectives and (II.) *Sexuality-Negating* Perspectives. These domains refer to general attitudinal dispositions toward sex and sexuality that may be conveyed to socialization targets through the messaging they receive from socialization agents. The second column of the table provides a summary description of the proposed dimension, followed by select references that support its inclusion in a comprehensive conceptualization of the domain's focus in the third column. The last column provides the mean level of importance score expert panelists ($N = 9$) assigned each dimension, on a scale of 0 ("Not at all important") to 3 ("Very important"). This scale measured experts' impressions of how important each dimension is to comprehensively conceptualizing the idea the domain under which it is listed is meant to represent. Also provided in the second column is the Content Validation Index (CVI; Grant & Davis, 1997) based on experts' ratings. (See Section 3.2.1.2.4 of Chapter 3, beginning on page 66, for an explanation of CVI.)

Appendix Table A-1 Dimensions of Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating Perspectives Conveyed in Sexual Socialization Messaging

Dimension	Description	Select References	Importance Rating/ (CVI) [a]
Domain I. Sexuality-Affirming (SA) Perspectives			**(.95)**
SA Dimension 1. *Access* [b]	Supports education, access to information, resources, and services to address sex(uality)-related questions, concerns, or curiosities	Dodd (2020); Ivanski & Kohut (2017); Nimbi et al. (2022); Williams et al. (2015)	3.88 (1.0)
SA Dimension 2. *Consent*	Characterizes consent as essential to and a prerequisite for all sexual activity	Dodd (2020); Ivanski & Kohut (2017); Kimmes et al. (2015); Nimbi et al. (2022); Queen (2014); Satterly & Ingersoll (2020); Williams et al. (2015)	3.88 (1.0)
SA Dimension 3. *Equity & Justice* *	Promotes freedom from persecution, discrimination, violence, legal consequences, etc., for sexual expression or activity; Promotes equal protection of sexual and gender rights; Promotes equality and power balance between sexual partners, including freedom from coercion, violence, and abuse	Dodd (2020); Ivanski & Kohut (2017); Queen (2014); Williams et al. (2015); World Health Organization (2006)	3.75 (.88)
SA Dimension 4. *Holistic Health & Wellbeing* *	Recognizes the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual benefit potential of sex(uality); Promotes sexual health and wellbeing not only by preventing/ treating disease but also endorsing sex(uality) as part of overall health/wellbeing	Burnes et al. (2017); Dodd (2020); Ivanski & Kohut (2017); C. M. Mosher (2017); Nimbi et al. (2022); Turner (2020); Williams et al. (2015); World Health Organization (2006)	3.75 (.88)

(continued)

Appendix Table A-1 (continued)

Dimension	Description	Select References	Importance Rating/ (CVI) [a]
SA Dimension 5. *Openness*	Encourages communication about sex and sexuality, both privately (e.g., between partners, between parents and children) and publicly (e.g., non-harmful, age-appropriate discussion of sex(uality) in media, schools, etc.)	Dodd (2020); Nimbi et al. (2022); Williams et al. (2015)	3.75 (.88)
SA Dimension 6. *Pleasure*	Acknowledges the possibility of pleasure and fun in sexual activity and expression; Accepts pleasure as a valid motivation for sexual activity and expression	Dodd (2020); Ivanski & Kohut (2017); Nimbi et al. (2022); Queen (2014); Williams et al. (2015); World Health Organization (2006)	3.88 (1.0)
SA Dimension 7. *Respect*	Condones variety in sexual activity, expression, relationship types; Withholds judgment of what is right for others regardless of personal values; Acceptance includes others' choices to abstain from sex or identify as asexual	Burnes et al. (2017); Dodd (2020); Donaghue (2015); International Society for Sexual Medicine, n.d.); Ivanski & Kohut (2017); Kimmes et al. (2015); Nimbi et al. (2022); Queen (2014); Williams et al. (2015)	4.00 (1.0)
SA Dimension 8. *Self-Determination*	Supports every individual's ability to choose and act on what is right for them, including abstaining from sex, without interference from others	Dodd (2020); Ivanski & Kohut (2017); Nimbi et al. (2022); World Health Organization (2006, 2015)	3.88 (1.0)
Domain II. Sexuality-*Negating* (SN) Perspectives			**(1.0)**
SN Dimension 1. *Inequity & Injustice*	Reinforces power differentials in "traditional" sexual relationships; Does not support rights, or endorses discrimination, on the basis of sexual or gender identity/expression	Dodd (2020); Ivanski & Kohut (2017); Queen (2014); Williams et al. (2015); World Health Organization (2006, 2015)	4.00 (1.0)

(continued)

Appendix Table A-1 (continued)

Dimension	Description	Select References	Importance Rating/ (CVI) [a]
SN Dimension 2. *Judgment & Moralization*	Judges others for sexual expression, activity, choices outside of what is considered acceptable, moral, "normal"; Includes characterizing non-normative sexuality as deviant, immoral, etc.	C. M. Mosher (2017); Queen (2014); Queen & Comella (2008)	3.83 (1.0)
SN Dimension 3. *Risks, Danger, & Dysfunction*	Limits discussion or acknowledgment of sex to the risks/dangers associated with engaging in it (e.g., risk of pregnancy, STIs, rape); May also include warnings about physical safety (e.g., being "gay-bashed" for coming out, getting raped for wearing "slutty" clothes); May characterize non-normative sexuality as an illness, pathology, genetic abnormality, etc.	Dodd (2020); Epstein & Ward (2008); Fine, 1988); Fine & McClelland (2006); Ivanski & Kohut (2017); Tolman & McClelland (2011); Turner (2020); World Health Organization (2006)	3.86 (1.0)
SN Dimension 4. *Shame & Disgust*	Characterizes sex(uality) as shameful, taboo, dirty; Discourages sexual expression	De Block & Adriaens (2013); C. M. Mosher (2017); Queen (2014); Williams et al. (2015)	3.67 (1.0)
SN Dimension 5. *Withholding/ Restricted Access*	Discourages discussion of or sharing of information/resources relevant to sex(uality)-related topics, issues, concerns; De-prioritizes or prohibits sex(uality) education	Dodd (2020); Ivanski & Kohut (2017); Nimbi et al. (2022); Queen (2014); Queen & Comella (2008); Williams et al. (2015); World Health Organization (2006, 2015)	4.00 (1.0)

[a] Importance rating refers to mean scores for expert panelists' ratings of "how important" the dimension is to a comprehensive conceptualization of the construct represented by the domain. Scale: 0 = "Not at all important"; 1 = "A little important"; 2 = "Somewhat important"; 3 = "Very important." CVI is *Content Validation Index* (Grant & Davis, 1997); see Section 3.2.1.2.4.

[b] Dimensions of Sexuality-*Affirming* perspectives align with Nimbi et al.'s (2022) *sex-positive pillars*, except for those marked with an asterisk ([*]), which have been added, based on other literature (see column 3 for select relevant sources).

[*] See note a, above

Appendix B Example Recruitment Notifications for Prime Panels Partner Platforms

Survey Invitation

Hi george,

You're invited to participate in a new survey! To maximize your chances of qualifying we highly recommend you take this survey as soon as possible.

Begin survey

Survey Name: Study 263591 - Sports
Length: **9 Minutes**
Reward: **$0.87**

Sincerely,

Vindale Research

If you are unable to click the link above, you may copy and paste the link below into your browser to begin the survey:
http://www.vindale.com/v/members/respondentJump.jsp?
VFTjHLqv&sio=1&g=69B9331FDF86C087C9B24EA49C66E4C2&p3=500578&z=87&url=%2Fv%2Frt%
2FplacementRouter.jsp%3F%7B%21access_code%7D%26sio%3D1%26tryP3NB%3D1%26sonly%3D1%26preScreen%
3D1%26tryp3%3D500578%26tryP3NoQ%3D0%26s2%3DAdhocAPI%26utm_campaign%3DRespondentAPI%
26utm_medium%3Demail%26utm_source%3Dinternal%26utm_content%3D500578%26resp%3D1

This email was sent to {emil+selenium-20150319122546@sayforexample.com} from Vindale Research. To change the types of email you receive, you may update your email preferences.

Unsubscribe

Vindale Research, 243 Fifth Avenue #541, New York, NY 10016 · Privacy policy ·

Survey: xxx

Dear %First Name% %Last Name%,

we invite you to take part in a paid survey.
The survey takes about **10 minutes** and is rewarded with **x.xx EURO**.

You find the survey here:
%URL%

With kind Regards,
Your Service - Team of
Consumer-Opinion.com

---

http://www.consumer-opinion.com/ belongs to:
Consumerfieldwork GmbH (=LLC)
Panel Sampling & Internet Surveys
Singapurstr. 15
20457 Hamburg
Germany
Tel. +0049 (0)40 / 740 41 98 - 2
URL: http://www.consumerfieldwork.com/

We got your email-address via your registration at http://www.consumer-opinion.com/ .
We respect your privacy. If you no longer wish to receive emails by us, log in with your email-address - %Email% - and your personal password at http://www.consumer-opinion.com/login.aspx and click "terminate membership" to be deleted from the email list. If you forgot your password, you can use the password reminder function there, too.

Survey: xxx

Dear <First Name>

Schlesinger Associates and our InspiredOpinions community have a new opportunity for you. Share some details with us and you could be on your way to getting paid for having a say!

Topic: <Topic>

Length: <LOI>

Incentive: <Incentive>

Link: <#InvitationLink>

Please click the link above, or copy and paste the above address into your Internet browser to get started.

Sincerely,
Heather Cole | Community Director
InspiredOpinions | *A Schlesinger Associates Community*
heatherc@inspiredopinions.com | www.inspiredopinions.com

We Respect Your Privacy. InspiredOpinions is part of Schlesinger Associates, an accredited market research company. We adhere to data protection law and market research codes of conduct. Our Privacy Policy safeguards all personal information collected, which remains confidential and only is used for research. Your access and use of the service is subject to our Terms and Conditions.

Please take the time to add this address heatherc@inspiredopinions.com to your trusted or safe sender list to ensure that our emails to you get delivered to your Inbox.

You have been sent this email because you subscribed as a member of the InspiredOpinions community. If you no longer wish to receive emails from us please go to Click Here to unsubscribe.

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Your Daily Program

Since when does shopping ... members earn Points every ... our network of top retailers ... receive personalized deals ... yourself with gift cards, cash

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MyPoints

Sign Up! It's Free and Easy

NEW

Register Using Your Social Network

then

Complete any empty fields within the form to submit your registration.

Fill Out Our Quick Form

First Name | Last Name

Email Address | Zip Code | Gender: Select

Date of Birth: mm dd yyyy | Create Password

Re-Type Password

Clicking "Join Now" indicates that you have read and agree to our Terms of Service and Privacy Policy.

Check your inbox for details on completing your registration as well as other great offers from MyPoints.

JOIN NOW

Shop

Shop the hundreds of retailers in the MyPoints network to begin earning Points from each transaction you make.

Start shopping

Automotive
Baby & Kid Stuff
Beauty & Fragrances
Books & Magazines
Clothing for Kids
Clothing for Men

Pets
Shoes
Sports & Leisure
Toys & Hobbies
Weddings

EARNINGS AREA | BEST OPPORTUNITY | COMPLETED OFFERS | COMPLETED EXTERNAL OFFERS | CLICKS HISTORY | CREDITING HELP

All Free | Apps | uSamp | FedSam | Tol | Surveys | OW | Coupons | PeanutL | Trialpay | Tasks | Radium

Our very best Surveys - Surveys are a safe way to earn while sharing your opinion. Companies want you opinion on existing or new products.

Other study (18 minutes) view details

VISIT OFFER & COMPLETE REQUIREMENTS

Offer credits after completion!

JOIN 79 USERS AND EARN 112 POINTS

Earn points | Earn cash

You must successfully complete the following study: Other

Chance of Qualification: 64%

Length of Interview: 19 minutes

Federated Sample | Free | Realsurvey

Get 56 points for completing the survey or 5 points for clicking

Hi justdoit2010, we have a great survey that fits your profile!

Earn 56 points for completing the survey. If you click and don't qualify for the survey you will receive 5 points.

Complete the survey and earn or earn by clicking, if you don't qualify!

points2shop

FUN SURVEY

Complete Survey

Follow the survey link and receive 5 additional points if you click but do not qualify!

Happy earnings,

Appendix C Supplemental Tables

Appendix Table C-1 Polychoric Correlation Matrix, 20 Items Included in Factorial Validity Testing (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	12	13	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1. SASSM 1	1.00																			
2. SASSM 2	0.63	1.00																		
3. SASSM 3	0.64	0.66	1.00																	
4. SASSM 4	0.67	0.64	0.74	1.00																
5. SASSM 5	0.59	0.53	0.72	0.71	1.00															
6. SASSM 6	0.75	0.62	0.74	0.72	0.76	1.00														
7. SASSM 7	0.69	0.64	0.72	0.74	0.71	0.71	1.00													
8. SASSM 8	0.64	0.54	0.55	0.54	0.51	0.59	0.69	1.00												
9. SASSM 9	0.61	0.66	0.57	0.58	0.66	0.58	0.62	0.59	1.00											
10. SASSM 10	0.70	0.60	0.67	0.63	0.66	0.76	0.75	0.76	0.61	1.00										
12. SNSSM 2	0.15	0.21	-0.01	0.02	-0.14	0.00	0.04	0.17	0.13	0.15	1.00									
13. SNSSM 3	0.20	0.15	0.03	0.00	-0.07	-0.02	0.09	0.16	-0.03	0.10	0.80	1.00								
15. SNSSM 5	0.22	0.21	0.07	-0.02	-0.09	0.02	-0.05	0.08	0.09	0.12	0.71	0.72	1.00							
16. SNSSM 6	0.21	0.13	0.03	0.00	-0.16	0.00	-0.01	0.05	-0.10	0.08	0.72	0.68	0.66	1.00						
17. SNSSM 7	0.21	0.18	0.06	-0.02	-0.04	0.11	0.06	0.07	0.01	0.07	0.47	0.54	0.65	0.58	1.00					
18. SNSSM 8	0.14	0.14	-0.05	-0.08	-0.11	0.01	-0.01	-0.06	-0.03	0.03	0.58	0.54	0.63	0.53	0.64	1.00				
19. SNSSM 9	0.19	0.05	0.03	0.06	0.01	0.04	0.09	-0.09	-0.15	0.10	0.51	0.65	0.53	0.71	0.58	0.62	1.00			
20. SNSSM 10	0.09	0.09	-0.03	-0.07	-0.11	-0.17	-0.13	0.09	0.03	-0.01	0.60	0.66	0.62	0.49	0.43	0.49	0.29	1.00		
21. SNSSM 11	0.30	0.27	0.16	0.13	0.15	0.21	0.18	0.26	0.12	0.29	0.44	0.47	0.48	0.43	0.40	0.36	0.26	0.58	1.00	
22. SNSSM 12	0.05	-0.03	-0.12	-0.09	-0.12	-0.07	-0.05	0.03	-0.01	-0.05	0.46	0.42	0.44	0.49	0.42	0.54	0.48	0.57	0.53	1.00

Appendix Table C-2 Sexuality-Affirming and Sexuality-Negating SSM Mean Scores for Parent/Caregiver and Friend/Peer Sources, by Demographic and Background Characteristic Groups

			Sexuality-Affirming SSM						Sexuality-Negating SSM					
			Parents/Caregivers			Friends/Peers			Parents/Caregivers			Friends/Peers		
Variable	n	%	*M*	*SD*	Range	*M*	*SD*	Range	*M*	*SD*	Range	*M*	*SD*	Range
Age (*M* = 25.8 years, *SD* = 4.5)														
18-21	62	21.8	1.35	0.88	0-3	1.59	0.87	0-2.9	0.77	0.75	0-3	0.62	0.81	0-2.9
22-25	76	26.8	1.58	0.85	0-3	1.86	0.74	0-3	1.19	0.92	0-3	0.92	0.89	0-3
26-29	69	24.3	1.33	0.92	0-3	1.61	0.89	0-3	1.01	0.89	0-3	0.69	0.80	0-2.9
30-33	77	27.1	1.56	0.98	0-3	1.65	0.89	0-3	1.06	0.81	0-2.9	0.83	0.90	0-3
Gender identity														
Cisgender female	155	54.6	1.36	0.93	0-3	1.65	0.88	0-3	0.94	0.80	0-3	0.60	0.80	0-2.9
Cisgender male	119	41.9	1.63	0.85	0-3	1.70	0.81	0-3	1.12	0.89	0-3	1.03	0.90	0-3
Another gender identity	10	3.5	1.19	1.08	0-2.7	1.98	0.82	0.4-2.9	1.16	1.18	0-2.9	0.36	0.45	0-1.4
Ethnoracial identity														
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	11	3.9	0.94	0.97	0-2.3	1.63	0.96	0-2.9	1.19	1.17	0-3	0.70	0.92	0-2.7
Black/African American	56	19.9	1.72	0.84	0-3	1.81	0.83	0-3	1.17	0.86	0-3	1.15	0.94	0-3
Latina/o/e/x	26	9.2	1.47	0.87	0-3	1.48	0.83	0-3	0.90	0.73	0-3	0.63	0.77	0-2.6
White/Caucasian	162	57.4	1.45	0.93	0-3	1.70	0.86	0-3	0.96	0.85	0-3	0.68	0.83	0-3
Multiracial/Multiple ethnoracial identities	21	7.4	1.27	0.90	0-2.7	1.54	0.87	0-3	1.01	0.82	0-2.43	0.63	0.77	0-2.3
Another ethnoracial identity	6	2.1	1.20	0.47	0.6-2	1.45	0.33	1.2-2	1.17	0.69	0-2	0.90	0.88	0-2
Sexual identity														
Bisexual	29	10.2	1.43	0.91	0-2.9	1.67	0.93	0-3	0.82	0.93	0-2.9	0.48	0.73	0-2.1
Gay/Lesbian	15	5.3	1.71	0.89	0.1-2.9	2.16	0.63	0.9-2.9	1.22	0.94	0.1-2.9	0.94	1.06	0-2.9
Straight/Heterosexual	221	78.1	1.46	0.92	0-3	1.64	0.85	0-3	1.03	0.84	0-3	0.80	0.87	0-3
Another sexual identity	18	6.4	1.37	0.92	0-3	1.84	0.79	0.4-2.9	0.99	0.89	0-2.9	0.65	0.69	0-2.3
Education level														
Middle or Junior high school	24	8.5	1.56	0.94	0-2.9	1.49	0.81	0-2.9	0.92	0.85	0-2.4	0.73	0.78	0-2.6

(continued)

Appendix Table C-2 (continued)

Variable	n	%	Sexuality-Affirming SSM						Sexuality-Negating SSM					
			Parents/Caregivers			Friends/Peers			Parents/Caregivers			Friends/Peers		
			M	*SD*	Range	*M*	*SD*	Range	*M*	*SD*	Range	*M*	*SD*	Range
High school diploma or equivalent (GED)	104	36.7	1.46	0.92	0-3	1.59	0.89	0-3	0.91	0.79	0-3	0.72	0.83	0-3
Some college	58	20.5	1.46	0.96	0-3	1.77	0.90	0-3	0.87	0.81	0-3	0.63	0.78	0-2.4
Associate's degree/Vocational training	28	9.9	1.38	0.86	0-3	1.60	0.80	0-3	1.18	0.82	0-3	0.86	0.92	0-2.6
Undergraduate (Bachelor's) degree	53	18.7	1.40	0.92	0-2.9	1.89	0.76	0-3	1.24	0.93	0-3	0.79	0.89	0-3
Graduate (Master's or Doctoral) degree	16	5.7	1.82	0.78	0-3	1.73	0.72	0.1-3	1.45	1.03	0-3	1.48	0.95	0-3
Childhood home government assistance														
Never qualified for gov't assist.	104	39.8	1.41	0.94	0-3	1.75	0.87	0-3	0.94	0.85	0-2.9	0.59	0.79	0-3
Qualified for gov't assist.	157	60.2	1.50	0.92	0-3	1.67	0.85	0-3	1.06	0.88	0-3	0.88	0.90	0-3
Childhood family's religious/spiritual affiliation														
Catholicism (2.26; *1.18*) [a]	31	11.4	1.26	0.92	0-3	1.71	0.82	0-3	0.83	0.76	0-2.4	0.58	0.79	0-2.3
Christianity (Protestant/Not Catholic) (2.80; *1.07*)	122	44.7	1.55	0.87	0-3	1.71	0.78	0-3	1.22	0.82	0-3	0.91	0.90	0-3
Another religion/spiritual belief system (2.82; *1.10*)	22	8.1	1.37	0.91	0-2.7	2.15	0.58	0.5-2.9	1.62	1.01	0-3	1.05	0.96	0-2.7
Family was spiritual but not religious (1.67; *1.35*)	32	11.7	1.58	0.89	0-2.9	1.69	0.98	0-2.8	0.52	0.54	0-2	0.46	0.65	0-2.3
Family did not belong to or identify with a religion/spiritual belief system	66	24.2	1.33	0.95	0-3	1.51	0.91	0-3	0.71	0.79	0-2.7	0.60	0.79	0-2.9
Primary parent(s)/caregiver(s) during adolescence														
1 maternal, 1 paternal (e.g., mother and father)	161	56.9	1.50	0.90	0-3	1.75	0.82	0-3	1.05	0.87	0-3	0.76	0.86	0-3
1 maternal (e.g., single mother)	76	26.9	1.29	0.94	0-3	1.43	0.89	0-3	0.98	0.87	0-3	0.76	0.86	0-2.9
1 paternal (e.g., single father)	22	7.8	1.60	0.93	0-3	1.90	0.85	0-3	0.84	0.78	0-2.3	0.84	0.86	0-2.4

(continued)

Appendix Table C-2 (continued)

Variable	n	%	Sexuality-Affirming SSM						Sexuality-Negating SSM					
			Parents/Caregivers			Friends/Peers			Parents/Caregivers			Friends/Peers		
			M	*SD*	Range	*M*	*SD*	Range	*M*	*SD*	Range	*M*	*SD*	Range
2 maternal (e.g., mother and female partner)	4	1.4	2.13	0.40	1.7-2.6	2.18	0.19	1.9-2.3	1.14	0.78	0.3-2	1.07	0.69	0.3-1.7
More than 2 parents/caregivers (e.g., biological parents and step-parents)	20	7.1	1.54	0.88	0.3-3	1.76	0.82	0.2-3	1.03	0.76	0.1-3	0.74	0.91	0-3
Dominant political ideology of U.S. state of residency during adolescence														
Blue state (Democratic-leaning)	160	58.2	1.46	0.91	0-3	1.72	0.83	0-3	0.95	0.84	0-3	0.71	0.81	0-3
Red state (Republican-leaning)	115	41.8	1.47	0.92	0-3	1.62	0.88	0-3	1.07	0.86	0-3	0.84	0.91	0-3
Rurality/urbanicity of area of residency during adolescence														
Remote or Rural/Small town	106	38.0	1.37	0.91	0-3	1.66	0.87	0-3	1.00	0.82	0-3	0.66	0.79	0-2.9
Suburban/Small city	100	35.8	1.30	0.89	0-3	1.57	0.86	0-3	0.96	0.87	0-3	0.72	0.82	0-3
Urban/Large city	73	26.2	1.79	0.86	0-3	1.85	0.77	0-3	1.13	0.88	0-3	1.01	0.96	0-3

[a] Numbers shown in parentheses after each religion/spiritual belief system represent the mean and standard deviation (M/*SD*) for ratings of the importance of religion/spirituality to people in the household where participants were raised. Participants who indicated their family was not affiliated with a religion or spiritual belief system were not asked about importance of religion/spirituality. Scale: 0 = "Not at all important"; 1 = "Slightly important"; 2 = "Moderately important"; 4 = "Extremely important"; Sample *M* = 2.56; *SD* = 1.20 (*N* = 205)

Appendix D Final Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging Measure (SANSSMM)

Note: The SANSSMM was developed and validated using a survey which asked participants to provide responses for sexual socialization messaging they received or perceived from their *parent(s)/caregiver(s)* and their *friends/peers*. It is intended to be used to gather the same information for SSM received or perceived from other sexual socialization agents, as well (e.g., intimate partners, other family members, religious leaders/communities, entertainment media, etc.); however, its utility focusing on SSM agents other than parents and peers has not been tested. It may also be applicable to other reference periods (e.g., middle or late childhood, early or middle adulthood, etc.) but, again, has not yet been tested for such a use.

Instructions

Listed below are a variety of messages you might have received (directly) or perceived (indirectly) from others during adolescence. You might not have received the messages exactly as they appear. You might not even have gotten them in words—instead, you may have simply picked up on them based on things people did, how they acted, the way they talked about certain topics, or if they avoided discussing certain topics.

Thinking about the time from when you were approximately 10 years old (around 5th grade) through age 17:

1. Indicate below each statement the extent to which you received that message (directly and/or indirectly) from your:
   a. Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)
   b. Friends/Peers

   Use this 0-3 scale:

   - 0 = Not at all*
   - 1 = A little
   - 2 = A fair amount
   - 3 = A lot

   **Note:* "Not at all" does not necessarily indicate disagreement with a message, or endorsement of a contrary message—it could simply mean that a message was absent. In other words, "Not at all" might apply if:
     - your parents' or peers' views differed greatly from the statement,
       <u>*or,*</u>

- the focus of the statement is a topic you never received any messages about, one way or another, because it was avoided or just never came up.

Appendix Table D-1 Final Sexuality-Affirming/-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging Measure (SANSSMM) Items, Factor Loadings, and Sample Mean Scores

Item no.	Item text	Factor loading	Sample Mean *(SD)* Parents/ Caregivers	Sample Mean *(SD)* Friends/ Peers
Sexuality-Affirming Sexual Socialization Messaging (SASSM) Subscale				
SASSM 1	There's more to learn about sex and sexuality than the risks and dangers of it. There are healthy, positive, and pleasurable things about it that people deserve to know, too.	0.81	1.26 *(1.08)*	1.47 *(1.08)*
SASSM 2	Once someone is of age, their sexual choices are their private business. Their decisions should NOT be made or influenced by anyone they don't want involved.	0.79	1.40 *(1.16)*	1.62 *(1.10)*
SASSM 3	Positive sexual experiences are ones where everyone involved enjoys what is taking place and can stop at any time if they want or need to.	0.86	1.64 *(1.13)*	1.75 *(1.13)*
SASSM 4	Everyone has a right to age-appropriate, factual, and complete information regarding sex and sexuality, from sources they trust.	0.85	1.47 *(1.10)*	1.57 *(1.09)*
SASSM 5	People of all sexual orientations and identities are entitled to the same rights, privileges, and protections as everyone else.	0.83	1.57 *(1.17)*	1.76 *(1.12)*
SASSM 6	Being able to communicate openly about sex and sexuality leads to safe, responsible, and fulfilling intimate relationships.	0.87	1.55 *(1.17)*	1.67 *(1.11)*
SASSM 7	Only individuals can know for themselves if they are ready to be sexually active, if and when they choose to be.	0.87	1.49 *(1.16)*	1.67 *(1.14)*
SASSM 8	It is OK to have sex simply because it feels good, as long as no one is coerced, forced, or in danger.	0.79	1.34 *(1.17)*	1.84 *(1.09)*
SASSM 9	Access to abortion and other reproductive/sexual health services is a right everyone is entitled to.	0.77	1.48 *(1.18)*	1.78 *(1.09)*
SASSM 10	Healthy sexuality is part of overall health and wellbeing.	0.87	1.47 *(1.16)*	1.71 *(1.08)*
Complete Sexuality-Affirming SSM Subscale			1.47 *(0.91)*	1.68 *(0.85)*

(continued)

Appendix Table D-1 (continued)

Item no.	Item text	Factor loading	Sample Mean *(SD)* Parents/ Caregivers	Friends/ Peers
Sexuality-Negating Sexual Socialization Messaging (SNSSM) Subscale				
SNSSM 1	Getting and giving clear consent through every step of a sexual encounter gets in the way of enjoying sex.	--	1.02 *(1.17)*	1.17 *(1.18)*
SNSSM 2	Having intimate relationships with people outside of your own race or ethnic group is NOT acceptable.	0.82	0.87	0.68
SNSSM 3	Having an intimate relationship with someone outside of your religion is NOT acceptable.	0.86	0.85 *(1.12)*	0.70 *(1.06)*
SNSSM 4	Having sex puts you in serious danger of getting HIV or a sexually-transmitted disease (STD).	--	1.66 *(1.03)*	1.40 *(1.05)*
SNSSM 5	Sex education gives kids ideas that will get them into trouble.	0.82	0.92 *(1.07)*	0.81 *(1.03)*
SNSSM 6	Homosexuality is a threat to many of society's institutions.	0.83	1.01 *(1.15)*	0.83 *(1.07)*
SNSSM 7	The primary goal of sex is to have children.	0.75	1.15 *(1.11)*	0.78 *(1.04)*
SNSSM 8	Nudity is shameful and embarrassing.	0.71	1.05 *(1.11)*	0.82 *(1.04)*
SNSSM 9	Sex outside of marriage is a sin.	0.77	1.27 *(1.20)*	0.78 *(1.05)*
SNSSM 10	When someone claims they were sexually abused or assaulted, they're probably exaggerating the details of what actually happened to get attention.	--	0.66 *(1.01)*	0.65 *(0.96)*
SNSSM 11	Guys who engage in casual hookups are likely to get falsely accused of rape at some point.	--	0.98 *(1.02)*	1.00 *(0.98)*
SNSSM 12	Girls who go around dressing and acting "slutty" are just asking for trouble.	--	1.04 *(1.09)*	0.88 *(1.07)*
Complete Sexuality-Negating SSM Subscale [a]			1.02 *(0.85)*	0.77 *(0.86)*

Note. Shaded items were dropped from the final SANSSMM based on results of reliability and validity testing.

[a] Mean scores for the complete SNSSM subscale are based on the final 7-item version, with shaded items excluded from the calculations.

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