A NEW PLATFORM FOR SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE: A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S DATING APP EXPERIENCES

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki,
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.
We are all Treaty people.

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ABSTRACT

The high rate of sexualized violence against women poses an urgent social issue and significant human rights problem. While not new for women, the proliferation of modern technology, particularly the surge in online dating app popularity and users, has created a new platform for sexualized violence to occur. This phenomenon is termed dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. It's an emerging field of research with a scarcity of qualitative studies and lacks a feminist approach, necessary to contextualize its meaning. This research employed a qualitative design, informed by radical feminism and technofeminism, to explore how gender and technology shape women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. This study recruited 19 women between the ages of 18 and 34 years, residing in Canada, who self-identified as active dating app users with experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with each woman, identifying three key themes: "Dating App Culture", "Dating Apps as Violent Tools", and "Resistance to Dating App-Facilitated Sexualized Violence". The impacts of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence on women's health and their journey to healing is also discussed. Overall, the findings elucidate how women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence are shaped by both gender and technology, providing valuable insights that could help establish a safer online dating environment and reduce occurrences of sexualized violence against women, both within dating apps and beyond.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

App(s)	Application(s)
COREQ	Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research
GPS	Global Positioning System
PRESS	Peer Review of Electronic Search Strategies
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TFSV	Technology Facilitated Sexualized Violence

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The high rate of sexualized violence against women is an urgent social issue and a significant human rights problem (Benoit et al., 2015; World Health Organization, 2021). While anyone can experience sexualized violence, women primarily represent the victims and men overwhelmingly represent the perpetrators (Breiding et al., 2014; Powell & Henry, 2017; Tarzia et al., 2017). Globally, an estimated one in three women experience physical or sexualized violence in their lifetime (UN Women, 2021; World Health Organization, 2021). In Canada the numbers are similarly alarming, with one in three Canadian women aged 15 and older reporting experiences of sexualized violence outside of intimate relationships (Statistics Canada, 2020). Accurately determining the extent of sexualized violence, however, remains challenging due to underreporting, and the actual numbers are likely much higher (Halstead et al., 2017; UN Women, 2021).

Reporting

Sexualized violence has historically been, and continues to be, underreported by those who experience it (Government of Canada, 2019; Ceelen et al., 2019). This is partially because there is not a universal understanding or consensus on what constitutes sexualized violence (Bedera, 2020; Benoit et al., 2015; Halstead et al., 2017). Definitions and terminology related to sexualized violence often focus on physical acts of violence, which lead to inconsistencies in understanding and wide variations in reporting (Bedera, 2020; Benoit et al., 2015). The stigma associated with incidents of sexualized violence also results in women being less likely to report their experiences (UN Women, 2021).

Since the #MeToo movement in 2017 there has been a substantial increase in the number of sexualized violence related crimes self-reported to police (Rotenberg & Cotter, 2018). Statistics Canada revealed that there were more police-reported sexual assaults in 2020 than in

any year since 1996 (Moreau, 2022). The #MeToo social media campaign demanded a cultural shift to destigmatize sexualized violence disclosure and empower survivors to share their experiences of sexualized violence (Jaffe, 2018). The movement was pivotal in recognizing the resilience of survivors, demanding accountability for perpetrators of sexualized violence, and working to deconstruct the popular discourse of victim-blaming (Hampson, 2019). Canadian data, however, continues to suggest extremely low reporting rates of sexualized violence, with estimates as low as 5% (Conroy & Cotter, 2017; Cotter & Savage, 2019).

Health Implications

Literature examining the social and health implications related to sexualized violence also predominately focus on physical forms of sexualized violence, such as rape (Pegram & Abbey, 2019; Scott et al., 2018; Stoner & Cramer, 2019). Negative health outcomes include poorer self-rated health, exacerbated psychological distress, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Amstadter et al., 2011; Campbell et al., 2009; Millon et al., 2018; Spohn et al., 2017; Zinzow et al., 2010). Negative mental health outcomes, such as increased self-judgement and isolation, also affect physical functioning and interpersonal relationships of survivors (Beck et al., 2009; Bedard-Gilligan et al., 2011; Forbes et al., 2012; McAllister & Vennum, 2021). In a recent study conducted in Australia, women who had encountered sexualized violence in the form of public harassment, flashing, unwanted groping, or being coerced into consenting to sex, reported higher symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD compared to non-victims (Tarzia et al., 2017). Further research is needed on the health implications of sexualized violence that extend beyond its physical forms.

Dating Application (App) Facilitated Sexualized Violence

Although sexualized violence has long been a concern for women, the surge in popularity of dating applications (apps) has introduced a new platform for its occurrence (David & Cambre, 2016; Duguay, 2016; Gillett, 2018; Henry & Powell, 2018; Vitis & Gilmour, 2017). "Dating apps are software applications designed to generate connections between people who are interested in romance, casual sex, or friendship. Downloaded onto mobile phones, they feature algorithms based on factors like age, gender of user and desired partner, and the distance users will travel to meet one another" (Orchard, 2019, p. 1). Dating apps operate on Wi-Fi or cellular data and use Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to help users find matches nearby (Orchard, 2019). Users design a profile with information about themselves, including photos, age, location, interests, and a brief description. Users indicate interest by swiping, or using a similar gesture, on other users' profiles and a match is generated if both users indicate interest. Users can send messages or engage in chat with other users they match with. Today, dating apps have become an acceptable, accessible, and affordable way for people to engage with each other (Albury & Byron 2016; Choi et al., 2018).

The popularity of dating app use continues to grow as society becomes increasingly digitized, and the use of dating apps to seek intimate relationships becomes increasingly normalized (Choi et al., 2018; Duguay, 2016; Gillett, 2018; Phan et al., 2021); the dating app industry is now estimated to be a multi-billion-dollar industry (IBISWorld, 2020). A North American-wide survey conducted by the Pew Research Center found that 48 percent of respondents 18 to 29 years had used a dating app or website (Anderson et al., 2020). Specific to Canada, online dating service eHarmony found that 36% of Canadians use online dating apps,

25% of users are between the ages of 18 and 34, and 16% reported having had sex with someone they met online (eHarmony Inc., 2021).

As dating app usage continues to surge in popularity, a novel area of global research is emerging that explores the potential for sexualized violence to occur both within dating apps and when the connection moves offline. Most notably, Britain's National Crime Agency (2016) reported a 450% increase in online dating initiated sexual offences between 2009 and 2014, with 85% of victims being women. Powell and Henry (2019) found that from an internet survey of 3000 Australian adults, 1 in 10 respondents reported an unwanted sexual experience with someone they first met on a dating app. Findings from a nationally representative survey of 4,860 US adults conducted by the Pew Research Center reported that young women who used dating apps were particularly likely to report negative interactions. When examining the data of women dating app users 18-34 years of age, 60% said someone from a dating app continued to contact them after they said they were no longer interested in them; more than 50% received explicit unsolicited messages or images while on dating apps; 44% were called an offensive name while on a dating app; and 19% said another dating app user threatened to physically harm them (Anderson et al., 2020). These findings also displayed that women were approximately twice as likely as men in the same age range to have these experiences, as well as substantially more likely to have these experiences when compared to women dating app users 50 years of age and older (Anderson et al., 2020). In the college context, a study involving 253 female victims of sexual assault in the United States found that 4.8% of respondents identified the offender of their most significant assault as someone they had met through a dating app (Gilbert et al., 2019). In a smaller study of 127 Canadian university students, it was revealed that 11.4% of male participants and 25.3% of female participants reported experiencing an unwelcome sexual

encounter with someone they had met through a dating website or app (Snaychuk & O'Neill, 2020). Additionally, there have been several anecdotal and media reports related to diverse forms of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, including harassment, abuse, intrusive interactions, and rape (Alderson, 2019; Anderson & Vogels, 2020; Jacques, 2018; Masden & Edwards, 2015).

Several possible explanations have been suggested regarding the role of dating apps in perpetuating and facilitating sexualized violence. One possible reason is that dating app users are seeking physical and face-to-face interactions after establishing a connection online (Kallis, 2020). When people meet in person for the first time, it is likely that they do not treat each other as strangers because of the belief that they know and trust each other from their online connection and interactions (Choi et al., 2018; Rowse et al., 2020). In a retrospective audit of a small forensic examination caseload in an Australian metropolitan area, it was revealed that 11 of 76 reported sexual assaults were facilitated through a dating app. Complainants in these cases were women mostly under 30 years old who had been assaulted by a single male perpetrator. In all nine cases where it was asked, the assault occurred during the first face-to-face meeting and half of these meetings occurred at the perpetrator's private residence. Similarly, three quarters of the offences reported by Britain's National Crime Agency (2016) occurred in a private residence/the offender's home. In the Rowse (2020) audit, anogenital injuries were observed during the forensic examination in 60% of the cases, and visible body injuries were present in 70% of the cases. Only one woman had no observable injuries.

The increased accessibility to strangers is another theory as to why dating app facilitated sexualized violence is on the rise (Choi et al., 2018). Dating apps offer an avenue for perpetrators to connect with unsuspecting strangers, which can heighten the chances of individuals connecting with sexual predators (Choi et al., 2018); dating apps have provided an

unprecedented way to meet unknown people who are not part of one's established social circles (Rowse et al., 2020). Most dating apps are also geolocation based, which can lead to increased stalking (Murphy, 2017; Rowse et al., 2020; Veel & Thylstrup, 2018). The vast amount of personal information shared on the internet enables predators to monitor potential victims more closely (Marganski & Melander, 2018), which can also contribute to cyberstalking and in-person stalking.

There is evidence to suggest that women and men have different expectations associated with dating app use, with women looking for serious relationships and men looking for casual sex (Scannell, 2019; Sumter et al., 2017). This difference in expectation can contribute to the risk of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women even when premeditation does not exist (Rowse et al., 2020). The increase in dating app-facilitated sexualized violence reported by Britain's National Crime Agency (2016) for example was determined to be a result of the upsurge in online dating combined with "the behaviours and expectations fostered by an online environment" (National Crime Agency, 2016, p. 3).

Dating app-facilitated sexualized violence has been found to be gendered, with gender norms, attitudes, and scripts that exist within society also persisting within dating apps (Gillett, 2018; Pooley & Boxall, 2020; Thompson, 2018). Gillett (2018) reported that dating apps convey the normalisation and support of sexualized violence against women, particularly in environments where women frequently experience intrusive behaviors from men. Thompson (2018) exposed the existence of sexual harassment and misogyny against women on dating apps, specifically the dating app Tinder. Studies have shown that like other forms of sexualized violence, women are predominantly the victims of dating app facilitated sexualized violence and men are predominantly the offenders (Anderson et al., 2020; Henry & Powell 2018).

There is currently no empirical data on the health effects associated with dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. Despite the lack of data, scholars do believe that dating app-facilitated sexualized violence may be associated with adverse health outcomes, and that the psychological harms may be the same as offline sexualized violence (Choi et al., 2018; Henry & Powell, 2015). Overall, there is a scarcity of research and literature in this area, and it is important that future research aims to understand the health risks associated with various forms of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women (Phan et al., 2021).

Rationale, Research Question, and Aim of Research

It is well established that dating contributes to sexualized violence against women, as intimate relationships serve as a primary source of violence and patriarchal oppression (Kelly, 1988; Rubio-Garay et al., 2017; Stanko, 1990). As dating moves online and the number of dating app users continues to grow, it is critical to examine how sexualized violence is also moving and being (re)produced online in ways that unjustly harm women. There is a scarcity of research on dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women, particularly qualitative studies (Gillett, 2018; Henry & Powell, 2018; Pooley & Boxall, 2020). To gain a comprehensive understanding of women's perceptions and experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, additional qualitative research is needed (Filice et al., 2022). Additionally, existing research in this area lacks a feminist approach, resulting in a limited contextualization of this phenomenon. The present research study therefore employed a qualitative research design, informed by radical feminism and technofeminism, to explore ***how gender and technology shape women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence.***

This research aims to gain a deeper understanding of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence from women who have experienced it. Through analysis of these women's experiences,

this work enriches the literature on dating app-facilitated sexualized violence and illuminates the broader social and technological factors that perpetuate and enable such forms of violence. By centering women's voices and perspectives, this study generates valuable insights and increases awareness about dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. The knowledge produced helps to establish a safer online dating environment with the aim of reducing occurrences of sexualized violence against women.

Terminology

For the purposes of this research study, the definition of sexualized violence extends beyond physical forms to include verbal, physical, emotional, and/or psychological violence carried out through sexual means or by targeting a person's gender or sexuality. This encompasses sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent/sexualized exposure, degrading sexual imagery, sharing sexual photographs without permission, and/or unwanted comments or jokes (Benoit et al., 2015; Saskatoon Sexual Assault & Information Centre, 2023; Victoria Sexual Assault Centre, 2014; World Health Organization, 2021). Defining sexualized violence in this way responds to a demand for adopting a feminist definition that is sensitive to woman's perceptions and understandings, reflects a wide range of sexualized violence, and more comprehensively captures the diverse forms of sexualized violence that women experience, especially online (Boyle, 2019; Kelly, 1988; Tweten, 2015). These include "the subtler and more pervasive forms of abuse of women which are woven into the fabric of our society" (Kelly, 1988, p. 102; Klein, 1981), such as sexual harassment and commonplace acts of misogyny.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis comprises five chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings and interpretation, and conclusion. Following this introductory chapter, the literature review chapter presents a scoping review on what is known from the existing qualitative literature about women's experiences of TFSV. This scoping review has been prepared as a manuscript and submitted for publication. The methodology chapter explains how this study was conducted, outlining the theoretical foundation and methodological approaches used to answer the research question outlined above. The findings and their interpretation are combined in one chapter. This integration aims to offer the reader a more coherent and cohesive narrative that presents the findings, their meaning, and their connection to current literature. The last chapter concludes the thesis by discussing the significance, implications, and limitations of this research.

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CHAPTER 2

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE: A QUALITATIVE SCOPING REVIEW

The work in Chapter 2 has been submitted for publication and is currently under review. Doria, N., Sinno, J., Boulous, L., Aiken, A. (2023). Women's Experiences of Technology-Facilitated Sexualized Violence: A Qualitative Scoping Review. *BMC Digital Health* (under review).

Abstract

The surge in popularity of digital technologies has presented a new avenue for sexualized violence to occur. This phenomenon is often referred to as technology-facilitated sexualized violence (TFSV). The aim of this scoping review was to map the existing literature on women's experiences of TFSV and highlight recommendations for future research. Databases were systematically searched to identify research studies, 2367 studies were screened, and eighteen studies met inclusion for full review. Inclusion criteria included primary qualitative data published in English that focused on women's firsthand experiences of technology facilitated sexualized violence over the last decade. Through employing qualitative content analysis, it was found that women commonly experience TFSV in diverse forms, including cyber harassment, cyberstalking, explicit images, revenge porn, and sexual coercion. These online occurrences often materialize into instances of offline sexualized violence. TFSV is mostly perpetrated by strangers using various digital technologies, and women often view these experiences as a result of men exerting power and control over them. Women reported negative emotions and challenges from these experiences and spoke about the obstacles of reporting, which rarely resulted in resolution or justice. Recommendations for future research aimed at advancing what is currently known about TFSV against women is discussed.

Introduction

Although experiencing sexualized violence is not a new issue for women, the surge in popularity of digital technologies has presented a new avenue for sexualized violence to occur (Jane, 2017; Marganski & Melander, 2018, Powell & Henry, 2017). This phenomenon is often referred to as technology-facilitated sexualized violence (TFSV), which is defined as:

> A range of behaviors where digital technologies are used to facilitate both virtual and face-to-face sexually based harms. Such behaviors include online sexual harassment, gender- and sexuality-based harassment, cyberstalking, image-based sexual exploitation, and the use of a carriage service to coerce a victim into an unwanted sexual act. (Henry & Powell, 2018, p. 195)

The internet specifically has increased the opportunity to perpetrate TFSV. Because of the internet, violence can occur when abusers are not in close proximity (Bailey & Mathen, 2019), and the abuse can be relentless and difficult to escape in today's digital world (Dunn, 2020).

TFSV can also lead to violence outside of the digital space and materialize in the offline lives of women. Reid (2016) found that 28% of women who experienced TFSV suffered in-person consequences such as being followed or stalked and encountering adverse effects in their workplace and/or educational settings.

Nicola Henry and Anastasia Powell are leading scholars in the field of TFSV and have researched its pervasiveness in recent years (e.g., Henry & Powell, 2015; Henry & Powell, 2016; Henry & Powell, 2018; Powell & Henry, 2018; Powell & Henry, 2019; Powell et al., 2020). Powell and Henry (2019) conducted an online survey of 2,956 Australian adults (aged 18 to 54 years) to explore their experiences of TFSV and found that 62.3% of respondents reported having experienced TFSV in their lifetime. Results revealed that although men and women both experience TFSV, perpetrators of TFSV were twice as likely to be men (Powell & Henry, 2019).

Receiving unwanted sexually explicit content and online sexual harassment are the most reported forms of TFSV against women (Powell & Henry, 2019; Snaychuck & O'Neill, 2020). Unsolicited genital images, known as 'dick pics', are a widespread phenomenon and a common culprit of the unwanted sexually explicit content women receive (Oswald et al., 2019; Waling & Pym, 2019). Cyberhate against women, such as negative comments on women's appearances (e.g., fat, ugly), gender slurs (e.g., slut, whore, bitch), and rape jokes have been noted as common forms of online misogyny (Jane, 2017). The presence of harassment and misogynistic behaviour in online spaces such as news comment sections and social media platforms has also been well documented (García-Favaro & Gill, 2016; Hardaker & McGlashan, 2016; Megarry, 2014; Moloney & Love, 2017; Stein, 2016).

Women are more likely than men to have experiences of TFSV, as well as tell the perpetrator to stop, change their online privacy settings, or leave the online space (Powell &

Henry, 2019; Huiskies et al., 2022). It has also been found that women are significantly more likely than men to report their experience of TFSV to the digital platform where it occurred (Huiskies et al., 2022). In Canada, the 2016 census reported that 28% of women blocked other online users and deleted their own accounts to protect themselves from online sexual harassment (Statistics Canada, 2020).

Given the increased internet use during the COVID-19 pandemic (Fernandes et al., 2020) and, therefore, added risk of exposure to online harms (UNICEF, 2020), it is likely that experiences of TFSV also increased. Huiskies et al. (2022) used the 21-item TFSV Victimization Scale (Powell & Henry, 2016) to investigate this phenomenon, specifically exploring reports of TFSV victimization and attitudes toward TFSV during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this research, it was discovered that women exhibited a notably higher likelihood than men of reporting various types of TFSV such as instances of online sexual harassment; the receipt of unsolicited sexually explicit content, comments, emails, or text messages; and repeated and unwelcome sexual requests through online platforms, email, or text message. Women were also significantly more likely to report a stranger being the perpetrator of their TFSV experience when compared to men. Similar to Powell et al. (2020), Huiskies et al. (2022) identified gendered trends in TFSV experiences, with women being significantly more likely to select "completely unacceptable" for all TFSV situations. Just like other types of sexualized violence against women that escalated during the pandemic, TFSV was found to be no exception (Huiskies et al., 2022).

Health Implications

Research has demonstrated that adverse health effects result from experiencing TFSV (Henry & Powell, 2016; Wilk, 2018; Woodlock, 2015). Negative health effects include a variety

of psychological and emotional harms such as anxiety, depression, damaged self-esteem, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation, and negative impacts on personal relationships (Bates, 2017; Henry & Powell, 2016). Bates (2017) found that women who had their intimate images shared without their consent experienced psychological distress similar to women who had experienced a physical sexual assault. However, literature on the health implications of sexualized violence has predominately focused on physical sexual assault and, therefore, the health implications of TFSV remain largely underexplored (Pegram & Abbey, 2019; Scott et al., 2018; Stoner & Cramer, 2019).

Present Study

It is well known that adult users of digital technology have increased steadily (Benoit et al., 2015; Powell & Henry, 2019) and as a result new opportunities for abusive behaviour and victimization against women are being facilitated (Henry & Flynn, 2019; Jane, 2017; Marganski & Melander, 2018). Research on TFSV, however, remains in its infancy. Further, the existing research is largely quantitative in nature, resulting in a limited understanding of women's firsthand experiences of TFSV. The aim of this scoping review is therefore to comprehensively map the existing literature regarding women's experiences of TFSV to identify the research gaps and highlight recommendations for future research.

For the purposes of this scoping review, a broad definition of sexualized violence was used. Sexualized violence was defined as any verbal, physical, and/or psychological violence carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality including sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent/sexualized exposure, degrading sexual imagery, sharing sexual photographs without permission, and/or unwanted comments or jokes (Benoit et al., 2015; Victoria Sexual Assault Centre, 2014; World Health Organization, 2021). Defining

sexualized violence in this way better encompasses the diverse forms of sexualized violence that women experience, such as behaviours of everyday misogyny (Boyle, 2019; Tweten, 2015). TFSV could be facilitated through any form of digital technology such as mobile phones, social media platforms, dating apps, and online games.

Methods

This scoping review was guided by Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) methodological framework for conducting scoping reviews and Levac's (2010) recommendations for enhancing this framework. These frameworks propose a systematic approach that include identifying the research question, identifying relevant studies, selecting relevant studies, charting the data, and summarizing the findings (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac, 2010). Critical appraisal to assess for quality and rigour is not part of the scoping review framework and, therefore, was not conducted (Grant & Booth, 2009; Peters et al., 2020). The main objectives were to assess the scope of available research, map/summarize the current literature, and identify the gaps and research areas that require further inquiry (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Daudt et al. 2013; Grant & Booth, 2009).

Identifying Research Questions

The research question for this scoping review is: *What is known from the existing qualitative literature about women's experiences of TFSV?*

Identifying Relevant Studies

The literature search for this scoping review was designed in August 2021 by the medical librarian on the research team (LB). It contains controlled vocabulary terms and keywords related to sexualized violence (e.g., gender-based violence; rape; sexual harassment; sex offenses; misogyny), digital technologies (e.g., cell phones, computers, social media apps, dating

apps), and a filter designed *ad hoc* for this review to limit the results to qualitative research only. The search strategy was peer reviewed by another medical librarian using the Peer Review of Electronic Search Strategies (PRESS) guideline (McGowan et al., 2016). The search strategy was designed and tested in MEDLINE All (Ovid) and Scopus (Scopus.com, Elsevier), and once finalized was translated to Embase (Embase.com, Elsevier) and PsycINFO (EBSCOhost). No limits or restrictions (e.g., date, time period, language) were applied to the search strategy and no published search filters were used. Appendix A details the MEDLINE All search strategy, which was also translated to Embase, PsycINFO, and Scopus. All searches were executed, and all results were exported, on August 31, 2021.

Selecting Relevant Studies

All citations from the database search were imported into Covidence, which is an online software tool. Covidence streamlines the review process through organizing citation screening and full text review, decreasing bias, and simplifying data extraction. Duplicates were removed using Covidence's automatic de-duplication function.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 1) were established by the research team for selecting relevant studies prior to screening (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac, 2010). Research studies were included if they aligned with the established definitions of sexualized violence and TFSV outlined above. Given that we were interested in adult women's first-hand experiences of TFSV, only research studies with primary qualitative data collected from women 18 years of age or older were included. Mixed-methods studies were reviewed, however, only the qualitative components were considered and included if relevant. Only English studies published in the last ten years were included as Smartphones became popular in 2012 and Tinder, which was the first

mainstream dating app, also launched in 2012. Studies from all countries were eligible for inclusion.

If an age range was not specified or the study included any participants that were 17 years of age or younger, the study was excluded. If the study included men, it was excluded as experiences of online sexualized violence have been found to be gendered and are experienced differently for men and women (Powell et al., 2020). Further, current studies suggest that young women are most vulnerable to experiences of sexualized violence (Conroy et al., 2017; Langenderfer-Magruder et al., 2016; Powell et al., 2020), and a 2018 review of the literature on TFSV reported that women (inclusive of bisexual and trans women) are at an increased risk of being the targets of online abuse (Henry & Powell, 2018). Reviews, conference abstract proceedings, and literature that did not include empirical data (commentaries, editorials, book reviews) were also excluded.

Table 1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Selected Articles

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
• Research articles including primary research data • Women's experiences of TFSV: online sexual harassment, gender- and sexuality-based harassment, cyberstalking, image-based sexual exploitation, and the use of a carriage service to coerce a victim into an unwanted sexual act • Adult women's (>18 y/o) firsthand experiences of TFSV perpetrated by men • Qualitative findings (including qualitative components of mixed methods studies) • Published in English • Published in the last ten years (2012 or later) • All countries	• Research articles that did not include primary research data • Women's experiences of sexualized violence that are unrelated to TFSV • Data that did not focus on adult women's (<18 y/o) firsthand experiences of TFSV perpetrated by men • Studies where participants included men • Quantitative findings • Not published in English • Published prior to 2012 • Literature that did not include empirical data (commentaries, editorials, book reviews) • Literature/systematic reviews • Conference proceedings and dissertations

Two reviewers independently screened all articles at the title/abstract stage and full-text stage in accordance with the inclusion and exclusion criteria; each article in Covidence required the vote of two reviewers. Reviewers met regularly throughout the screening process to discuss challenges related to study selection, resolve any conflicts, and refine the search strategy as needed (Levac, 2010; Pollock et al., 2022). Both reviewers are PhD in Health students and ND's dissertation research focuses on dating-app facilitated sexualized violence against women. If voting conflicts could not be resolved by the first two reviewers, a third reviewer (JS) was consulted to determine final inclusion or exclusion (Levac, 2010).

Charting the Data

The research team collectively determined that the following data be extracted and charted: first author, year, title, country, aim of study, method, participants, and type of TFSV experienced. ND independently extracted data from five included studies using a data-charting table in Microsoft Word and met with the research team to determine that extraction was consistent with the research question and purpose (Levac, 2010; Pollock et al., 2022). ND independently extracted and charted the data from the remaining studies. To ensure rigour and accuracy, a second reviewer (JS) reviewed and confirmed all extracted data and ND and JS met regularly to resolve any inconsistencies (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac, 2010). Please see Appendix B for extracted data.

Summarizing Findings

Scoping reviews do not seek to re-interpret the literature, but instead are meant to be descriptive in nature; "they aim to map the available evidence or identify characteristics or factors" (Pollock et al., 2022, p. 6). Qualitative content analysis was therefore employed to categorize the literature and map the results of the included studies (Peters et al., 2021; Pollock et

al., 2022). Qualitative inductive content analysis was guided by Elo and Kyngäs (2008) three phase approach: preparation, organizing, and reporting. Two reviewers (ND & JS) completed this process by familiarizing themselves with the data; organizing the data through open coding; creating categories and a coding framework that focused on women's experiences; and reporting the overarching categories. Qualitative software was not used.

Results

A total of 3783 studies were identified from the databases searched (MEDLINE, Embase, PsycINFO, and Scopus); 1416 duplicates were removed; and 2367 studies were screened at the title/abstract stage. Screening at the title and abstract stage resulted in the exclusion of 1961 studies. There were 406 studies screened at the full-text stage, with 388 studies being excluded. Studies were excluded for the following reasons in the following order: 1. Full text could not be located (n=1); 2. Not available in English (n=10); 3. Published before 2012 (n=1); 4. Wrong source type (n=61); 5. Participants were under 18 years of age or age was not specified (n=68); 6. Quantitative research study or primary qualitative data could not be extracted (148 n=); 7. Wrong population/participants included men (n=41); 8. Not about women's experiences of TFSV (n=57); 9. Duplicate (n=1).

A total of 18 studies were included in the final data set (see Figure 1 for PRISMA diagram) (Page et al., 2021). Of these studies, ***15 were qualitative*** (Amundsen, 2021; Chen et al., 2020; Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Eckert, 2018; Freed et al., 2018; Freed et al., 2017; Golzard & Miguel, 2016; Gray, 2012; Hodson et al., 2018; Jane, 2018; Lewis et al., 2018; Miller & Lewis, 2022; Pashang et al., 2019; Recio et al., 2022; Vandeweerd et al., 2016) and ***three were mixed methods*** (Emelianchik-Key et al., 2022; Messing et al., 2020; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021). Study participants were diverse in age (18-71 years), race, sexual orientation, relationship

status, and location of residence. In five of the eighteen studies, the primary focus was women who worked in online spaces, such as journalists, news anchors, bloggers, and scholars (Chen, 2020; Eckert, 2018; Hodson, 2018; Jane, 2018; Miller & Lewis, 2022).

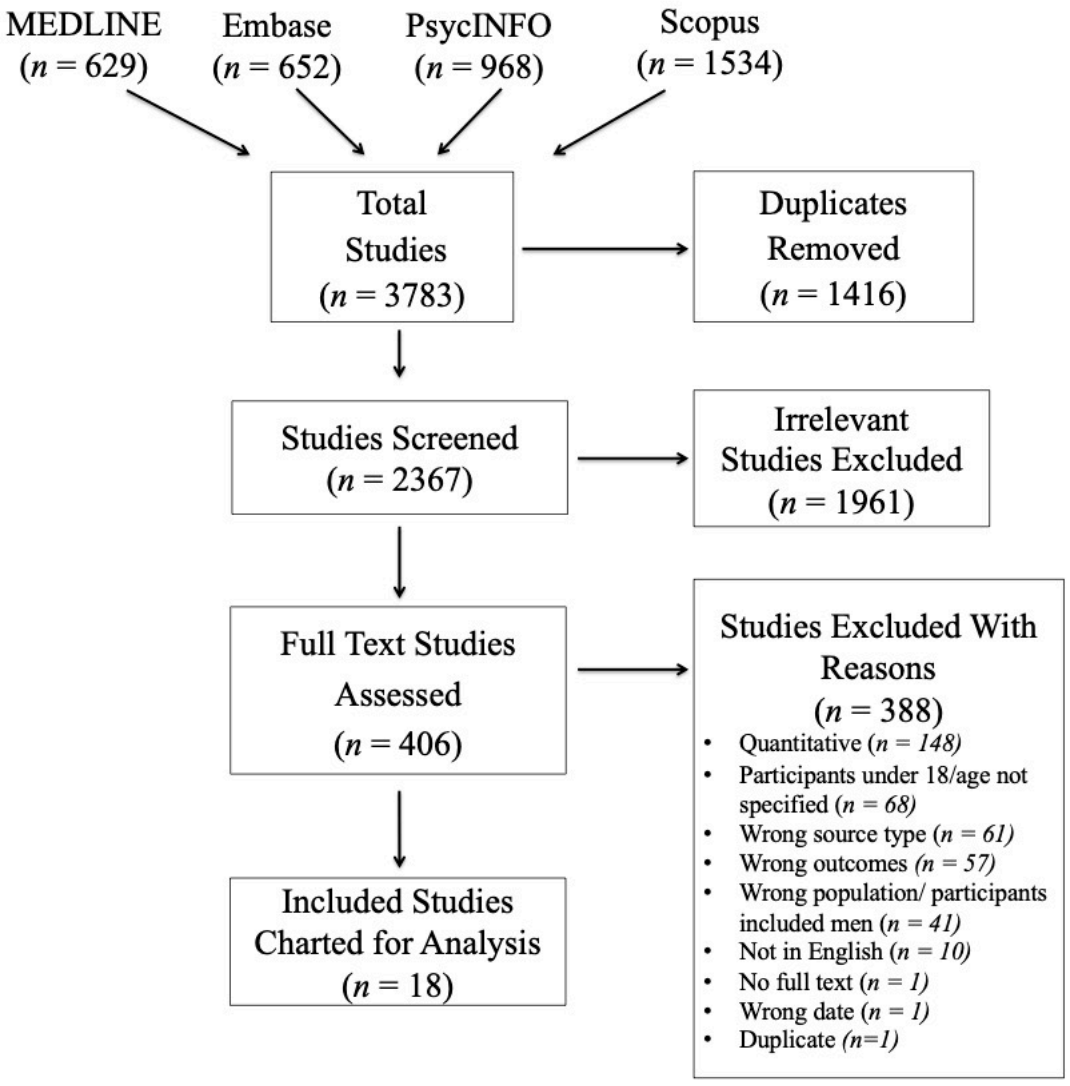

Figure 1 PRISMA flow diagram for scoping review process

Technology Facilitated Sexualized Violence

The included studies explored various types of TFSV against women, with most studies discussing more than one type of TFSV. The forms of TFSV women experienced included ***cyber harassment*** in 16 studies (Amundsen, 2021; Chen et al., 2020; Clevenger & Navarro, 2021;

Eckert, 2018; Emelianchik-Key et al., 2022; Freed et al., 2017; Freed et al., 2018; Golzard & Miguel, 2016; Gray, 2012; Hodson et al., 2018; Jane, 2018; Messing et al., 2020; Miller & Lewis, 2022; Pashang et al., 2019; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021; Vandeweerd et al., 2016); ***sexist and misogynist comments*** in nine studies (Amundsen, 2021; Chen et al., 2020; Eckert, 2018; Golzard & Miguel, 2016; Gray, 2012; Hodson et al., 2018; Jane, 2018; Lewis et al., 2018; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021) such as "she needs a good kicking in the cunt...she's a man hating lesbian and needs a good fucking to sort her out...someone should shut her up by sticking a cock in her mouth" (Lewis et al., 2018, p. 529); ***cyberstalking*** in eight studies (Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Eckert, 2018; Emelianchik-Key et al., 2022; Freed et al., 2017; Freed et al., 2018; Jane, 2018; Messing et al., 2020; Vandeweerd et al., 2016); ***explicit and unsolicited images*** in five studies (Amundsen, 2021; Golzard & Miguel, 2016; Hodson et al., 2018; Miller & Lewis, 2022; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021) ***revenge porn*** in three studies (Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Freed et al., 2018; Pashang et al., 2019); and ***coercion*** in three studies (Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Freed et al., 2018; Recio et al., 2022). Eight studies also discussed how TFSV ***materialized into women's offline lives*** through in-person stalking, violence, and non-consensual in person encounter's as well as by impacting their work and offline relationships (Eckert, 2018; Freed et al., 2018; Jane, 2018; Lewis et al., 2018; Messing et al., 2020; Pashang et al., 2019; Recio et al., 2022; Vandeweerd et al., 2016). For example, one woman shared:

> His friends all put in their Facebook statuses something like "Donna Smith is a lying whore who says she was raped when really she was drunk. If you see her, be sure to let her know what garbage she is." And they would each tag me in it each time. It was so awful. This also led to his friends and teammates throwing garbage at me when I walked on campus and calling me a "garbage human" for "lying" about David raping me. (Clevenger & Navarro, 2021, p. 366)

A different woman shared:

> He had my naked pictures on a few sites. He put my name, my home address, cell number, the school I worked at and a link to my Facebook and Twitter. The description he put on there was that I was a "dirty c*** that was up for anything so contact her." I had men calling me and leaving messages, sending me disgusting messages online saying they saw me and wanted some. Then the school found out and I was placed on "leave" and then dismissed. Even after I would get the pics off the site, they would be back up again and the whole process continued over and over. I couldn't be online ever and had to change my number. (Clevenger & Navarro, 2021, p. 369)

TFSV was facilitated through various digital technologies. Studies would often refer to the ***internet*** or ***online spaces*** generally in which a mobile phone or a computer was used to facilitate sexualized violence. Most articles discussed more than one digital technology, with ***social media applications*** such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat mentioned in fourteen studies (Amundsen, 2021; Chen et al., 2020; Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Eckert, 2018; Emelianchik-Key et al., 2022; Freed et al., 2017; Freed et al., 2018; Golzard & Miguel, 2016; Hodson et al., 2018; Jane, 2018; Lewis et al., 2018; Miller & Lewis, 2022; Pashang et al., 2019; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021); ***dating apps/platforms*** in three studies (Amundsen, 2021; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021; Vandeweerd et al., 2016); and ***video games*** in three studies (Gray, 2012; Jane, 2018; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021).

Fifteen studies discussed women's experiences of TFSV by a ***stranger*** (Amundsen, 2021; Chen et al., 2020; Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Eckert, 2018; Emelianchik-Key et al., 2022; Golzard & Miguel, 2016; Gray, 2012; Hodson et al., 2018; Jane, 2018; Lewis et al., 2018; Miller & Lewis, 2022; Pashang et al., 2019; Recio et al., 2022; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021; Vandeweerd et al., 2016) and six studies discussed women's experiences of TFSV from a ***partner or someone they knew*** (Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Emelianchik-Key et al., 2022; Freed et al., 2018; Freed et al., 2017; Messing et al., 2020; Pashang et al., 2019); three studies included women who talked about experiences from both strangers and people they knew.

Negative Emotions. All 18 studies discussed how women's experiences of TFSV elicited negative emotions. These emotions included deprivation of autonomy, powerlessness, lack of control, violation, domination, terrorization, panic, pain, anger, upset, exhaustion, unhappiness, stress, fear, paranoia, stigma, shame, blame, ridicule, anxiety, embarrassment, oppression, vulnerability, disgust, devastation, and wanting to die. One woman described how the embarrassment she went through beat her to the ground:

> He shared naked pictures of me…he also sent them to [public media]…He took my phone and he sent them through private messages to friends, but he also sent them through my email and my [social media] because he had the password…he threatened to send them to [my work]…The embarrassment that I went through, the public humiliation, it...beat me to the ground. (Freed, 2018, p. 8)

Another woman captured several negative emotions she experienced because of TFSV:

> I think partly it's like, if you don't know what's coming when you're opening a message and it's like a sexual image, it's kind of invasive. It's like; 'I don't wanna see this. I didn't choose to see this. I didn't consent to this', kind of thing. Like I don't think it's OK to send unsolicited like sexual anything, like sexual messages, sexual images to, especially to strangers, but kind of to anyone. I think it needs to be like a base level of consent established before you start sending that kind of things. And also I think it is, I think it is sexually aggressive. Like it's like 'look, I can get into your inbox, I can show you my penis, I can try and sexually entice you with this photo'. And it's just, yeah it's kind of like a male dominance kind of vibe. (Amundsen, 2021, p. 1471)

Three studies described how these negative emotions translated into mental and physical health problems such as anxiety and the need for anxiety medication, depression, panic attacks, post-traumatic stress disorder, self-harm behaviours, addiction, and feeling physically sick (Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Jane, 2018; Pashang et al., 2019).

Part and Parcel. Twelve studies reported that experiencing TFSV was part and parcel of being a woman online (Amundsen, 2021; Chen et al., 2020; Eckert, 2018; Emelianchik-Key et al., 2022; Gray, 2012; Hodson et al., 2018; Jane, 2018; Messing et al., 2020; Miller & Lewis, 2022; Recio et al., 2022; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021; Vandeweerd et al., 2016). Women often

used words like common, normal, constantly, frequently, daily, and all the time to describe their experiences of TFSV: “I receive at least one dick picture a day, over a dozen crude comments on each post, daily requests for nude photos and sex, and then rape and death threats several times a month” (Jane, 2018, p. 584). Another woman echoed, “almost every day on my social media account of unwanted nudity pictures by men. Every day or other day of nude pictures of penises” (Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021, p.14). Women commonly believed there was little they could do about the TFSV they experienced, and it was something that they learned to get “used to” and not “get offended by” (Amundsen, 2021, p. 1472). When woman experienced TFSV because of their career choice (e.g., journalism), they believed TFSV was “the price of entry into online spaces” (Jane, 2018, p. 583) or “the cost of doing business” (Jane, 2018, p. 580).

Power and Control. In sixteen of the studies, women expressed that they believed their experiences of TFSV to be a result of men having an inferior view of women and exerting their superior level of power and control over women in online spaces (Amundsen, 2021; Chen et al., 2020; Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Eckert, 2018; Emelianchik-Key et al., 2022; Freed et al., 2017; Freed et al., 2018; Gray, 2012; Hodson et al., 2018; Jane, 2018; Lewis et al., 2018; Messing et al., 2020; Miller & Lewis, 2022; Pashang et al., 2019; Recio et al., 2022; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021). Women believed they lacked control over their online space and there was always a threat of unwanted male intrusion and harassment that was difficult to escape (Amundsen, 2021; Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Emelianchik-Key et al., 2022; Freed et al., 2017; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021). An example of this was when women described received unsolicited ‘dick pics’ as “more of a kind of controlling thing, like you now have to look at my penis whether you like it or not”’ (Amundsen, 2021, p. 1470).

The TFSV facilitated by men against women was omnipresent in online spaces (Amundsen, 2021; Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Emelianchik-Key et al., 2022):

> I could not log into anything without him being there, threatening me or worrying that he was watching me. I would also get messages from other people too, so it was a constant presence in my life. Even when I went "off the grid" I still knew it was out there and then I worried what he was saying about me because I could not stand it and I ended up going back online. So, even then he won. (Clevenger & Navarro, 2021, p. 367)

Men would also use technology to control, monitor, and coerce women. As one woman explained:

> He gave my child an iPad and was using that to find out what's going on at home. He would use Facetime, where he gets to see where my child is and maybe what's going on in the background. It's like having him at home again, even though he's not actually there. (Freed et al., 2017, p. 9)

Men would install GPS software or spyware to track women, purchase devices for women to use so they had ownership and control of the device, monitor use of accounts and devices, threaten to share elicit content, and harass women as ways to control them, silence them, create compliance, and/or cause them to withdraw from online space(s) (Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Freed et al., 2017; Freed et al., 2018; Gray, 2012; Recio et al., 2022). If women worked in online spaces, they would limit what they posted online and cautiously choose what they reported on/avoid hot topics, while other women withdrew completely and found new careers; their voices were controlled because of the TFSV they experienced (Chen et al., 2020; Eckert, 2018; Hodson et al., 2018; Jane, 2018; Miller & Lewis, 2022): "Sex is used to intimidate us. Rape is used to frighten, intimidate, and stop us ... from doing our work, but at a deeper level it is actually about stopping us from having opinions, showing any semblance of independence" (Chen et al., 2020, p. 890). This sentiment was shared by women who engaged in online debate, believing that TFSV controlled the participation of women in online spaces through silencing them with abusive speech and images (Lewis et al., 2018).

Coping Strategies. Fourteen studies made mention of the strategies that women used to cope with TFSV (Amundsen, 2021; Chen et al., 2020; Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Eckert, 2018; Emelianchik-Key et al., 2022; Gray, 2012; Hodson et al., 2018; Jane, 2018; Lewis et al., 2018; Messing et al., 2020; Miller & Lewis, 2022; Pashang et al., 2019; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021; Vandeweerd et al., 2016). Only five studies mentioned that women would confront their perpetrators or expose their abuse (Amundsen, 2021; Eckert, 2018; Gray, 2012; Hodson et al., 2018; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021; Vandeweerd et al., 2016). Women were more likely to ignore or delete messages and/or block the perpetrator (Chen et al., 2020; Eckert, 2018; Hodson et al., 2018; Jane, 2018; Lewis et al., 2018; Miller & Lewis, 2022; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021; Vandeweerd et al., 2016). As one woman explained:

> The blocking and deleting is just the only, the only real option — productive option. They [harassers] are not interested in a dialogue, they are not interested in an exchange, they are only interested in intimidation and power and finding some way to cow me, so by not responding and by deleting and blocking, they don't get any response — meaningful response — for all they know it might have never been seen. So, I feel like that's the most effective way to respond, to not even feed their, feed whatever it is that's driving them to contact me. (Hodson et al., 2018)

Another woman similarly stated:

> I don't respond. If they keep on messaging [me] without a response, then I just block. I don't need that. I don't need to feel worried about opening my social media because of a weirdo, so I just block a lot of people. I have probably 60–70 people blocked. (Miller & Lewis, 2022, p. 13)

Some women decided to remove themselves from online space(s) to avoid TFSV (Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Eckert, 2018; Jane, 2018; Messing et al., 2020; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2021). Women who worked in online spaces, however, commented that this was not an option for them: "I can no more stay off Twitter than I could not go to the supermarket" (Jane, 2018, p. 582).

Most commonly women would cope by seeking support from friends (Amundsen, 2021; Chen et al., 2020; Eckert, 2018; Emelianchik-Key et al., 2022; Gray, 2012; Hodson et al., 2018;

Lewis et al., 2018; Messing et al., 2020). This often looked like disclosing their experiences of TFSV with friends in a humorous or commiserating manner:

> I never responded. I never engaged with those people. I did copy the text of some of them, and share them with some trusted friends, and say, 'Oh my God, can you believe this person?' Just kind of looking for some sympathy. (Hodson et al., 2018)

Another woman shared:

> I would definitely [share the story] with my friend [giggles], just saying 'I just received a random picture of a guy's dick'. [. . .] Yeah I know, that's definitely a sharing kind of thing. Yeah I know, and it's kind of like, commiseration. (Amundsen, 2021, p. 1472)

Four studies mentioned that women would engage in cyber revenge as a coping strategy (Amundsen, 2021; Emelianchik-Key et al., 2022; Messing et al., 2020; Pashang et al., 2019). In Amundsen (2021) women shared unsolicited images with their friend groups to laugh and critique them together, which some women labelled as TFSV; women in Emelianchik-Key et al. (2022) used technology to engage in retaliatory behaviours; the Messing et al. (2020) article spoke about women logging into their abuser's online accounts without permission to track their activity though women noted this was done to protect themselves (Messing et al., 2020); and in Pashang et al. (2019) women would engage in TFSV to get revenge for the mental health consequences and hurt that they were experiencing.

Reporting. Ten studies mentioned women's experiences of reporting TFSV either to the online platform, their place of work, or the police (Chen et al., 2020; Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Eckert, 2018; Freed et al., 2017; Freed et al., 2018; Hodson et al., 2018; Jane, 2018; Lewis et al., 2018; Messing et al., 2020; Pashang et al., 2019). In all these studies, women spoke to their negative experiences with reporting, and how reports through these avenues were of "no avail" (Jane, 2018; p. 583). Women believed that although social media platforms have a reporting option, they do not do anything to address TFSV: "And even when you press something and say

that you want to report this for offensiveness or abusiveness, they don't do anything about it" (Freed, 2017, p. 18). Women believed, however, that social media platforms could do more but choose not to:

> [Social media companies] could acknowledge misogyny as hate speech or unacceptable behavior, but they choose not to. I've tried reporting one or two of the things and they said, 'we've reviewed it and it doesn't meet our guidelines.' They could do something; [but] they choose not to. (Hodson, 2018)

In relation to reporting TFSV to police, women talked about police being confused or "idiots" (Clevenger & Navarro, 2021; Eckert et al., 2018) and not taking TFSV seriously, instead dismissing the reports: "You know, 'oohhh you got in a fight on Facebook and now you're expecting me to do something about it? Get out of here, I've got important stuff to do' kind of attitude" (Hodson, 2018, p. 1296). Another woman similarly stated:

> I contacted the local police chief about it, and he never responded. ... because the laws haven't quite caught up to the internet but ... it is not really true that the FBI cares about this thing or takes it serious. (Eckert et al., 2018, p. 1296)

A woman who worked in an online industry recounted that when they reported their TFSV to the police they were told "well, in your industry what do you expect?" (Jane, 2018). Regarding reporting to their workplace, they commented: "My organization pussyfoots around this. They don't see that I am trolled so personally that it hurts" (Chen et al., 2020, p. 891). Generally, women believed they couldn't go to the police because "police is not treating victims of sexual abuse and rape properly let alone cyber textual abuse" (Pashang et al., 2019, p. 1127).

Implications

Through mapping the literature on TFSV against women, it was found that women commonly experience TFSV in various forms such as cyber harassment, sexist and misogynist comments, cyberstalking, explicit and unsolicited images, revenge porn, and sexual coercion. The TFSV incidents women faced frequently manifested offline, involving in-person stalking,

physical violence, non-consensual in-person encounters, and adverse effects on their offline professional and personal relationships. TFSV was perpetrated mostly by strangers using several types of digital technologies, such as mobile phones, online spaces (blogs, websites), social media applications (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat), dating apps/platforms, and video games. Most women considered these experiences as part and parcel of being a woman in online spaces as well as a result of men exerting their perceived superior level of power and control over women. As a result of the TFSV they experienced, women suffered an array of negative emotions and challenges. Women spoke about their negative experiences with reporting and how reports rarely resulted in any resolution or justice; consequently, they relied on their own coping strategies to minimize and manage the violence. These findings summarize what is currently known about women's experiences of TFSV and illuminate several recommendations for future research in fields such as social sciences, education, health, law, and technology (Table 2).

Table 2 Key Findings of the Review

Key Findings
• Women generally experience more than one form of TFSV, including cyber harassment, sexist and misogynist comments, cyberstalking, explicit and unsolicited images, revenge porn, and coercion. • TFSV often materializes into women's offline lives through in-person stalking, violence, and non-consensual in person encounters. • TFSV is facilitated through various digital technologies, including social media applications such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat, dating apps/platforms, and video games. • TFSV is mostly perpetrated by strangers, followed by partners or people women know • As a result of TFSV, women experience negative emotions such as deprivation of autonomy, powerlessness, violation, terrorization, pain, anger, and shame, among others. These negative emotions can result in mental and physical health problems like anxiety, depression, self-harm behaviors, and addiction. • Women perceive TFSV as being normal, common, and something they need to learn to get used to. • Women predominantly hold the view that TFSV stems from men's inferior perception of women, leading them to assert dominance and control in online environments, where the constant potential for unwelcome male intrusion and harassment is challenging to escape.

- TFSV is used to intimidate women and stop them from doing their work or having opinions online, as well as controls the participation of women in online spaces through silencing them with abusive speech and images.
- Men use various methods, including installing GPS software or spyware to track women, purchasing devices for women to use, monitoring accounts and devices, threatening to share elicit content, and harassing women to control, silence, create compliance, and/or cause them to withdraw from online space(s).
- Women largely rely on coping strategies to deal with TFSV such as ignoring and deleting messages, blocking the perpetrator, limiting what they post online, and withdrawing/removing themselves from online spaces when possible.
- Seeking support from friends was the most used coping strategy by women and confronting or exposing perpetrators was the least used coping strategy. Some women used retaliatory behaviors, such as sharing unsolicited images with friends or engaging in TFSV themselves, to cope with TFSV.
- Women will sometimes report TFSV to online platforms, their workplace, or the police and overwhelmingly reported negative experiences with reporting, with many reports going unanswered, dismissed, or not taken seriously.

With only 18 included peer-reviewed studies, it is evident that research on women's experiences of TFSV remains in its infancy and there is a need for qualitative research that explores this topic further. It is recommended that such research be grounded in a socio-technical lens, as TFSV is a socio-technical issue that exists in the context of broader social and cultural conditions for women (Amundsen, 2021; Eckert, 2018). This framing is supported by the findings of this review, which revealed women's belief that men perpetrated TFSV against them to maintain power and control in online spaces. A better understanding of how TFSV against women is both social and technical is imperative. For example, how the intersection of the technologies and the social context within which they are designed and used constitute the problem (Jeanes et al., 2012; Powell & Henry, 2017).

Although participants in the included studies of this review were diverse in sexual orientation and race, future research needs to explore the experiences of marginalized and intersecting identities more comprehensively (Clevenger & Navarro, 2021). To better understand women's experiences of TFSV, it is essential to recognize that women's identities and the

intersection of these identities lead to distinct experiences and challenges. Exploring the experiences of men, perpetrators, educators, health practitioners, and law enforcement in relation to TFSV are all important perspectives that were beyond the scope of this review but remain understudied.

All studies discussed the negative emotions that women endured because of their experiences with TFSV, but only three studies mentioned how these emotions manifested into mental and physical health issues. The short and long-term physical and mental health effects of TFSV need to be better explored and understood. Research in this area would help identify the health services needed to support women who experience TFSV and determine the strengths and limitations of existing services available for women who experience TFSV. Resources and supports for women who experience TFSV, including where to turn to for help, also need to be systematically developed and disseminated (Clevenger & Navarro, 2021).

Determining how to provide progressive legal remedies and protections that respond to the needs of women who experience TFSV is essential (Henry & Powell, 2018; Pashang et al., 2019). What legal provisions of existing policies and laws are needed to protect women in online spaces, and/or women who experience TFSV require further research considerations (Messing et al., 2020). Developing training, tools, and resources that contribute to law enforcements proper identification, understanding, responding, and reporting of TFSV against women also requires additional research attention. Research that explores how to support women who experience TFSV when the criminal and legal system fails to do so, or when women choose to avoid the criminal and legal system altogether, is also needed.

As conceptualizations of TFSV continue to evolve and change, research must ensure the inclusion of new technologies and consider their role in (re)producing sexualized violence both

online and in-person (Messing et al., 2020). Although it is well known that dating apps have surged in popularity, only three studies in this review mentioned dating apps or online dating platforms. Further, there is a scarcity of research examining dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women, with nearly no qualitative studies on this phenomenon (Gillett, 2018; Henry & Powell, 2018; Pooley & Boxall, 2020). Future research needs to better understand women's experiences of dating app facilitated sexualized violence and the ways that dating apps frame the current realities of TFSV against women.

Given the rise and prevalence of TFSV against women, initiatives that help prevent women from experiencing TFSV need to be better investigated. Education and awareness about TFSV from a young age, and the curriculum and messaging that would be required to help children and youth understand that TFSV is a prevalent form of sexualized violence today, need to be developed and validated. Further research is needed to determine if educational institutions are equipped, willing, and permissible to teach youth about TFSV or if this educational material would be better delivered elsewhere/through other modalities (Pashang et al., 2019). The training and educational programs that adults would benefit from to better understand, prevent, prepare, protect, and defend themselves against TFSV also requires further research.

Research that focuses on the role of technology companies in addressing and preventing TFSV against women is also needed. As found in this review, women believed that that digital technology companies could do more for their users' safety but choose not to. Research that demonstrates how internet service providers and social networking companies can better design their user interfaces, digital resources, moderation tools, privacy features, and safety features with attention to social and cultural conditions could both prevent TFSV against women and assist in supporting women who experience it (Freed et al., 2018; Lewis et al., 2018; Messing et

al., 2020). How technologies can be used to enhance women's safety through various innovations and/or safety apps warrants additional research as well (Doria et al., 2021; Emelianchik-Key et al., 2022). Lastly, discovering how to better utilize technology to collect, store, and retain valid digital evidence, and how to incorporate this evidence into the legal system, requires further attention (Freed, 2017).

Strengths and Limitations

This scoping review was guided by rigorous and systematic methods and conducted by a research team with expertise in both TFSV and scoping reviews. The search strategy was developed in collaboration with a medical librarian (LB) and peer reviewed by a second medical librarian before being tested and translated to four databases. Each article was reviewed in Covidence by two independent reviewers and data was charted and summarized by two reviewers as well. To our knowledge, this is the first scoping review to map the qualitative literature on women's experiences of TFSV.

Although this scoping review contributes new knowledge and proposes innovative implications and future direction, there are limitations that warrant mention. First, only articles with qualitative data were included. Therefore, valuable insights from quantitative data exploring TFSV were excluded. Second, articles that included men were excluded. Although qualitative articles exist on this topic with both men and women participants, the qualitative data on women was not separate from the data on men and, therefore, could not be extrapolated; this data was excluded and not examined. Third, the review did not incorporate the consideration of location or potential cultural variations. Fourth, only articles in English were included and, therefore, articles in other languages may exist. Fifth, gray literature was not reviewed and although optional, stakeholder/community consultation did not take place to provide additional research or validate

study findings. Last, although quality appraisal is not a component of the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) scoping review framework or one of the main objectives of a scoping review, quality of the included studies was not systematically determined.

Conclusion

TFSV is a growing problem for women in today's digital world. Although in recent years the issue of TFSV has garnered attention in the academic literature, it remains understudied and requires further attention from researchers, medical professionals, technology companies, and judicial systems. The recommendations provided in this review can be effective in propelling this research area forward and informing the development of prevention strategies. As technology continues to advance and transform our lives, it is critical to ensure gender inequity and patriarchal norms are not being (re)produced and facilitated through these technologies to harm, control, and disempower women.

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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the study design and methods employed in my exploration of how gender and technology shape women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. The consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ), which is a 32-item checklist, guided the reporting of information in this chapter (Tong, 2007). The three domains of the COREQ and how they apply to the present study are included in detail below: research team and reflexivity, study design, and analysis and findings.

Research Team & Reflexivity

Research Team

The research team consisted of myself Nicole Doria (ND), my primary supervisor, and three committee members. I was responsible for all aspects of the research from conception to completion, including research question development, design of the research, data recruitment, data collection, data analysis/interpretation, and dissertation writing. Dr. Alice Aiken (AA) acted as my primary supervisor throughout the research process and dissertation writing. She was responsible for overseeing the conception and design, data recruitment, data collection, data analysis/interpretation, and providing consistent support and feedback. My thesis committee members Dr. Diane Crocker and Dr. Marion Brown provided feedback and edits throughout the research process and reviewed dissertation writing. Committee member, Dr. Nancy Ross, reviewed and provided edits on dissertation writing. There were no dual roles or conflicts of interest present for any member of the research team in relation to potential study participants.

Reflexivity

In qualitative research, achieving credibility, trustworthiness, and ethicality in conducting research relies on the essential aspect of reflexivity (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Reflexivity "means turning of the researcher lens back onto oneself to recognize and take

responsibility for one's own situatedness within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting and people being studied, questions being asked, data being collected, and its interpretation" (Berger, 2015, p. 220). When conducting feminist research, it is important to acknowledge that all research is situated and impacted by power relations (Haraway, 1988) and to use reflexivity as a practice to create more caring and reciprocal relations with research participants (Hesse-Biber, 2011). By being reflexive I aimed to foster transparency, accountability, empathy, and sensitivity throughout the research process, which is elaborated on in this chapter.

Reflexivity is also about being conscious about one's position as a researcher and how that position is reflected in the creation and understanding of knowledge (Pillow, 2003). I conducted all interviews as a doctoral candidate in the PhD in Health program at Dalhousie University. I have extensive experience and training in ethics, qualitative research methods, health promotion, and trauma-informed approaches as a result of several research roles that I have held as a Masters Graduate, Research Manager, Research Coordinator, and Research Assistant. I have also conducted qualitative interviews with a variety of populations including women, men, adolescents, and marginalized populations, growing my comfort with talking to people who have had difficult experiences. I am also a young, white, heterosexual, cis-gender woman who has experienced dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. Because of this I had to be particularly mindful of my subjectivity and perspective during the research process and ensure the voices and experiences of the participants were meaningfully represented and at the forefront of analysis; I remained cognizant to not block hearing the voices of the participants by imposing my own familiarities or position on to them (Cloke et al., 2000; Finlay, 2002; Pillow, 2003). This proved to be especially challenging when I encountered situations in which my

personal experiences were comparable, yet my viewpoints differed. However, over time and through my diverse research roles and exposure, I have developed the skill of self-awareness in this regard. This self-awareness has enabled me to address and navigate this challenge more effectively. Last, I identify as a feminist and, therefore, see the world through a lens that seeks to name, challenge, and dismantle gender-based inequities that persist in our society. I conducted this research and analyzed and interpreted the data through this lens.

Feminist research regards the researcher as an asset, and my previous training and similar personal experiences to participants offered me many advantages such as easier entry into conversation, increased knowledge of the topic, a better understanding of participants nuanced reactions, and creation of more authentic connections with research participants (Kacen & Chaitin, 2006; Lietz et al., 2006; Padgett, 2008). I was transparent with participants about my experiences with dating app facilitated sexualized violence, and that this had ignited my interest in this research topic. I also told participants that this research was being conducted in partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree with the hope to evoke change in the area of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women.

I examined my own beliefs, judgements, and practices throughout the entire research process. I reflected upon and wrote about the research process with the use of a research journal (Buetow, 2019), including the "process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of [my] positionality" (Mitchell et al. 2018, p. 678). Keeping a research journal was effective in documenting my thoughts, emotions, reasonings, and questions to myself, and I learned that it also served as a valuable tool for self-supervision and emotional release (DePoy & Gitlin, 2019). I gained insight into my own experiences, as well as the parallels and distinctions between my experiences and participants experiences with varying ages,

socioeconomic statuses, educational backgrounds, and racial identities. This taught me that my perspectives and background fostered both commonalities and differences with each participant in relation to how we experienced dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. I also used my research journal to engage in continuous and critical self-questioning throughout the analysis process, considering the influence of my background, experiences, and identity on codes and themes. This helped me challenge my assumptions, interpretations, and conclusions by reflecting on my preliminary analysis and exploring alternative perspectives. Peer debriefing with my supervisor (AA) and colleagues also gave me an opportunity to discuss the research as it progressed and evaluate the analytical process. Peer debriefing was important in strengthening the legitimacy of the final interpretation of the data and recognizing my possible projections (DePoy & Gitlin, 2019).

I also read and re-read the transcripts and data several times, letting time lapse between each review. This offered me the opportunity to consider how my experiences may have been imposed on the interpretation of the data from a fresh perspective, and ensure it was the participants voice and experience at the forefront of the analysis (DePoy & Gitlin, 2019). From this process I was reminded that reflexivity is an ongoing process that requires mindfulness, patience, and a genuine commitment to placing the participants' authenticity and stories at the center of the research. With each read I became more confident with the interpretation of the data and the richness of my findings.

Study Design

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinning of this study is feminist theory. Feminist theories are extensions of the feminist movement, which is one of the longest movements in history that

continues today (Srivastava et al., 2017). One of the goals of the movement is to liberate women by establishing political, economic, personal, and social equality for all people (Mackay, 2015; Srivastava et al., 2017). As stated by bell hooks, it is "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (2000, p. viii) and "challenge, change, and ultimately end patriarchy" (2004, p.108). The genealogy of feminist theory can be traced through different waves of feminism that reflect its evolution and the ongoing struggle to achieve gender equality and social justice: first-wave, second-wave, third-wave, and fourth-wave.

First-wave feminism emerged in the 1830's and continued into the early 1900's. It focused on securing women's legal and political rights; starting with the women's suffrage movement which successfully lobbied for women's right to vote. It also promoted other political and legal change such as the abolition of slavery and improved opportunities for women, such as the right to own property and the right to an education (Srivastava et al., 2017; Wrye, 2009).

Second-wave feminism occurred from the1960's to the 1980's and focused on gender equality (e.g., economic equality) and women's liberation. It critiqued rigid sex roles and promoted sexual freedom of women (e.g., sexual pleasure, reproductive rights, and laws and rights in relation to divorce, workplace discrimination, and sexualized violence) (Srivastava et al., 2017; Wrye, 2009). Intersectional feminism also emerged, which recognized the intersection of race, class, and gender in shaping women's experiences (Crenshaw, 1989).

Third-wave feminism was prominent from the 1990's to the early 2000's and focused on empowering women to utilize their body as a source of personal expression, sex positivity, and activism for queer, transgender, and disabled women. Women of colour contested the dominance of white, middle-class feminism that was prominent in second wave feminism by continuing to advocate for a more intersectional approach; highlighting that various forms of identity overlap

and intersect with gender to shape women's experiences of oppression (Crenshaw, 2017). This wave promoted gender pluralities such as women managing careers, sexual freedom, and motherhood (Srivastava et al., 2017; Wrye, 2009). The third wave also involved the advent of computers and digital technology, such as computers. Cyberfeminism emerged as a response to the male-dominated nature of the technology sector, which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Fourth-wave feminism began in 2012 with a focus on sexual harassment, body shaming/positivity, rape culture, and workplace harassment. A key focus on technology and social media in relation to both facilitating and addressing these issues (e.g., the #MeToo movement) has also been integrated (Srivastava et al., 2017). There is much debate about the fourth wave of feminism, and if perhaps we are entering, or need to be entering, a fifth wave. Regardless, feminism remains an active and successful social movement that is still needed and relevant today (Aune, 2018).

Feminist theory provides a "woman-centered description and explanation of human experience and the social world" and is guided by the notion that "gender governs every aspect of personal and social life" (Danner 1989, p. 51). It started to account for the actual experiences of women and challenged the androcentric constructions of women's lives (Geiger, 1990; Rennison, 2014); recognizing that "females should not be invisible, subordinate, peripheral, or viewed as appendages to males. Instead, feminist theories argue that females should be at the center of theory development, research, and intellectual inquiry" (Rennison, 2014, p. 1618).

In relation to gender, feminist theory emphasizes that gender is complex and is a socially, historically, politically, and culturally produced construct that impacts individuals' experiences and opportunities (Disch & Hawkesworth, 2018; Rennison, 2014). Gender relations and

masculine and feminine roles are not equal, but rather privilege men and subordinate women (Disch & Hawkesworth, 2018; Rennison, 2014). Further, feminist theory largely acknowledges that the difference between men and women is "not a fact of nature but a vector of power" (Disch & Hawkesworth, 2018, p. 5), which means that the differences are socially constructed and not biological. To resist emphasizing hierarchies of difference, feminist theories focus on denaturalizing sex and gender binaries to challenge the assumption that sex and gender are strictly binary and biologically determined (Disch & Hawkesworth, 2018). Most modern feminist theories are intersectional (Crenshaw, 1989), recognizing that various systems of oppression (e.g., racism, patriarchy, heterosexuality) interact to construct identities and experiences of oppression (Disch & Hawkesworth, 2018).

Feminist theories have significantly contributed to the understanding of sexualized violence, arguably more so than any other theoretical tradition (Rennison, 2014). Not all variants of feminist theory, however, address sexualized violence (Rennison, 2014). As previously mentioned in chapter one, this current research study on women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence is underpinned by radical feminism and technofeminism, which are described in greater detail below. Although this study particularly focuses on the tenets of radical feminism and technofeminism, it is important to acknowledge that various waves of feminism build upon the ideas and accomplishments of earlier movements. This work aligns with core principles of the feminist movement more generally by aiming to raise awareness, challenge patriarchy, advocate for women's safety, empower survivors, promote consent culture, acknowledge intersectionality, advocate for policy change, and engage in digital activism. This research also contributes to the broader fight for gender equality, safety, and justice for women by considering gender as a primary focus of the analysis (Rhode, 1990). Principles and insights

from all waves remain relevant and influential in shaping this research, with a persistent focus on analyzing gender-based inequities and how to eradicate them.

Radical Feminism. Radical means 'pertaining to the root', and radical feminism is the thread of feminism that considers patriarchy to be the root of oppression and gender inequity. Patriarchy "refers to the belief that society views women as the property of males and, therefore, societal norms convey that females are subject to male control" (Rennison, 2014, p. 1620). Radical feminism clarifies the many ways in which patriarchy holds women in subordinate social positioning to men, constituting women as an oppressed 'sex class' who are oppressed and exploited by men (Rosewarne, 2020; Rowland & Klein, 1996; Thompson, 2001). In radical feminism "male power and privilege [are] the source of all social relations, inequality, and violence against women" (DeKeseredy 2011, p. 298); identifying that women's fear of sexualized violence, or the continual threat of experiencing it, stems from patriarchy and perpetuates the domination of men over women's minds and bodies (Mackay, 2015; Rennison, 2014). To end oppression of women, radical feminism aims to "dismantle not only patriarchy but each of the social, cultural, political, and economic structures that benefit from – and support – male authority" (Rosewarne, 2020, p. 54).

The concept of patriarchy and the ability to dismantle patriarchy, has been critiqued as naïve, simplistic, and universalizing (Rowland & Klein, 1996; Whisnant, 2016). While I acknowledge that patriarchy is not universal in the sense that not every man is constantly participating in the equal oppression of women, I do believe that men generally benefit from patriarchy, and they frequently behave in ways that uphold it (Jensen, 2021). I hold the view that as a result, all women are constrained by it (Jensen, 2021). This does not disregard my belief, however, that "women can and do oppress each other" (Rosewarne, 2020, p. 61). Although

another frequent criticism of radical feminism is that it supports biological essentialism (Rowland & Klein, 1996), and some radical feminist work does (e.g., Firestone, Adrienne Rich, and Mary Daly), I align with the belief that the "the struggle between the sexes is not the result of biology" (Rowland & Klein, 1996; p. 297) and concepts like power, collective domination of men, and other socialized factors determine the differences between men and women (Rowland & Klein, 1996). Additionally, radical feminism is critiqued for categorizing the oppression of women as universal and lacking an intersectional lens (Connell, 1985; Murphy & Livingstone, 1985; Rowbotham, 1992; Walby, 1986; Whisnant, 2016). An intersectional approach, however, is compatible with radical feminist theory and applied in the present research study to acknowledge the diversity of women. Personally, I believe that women experience oppression differently based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, location, and other various social and political identities (Crenshaw, 1989, 2017) and it is important for feminist research to acknowledge this.

Power in radical feminism refers to the relations in which all social interactions and everyday encounters between men and women are structured; where men's social roles afford them more power and power resources than women (Kelly, 2013). These gendered power relations are present in everyday interactions and communications (Freeman, 1975) and result in women experiencing sexual harassment in their everyday lives because of men's "daily intrusions into their feelings, thoughts, behaviour, space, time, energies, and bodies" (Wise & Stanley, 1987, p. 71). Men for example tend to initiate social and sexual encounters with women and can use intrusion, anger, and/or aggression as a power resource when subordinated or rejected by a woman (Kelly, 2013; Lips, 1981). Although the possibility for resistance and

subversion exists within all power relations, women have fewer power resources and, therefore, are rarely able to change how men exercise power over them (Kelly, 2013).

Sexualized violence against women has been a primary focus of radical feminism, where it is understood as one of the primary ways through which the dominance of males and the subordination of women are exercised and upheld (Grosser & Tyler, 2021). One of the most influential ways that radical feminists have contributed to our understanding of sexualized violence against women is through reconceptualizing its definition (Rennison, 2014; Powell & Henry, 2017). Sexualized violence is defined more broadly in radical feminism - on a continuum from sexual harassment to rape - moving beyond only physical forms of sexualized violence. By defining sexualized violence in this way, the diverse forms of sexualized violence that women experience are better accounted for; not only sexualized violence that inflicts physical harm and/or injury is accounted for, but so are the "more taken for granted forms, such as sexual harassment" (Kelly, 2013, p. 75). Liz Kelly (1988, 2010, 2013) is most famously known for this conceptualization of a continuum of sexualized violence (Powell & Henry, 2017; Rennison, 2014), stating: "some is out of the ordinary and unbearably brutal; much is banal, and unbearably mundane; we need all of it in our sights" (Kelly, 2010, p.121). Kelly's (1988) research uncovered information about how women experience and define sexualized violence, finding that "men use a variety of forms of abuse, coercion and force in order to control women" (Kelly, 1987, p.48). Kelly (1988) also emphasizes that women need to be able to recognize their experiences of sexualized violence, which is challenging if their experience is not reflected in the definition of it. Additionally, women's credibility in labelling their experiences as sexualized violence has continuously been challenged due to limiting definitions of sexualized violence

(Kelly et al., 2005; Horvath & Brown, 2013; Haaken & Reavey, 2009) and the systems of power that deny the truth of their accounts (Healicon, 2012).

Radical feminists also emphasize that sexualized violence is not a pathological behaviour that is innate or part of human nature (Goldner et al., 1990; Rennison, 2014), but instead is socially constituted as a result of gendered power relations; an expression of patriarchal power and a form of violence that maintains the patriarchy through its constant threat (Brownmiller, 1975; Millett, 1970; Powell & Henry, 2017). It is political, not biological (Griffin, 1971; Mackay, 2015). Brownmiller was one of the first radical feminists to frame rape as a political problem that was central to the patriarchal domination and subordination of women (Brownmiller, 1975; Rennison, 2014). Brownmiller (1975) explained rape as a crime of power and control, which countered the dominant discourse that rape was a sexual crime of passion or 'sex gone wrong'. As a result of her work, the motivation and consequences of sexualized violence have become better understood in various ways, emphasizing that sexualized violence is motivated by power, control, and anger; women do not provoke an offender or "ask for it" in relation to any form of sexualized violence; sexualized violence does not impact "bad" women; a rapist can be anyone, including spouses; and woman are not in a perpetual state of consent regardless of their relationship status (Brownmiller, 1975; Rennison, 2014). Rape is "nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear" (Brownmiller 1975, p. 5). MacKinnon (2007) more recently echoed this position, stating rape is an "act of dominance that works systematically to maintain a gender-stratified society in which women occupy a disadvantaged status as the appropriate victims and targets of sexual aggression" (p. 130). Some radical feminists have been critiqued for extremism when arguing that all sex is rape: "*every* fuck is a rape even if it feels nice because every man has power and

privilege over women, whether he uses it blatantly or subtly" (Deevey 1975, p. 24). I do not personally align with this extremist position. I firmly believe in the importance of promoting consensual sexual activity and sex positivity, where women can experience and enjoy sexual intimacy without judgment or stigma, and I do make a distinction between consensual sex and sexualized violence.

For Brownmiller's (1975), rape, or its threat, was identified as how all men practically or conceptually control all women; women live in a state of fear regarding men's potential for violence even if they haven't personally experienced it, and men collectively, as a sex class, benefit from it (Graham, 1995; MacKay, 2015). Theorists like Dworkin (1982) and MacKinnon (1982) broadened this notion of perpetual threat of male violence against women to include pornography and prostitution, situating them within the patriarchal, male-dominated system; arguing that sexual work performed by women for the pleasure and consumption of men further legitimizes aggressive male sexuality. There is much debate within feminism about whether sex work contributes to either domination or liberation of women. As mentioned above, I do identify as a sex positive feminist. However, I also recognize that pornography can contribute to the increased objectification of women and that men who consume pornography may develop unrealistic expectations about sexual relationships and body image. I think it is important to approach discussions about these topics with nuance, acknowledging the potential of sex work to both empower and harm women. According to MacKinnon, sexuality is the primary domain of male power, where power and violence intersect. I do agree with MacKinnon's position that sexualized violence is interconnected with normative heterosexuality, where aggressive male sexuality is accepted and normalized.

Radical Feminism and Dating App-Facilitated Sexualized Violence. Overall, radical feminism offers a conceptualization of patriarchy, power, and sexualized violence that informed my exploration of women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. More specifically, radical feminism was used to inform my comprehension and perspective on the definition and conceptualization of sexualized violence and the influence of the patriarchal heteronormative imperative. Two significant aspects of this research that are rooted in radical feminism are the definition of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence used in this study as informed by Kelly (1988), and the recognition that dating app-facilitated sexualized violence is gendered and influenced by socio-cultural factors (Brownmiller, 1975; Millett, 1970). The aforementioned texts of radical feminist scholars created the foundation for acknowledging sexualized violence against women as a form of discrimination that was connected to the broader social contexts of women's inequity, which helped inform my feminist theorizing on how to understand dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women. These scholars are, therefore, frequently cited in the subsequent findings and interpretation chapter.

Following the work of Kelly (1988, 2013), the definition of sexualized violence for the present research study is understood as occurring in diverse forms that range on a continuum from harassment to rape. Further, as informed by Kelly's work, how women experience the issue of both recognizing and being believed about their experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence was also explored. As informed by a radical feminist lens, this study examined the extent to which patriarchy influenced dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, given the literature's suggestion that patriarchy persists in online spaces and is the root cause of online misogyny today (Halbert, 2004; Jane, 2017). Brownmiller's (1975) understanding that sexualized violence against women is a result of patriarchal domination and subordination was

applied to investigate dating apps as "a new public space in which women are vulnerable to systematic subordination" (Megarry, 2014, p. 52). Additionally, radical feminists such as Stanko (1985, 1990) have discussed sexualized violence as a normal part of heterosexual interactions. This research also examined how dating apps (re)produce and/or facilitate everyday heteronormative sexualized violence against women and how it may be excused as expected heteronormative male behaviour (Gavey, 2005; Penny, 2013; Powell & Henry, 2017).

In radical feminism "the continual threat of sexual violence serves to perpetuate male domination over female minds and bodies" (Rennison, 2014, p. 1620) and results in women always being on guard to the possible threat and occurrence of experiencing sexualized violence (Stanko, 1985). This research study explored the continued relevance of male domination in relation to dating app-facilitated sexualized violence (Jurgenson, 2010; Thompson, 2018) and the degree to which women encounter sexualized violence in their daily lives due to men's exploitation of dating apps to intrude upon their emotions, thoughts, behaviors, personal space, time, energies, and bodies. Consciousness-raising also played an essential role in shaping the emergence of radical feminist theory and activism in relation to sexualized violence: "the strategy credited with providing the critical context in which women talked about sensitive, even painful experiences openly" (Bevacqua, 2000, p. 30). This research considered the various strategies, such as consciousness-raising, that women employed to resist and eradicate dating app facilitated sexualized violence (Wise & Stanley, 1987).

Overall, addressing sexualized violence is critical to achieving gender equality and radical feminism has made foundational contributions in the understanding of this relationship that remain fundamental when conducting research related to sexualized violence today. Further, radical feminism provides a framework for understanding and suggesting avenues for change

that go beyond individual behavior to address broader societal structures and the importance of collective action, which this research aimed to accomplish. Despite the usefulness of approaching the present research with a radical feminist lens, a large limitation is the frequent critical stance toward technology. Since I perceive technology as having both positive and negative aspects, the present research also integrated a technofeminist perspective.

Technofeminism. Technofeminism is a newer subfield of feminism, and specifically cyberfeminism. Cyberfeminism is a term first used by Sadie Plant in the 1990s to refer to feminists who were interested in the inquiry and critique of new technologies, such as the internet and cyberspace (Mia, 2012). Cyberfeminism sought to understand the intersection of gender and technology and aimed to both challenge the ways that digital technologies reinforce gender inequities and promote the ways digital technologies can be utilized for feminist activism, community building, and social justice (Plant, 1995, 1997). Plant believed that women could engage with the internet to work, play, and experience their identity; free themselves from social constraints; and gain power resources (Plant, 1997). Plant's scholarship, however, was often criticized for technological determinism, meaning it over emphasized the influence of technology in shaping society and human behaviour while under emphasizing the role of human agency and other societal and contextual factors. Donna Haraway is considered another founder of cyberfeminism. Her essay, A Cyborg Manifesto (Haraway, 1985), presented that the boundaries between humans and machines were becoming increasingly blurred, introducing the concept of the cyborg to represent a being that is part human and part machine; she argued that such a hybrid can resist dominant systems of power and oppression (Haraway, 1985). Haraway's work has been criticized, however, for promoting a "colourblind" perspective that does not address the concept of whiteness (Wilkerson, 1997). Although influential in its contributions to feminist

theory, cyberfeminism has overall been criticized for being overly optimistic regarding the possibilities for women empowerment via the internet and digital media (Hawthorne & Klein, 1999; Plant, 1997); over emphasizing the potential of technology to create a utopianism for women where gender inequities are eradicated, and overlooking the ways in which technology can be used to perpetuate gender inequities such as reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes and exacerbating harassment and abuse (Mia, 2012).

Judy Wajcman (2004) introduced Technofeminism to weave the optimism of cyberfeminism with a more realist lens of women's relationship with technology. Technofeminism is a theoretical framework that therefore explores the intersection of gender and technology, viewing the relationship as mutual in which technology is both a "source and consequence of gender relations" (Wajcman, 2004, p.7). Contrary to cyberfeminism, technofeminism acknowledges that technology can be both liberating and oppressive (Wajcman, 2006), in between 'utopian optimism' and 'pessimistic fatalism' (Wajcman, 2004, p. 156). Cyberfeminism was unable to capture this reciprocity and instead portrayed technology as either neutral or deterministic, leading to implications for women that were either excessively optimistic or overly pessimistic, as described above (Kumar, 2020). In technofeminism, "digital technologies are not inherently patriarchal or unambiguously liberating but are shaped by the social circumstances within which they are designed and used" (Jeanes et al., 2012, p. 270). The design and use of technology is viewed as reflecting and perpetuating societal norms, gender roles, and power structures, while also promoting women's sociotechnical agency.

The fundamental principle in technofeminism regarding the relationship between gender and technology is that it is mutually shaped and co-constructed, "in which technology is both a source and a consequence of gender relations and vice versa" (Wajcman, 2004, p.7). This

emphasizes that the gender-technology relationship is fluid, and that technological change can influence gender power relations. In technofeminism, technology must be understood as technical and social (Wajcman, 2004), which means that technology is not solely a matter of hardware, software, or technical functionalities but is deeply embedded in the social context in which it is developed and used. How gender hierarchies and relations that exist in broader society are being replicated in and through digital technologies must also be considered (Powell & Henry, 2017; Wajcman, 2004). Technofeminism, however, has been criticized for lacking consideration of other identity markers besides gender or being a woman (Segers & Arora, 2016). To address this issue, researchers are urged to encompass an intersectional approach to account for race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality (Bassett et al., 2019; De Hertogh et al., 2019; Lykke, 2010). In alignment with this critique, technofeminism has also been criticized for assuming an "educated, white, upper-middle-class, English-speaking, culturally sophisticated readership" (Fernandez & Wilding, 2003, p.21).

Technofeminism and Dating App-Facilitated Sexualized Violence. In the present research I employed technofeminism to critically analyze the social and technological contexts that contribute to dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, including how the social circumstances within which dating apps are designed and used contribute to the various forms of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence that women experience. Many feminist theorists argue that online spaces and online norms have been dominated by men and, therefore, are hypermasculine from inception (Franks, 2012; Hughes, 2000; Ritter, 2009). For example, Ging and Siapera (2019) state that "women have never been equal in the online public sphere, and it appears that social media forums remain firmly grounded in the material realities of women's everyday experiences of sexism in patriarchal society" (p. 113). Technofeminism was used in

this present study to explore the extent to which this argument applies in the contexts of dating apps.

A technofeminist approach also assisted in my exploration of dating apps as not only a tool that can aid in the (re)production of sexualized violence but also as a space where identity, power, gender, and cultural practices are manifested (Clinnin & Manthey, 2019; De Hertogh et al., 2019; Wajcman, 2010); allowing for a more complete account of the ways in which dating apps are (re)producing the gender relations of society more broadly and in new and amplified ways (Brophy, 2010; Powell & Henry, 2017). Powell and Henry (2017) argue that "sexual violence in a digital age cannot be understood, or addressed, outside of both the technologies and the social context that constitute the problem" (p. 306), meaning that the notion of treating technologies as a distinct and isolated domain of behaviors and experiences, separate from the offline world, is no longer relevant in today's digital age where the boundaries between them are often intertwined and blurred. Similarly, women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence cannot be viewed in isolation from technological and non-technological aspects because they are likely interconnected (Powell & Henry, 2017). In my research, I embraced a technofeminist perspective to explore this notion and generate an enriched understanding of how women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence are shaped by both technological and non-technological aspects. Technofeminism also informed my analysis that highlights the accountability of dating app companies, how dating apps are used for empowerment and resistance, and the importance of digital literacy and education to empower women to navigate dating apps more safely. To offset the limitations of technofeminism, I incorporated an intersectional approach and combined insights from radical feminism to offer a

more comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness between gender, technology, and women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence.

In today's digital world, the research questions that need addressed remain pertinent to those posed during the radical feminist movement of the second wave. Key among them is how to dismantle a system of male dominance that upholds gender inequity, and in turn a society where women do not receive equal treatment to men (Halbert, 2004). Overall, a technofeminist approach informed my understanding of the connection between gender, technology, and women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. This approach allowed for the generation of new feminist scholarship and possibilities for change in this emerging field of research (Wajcman, 2006).

Participant Selection

A purposeful sampling technique was used for this research to select information-rich cases (Patton, 1990). Patton (2002) describes information-rich cases as "those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations" (p. 230). More specifically, purposeful criterion sampling was used to recruit participants for this research study (Patton, 1990). The criterion included six eligibility questions (Appendix C):

1. Are you between 18 and 34 years of age?
2. Do you reside in Canada?
3. Do you identify as a woman?
4. In the last 12 months, have you used dating apps on at least a monthly basis?
5. Do you primarily seek men online?

6. Have you experienced dating app-facilitated sexualized violence (e.g., unsolicited nudes, sexist/misogynist messages, online sexual harassment, cyberstalking, coercion into an unwanted sexual act)?

Prospective participants needed to answer "yes" to all the screening criteria questions to be considered eligible for participation in the present study.

All participants were required to be a current and active dating app user, defined as a monthly user during the last 12-month period on one or more of the various dating apps (e.g., Tinder, Bumble, Hinge). This allowed participants to speak to the current dating-app environment, which has evolved since its inception in 2012. Participants needed to self-identify as a woman because although anyone can experience sexualized violence, women are primarily the victims of sexualized violence and men are typically the perpetrators (Breiding et al., 2014; Powell et al., 2020; Tarzia et al., 2017). Current studies suggest that young women are most likely to experience sexualized violence (Conroy & Cotter, 2017; Langenderfer-Magruder et al., 2016; Powell et al., 2020) and a 2018 review of the literature on technology-facilitated sexualized violence reported that women (including bisexual and trans women) are at an increased risk of being the targets of online abuse (Henry & Powell, 2018). Experiences of online sexualized violence have also been found to be gendered in particular ways and experienced differently for men and women (Powell et al., 2020), and exploring the experiences of men were outside the scope of this study. Most users on mainstream dating apps are 18-34 years of age, which is also why participants in this age range were selected.

Women who primarily sought same gender dating were excluded from this research as there are specific dating app platforms for women seeking women and, therefore, unique contexts are present for this population. The experiences of women on same gender dating apps,

as well as experiences of abuse in same gender relationships, are distinctly different than women who seek relationships with men (Choy, 2018; Laskey et al., 2019; Watson et al., 2019). As such, the experiences of this population were also beyond the scope of this study.

In this research, dating app-facilitated sexualized violence is also distinguished from interpersonal violence that results from a relationship that originated from a dating app. Dating app-facilitated sexualized violence encompasses incidents that occur in early or casual interactions initiated through dating apps, often with limited face-to-face contact. In contrast, interpersonal violence resulting from a dating app relationship involves more established, ongoing connections, such as romantic relationships that develop after meeting on a dating app, and these experiences were beyond the scope of the present research study.

Participants were recruited with the use of an electronic advertisement on Instagram. This advertisement was promoted on a dedicated Instagram page (@datingapp_research) on both the Instagram feed (Appendix D) and Instagram story (Appendix E). The Instagram feed post was "boosted" to reach people who met the inclusion criteria (women, 18-34 years of age, residing in Canada). Boosted advertisements require a specific budget to target specific audiences. This advertisement was boosted twice; once from October 3rd – October 6th and again on October 21st. The advertisement was boosted a second time because data saturation had not been met with completed interviews from the first advertisement. The first boost (Oct 3rd-6th) generated 170 link clicks, reached 5, 284 people, and made 6, 108 impressions/displays. The advertisement spend was $75, or $0.44 per link click. The second boost (Oct 21st) generated 193 link clicks, reached 9, 730 people, and made 10, 118 impressions/displays. The ad spend was $100, or $0.52 per link click. The recruitment approach proved highly effective, generating significant interest in a focused and rapid way while engaging potential participants in a respectful and considerate

manner; allowing people to voluntarily participate without feeling pressured or inconvenienced. In my experience, this recruitment method yields a wider and more diverse range of participants compared to conventional approaches, such as posters, which may not reach or engage a diverse audience as effectively. I was pleased with the use of this recruitment method for the present research study as it allowed me to quickly recruit women from across Canada that met my inclusion criteria.

The caption in the post directed people to click the link in the Instagram bio, which was a hyperlink to the eligibility survey using the survey software *Opinio* for screening purposes (Appendix C). In total, 196 people completed the eligibility survey and 140 people were eligible. All eligible participants were contacted via email with instructions to review, sign, and return the informed consent form (Appendix F). Participants were notified in this email that once the consent form was received, a phone interview would be scheduled that would be approximately 60 minutes long. Most eligible participants stopped participation at this stage, with 101 people not responding to the email, nine people declining to participate because of lack of compensation, and five people declining to participate because they did not feel their mental health was strong enough. With recruiting through electronic advertisements on Instagram, I expected this attrition rate. Most participants tend to discontinue their engagement shortly after initially expressing interest in the advertisement. Participants exhibit an immediate response by clicking on the ad, but their enthusiasm decreases when subsequent steps and more detailed instructions are presented, which leads to most drop-off at this stage. I was transparent with research participants that given this was a student doctoral project, there was a lack of financial resources to provide participants a financial incentive for participation. However, providing an incentive would have likely improved attrition rates at this stage. Six people completed and

submitted the consent form but did not move forward with scheduling an interview for reasons unknown. None of the participants withdrew from the study after completing their interview. In total, 19 interviews were completed and there was a total of 19 participants in this study. No prior relationships existed between me and the participants prior to the commencement of the research study.

Data Collection

All interviews were scheduled using Calendly and conducted over the phone in a quiet environment by myself (ND); interviews were one-on-one and to my knowledge only the participant and researcher (ND) were present. All interviews were conducted over the phone and audio recorded. Interviews were semi-structured, which was a useful approach for this exploratory study. Semi-structured interviews provided a purposeful and focused approach to my interviews (DePoy & Gitlin, 2019) while allowing me the flexibility to be responsive to participants perspectives and experiences, especially when unpredictable (Berg, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Newcomer et al., 2015). A semi-structured interview guide was used (Appendix G), which consisted of open-ended, probing, and follow-up *why* or *how* questions (Newcomer et al., 2015). This interview guide was piloted in advance with a colleague who is a doctoral candidate in a similar area of research. The interview guide was helpful in providing a balance between structure and spontaneity. It also allowed for consistency across the interviews while allowing for questions to be tailored or expanded upon depending on the participants personal experiences. The decision to use a semi-structured interview guide was suitable for this research study as it facilitated open exploration while also ensuring that all important conversation topics were addressed.

Interviews were 60-90 minutes in length, which was useful in avoiding interviewer and respondent fatigue (Newcomer et al., 2015). The interviews flowed naturally and resembled a casual conversation, which is a characteristic of semi-structured interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Choak, 2012). I was cognizant during the interviews to be aware of how my questions and responses/reactions may inadvertently guide participants or influence their answers and did my best to maintain a neutral position. Given that all women I interviewed had experiences of sexualized violence, with many being raped, I did find the interviews to be emotionally and mentally distressing. Listening to traumatic stories repeatedly during data collection did take an emotional burden as I was not properly prepared for the emotional impact the interviews would have on me as a researcher. The weight of their stories lingered in my mind long after the interviews, causing moments of sadness, anger, frustration, and exhaustion. This experience made me realize the importance of adequate preparation and support for researchers dealing with such sensitive topics to protect their well-being, which is an aspect that, in my view, is not given enough attention and discussion in research environments.

Data Saturation. The intended sample was 12 to16 women across Canada who self-identified as having experienced dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. This sample size was determined based on when data saturation in thematic analysis is likely to occur (Braun & Clarke, 2021), which is a concept in qualitative research where no new information or themes are generated from the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Braun and Clarke (2021), however, argue that data saturation is not consistent with reflexive, deductive, thematic analysis because meaning arises from the interpretation of the data and, therefore, determining the appropriate point to conclude data collection is not entirely definable prior to the process of analysis. Braun and Clarke (2021) instead recommend proposing a range in sample size that is likely to generate

adequate, rich, and meaningful data and determine data saturation during the research. Based on data saturation experiments, the range of 12 to 16 was chosen as the range for this research (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The final number of participants was decided, however, during the data collection and preliminary data analysis, with a total of 19 interviews occurring.

The final number of interviews was based on my determination of information redundancy as well as deciding that I had enough data to answer my research question adequately and meaningfully; therefore, data saturation had occurred. After each interview, I listened to the audio recording, transcribed the interview, and explored and categorized the data with the use of a codebook. Through this process I monitored data saturation (Braun & Clarke, 2021). After conducting 19 interviews, no new information or codes were identified, and I determined that I did not need to conduct any further interviews. This decision relied on my judgement, and different researchers may have determined data saturation sooner, or later. I believe that extending data collection would have allowed me to achieve a more comprehensive representation of participants, particularly in terms of racial diversity and intersecting identities.

Online Recruitment and Data Collection. The use of online recruitment and data collection was chosen as it has proven to be successful in a variety of research areas that target adults, including substance use (Cunningham et al., 2015; Bonar et al., 2020), smoking cessation (Naslund et al., 2017), HIV (Cornelius et al., 2019; Iribarren et al., 2018), and nutrition (Hsu et al., 2018). Online recruitment and data collection have been found to make it easier to access hard to reach groups (Guillory et al., 2018; Kayrouz et al., 2016; Ramo et al., 2014), reduce barriers to participation (e.g., transportation, location, stigma) (Ramo et al., 2014), and provide an opportunity for greater honesty and increased comfort of participants (Jacobs et al., 2014). I have used online recruitment and data collection methods several times in other research studies

and have always found it to be a successful and resource efficient approach. For this research, the use of Instagram to recruit women who had experienced dating app-facilitated sexualized violence proved to be a successful, rapid, and cost-effective recruitment strategy. Given the pandemic, online recruitment and data collection also allowed for adherence to physical distancing regulations related to COVID-19.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in designing research are a fundamental element of feminist methodologies (Dragiewicz et al., 2023), with researchers studying sexualized violence against women having been at the forefront of prioritizing the well-being of their participants; integrating ethics with the quality of generated insights and knowledge (Reinharz, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1993). Although sexualized violence can be a sensitive area of research, the assumption that it is harmful for survivors to participate in such research has been challenged (Dragiewicz et al., 2023). Dragiewicz et al. (2023) highlights a large body of recent literature that has found few participants indicate experiencing distress from participating in trauma-related research, with most research participants experiencing less stress than everyday events and viewing their participation as a positive and beneficial experience.

Nonetheless, it remains critical to thoughtfully consider the ethical implications of conducting research with women who have experienced sexualized violence. The informed consent process, privacy and confidentiality concerns, risk and benefits analysis, and the dissemination plan for the current research are detailed below. These ethical considerations were implemented to uphold responsible research practices, with a primary focus on prioritizing participant well-being. Ethical approval was obtained from the Dalhousie Health Sciences

Research Ethics Board prior to undertaking this research project: REB#: 2022-5987 (Appendix H).

Informed Consent. Eligible participants were emailed an informed consent form, which explained the research aims, outlined the research process/procedures, and identified potential risks and discomforts (Appendix F). At this time, the participants had the opportunity to email any questions or concerns they had about the research and/or consent form before scheduling an interview. None of the participants had any questions or concerns except for compensation (discussed above), which resulted in nine women not signing and returning the consent form. Consent was obtained by electronic or written signature and emailed back to me prior to the interview. None of the participants had any questions or concerns about the consent form or process and all returned a signed consent form prior to the interview.

Participants were also given the opportunity to ask any questions/express concerns immediately before the interview began; no one presented questions or concerns and were comfortable with starting the interview. Participants were reminded at this time that they were free to skip any questions that made them uncomfortable, as well as end the interview at any time; none of the participants skipped any questions or withdrew from the interview. Participants were also asked to provide verbal consent for the interview to be recorded as recording the interview was a requirement to participate in this research study, which was communicated to the participants via the informed consent form. Participants were given up to two weeks after their interview date to decide if they would like to remove their interview data as after two weeks the data was transcribed and de-identified; none of the participants requested to have their data removed. Overall, there were no concerns or issues with the informed consent process.

Privacy and Confidentiality. Several measures were taken to ensure participant data was kept private and confidential. Only I, the primary investigator (ND), had knowledge of the participants' identities as I alone completed the screening eligibility, interviews, transcribing, and de-identifying of raw interview data. Individual study participants are not identified in any way in this dissertation and will not be identified in any reports, publications, or presentations. Instead of participants real name, participants are identified by a participant number (e.g., P1). Unattributed direct quotes are used in this dissertation, which participants consented to via the informed consent form. Participants are not identified in any direct quotes and all identifiable information was removed.

After the interview was completed, the recording was immediately transferred to OneDrive and deleted from my personal device. I then transcribed and de-identified the interviews, removing any identifying information that could directly or indirectly identify an individual such as names, locations, place of work, addresses, and usernames. To de-identify the transcripts and protect participants privacy, I replaced identifying details with generic terms or descriptions (e.g., Toronto to large urban city). I was solely responsible for de-identifying the data, which ensured consistency with the de-identification process across transcripts. Further, the identifying information remained consistent throughout the dataset, making it straightforward to become acquainted with replacement terms and apply them easily. Since I also conducted all the interviews and transcribed the data myself, I was very familiar with the data and the loss of detail by removing or altering the identifying information did not impact data analysis. Overall, there were no difficulties with the de-identification process or being able to analyze the de-identified data.

Once the audio recordings were transcribed and checked for accuracy, the audio recordings were deleted from OneDrive. All identifying information (such as name, contact information, and consent form) were securely stored separately from transcripts on OneDrive. After the two-week period of data removal, only deidentified records were kept; a participant number was used for written and computer records. The transcribed and de-identified data will be stored on OneDrive for three years after the dissertation is accepted, and then will be deleted.

The participants for this research project did not include minors as all participants were 18 years of age or older. As a result, it was outlined in the consent form that any reports of sexual violence experienced or perpetrated by a participant on a dating app would be kept confidential and not be reported to authorities. The verbiage in the consent form stated: "You will be asked questions that may lead you to share information about experiences of sexualized violence on dating apps. All the information you provide will be held in strict confidence. The research team will not report to law enforcement authorities any information about your experiences of sexualized violence on dating apps unless required by law to reveal it". This was important in ensuring that participants felt comfortable and secure in sharing their experiences. By explicitly assuring confidentiality and non-disclosure to law enforcement, the consent form aimed to create a safe environment for participants to discuss sensitive topics and encourage open and honest responses.

Risks and Benefits. Participants discussed their firsthand experiences of dating app facilitated sexualized violence, which can be a sensitive and challenging issue to discuss. The possibility of negative distress was discussed prior to the interview and participants were informed that they could skip any questions during the interview, as well as stop the interview at any time. Contact information for local sexual assault centers were also emailed to every

participant prior to the interview via a resource link which comprised sexual assault centres, crisis lines, and support services in Canada.

Although dating app facilitated sexualized violence can be a difficult subject to discuss, I believe it is important to give a voice to women who have experienced dating app facilitated sexualized violence, as well as expose the realities of this issue for women. Though there were no direct benefits provided to participants (incentive/compensation were not provided), participating in this study allowed participants to engage in reflective conversation about their own experiences, which many participants expressed they found to be beneficial and enjoyable. This supports previous research findings where survivors of sexualized violence reported the value of open and supportive conversations, empathetic listeners that normalize their experiences, control over the information shared, increased understanding that they are not alone, and additional connections to support services (Campbell et al., 2010; Hamberger et al., 2020).

Dissemination Plan. The research findings will be disseminated through publications, presentations, and knowledge mobilization strategies. I am committed to sharing my findings at both local and international conferences, as well as with community groups and organizations that work to combat sexualized violence against women in Canada and beyond. A copy of the approved dissertation and any dissemination/knowledge translation materials will also be provided to all consenting participants, which many participants expressed their eagerness to review and share.

Analysis and Findings

Thematic analysis was applied to extract the participants' experiences, perspectives, behaviour, and practices in relation to dating app facilitated sexualized violence (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method for "identifying, analyzing, and interpreting

patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data" (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 297) and is compatible with a range of theoretical frameworks and research paradigms (Braun & Clarke 2006). It is congruent with the use of semi structured interviews for data collection, as this data collection method produces quality interview data that is rich, meaningful, and comprehensive for analysis (Berg, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2013). Thematic analysis also perceives researcher subjectivity as an asset, rather than a threat to the generation of knowledge (Gough & Madill, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2019). For these reasons, thematic analysis aligned with the foundations of my research and proved to be a beneficial approach for analyzing the research data.

A combined technique of deductive (theory driven) and inductive (data-driven) thematic analysis was used (Braun & Clarke 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Being a theoretically flexible approach, thematic analysis allowed for the tenets of radical feminism and technofeminism (e.g., gender, technology, power, and patriarchy) to be integral to the data analysis and interpretation, while also allowing the identification of novel themes to be generated from the data (Braun & Clarke 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013; Patton, 1990). The degree of flexibility was well-matched to my research question and theoretical and conceptual study design, allowing me to adapt codes and potential themes as I immersed myself in the data. It also facilitated my ability to engage in constant reflection, self-awareness, and interpretation of the data's codes and themes as they evolved, enabling a more reflexive approach.

Although the flexibility of thematic analysis is one of its key advantages (Braun & Clarke, 2006), this level of flexibility also posed challenges in deciding which aspects of the data to prioritize, leading to substantial analytical efforts and a time-consuming approach to the analysis process. This is one critique of thematic analysis, where condensing and simplifying

complex data into themes can become paralysing for the researcher when deciding what aspects of data to focus on (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and result in a loss of depth that is present in the raw data set: “The challenge to the qualitative researcher is to use thematic analysis to draw the richness of the themes from the raw information without reducing the insights to a trivial level for the sake of consistency of judgement” (Boyatzis, 1998, p.14). To address this issue, I implemented proven strategies and techniques such as using NVIVO software to help organize a large qualitative data set (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017) and integrating deductive and inductive coding, which incorporates a theoretical framework to help extend analysis beyond mere description (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

I specifically used Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six steps to thematic analysis to analyse the data. Adhering to the six steps within the framework, which include inherent safeguards, provided advantages in terms of checking my work for internal consistency and completeness (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). First, I familiarized myself with the data by transcribing the interviews, reading and re-reading the transcripts, and noting down initial ideas, impressions, powerful quotes, and recurring patterns. I discussed my initial thoughts on the data with my supervisor (AA) and colleagues. I then generated initial codes, line by line, both maintaining a flexible iterative approach that allowed for new codes to be generated, and a deductive approach by actively searching for instances that related to gender and technology. The entire data set was coded and collated with the use of reflexive note taking where I would write short memos regarding reasoning for my decisions. Codes were grouped together into potential themes to generate a thematic map of the analysis, which was checked against the coding framework and reviewed with my supervisor. I identified themes at a latent or interpretative level, which goes beyond the meaning expressed by the participants/surface meanings of the

data and draws upon my interpretation and insight to determine the underlying patterns, stories, and assumptions. As mentioned previously, NVivo software was used to organize the research data and prepare it for analysis, which was helpful given the large amount of data.

The analysis process was complex and time-consuming, requiring the coding framework to be adapted and modified often as deductive and inductive codes attempted to be reconciled and conceptualized into themes. The process of reconciling inductive codes (e.g., hook-up culture) with deductive codes (e.g., gendered power dynamics) had the overarching goal of capturing themes that emerged from participants' experiences, while also aligning with the theoretical frameworks of radical and technofeminism. For instance, the theme of dating app culture explores how online hookups perpetuate gendered power dynamics and patriarchal norms. Another criticism of thematic analysis is that during the coding process, context can become lost (Bryman, 2001). To mitigate this concern, I coded excerpts of data under multiple relevant themes and subthemes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was completed with the use of hierarchical codes and the node function within NVIVO (King, 2004). I was also sure to code tensions and inconsistences within and across the data, which researchers employing thematic analysis are often critiqued for ignoring in thematic mapping (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell, 2017).

After coding was complete, themes were refined, defined, and named based on further analysis of the overall story for each theme and the entirety of the data set. The ways in which each theme intersected with gender and technology was also considered and adjusted several times to meaningfully represent the data and incorporate the desired feminist lenses; ensuring to appropriately reflect the intersection of my data, analytic process, theoretical underpinning, and subjectivity (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 594). Although member checking comes with its

limitations and was purposefully not used in this study because of resource and time constraints, I would have liked to share my findings with participants for their input and perspectives to further validate my findings and interpretations. Final themes, however, were exemplified using direct quotations from the research participants to center the voice of participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

Considering both the strengths and limitations of thematic analysis, I arrived at the determination that it represented the most suitable approach for analysing my data. Despite the few challenges mentioned above, this approach generated rich and novel insights that contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. I am proud of the meaningful findings that ensued, which are shared in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS & INTERPRETATION

This chapter portrays how both gender and technology shape women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. Dating app use encompasses factors beyond individual users or the inherent features and affordances of dating apps; it also embodies the broader cultural conventions and interpretations that surround them (Hjarvard, 2013). In other words, people both shape and are shaped by larger structures of power and oppression in society and dating apps are designed and utilized in ways that are influenced by these structures. This research study identifies three themes to enhance understanding of how women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence are shaped by gender and technology. The first theme, "Dating App Culture", emphasizes the role of hook-up norms, men's assumptions and presumptions about women, and heteronormativity. The second theme, "Dating Apps as Violent Tools" highlights distinct design attributes, features, and affordances. Notably, women also exhibit "Resistance to Dating App-Facilitated Sexualized Violence", which is captured in the third theme. This chapter concludes by exploring the impact of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence on women's health and their journey to healing.

For this study, 19 women who self-identified as having experienced dating app-facilitated sexualized violence were interviewed. The interview data displayed remarkable consistency, and the women's experiences were largely similar. Given the consistency of the data, the findings below often refer to the participants of this study in the collective voice. To capture their shared lived experience and enhance the empowerment of research participants, their spoken words are woven through the findings. Additionally, direct quotations that align with my analysis are used to represent my narrative (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006). Displaying the data in this manner is meant to be illustrative, assist the reader in more closely experiencing the dataset from which the findings were generated (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006), and remain aligned with the essence of

radical feminism to be woman-centred: centering participants voices and experiences at the centre of the research (Rowland & Klein, 1996).

I would also like to begin this chapter by acknowledging that not all men who use dating app platforms are violent predators, and not all women who use dating apps can be uniformly characterized as virtuous. While these findings highlight instances of abuse, harassment, and violence against women by men on dating apps, it is essential to recognize that such behaviors do not represent the entire population of men and women who use dating apps.

Dating App Culture

This theme includes the subthemes: "Casual Chemistry: Dating Apps and Hookups", "Men's Perceptions & Presumptions of Women on Dating Apps", and "Doing Gender on Dating Apps".

Every woman in this study spoke to their overwhelming negative experiences on dating apps, describing the dating app culture as "discouraging" (P5), "disappointing" (P6), "rife with disrespect and sexism" (P2), and resulting in "some of the worst experiences" (P4) of their lives. When asked about the forms of sexualized violence they had experienced on dating apps such as gender and sexuality-based harassment, cyberstalking, receiving unsolicited 'dick pics', coercion into unwanted sexual acts, and violence that materialized offline, the answer was "yes, to pretty much all of them" (P3) and "I think most women on dating apps have experienced all of those things" (P6). The women interviewed for this study, however, had been on and off various dating apps for years –having "tried them all" (P1). They believed they had "no choice but to continue looking and hoping that maybe a decent person is out there on the apps" (P6). Given that "gone are the days of people meeting at bars" (P5), "if somebody's single, they're on a dating app and that's just how you meet people now"; dating apps are the "modern day dating venue" (P3) and predominantly symbolize modern day dating culture.

Casual Chemistry: Dating Apps and Hookups

Dating apps, often referred to as "hookup apps," have made hookup culture more accessible by bringing it online and making it more readily and widely available (David & Cambre, 2016; Mason, 2016; Helm, 2019). Dating apps were often described by the women in this study as being synonymous with hook up apps, with casual encounters being "so prevalent on dating apps that it's become colloquial that you associate dating apps with finding someone to hook up with" (P10). Women discussed how online hookups have "been accepted by society as something that's normal…at least by the younger generations" (P8). One woman explained:

> My parents…they wouldn't ever consider meeting someone online because that was their generation, and you couldn't do that. But now it would be weird to go up to someone at a bar…so it's more socially acceptable to meet people online than it was before. Which also means that it's more socially acceptable to meet people for sex online than it was before. (P8)

It is important to note that although online hookups are generally accepted amongst young people (Bogle, 2007), there are many women who do not feel comfortable with its normalization (Maida, 2018). Most women in this study held the belief that hookup culture embedded within dating apps produced more harm than benefit, creating "a very misogynistic environment" (P14) where "men can really get away with a lot of things" (P16). One woman, however, suggested that online hookups are "not necessarily all bad" (P2):

> Young people and what they want has changed. When you're young, you're no longer looking for a life partner. When you're at college, you're looking to party it up. There's been a shift and it's going to be reflected in how we choose to communicate. People don't want to have babies this early anymore. Women can have jobs…so many things play into online hookup culture, and so many of these things I agree with. (P2)

Women discussed how the normalization of dating app hookups was likely a result of a "sexualized culture in general" (P18) being reflected online; "rooted in inherent sexism where culturally there is a big lack of respect for women still" (P15) – "where there is no such thing as

dating...there's only just sex" (P12). Recent literature substantiates this notion that in the context of dating apps, user interaction primarily revolves around matters of sex and operates on stereotypical assumptions about gender, sex, and sexuality (Bivens & Hoque, 2018; Parry, 2023). Current literature also supports that the dating landscape has undergone a dramatic transformation in recent decades; suggesting this is largely a result of the widespread adoption of digital technologies coinciding with the rise of hookup culture (Hobbs et al., 2017; Sales, 2015). Many young adults desire various romantic experiences to explore their sexuality and desires and opt for casual relationships like hookups, friends with benefits, and non-committal dating instead of pursuing longer, more serious relationships (Brimeyer & Smith, 2012; Hall et al., 2014; Rappleyea et al., 2014). This choice is often influenced by their lack of readiness for commitment and prioritization of professional and financial pursuits (Shulman & Connolly, 2013). In the past, hookup culture has been predominantly associated with college campuses, where young adults frequently participate in casual sexual encounters and relationships. The introduction and extensive use of dating apps for sexual purposes, however, has expanded the reach of hookup culture beyond the college campus (Blackwell et al., 2015).

While engaging in hookups is not inherently problematic for women, hookup culture is (Wade, 2017). Wade declares that hookup culture is "designed to facilitate men's sexual access to women" (Wade, 2017, p. 218) and structured in a predator/prey format (Heldman & Wade, 2010). It is rooted in an expression of patriarchal system that privileges male pleasure (England et al., 2008; Kimmel, 2008) and where sexual aggression is often present (Freitas, 2013). This culture gives rise to a double standard that disproportionately subjects women to sexual objectification, harassment, coercion and manipulation, victim blaming, revenge porn, and non-consensual sexual activity (Armstrong et al., 2006; Armstrong et al., 2014; Hanson, 2022). While

dating apps themselves haven't originated a novel hookup culture, they have provided a convenient and easily accessible platform for its growth. This factor was emphasized by the women in this study as a significant contributor to their experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence.

The prevalence of hookup culture on dating apps also created tensions for most of the women in this study because they were not using dating apps to hookup, but instead were "lonely and looking for intimacy and meaningful connection" (P6); "more concerned with the emotional connection" (P5) and "the getting to know someone" (P13) "than with looking for physical intimacy" (P5). Men, however, were perceived as not being interested in utilizing dating apps to garner meaningful connections, evidenced by bios that said, "I'm just here to fuck women" (P11). Women in this study echoed the sentiment that "men on dating apps are just looking for a body" (P14) – "they're going on the apps with the intent of finding someone easy to hook up with, to have sex with" (P19), and "they're just thinking about what they want out of the interaction" (P12).

The perspective that there are distinct intentions and usage patterns between men and women regarding dating apps is heavily supported within the literature. Researchers consistently find that gender influences the intentions of online dating app users, with men typically seeking casual, sexual relationships and women seeking socialization, friendship, self-validation, and serious relationships (Albury et al. 2019; Ciocca et al., 2020; Newett et al., 2018; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017a). Additionally, men tend to engage in behaviors that align with stereotypically masculine traits such as emotional detachment and sexual objectification while women prioritize creating appealing profiles and taking measures to protect themselves from potential dating violence (Hanson, 2022). Although there have been findings to suggest that men

may also use dating apps to pursue meaningful relationships (Hobbs et al., 2017; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017b), this was not the experience of women in this study. Overall, the literature finds that when people use dating apps for sex-seeking, their attitude and assertiveness is predictive of such intent. This finding helps explain why the women in this study who have experienced dating app-facilitated sexualized violence often identified men seeking casual sex as the most common perpetrator.

Women in this study discussed how men perpetrating dating app-facilitated sexualized violence "comes down to the values, attitudes and actions of men on dating apps" (P10). Further expressing that it is their current attitude, behaviours, and privileges being reinscribed online that is the problem: "The guys that are going on dating apps and acting violent, they were already like that…it's not like they get on to this app and suddenly are like "now I'm a piece of shit" (P14). An ethnographic study on women's interpretations of negative responses from men on dating apps similarly found that dating apps are just a space where such men "simply feel more comfortable with making women less comfortable" (Franco, 2019, p. 91). This finding also aligns with the technofeminist position that technology is not neutral but reflects existing dynamics, norms, and behaviours that exist in broader society (Wajcman, 2004). Likewise, another woman commented:

> I don't think that someone who says something totally uncalled for on a dating app wouldn't ever say those things in person, or think them…at the very least, they're thinking them. Because I don't think that someone who in person is this totally respectful and inclusive man is going to say *I want to choke you out* as an opener on a dating app. (P15)

The participants frequently raised concerns about the recurring presence of male entitlement, which they observed being normalized on dating apps, for example "how normalized it is for men to be entitled to women's bodies and women's time" (P19), and how men are "entitled to act a certain way, entitled to talk to women a certain way, and entitled to their attention" (P10).

This finding also emerged in Kimmel's 2008 study, where "guys believe that they are entitled to women's bodies, entitled to sex" (Kimmel, 2008, p. 227). This further supports the radical feminist perspective that "the compulsory nature of heterosexuality defines men's access to women as natural and their right" (Rowland & Klein, 1996, p. 278). The women in this study further claimed that "when they [men] don't get what they want, they take measures to make sure they do get what they want" (P3). This behaviour is also known as sexual entitlement, which is a heterosexist male norm where men are expected to be in control and get what they want, and women are expected to be submissive and passive (Christensen, 2021; Shaw, 2016). Participants expressed that men's sexual entitlement on dating apps contributed to a dating app culture that "further normalizes really crappy ways to treat women" (P6) and led to women internalizing and accepting such behavior as the norm as well:

> I feel like I'm not as shocked as I should be because it has happened so often…. it becomes something that's so routine…these acts of violence on dating apps have become so routine and so normal that it's just something we fully expect is going to happen and we kind of prepare for the worst. And in turn it gets worse. (P10)

It is not uncommon for women to frame sexualized violence as "normal" (Edwards et al., 2014; Hlavka, 2014) and to internalize it as such (Lundgren et al., 2001; Pornari et al., 2013). This phenomenon has predominately been studied in college settings because of the prominence of hookup and rape culture, where instances of sexualized violence against women are accepted or disregarded as common occurrences on campus and, therefore, normalized within the social context (Burnett et al., 2009; Sinko et al., 2021). Similarly, it has been argued that sexualized violence that occurs in other hypersexualized contexts, such as nightlife, is also normalized (Kavanaugh, 2013, p. 21). It is therefore understandable that dating apps, characterized by prevalent hookup culture and hypersexualization, create a social environment where women perceive their experiences of sexualized violence to be a normal part of their dating app

experience (Hlvaka, 2014; Hollander, 2001). Since most instances of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence do not escalate to physical violence, which is often regarded in the feminist literature as being perceived by society as more severe (Kelly, 1988; Stanko, 1985), there is an increased likelihood for dating app-facilitated sexualized violence to mistakenly be associated with typical male behavior that is normalized and expected by women on dating apps. Other studies have likewise demonstrated that women expect to encounter experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence because of the inherently sexualized nature of these platforms, which they believe are intrinsically linked to such experiences (Duguay et al., 2020; Gillett, 2019).

Participants in this study agreed that dating app-facilitated sexualized violence "is a societal thing. It's so much deeper than just dating apps. The reason men are the way they are on dating apps is because that is the way they are" (P17); "men have always thought this way about women…the dating app issue just exists so far outside of the dating app" (P10). They also expressed the connection between app-facilitated sexualized violence and the societal upbringings of men: "A lot of men have been raised to be dominant, to demonstrate how strong they are" (P18), that "men don't cry" (P12), that they need "to be more sexual and take on this man whore mentality" (P5) and make sure they are "taking control and running the script" (P9). Women discussed the belief held by men that "this is how a guy is supposed to act…and if you're acting sensitive or vulnerable, you're seen as weak, and nobody wants that" (P5). Women held the belief that these philosophies of how men should behave were influenced by the media, a perspective that feminist scholars have long criticized for depicting women as powerless and subordinate to men (Mardorossian, 2002). As one participant elaborated:

> The media that men are constantly consuming, whether they're conscious of it or not, they're absorbing these values and applying them to everyday life. They're listening to

> influencers go on and on about how women are your property, women are to be used, women are only good for sex (P10).

Other participants agreed that "men accept the medias narrative as normal and put that into practice in their personal life" (P8). Given that dating apps have been described as "firmly rooted in popular culture" (Pond & Farvid, 2017, p. 6), and it is well known that sexual media exposure has a significant association with sexually violent attitudes and behaviours (Rodenhizer & Edwards, 2019), women acknowledging the role of media in men's perpetration of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence is supported by other research findings. Similarly, women drew associations between dating app exposure and men's violent behaviour, suggesting that frequent use of dating apps can desensitize men and normalize inappropriate or violent conduct:

> I know right off the bat that somebody is divorced…they act a very different way. You can tell that they're sort of new to the platform and haven't really been in this environment of poor behavior. (P13)

Radical feminists have long debated the role of pornography in the oppression of women and the sexualized violence they experience. With the surge of pornography in the media and access to pornography via the internet, this debate remains relevant today (Rosewarne, 2020). Many "radical feminists see porn as a major producer of sexist ideologies that normalise, condone, legitimise and glorify women's subordinate status" (Smith & Dines, 2012, p. 18–19). Women's bodies are often similarly objectified in media and pornography in ways that can validate and normalize the sexual exploitation and objectification of women's bodies for men's sexual pleasure and consumption (Jensen, 2021; Rowland & Klein, 1996). A few participants specifically mentioned pornography as a form of media the influences how men treat women, both online and offline. Although participants did not go as far as some radical feminists to say that "pornography predisposes some men to want to rape women" (Russell, 1997, p. 158), their perspectives aligned with the radical feminist belief that pornography teaches men about sex:

"pornography is ideas; ideas matter. Whatever goes on in the mind of pornography's consumer matters tremendously" (MacKinnon, 1987, p. 22). In relation to sexualized violence, this becomes problematic when these ideas center on abuse and subordination of women (Russell, 1997; MacKinnon, 1987). Dworkin & MacKinnon (1988) further argue that men are unable to see the harms of pornography because they are enjoying it sexually. This idea seems to translate on dating apps where men are more concerned about their enjoyment than the harm they may be causing to women.

Men's Perceptions & Presumptions of Women on Dating Apps

Women in this study discussed how men perceived their presence on dating apps as a signal that they were sexually available. As one woman in this study stated:

> On dating apps there's already that romantic and more sexual connotation present…. men are coming in with some sort of expectation for a romantic or sexual connection…. there is that connotation that you are looking to date, which then generally includes having sex. (P7)

Bandinelli and Gandini (2022) also found this type of signalling to be true on dating apps, "whereby users navigate their way using signals to communicate without communication" (Bandinelli & Gandini, 2022, p. 436). Since women felt that men were "already going in with the idea that it's all bound to lead to sex they act out of pocket" (P19), which refers to men behaving in an inappropriate or unexpected manner that generally is not socially acceptable and, therefore, leads to a negative reaction. This woman went on to say that men "view women in a different way when they've met on a dating app…they already have this preconceived notion about them…that they're available and definitely want to hook up" (P19). This finding supports radical feminist, Janice Raymond's (1986) position that "the single woman is defined as 'loose' in the promiscuous sense. So, the state of being free and unattached with respect to men is translated into the negative state of being available to any man" (Rowland & Klein, 1996, p. 278). This

presumption led participants to receive "countless crude comments" (P16), including: "you look like you'd do a really good job if you got down on your knees" (P1), "you have nice lips, I want them to see them around my dick" (P15), "are you in to casual sex or should I wear a tie" (P8), and "instead of Netflix and chill how about fentanyl and anal?" (P14). For decades, instances of sexual harassment, including verbal abuse and sexual comments, have been prevalent occurrences in public spaces (Pain, 1991, p. 421). These instances of harassment are no longer confined to public spaces but have also expanded to encompass virtual spaces, where they are arguably more explicit and offensive. The participants were all easily able to give examples of crude comments, repeating them verbatim without hesitation. This implies that the comments they received left a lasting impression and, therefore, also possess the capacity to result in enduring adverse effects. Technofeminism is helpful in the interpretation of these findings, revealing that "despite the enormous potential of the net to be a network – to promote egalitarian, cooperative communication exchanges – the virtual reality is one where aggression, intimidation and plain macho-mode prevail" (Spender, 1996, p. 198).

Women in this study mentioned that after men made these types of crude remarks "they would see how you act towards it and if you're not receptive they will sometimes say *oh, I was just joking, calm down*…and try to play it off as a joke" (P1). The participants reported that men often employ a strategy of framing their sexually explicit messages and behaviours over social media as jokes, presenting them as harmless. This framing enables men to uphold a self-image that distinguishes them from other men whom they portray as harmful and dangerous (Pascoe & Hollander, 2016) and allows them to ignore the dangerous normalization of sexualized violence on dating apps that they themselves are perpetuating. Women agreed, commenting that they didn't think men meant it as a joke, "it doesn't come off as a joke…they aren't funny" (P15) and

“it wouldn’t have been a joke if I went along with it” (P14). Instead, women thought men used this tactic to push boundaries and see what they could get women to agree to:

> Men are always trying to push our boundaries and they'll try this weird manipulation thing where they'll say something super extreme and when you say no, then they'll try something that's less extreme. (P1)

Another participant agreed:

> I think they're trying to see what they can get away with because if the girl brushes it off like it’s a joke, they're like, cool, I can push a little bit harder. If the girl says absolutely not, then they they’ll try and see what else they can get away with. (P14)

Women in this study specifically spoke to how men “push women to send explicit pics” (P1) on dating apps. One woman explained:

> We were talking about nudes and originally, I was like…I don't really…I was not really asking for this. And he was like, *oh, I thought that you wanted it*. And we go back and forth, back and forth, and then he sends unsolicited pictures, and then I convince myself that it's something that I wanted. So, I sent pictures back. And then immediately after he goes to bed, I get this sense of, like, regret and anxiety washing over me. And I just feel awful. And then I realized that it wasn't something that I had wanted to do. And I'm now left with this feeling where I felt disgusting at the time because I didn't realize that I was being taken advantage of. (P19)

Participants felt it was “a common thread that men just think they can convince women to do anything” (P10). One of the ways men went about this on dating apps was guilting women. The women in this study described that men would say things to them like “you're just a stick in the mud if you don't want to do X, Y, Z sexual kinds of things” (P1), “you’re immature…or too much of a pussy?” (P12), and “why not? Don't you want to have fun? Why are you talking to me then? If you can message me then you can just come over” (P7).

This idea that women’s presence on dating apps declared them wanting a sexual exchange also led to increased objectification of women. Women discussed how men viewed their dating app profile pictures “through a lens of objectification” (P19); “seeing women as

objects, which is not how we desire to be seen" (P6). Men often hypersexualized women's profile pictures, as one participant explained:

> I've had a guy start talking about how my boobs looked in one picture. But I was literally just wearing a tank top and shorts, and I was posing with my dog. He was really fixating on my boobs because I was wearing a bathing suit top under the shirt. So, he kept going on and on about it and it made me feel really weird. (P16)

Another participant echoed, "God forbid I wear something to go into the water or for hot weather in one of my profile photos…even if I'm just wearing shorts, a sexual comment is always coming" (P10). Women highlighted examples of posting profile photos in casual attire, emphasizing that their intention was not to convey a sexual image. Nevertheless, they made it evident that regardless of a woman's clothing in a profile photo, she should be approached and treated with respect: "I could put photos in my dating profile from a boudoir photo shoot if I ever did one. No one should be talking to me that way" (P10).

For feminists, the body is the currency of patriarchy from which oppression emerges (Halbert, 2004; Rowland & Klein, 1996); on dating apps this concept remains pertinent. Radical feminism has shown that the "violence to women's bodies and women's selves has been so intrinsic to patriarchal culture as to appear 'normal' and therefore justifiable" (Rowland & Klein, 1996, p. 287). The theorizing of the body has shifted alongside advancements in technology (Halbert, 2004), and these findings display how dating apps are an extension of the patriarchal norms that objectify women's bodies and that the normalization of violence against women's bodies within patriarchal culture is (re)produced on dating apps.

Further, men engaging in the act of viewing and objectifying women's profile photos on dating apps can be understood as a digital manifestation of 'girl watching', which Quinn (2002) argued is something men do in everyday settings to sexually evaluate women. The practice involves, amongst others, sexually explicit comments about the woman's body and imagined

sexual acts (Quinn, 2002). 'Girl watching' is seen as a tactic of power that reinforces a masculinity characterized by dominance, strength, and uncontrollable sexuality. However, it is also trivialized as play, fun, and normalized as natural and commonplace; a "game played by men for men" (Quinn, 2002, p. 392). Dating apps provide the ultimate everyday setting for 'girl watching'. Men engage in 'girl watching' behaviours when they evaluate women's profile photos and make explicit or sexual comments. Such behaviour depicts women as passive recipients of men's sexual desires, thereby sustaining power imbalances and strengthening patriarchal structures that contribute to instances of sexual harassment within the context of dating apps (Walby, 1989; Radford & Stanko, 1996). 'Girl watching' on dating apps is also exacerbated by the abundance of profiles and anonymous viewing of them, which is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Moreover, the hypersexualization of women's profile photos by men also reinforces the "unsafety of femininity" (Vera-Gray, 2018) where for radical feminists' womanhood is a site of unsafety (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020) and "women's bodies [are] something acted on rather than acted through" (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020, p. 228). On dating apps, women's bodies are often seen as objects to be acted upon or used for the pleasure and/or desires of men, rather than being recognized as a means through which women express themselves and their personal experiences. This underscores the importance of recognizing women as complete individuals and not just objects to be consumed or controlled by men. Further, concerns have arisen about the possibility of heightened self-objectification as a result (Koval et al., 2019), which has implications for increasing depression, eating disorders, and issues with sexual intimacy amongst women (Tiggeman, 2011). Research indicates that social media platforms can recreate patriarchal objectification of the female body, as women engage in self-objectification through presenting an

online self that caters to the male gaze (de Vries & Peter, 2013). Although dating apps also require women to look at men's profile photos, and in turn provide opportunity to disrupt the traditional unidirectional gaze of men at women (Chan, 2023), the women in this study did not speak of men's profiles in an objectifying way. Women prioritized screening men's profiles for characteristics, interests, and political views that they believed made them safer to message and/or meet in person. The women in this study were also more interested in meaningful dating relationships and, therefore, likely to be less interested in men who presented in an objectified manner (Daniels, 2020).

Participants emphasized that their presence on dating apps seemed to similarly signal implied consent for sexual harassment, unsolicited lewd photos, and engaging in sexual activity when transitioning from the app to in-person interactions. One woman stated that "men sort of take your presence on the app as your consent" (P15) and "men often take being online and being in these spaces as implied consent" (P16). Another woman elaborated:

> It's just implied that if you're on the app you're bound to just either hook up or have sex eventually. So, for them, they don't even see it as a thing that they need to ask if you're interested in, because they're under the assumption and basis that you are completely down for it. (P19)

The participants believed that by being on dating apps, "men make more assumptions about what you are consenting to than if you had met in person" (P15) and that when you meet online "no doesn't mean no because it's not in person" (P3). At times, the women in this study believed this too:

> Because I was online it was a situation where I was like, I can't have my consent violated, like this is online, it's not in person, it's not physical. And I tried to downplay it so much to convince myself that I had consented, even though I knew my body was telling me that I didn't, and my mind was telling me that I didn't. (P19)

Participants more commonly, however, recognized that this was not how consent worked, and that "consent is consent…it isn't modality dependent" (P3). Another woman agreed:

> Even in the messages they send. I'm not consenting to those messages. I'm not consenting to your dick pic just because I'm on an app…where did I sign the dotted line? My presence here doesn't automatically mean that I want this. (P15)

Considering that the absence of consent is a central characteristic of sexualized violence (Basile et al., 2016), it is unsurprising that the same was found to be true on dating apps.

The participants belief that their dating app presence implied consent to men also extended to situations when they transitioned from the dating app to in person settings. One woman said:

> One time I met someone [off a dating app] and they insisted on walking me home and they tried to come up and they were like, *well, we met on a dating app…what else do you want from this? What did you expect was going to happen?* And thankfully, I live in a secure building. They couldn't come up and they didn't know what unit I was in, so nothing came of it. But he tried very hard to convince me I had consented to more than a date. (P15)

Other participants agreed, stating "if you do end up meeting in person, they almost think they automatically have consent from what you have said online instead of having a new conversation about it" (P5) and "when you meet in person you feel like you can't back out of anything you said online…it's like you made a decision and it's set in stone" (P10). This finding supports other evidence indicating that different expectations linked to in-person meetings can potentially increase the likelihood of engaging in offensive behavior, even in the absence of premeditation (Pooley & Boxall, 2020).

Other research finds that women's presence on dating apps is perceived as an indication of their active desire to seek a romantic or sexual partner (McWilliams & Barrett, 2014). This is very different than most offline spaces, or other online spaces, where inferring a woman's relationship interests or reasons for being present cannot be assumed. When two users' express

interest in each other on a dating app there is a 'match', and users can start messaging each other. The participants reported that for men, this seemed to infer consent of women's sexual interest and reinforced the notion that they could bypass consent altogether or that obtaining consent was less relevant – assuming that the dating app facilitated the exchange of consent for them. This has also been supported by the literature (Zytko et al., 2021). Further, research in the field of human-computer interaction demonstrates that signals can often be misinterpreted and unreliable (Donath, 2007; Zytko et al., 2021). Likewise, the findings of the present study demonstrate that men's perception of women's presence on dating apps, combined with mutual matches and subsequent interactions as indicators of sexual interest and consent, proved to be unreliable and resulted in women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. The behaviors associated with presuming consent constitute actions that have long been recognized as contributing to a culture of sexualized violence (Dietzel, 2021; Hollway, 1984; Henry & Powell, 2014; Buchwald et al., 1993), which also aligned with the findings of this study where presuming consent contributed to dating app-facilitated sexualized violence.

Literature has also examined the potential uses and benefits of dating apps to facilitate discussions about boundaries and consent in a more comfortable and reduced-risk setting (Lundquist & Curington, 2019; Zytko et al., 2021). Contrarily to the findings of the present research, there have been findings that dating apps gave women greater control over the consent process both while on the app and before an in-person meeting (Lundquist & Curington, 2019; Zytko et al., 2021). Lundquist and Curington (2019) found that dating app use allowed for discussion about sexual boundaries prior to engaging in sexual interactions, which is generally lacking within offline hookup culture. Zytko et al. (2021) found that dating apps provided an opportunity for women to better navigate the gender-specific risks associated with meeting new

dating partners. Women in the present study did not have these experience but instead spoke to how any sexual communication on the app was weaponized against them off the app in ways that manipulated or exploited them to serve the best interest of the men they were meeting. Once off the app, participants found that men assumed consent was already established and it was difficult for women to obtain or renegotiate consent in person. Several women in the present study encountered instances of in-person sexual assault and rape after meeting someone from a dating app, and they identified the assumption of consent because of online conversations to be a significant factor. This finding further emphasizes the need for improved understanding and practices surrounding consent, both within the context of dating apps and in-person.

The land of unwanted 'dick pics'. Men's assumptions of women's sexual availability and implied consent on dating apps was also associated with how regularly women received unsolicited 'dick pics':

> It's so normal for you to receive an unsolicited dick pic...it's disgusting. I can't put into words how much I hate it…I told my guy friends*, hey, do you want to see this dick pic that I got last night?* And they're like, *no, why the fuck would I want to see that?* I'm like, *yeah, why the fuck would I want to see that? But at least I asked you.* (P6)

Several studies that include the perspectives of both men and women have identified reasons for why men send unsolicited 'dick pics', which include "getting recipients' attention, communicating sexual interest, gauging recipients' interest or willingness to chat, informing recipients about the sender's physical attributes, acting on sexual arousal through exhibitionism, persuading recipients to engage in sexual activity, coaxing recipients to send nudes in return, and deriving satisfaction from exerting power and control by violating personal boundaries" (Filice et al., 2022, p. 12). The women in this study spoke to several of these reasons but focused particularly on control and dominance when reflecting on their experiences of receiving unsolicited 'dick pics':

> I think a lot of the time for men, there's this element of having it not be wanted or having it not be expected. That is kind of like the thrill of it…like how there's such a draw to celebrities leaked nudes versus celebrities consensually posting revealing stuff, because there's an element of that woman didn't want that to happen. That woman didn't want that to be seen, or the woman didn't want to see that. So, for men it's asserting dominance, being like, yeah, I'll do whatever, here's my dick, and you'll just see it and you'll have no warning and what are you going to do about it? (P16)

Given there is no "female equivalent or comparable practice" (Oswald et al., 2019, p. 2), the present study finds that unsolicited 'dick pics' are a way for men to exercise power, (re)affirm masculinity, and express entitlement on dating apps, which has also been identified in other research findings (Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018; Mandau, 2020; Marcotte et al., 2021). Sending unsolicited explicit images, such as 'dick pics', serves as a reminder to women of men's perceived dominance and control over the dating app space (Fileborn, 2016). It reinforces the notion that women's consent is disregarded and that they are left vulnerable to potential sexual threats (Roberts et al., 2022).

Doing Gender on Dating Apps

The findings of the present study support that men and women "do gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987) in online dating very similarly to offline dating, where performing heteronormative gender roles persists. As one woman commented, "I don't think dating apps have changed the culture of dating, but I think they've amplified what already existed" (P4). This finding has also been supported by recent literature on dating norms (Berkowitz et al., 2021; Hanson, 2022; Lamont, 2021), where men have historically been seen as the primary possessors of power and resources within romantic relationships (Hall et al., 2014). All women in the present study recognized that gender roles and scripts were being "exacerbated and amplified on dating apps" (P19); "magnifying a lot of the societal issues that we have in general with dating" (P15). Participants highlighted the gendered nature of dating apps and expressed how distinct

gender roles and heteronormative gendered scripts are (re)produced and enforced by men on dating apps (Bivens & Hoque, 2018; Hanson, 2022). From a technofeminist perspective, this finding indicates that participants are aware that dating apps are not a neutral technological space, but rather influenced by traditional gender dynamics and conventional expectations of the different gender roles in heterosexual relationships. Participants acknowledged that such scripts favoured men but "a lot of women go along with the scripts because they're conditioned to seek that validation from men and just put up with really horrible things" (P16):

> We societally are supposed to be smaller, more agreeable, more palatable. We go with the flow, not talk about sex or intimacy, take shit from men…. it's how we've been conditioned. So, I've definitely played the role of being a smaller woman and holding my tongue, swallowing things, ignoring red flags because it's just what society expects of me. But men are able to be aggressive or loud, entitled, can demand or ask for things, they can talk about sex. But then if women were to do that, men are usually turned off by that. (P19)

Additionally, participants felt that on dating apps they "were supposed to be looking certain ways and acting certain ways" (P9); "a lot of our value is placed on the way we look and the way we act" (P9). For example, one woman mentioned that she was "terrified of coming off too strong or too much to other people" (P7): "I just internalized within me that I feel like anytime I ask for something, I'm demanding too much" (P7). This finding can be understood as "responding to a particularly gendered message: that women need to be less—less vocal, less visible, less free—in order to be safe" (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020, p. 266).

Men often adhere to scripts of hyper and toxic masculinity on dating apps (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Hess & Flores, 2018; Jane, 2016) and, as in most heteronormative settings, there is a persistent expectation for men to take the lead, initiate contact, and maintain control over messages, dates, and hookups (Chan, 2018; Christensen, 2021; England et al., 2008; Laner & Ventrone, 2000; Ridgeway, 2011; Sobieraj & Humphreys, 2021); women are left to react (Paytner & Leaper, 2016). For example, participants stated that on dating apps they generally

would not ask a guy out first: “I still wait for a guy to ask me out and I don't ask him out, which I know it's about to be 2023…why don't we feel comfortable asking a guy out? It’s ridiculous” (P3). This finding aligns with offline dating norms where men are traditionally seen as the initiators who make first contact and ask for dates (Rose & Frieze, 1989; Rudder, 2014). This finding also further emphasizes that dating apps continue to reinforce traditional gender roles and relationship practices that have been built within a patriarchal gender hierarchy and perpetuate socially constructed ideas of how men and women should be/behave (Rees, 2022; Ridgeway, 2011). This is problematic because the social and structural context of gender hierarchization, “a historically constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and definitions of femininity and masculinity” (Connell, 1987, p. 98-99) is a fundamental factor in the perpetration of sexualized violence against women. The findings of this study can be applied to support Wajcman’s (1991) discovery that “treating [dating apps] as a culture has enabled us to see the way in which [dating app] technology is expressive of masculinity” (Wajcman, 1991, p. 149). Gavey (2018) further argues that such gender scripts are where sexualized violence is established because they depict women's sexuality as passive or asexual, while portraying men's sexuality as aggressive and solely driven by sexual release. Women encounter these challenges on dating apps because they are often made to feel that they lack the equal right to occupy the space on the same terms as men – “gendered business as usual” (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020, p. 228). These findings also substantiate the assertion made by radical feminism that the patriarchal system perpetuates an uneven distribution of power between women and men by creating definitions of masculine and feminine behavior that reinforce the existing power disparity (Rowland & Klein, 1996).

Despite the opportunity for dating apps to shift dating norms and practices, the findings of the present study indicate that dating app technology has not resulted in radical change for women in the dating space. Instead, cultural norms, values, and existing beliefs about gender have translated into online dating spaces where they continue to replicate and perpetuate traditional gender norms, dynamics, inequalities, and sexualized violence (Berkowitz et al., 2021; Lamont, 2021). This can be understood through Wajcman's (2004) lens of technofeminism, which argues that technology is not deterministic and capable of creating a utopianism for women that is free from gender disparities. Instead, technology has the potential to perpetuate gender inequities such as reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes and exacerbating harassment and abuse, as supported by the above findings.

Given that gender serves as a primary frame for understanding ourselves and others, and gender socialization guides behaviors in social situations, the introduction of dating app technology has not brought about transformative change in terms of gender dynamics in dating (Ridgeway, 2011). People adhere to these scripts because they offer a sense of certainty and social acceptability and there are consequences for not following them (Ridgeway, 2011; Goffman, 1959), especially in situations where "people are getting to know each other and feel that it is a safer bet to simply conform rather than contest gender norms" (Lamont, 2021, p. 4). Dating apps "can be confusing, risky, and uncertain, and, thus, following existing dating and hookup scripts can lessen the tensions, awkwardness, and risk of harm that come with navigating an ambiguous terrain" (Berkowitz et al., 2021, p. 505). Last, decades ago the literature in the field of media psychology and trauma cautioned about the Internet's influential role in shaping collective behavioural patterns, including sexual scripts (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). These warnings have come to fruition when exploring dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against

women. Considering the changes in the dating landscape discussed earlier in this chapter, the continued dominance and persistence of traditional dating scripts and practices on dating apps highlights their obduracy and influence on heterosexual dating (Eaton & Rose, 2011; England, 2010; Lamont, 2021; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Patriarchal gender and sexual scripts underlie numerous problematic consent practices and provide explanations for sexualized violence in offline contexts and settings (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Frith & Kitzinger, 2001; Hirsch et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2018). Similarly, these scripts were observed in the present study to have a significant impact in the context of dating apps and dating app-facilitated sexualized violence.

Overall, these findings align with the technofeminist perspective, which contends that gender relations are both a source and consequence of technology (Wajcman, 2004). Dating app users reproduce, broaden, and exaggerate the gender relations and scripts that contribute to women's experiences of sexualized violence (Fileborn, 2016; Gavey, 2018; Mardorossian, 2002; Wajcman, 2004). Dating app-facilitated sexualized violence is as a result partially manifested through the online enactment of such gender scripts and the attitudes that persist in society more broadly (Dietzel, 2021; Farvid & Aisher, 2016; Fileborn, 2016; Gavey, 2018; Gillett, 2018; Hess & Flores, 2018; Pooley & Boxall, 2020; Shaw, 2016; Thompson, 2018). The advent of dating apps has not resulted in a dating revolution, but rather perpetuated a dating culture characterized by patriarchal and heteronormative behaviour.

Dating Apps as Violent Tools

This theme includes the subthemes: "Decoding Dating App Design: Speed, Convenience, Gameplay and Money", Dating App Profiles: How a Digital Dossier Facilitates Violence", "Swiper, No Swiping", The Violent Effects of Abundance on Dating Apps", "Behind the Screens: Anonymity and Accountability", and "The Futility of Reporting".

The women in the present study reported that "even though violence against women is a problem that already exists, it's exponentially worse online" (P14). Women discussed how dating apps have specific artifacts, features, and affordances that make them the "easiest and safest conduit for violent men" (P18) who "just want to prey" (P8). The elements of dating apps that women spoke to included profile design, swiping and matching, messaging, photo sharing, and safety features (or lack thereof). The way these elements are interpreted and used intersected with the aforementioned social and gender relations to jointly shape women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. This finding supports a primary assertion of technofeminism that conceptualizes the relationship between gender and technology as mutually shaped and co-constructed (Wajcman, 2004).

Although dating apps may vary slightly in terms of features, user interfaces, target audiences, and approaches to matchmaking, women commented that "in reality they all do the same thing, and they all have the same result" (P19); they all facilitate sexualized violence. Women also spoke to how some apps market themselves as designed for women, but that is a "hoax" (P5); they are still "designed for men" (P1) and "to benefit men" (P6) and when "you make a dating app where the majority of men are comfortable, it's going to make the majority of women uncomfortable" (P17).

Decoding Dating App Design: Speed, Convenience, Gameplay, and Money

Participants often referred to dating apps as "a culture of sexual speed" (P13), "where men immediately start talking in a sexual manner…where you hardly get hello in and they want to send you pictures of their junk" (P5) or "message you, *want to fuck?"* (P1). One participant said:

> I can't tell you how many times guys have tried to start sexting with me… I've had a number of guys ask me things like, *what do you wear to bed?* and stuff like that…and we're three

> messages in…and I'm like we don't know each other…I haven't developed that connection with you just because I'm on an app. That's not the way that it would normally progress…if you met me at a bar, you wouldn't be texting me, *hey, send me pictures of you in bed*. Inappropriate questioning happening super quickly seems to be normalized on these platforms. (P13)

Another participant similarly stated that "it seems really fast" (P9). She described:

> We're two or three messages deep, you know like, *how's your day going?* And then it turns sexual. I think again, that's because of men's intent. Their final intent is to get sex and to get it quicker rather than later. (P9)

Immediacy is a main affordance that influences the speedy pursuit of sex on dating apps and translates to "fast sexual encounters" (Duguay, 2017; Licoppe et al., 2016, p. 2545). The integration of GPS technology in dating apps has been associated with the immediacy of meeting potential partners, as it allows users to promptly identify nearby individuals who they can potentially meet instantaneously (Choie et al., 2018; Fansher & McCarns, 2019; Murphy, 2017; Timmermans & Courtois, 2018). Since people typically always carry their smartphones with them, it is easier to sustain ongoing interactions initiated on dating apps by being able to immediately respond to messages (Yeo & Fung, 2016), which is also facilitated by receiving notifications from the dating app when users have a new match or new message.

Women in this study also believed that dating apps create a level of convenience that was non-existent in traditional dating culture. As one participant explained:

> I think dating apps have definitely made obtaining sex easier and more convenient...it's literally at your fingertips. You don't even have to get up until you say, *okay, I'll be at your place in 20 minutes*. You don't have to do anything until you actually get up to go. Whereas in my parents' generation…for my mom, if she was with a man that only wanted sex, he still had to put in an effort. (P12)

Another participant concurred: "Men just sit in bed and look for girls to hook up with, have them drive over, and won't even offer them a glass of water. They don't have to do anything" (P13). In a similar vein, Bauman (2010, p. 22) stated "getting sex is now like ordering a pizza… now

you can just go online and order genitalia". Dating apps offer a more convenient and readily accessible method for individuals to date and connect with potential dating and/or sexual partners (Holloway et al., 2014). Unlike traditional dating websites that often require subscription fees and more extensive personal information to join, dating apps today can be downloaded free of charge and require minimal effort to set up. Consequently, men are considerably more inclined to perceive sex and intimacy as easily accessible and convenient on dating apps (Sales, 2015), which, in turn, contributes to a greater propensity for men to make sexual demands and sexually harass woman (Thompson, 2018).

Participants also discussed how dating apps were "designed to play" (P10); "using the app has become the activity, not the dating" (P13). Various research findings have also found that men's main purpose of using dating apps is not primarily to find a romantic partner, but rather to utilize the app as a form of entertainment (Carpenter & McEwan, 2016; Garda & Karhulahti, 2021; Sumter et al., 2017; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017b; Sevi et al., 2018). According to the co-founder of Tinder, which is the pioneering dating app that revolutionized the way people meet and connect online, Tinder integrated a distinctive interface inspired by games. The apps interface was designed to resemble a deck of cards, drawing inspiration from the act of playing with physical cards. The intuitive response of discarding the top card by throwing it to the side led to the creation of the now-iconic Tinder swipe, which was created to gamify the dating experience and keep users on the app for as long as possible (Stampler, 2014),

The participants of this study recognized that there was a gamification component to dating apps where for men "trying to get sex really fast was their version of winning" (P9) and that "it's a numbers game…play enough times and you're bound to win" (P1). Participants likened this experience to gambling. The design patterns of dating apps have been found to share

similarities with slot machines, creating a sense of machine-driven play where social interaction and potential relationships serve as bets, currencies, and rewards. Dating apps also parallel the experience of slot machine gambling, where continuous engagement is driven by the pleasure of uncertain outcomes (Garda & Karhulahti, 2021). If men feel like they are engaging in a game, where potential sexual relations are the reward, this has implications for how men use dating apps, and in turn, how men treat the women that they engage with on dating apps. From a feminist standpoint, there is concern about how this contributes to dehumanizing and objectifying behaviour, which is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

The women in this study also talked about how dating apps push users to get off the app to chat elsewhere, essentially ending the game on the app with that user:

> After three messages back and forth or something like that dating apps have those little things that come up to send your Snapchat link, or phone number, or Instagram and Facebook link, and people will want to go talk there instead. There's like an implied kind of rush. (P16)

Participants commented that they found this feature "really weird" (P16), especially when they weren't "ready to give personal information" (P18):

> I don't want to give you my personal information yet. I don't know you… and especially with Snapchat and stuff, the way that their Snap maps are working now, you can click on someone and find out exactly where they are. (P18)

This feature that pushed women to chat with men on other digital platforms enabled the occurrence of technology facilitated sexualized violence elsewhere, as well as offline sexualized violence. By encouraging users to quickly move their interactions to external platforms, dating apps are creating an environment where women may feel pressured to share personal information prematurely. This features also creates a sense of urgency in the dating process, which may contribute to prematurely meeting other users or, again, prematurely sharing personal information. Further, women may feel compelled to comply to avoid being ridiculed, as

mentioned earlier in this chapter. This is a further example of how existing patriarchal structure, gendered power relations, and gendered scripts are embedded within dating apps, and specifically, within dating app features.

The women in this study recognized that dating apps are billion-dollar businesses and "designed with money in mind" (P12): "They [dating app companies] don't care about your safety or what makes you comfortable…they just want to make a shit ton of fucking money off of you" (P6). Dating apps most often operate as a freemium model, which is a business model that combines the offerings of basic services for free and premium features that users can choose to pay for. One feature that women spoke to being able to pay for was 'read receipts' to show you if your match had read your message or not. One participant spoke about how men were more likely to "take advantage of every feature [paid and unpaid] and figure out how they can be weaponized against women" (P16). Recent literature has also highlighted that dating apps emphasize their business interests and profit-driven business models rather than prioritizing safety initiatives and enhancing user experiences or outcomes (Parry, 2023; Stardust et al., 2023; Wilken et al., 2019). Due to the profitability generated by current dating app features, it is likely dating app companies are neglecting the need for progressive changes to keep women safe at the risk of losing male users and, therefore, compromising profits (Parry, 2023). This represents a broader feminist issue where men's interests and preferences are generally prioritized in decision making processes. On dating apps, this is perpetuating gendered inequalities and a compromised user experience for women.

In relation to offline public spaces, poor design (ex. inadequate lighting) has been shown to increase opportunities for crime and create a perception that there is a lack of control and, therefore, feelings of unsafety (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020). Similarly, within the context of the

current research, participants raised concerns regarding how the design of dating apps and dating app features cultivated an overarching sense of unsafety among them. Later in this chapter, reporting and other safety features are discussed in greater detail and the participants highlight how their poor design create the perception that there is a lack of oversight and control on dating apps that heighten their vulnerability to experiences of sexualized violence. To expand on the feminist research conducted by Vera-Gray and Kelly (2020), the present research finds dating apps to largely be a poorly designed online space with bad lighting.

The lack of appropriate features and mechanisms can be attributed to the overall poor design approach that places a greater emphasis on profit generation even if it is at the expense of women's safety, as previously mentioned. Additionally, it can be attributed to the lack of women in the design process. According to Kumar (2020), most individuals involved in the creation of new technical objects are men and lack representation and consideration for female users, which significantly impacts their development, engagement, and use. Other scholars agree that women need to be involved in the design process at an earlier stage (Bardzell, 2010; Zytko et al. 2020; Aljasim & Zytko, 2023); "involved in producing, rather than only reacting to novel designs" (Aljasim & Zytko, 2023, p. 95). This echoes technofeminism's emphasis that the gendered dichotomy in which men design technology and women only receive or consume it, grants men the power to shape technology (Wajcman, 2010). When women actively participate as designers and propose new designs that align with their own visions of safety, it is believed that the resulting designs will better cater to their needs (Aljasim & Zytko, 2023) and provide an opportunity for women to play a role in revolutionizing technologies and consequently reshape gender dynamics (Wajcman, 2006). Although it is challenging to anticipate the inclusive features of dating app artifacts beforehand, I join with other researchers in calling for women to lead in

the process and practices of technological innovation to help conceptualize their safety needs, produce a more equitable users experience, and mitigate dating app-facilitated sexualized violence (Aljasim & Zytko, 2023; Kumar, 2020). Additionally, from a radical feminist perspective, technological solutions, including the increased representation of women in the design and development of technology, "must be accompanied with a transformation of the sex-class system or the outcome will be the continued oppression of women and/or the absorption of women into the male system" (Halbert, 2004, p. 122).

Dating App Profiles: How A Digital Dossier Facilitates Violence

When a person signs up for a dating app, one of the first steps is to create a profile. Profiles are designed to include a collection of photos, some basic personal information (e.g., age, height, dating preferences) also known as 'user stats', and on some dating apps answers to a few written prompts (e.g., the key to my heart is…). One consistent criticism from the women in this study is that "there is no real substance to profiles themselves" (P16) and they preferred the dating apps that had more "prompt questions and interactive things because it tells you more about a person" (P17) and "adds in layers that help make profiles more substantive" (P9). Despite the lack of substance, however, participants stated that men seemed to have "an increased sense of familiarity because they've seen your profile" (P15); "because they would not be having these conversations with a stranger they met at work or a frigging coffee shop" (P19). Another study similarly found that the technological affordances of dating app profiles, such as the profile pictures and bio, played a large role in dating app users making assumptions about other users (Bandinelli & Gandini, 2022). Other studies have also found that the premise of dating app profiles results in user dissatisfaction because being judged and reduced to mere photographs and a checklist of characteristics creates a dehumanizing user experience.

Objectification. Women in this study spoke about the focus of profiles being "predominantly pictures…so really based off of physical appearance" (P13) and how this focus made it easier to "objectify and dehumanize women" (P6): "Since men are just going off pictures of women, they're objectifying them and only seeing them as sexual objects" (P19), which "is really damaging because it further perpetuates women feeling like objects" (P12). One participant explained, "since men are just looking at pictures what else are they going to comment on other than your appearance and what they like about your appearance? And that locks them into the objectification almost" (P15). Another participant agreed, stating: "even when I sit down and look at a profile, I'm just looking at a face or a body and there's no connection there. So, it's so easy to just objectify and put women into boxes of hot or not" (P12); "other people can't see your value from a picture on a screen" (P9). One woman believed that "it's very easy to objectify on a dating app because behind a screen you are not a real human being" (P13). This is as opposed to when "men meet girls in bars and exchange words with them…that they've seen in person…they're real…it's harder to objectify a real human being compared to one of a million profiles on this app (P13). Another participant echoed:

> It's so much easier to not see woman as human beings [on dating apps] …so they'll talk about your body and specific things that they imagine doing to you that just aren't acceptable. You could never say that in person. It just makes it easier for men to objectify (P6).

This finding aligns with other studies that have indicated dating app users consider online dating as more objectifying than offline dating (Bonilla-Zorita et al., 2021). One reason could be because of the "pretty big selection of people, men lose the view of women being people" (P1), which "really dehumanizes the overall experience of dating and makes it a lot easier to treat women poorly when you don't view them as individuals" (P13) and to "send that unsolicited photo and to make that sexual comment" (P19). One participant explained, "because men only

see you as a name on a screen with a picture, they don't have any empathy and they don't feel bad about their behaviour" (P2). Women in this study urged men to "acknowledge the fact that they're talking to real people and have the real potential to hurt someone" (P1).

Overall, the participants wondered "if the dating culture would be different if profiles were not solely focused on looks" (P1). Currently, however, the visual affordances on dating apps, where women are primarily selected on their profile image that take up the whole screen, emphasizes the importance of physical appearance (Chan, 2017; David & Cambre, 2016). This emphasis on physical appearance has been criticized for keeping interactions superficial and promoting superficiality (Berkowitz, 2021; Hobbs et al., 2017; Rudder, 2014). Additionally, the process of filtering through numerous profiles contributes to an objectifying environment (Bonilla-Zorita et al., 2021) because women's profiles are "one of a million" (P13), which leads men to become more selective and judgmental based on superficial criteria and more likely to reduce women to objects or commodities.

Cyberstalking. The personal information included in dating app profiles provides the opportunity for cyberstalking:

> I've had people that I've matched with on a dating app, which only has my first name…and I've had them find me on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, every form of social media that I have, and they've added me on it, sometimes multiple times. I'll just reject the friend request or the follow request, and then they'll try again to the point where I have to block them, or they'll just keep trying. I've had people send me DM [direct message] requests. I had someone follow one of my friends to try and convince them to unblock them or convince them to convince me to unblock them, it is all really strange and scary. (P15)

In today's digital age, it comes as no surprise that the information shared on dating apps can lead users to a wealth of personal information that is posted online. Unfortunately, this also provides men an opportunity to monitor women more closely after simply viewing their dating app profile (Marganski & Melander, 2018).

Several women in this study talked about how scary it was when they were cyberstalked, one woman explained:

> It scared the shit out of me because I was like, now you know where I work. You know who my friends are. You've found my Instagram, my Twitter. You basically know everything about me, and we've been talking for not even two days. (P18)

Another woman agreed, stating: "I wasn't ready to have him in every single aspect of my life. I wasn't even sure I was ready to have him in any aspect of my life…it instigates this fear factor" (P12). Women compared cyberstalking to "real life stalking" (P10) and stated that "unfortunately men feel more comfortable cyberstalking than in-person stalking but either way it feels like they're standing outside your house" (P10). Unlike traditional methods of stalking or physical tracking, cyberstalking offers men a means to engage in similar behaviors with reduced risk and effort, as continuous physical surveillance is not necessary (Phan et al., 2021). Further, men engaging in cyberstalking behavior can maintain continuous access to their victims, which intensifies the sense of being exposed, vulnerable, and fearful for the women being victimized (Diette et al., 2014; Nobles et al., 2014).

In this study, there were times where cyberstalking did materialize into in-person stalking and several women explained situations where men would show up at their place of work: "I had one guy weirdly enough add me on LinkedIn. I did not accept his LinkedIn request and he actually showed up at my work one day looking for me" (P3).

Another participant described:

> I was bored at work, so I was on a dating app, and he had said, *oh, so where do you work?* I said, *oh, a tavern in town*. And just by the name Tavern, he was able to find me and show up at my work. (P18)

Many dating apps incorporate GPS technology to locate and connect users in close proximity, which facilitates a quick and easy transition from online interactions to offline meetings (Fansher

& McCarns, 2019). This affordance heightens the vulnerability of women to be targeted, monitored, and stalked by potential abusers, as observed in the experiences shared by the women in this study.

Racialization. One white woman in this study recognized that "the swiping that led to matches that led to daily compliments that led to validation was a privilege in itself" (P16). This woman went on to explain:

> I never had to deal with the comments that somebody who's not a white girl might get. My best friend is Jamaican, and she gets the most wild comments from men…just the most absurd things…and it's like what kind of audacity do these guys get to say this…and just because she's black…I also have a best friend who is half Filipina, and she doesn't even say what her race is. And when guys try to guess, if they say Thai, because Thai women are so highly sexualized, she instantly unmatches them because she's like, I know where you're going to go with that if I respond to you. And that's an aspect of dating apps that I don't even have to consider. (P16)

Another participant explained that as an Asian woman she was often targeted by men on dating apps who had "yellow fever…a racial preference for Asian women" (P6). She explained that these men expected her to be "very docile, submissive, quiet, very demure, reserved, and obedient…and when it comes to physical intimacy into the same things that they're into" (P6). She recalled a story where one guy said she "was his first Asian" (P6) and she expressed that "I'm more than just a race" (P6). An Indigenous participant expressed her feelings about using dating apps, explaining:

> There's so much more crime against Indigenous women…it's just something that I don't advertise…I don't look Indigenous. I know that for sure. Partially because I bleach my hair…and I don't really advertise it on my profile because I don't want to get targeted…sometimes I bring it up if I feel comfortable enough, I'm very proud to be Indigenous and very proud of my heritage…I'm not ashamed of it or anything…I do understand that it's sometimes a targeted demographic and I am quite fortunate to be white passing. (P7)

These findings are consistent with previous research, which indicates that racial discrimination encountered by individuals in sexual or romantic contexts is perpetuated through

dating apps (Ang et al., 2021; Carlson, 2020; Hanson, 2022; Lee, 2021; Li & Chen, 2021; Mason, 2016; Peck et al., 2021; Stacey & Forbes, 2021). Sexist and racist cultural norms have been translated into dating app affordances, as highlighted by several studies (Bivens & Hoque, 2018; Currington et al., 2021; MacLeod & McArthur, 2019; Ranzini & Rosenbaum, 2020; Zhou, 2022). Consequently, users that do not fit white hegemonic ideals of beauty have negative experiences that reinforce prevailing stereotypes (Lundquist & Curington, 2019; Nash, 2014; Phan et al., 2021). Women of colour for example often face sexual racism and heightened levels of objectification and fetishization, particularly by white men (Adeyinka-Skold, 2020; Currington et al., 2021). These experiences are often exacerbated on dating apps because of the disinhibitory effect of cyber-communications (Lundquist & Curington, 2019). As a means of screening for these issues, women of colour and mixed-race women have been found to explicitly state in their dating app profile that they will not date white men (Adeyinka-Skold, 2020) and use political references like Black Lives Matter (Buggs, 2017). Another contributing factor to the lack of racial neutrality in dating apps is the replication of the creators' worldview, reflecting the research that suggests dating apps are predominantly developed by white men (Bandinelli & Gandini, 2022; Duguay, 2017). Technofeminism substantiates this finding, theorizing that those who design and develop technology wield the power to shape it (Wajcman, 2010).

Overall, the accounts shared in this study correspond with Vera-Gray & Kelly's (2020) feminist work that highlights how sexual harassment of women from black and minoritized ethnic groups produces "a feeling of unbelonging heightened by an inescapable visibility – seen but discounted" (p. 270). These findings and discussion also emphasize the necessity of incorporating an intersectional approach that highlights the various forms of identity that overlap

and intersect with gender to shape women's experiences of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989, 2017). Although in alignment with the radical feminist belief that women are oppressed first and foremost as women in the dating app space, it is imperative to recognize how women experience and express dating app-facilitated sexualized violence differently based on their intersecting identities (Griffin, 1982; Rowland & Klein, 1996). Further, while the internet can be a space for women to challenge gender disparities and various other forms of oppression (Daniels, 2009; Stephan, 2013), technofeminism recognizes that online spaces can also perpetuate existing gender and racial inequalities as these findings demonstrate.

Swiper, No Swiping

Swiping, or a similar gesture, is a main feature of dating apps that women spoke to contributing to their experiences of objectification and commodification. Once the user profile is set up, browsing can begin, with the aim of establishing a mutual 'match'. Many dating apps use a swiping feature, or similar action, where one swipes to the right on someone's profile to potentially match with them or left to express disinterest in matching; where "in most cases, people are swiping based exclusively on looks" (P9). When two people swipe right on each other there is a 'match', which unlocks the ability for the two users to exchange messages. One reason why dating apps are successful is because of the exhilaration experienced when receiving a new match (Timmermans & Courtois, 2018), which also establishes matches as the primary currency in the gameplay of dating apps (Garda & Karhulahti, 2021). Further, because both users need to swipe right to match, dynamics of mutual attraction and consent are determinative (Timmermans & Courtois, 2018), which may also contribute to users assuming implied consent on dating apps as discussed earlier in this chapter.

The women in this study talked about how the swiping feature is "low effort" (P1) and "for hours you can just be swiping, swiping, swiping" (P10) and "get stuck in a swiping frenzy" (P1). Other studies have suggested that the swiping feature is intentionally designed for speed, as it fosters accelerated swiping sessions (David & Cambre, 2016) and aligns with the overall goal of creating a fast-paced user experience (Garda & Karhulahti, 2021). This feature also contributes to the gamification of dating apps and user engagement for extended periods of time (Ferris & Duguay, 2020; Stampler, 2014). One woman relayed a story where she "sat with some guys…and they didn't even look…. they swiped on everybody…they're just trying to get as many matches as possible" (P14). This strategy where you swipe right on all profiles and filter out potential partners afterwards, has been referred to as the shotgun approach (Lefebvre, 2018). Some men likely do this to increase their number of matches and, therefore, potential victims. In general, the swipe function plays a role in promoting the objectification and commodification of women, as well as fostering a more casual dating atmosphere. These factors have previously been linked to a potential reduction in the significance of consent and respectful communication, both of which are crucial in preventing instances of sexualized violence.

Further, participants talked about how the swiping feature "feels addictive" (P10). One woman explained how when she would try to get off the apps, she would think "maybe I'm missing out on somebody that I would have just swiped on" (P16). She compared these thoughts to being "similar to someone's who addicted to gambling – "oh, but this time I'm going to swipe and I'm going to win" (P16). Other women related, stating "there's a dopamine boost every time you're swiping, and you get a match with someone new" (P13); "that validation when someone swipes right on you is like a hit" (P14). Participants talked about how this validation was connected to societal expectations of "how women are supposed to be looking certain ways and

acting certain ways, and a lot of our value is placed on the way we look and the way we act. Radical feminists theorize that this is because women's personalities and their sexuality is created for man (Raymond, 1986; Saulnier, 1996): "we live in a hetero-relational society, where most of women's personal, social, political, professional, and economic relations are defined by the ideology that woman is for man" (Raymond, 1986, p. 11). When users receive a 'match,' it provides immediate gratification that they are meeting the standards of men, reinforcing how women are supposed to be for men. This contributes to mens control of women's energy and sexuality as well as bolsters a limited set of cultural beliefs about attractiveness (Finkel et al., 2012; Yeo & Fung, 2016; Sales, 2015; Ward, 2017). On the contrary, "if you're not getting matches, or if they're dwindling, that sort of disrupts the exact way that you think about yourself and your placement in society, which is very difficult to unlearn" (P9). One participant admitted that seeking this validation led her to a dating app addiction:

> I had a dating app addiction at one point where it was just swipe, perform, let me talk to all the men…because of the validation and the dopamine hits…not realizing these apps are harmful and I ended up in situations where I did not consent to because I forgot that it's not a game. (P19)

Although the addictive nature of dating app design has not been extensively studied, existing research on social networking sites indicates that user interactions like scrolling, tapping, and typing can contribute to smartphone addiction (Noë et al., 2019). Given that dating apps share similar user interaction patterns, such as typing, scrolling/swiping, and liking, it is possible that they may also exhibit associations with addictive usage patterns. Moreover, as Schüll (2012) finds in her work on machine gambling, the addictive nature of the gameplay is what generates profits for the game's owner, meaning dating app addictions would be good for business. Given addictive behaviour would generate further profits for dating app companies, it would also likely further perpetuate the prioritization of profitable features over user safety. This

situation becomes even more concerning if women are addicted and, therefore spending progressively more time on dating app platforms. This heightened engagement could lead to more frequent encounters with dating app-facilitated sexualized violence and potentially desensitize women to such experiences, consequently regarding them as increasingly acceptable and normalized.

The Violent Effects of Abundance on Dating Apps

With millions of dating app users worldwide, dating apps have been referred to as technologies of choice (Illouz, 2013). The women in this study spoke about how the abundance of women or "so much choice" (P3) on dating apps contributes to men's commodification of women: "When you're on dating apps, you're not a person. You're not a human being. You're an option" (P14). Researchers have also discovered that the abundance of potential partners significantly contributes to fostering an entertainment-oriented mindset among users of dating apps (Hanson, 2022). Women in the present study often drew parallels to shopping: "It's like window shopping…there's this illusion of so much choice" (P17). "On dating apps men see women as purchases or transactions where they're just swiping, swiping, swiping, until they pick one" (P19). Another participant elaborated:

> For men, it's like going to the dollar store. You can pick up 20 things without even thinking about it and it's great. Now you have 20 things from that store. But do they really add any value? No, but it creates a false sense of satisfaction and masculinity. (P12)

Bauman (2003) similarly argues that dating apps have transformed the relationship building process into a form of entertainment where users can date "secure in the knowledge they can always return to the marketplace for another bout of shopping" (p. 65). Dating apps have long been referred to as 'relationshopping' (Heino et al., 2010), which women in the present study perceived as further contributing to the hypersexualization of dating app culture where they are

commodified and treated as a means to fulfill men's personal desires and need for instant gratification. This finding has been further supported by additional literature (Hanson, 2022; van Hooff, 2020) and emphasizes the feminist analysis that "it's in the nature of patriarchy to respond to challenges to male power with new strategies" (Jensen, 2021, p. 6):

> Men can no longer claim outright ownership of women, as they once did. Men cannot always assert control over women using old tactics. But they can mark women as always available for men's sexual pleasure. They can reduce women's sexuality—and therefore can reduce women—to a commodity that can be bought and sold. They can try to regain an experience of power lost in the public realm in a more private arena. (Jensen, 2021, p. 6)

Dating apps are the new private arena.

The women who participated in this study also discussed how men's mindset on dating apps tends to be focused on the plethora of options and the mentality that "there's always going to be somebody else" (P4) and if men aren't "getting what they want from women right away, then they'll move on to the next person that might put out" (P11); men know there are "how many other thousands of profiles to flip through…and just try to get with somebody else" (P9). Dating apps also facilitate simultaneous interactions, where individuals can engage in online relationships with multiple users simultaneously (Timmermans & Courtois, 2018). As a participant explained:

> I think there's something to be said about when you are communicating with multiple people at once and have an endless number of people at your fingertips, the consequences of your actions seem a lot less strong, if you will, because there's something around the corner. (P13)

These findings support the position of several feminist scholars that the internet "facilitates the trade of women's bodies (both real and virtual) in a more efficient manner" (Halbert, 2004, p. 127).

Participants talked about how having access to an abundance of women was "so much easier on a dating app" (p14). "Men don't have to go to a bar or wherever where there are a limited number of people…they can just sit in bed and find infinite people" (P14). Because dating apps were "facilitating having access to all these people" (P1), it made it more likely that users were "coming across people that you would never see or interact with" (P9); making it "so much more accessible to reach people" (P4) and create "connections with people who women would otherwise never ever meet" (P4). One participant explicated the following about a man she met on a dating app who ended up assaulting her in person:

> I absolutely never would have been in contact with this person in my day-to-day scenario. The reason we met is exclusively because of a dating app. There's something to be said about that. The app certainly facilitated it. It makes it that much easier to meet people. To meet people that are not in your surroundings, that might not know about your reputation and stuff like that. I do think that this particular individual was capable of this behavior with or without the facilitation of an app. But I can see in a number of situations how the app is really creating an environment that facilitates this type of behavior or ease of it. (P13)

The literature has corroborated this idea that the enhanced exposure to a broader pool of people, which is made possible by the ability of dating apps to connect users with individuals beyond one's social circles, increases the risk of women encountering sexually coercive individuals and as a result experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence (Brayford et al., 2013; Choie et al., 2018; Fansher & McCarns 2019; Lehmiller & Ioerger, 2014; Whittle et al., 2013). This situates heterosexual women in a comparatively disadvantaged and more vulnerable position in contrast to heterosexual men, as prevailing societal norms frequently depict men in the role of the aggressor and women as the target.

Behind the Screens: Anonymity and Accountability

The anonymity that users felt when using dating apps was attributed to being one of the main factors in women experiencing dating app-facilitated sexualized violence: "It's so easy to

send an unsolicited photo and so easy to make that sexual comment from behind a screen… and because of this men can say the most out of pocket things" (P19); "it is like they are catcalling you constantly but it is anonymous and from the safety of their own homes" (P1). Participants commented that men "hide behind the screen" (P18), are "protected behind the screen" (P10, P15), "feel a sense of comfort from behind the screen" (P16), and "use the screen as a shield in a way" (P16). Participants relayed how this made men "braver" (P10), "brasher, and bolder" (P1). Or as one woman reflected, "I was going to say bolder, but it's not necessarily bolder, it's just grosser" (P9). Participants described that although on dating apps "you are using your real name and your real pictures, it still feels like it's somewhat anonymous from behind a screen… and that creates distance from men's behavior" (P1). Other studies have confirmed these findings, demonstrating that the anonymity afforded by dating apps emboldens users to say and do things that they would not in person (Suler, 2004; Race, 2015). Further, such anonymity creates a diminished sense of social accountability and, therefore, more anti-social behaviour (Suler, 2004) such as sending unsolicited 'dick pics' (Oswald et al., 2020).

Such anonymity also led to a lot of deceptive self-presentation because "it's easy to lie on a dating app…I can put in my bio that I'm a heart surgeon…I'm definitely not" (P12). Other women in the study agreed, commenting "another thing I find super frustrating with the apps is the general trend that people are trying to put their best foot forward…like a resume…you can lie a little bit" (P3), and a lot of "my matches lie to me in the conversations that we are having on the app" (P10). Men were also perceived as "playing a role and being on their best behavior" (P9) because dating apps "make it a lot easier to hide the undesirable qualities" (P12) and "typically people only show the good stuff" (P4). Participants also

mentioned how men seeking to perpetrate dating app-facilitated sexualized violence would "pretend they had the same interests to get to their end goal of sex" (P9):

> I find it very rarely to be the really bad, violent guys right off the bat that you have to worry about because they just make it obvious. Whereas guys that rely on coercion will play a nicer role leading up to the violence. (P16)

Another participant agreed:

> They [coercive men] don't come out full deck balls swinging because it's just like that frog in the pot thing. You know, throw it in hot water and It's going to jump right out. You want to slowly keep raising the temperature of the water so by the time the frog figures out that the water is boiling hot, they're dead. That is what men do to women on dating apps. (P14)

One participant explained how "discerning this is more difficult on an app than in person", which other participants agreed was because you can't see "body language or micro-expressions" (P14), and "get all of these cues that you would get in person" (P13); "dating apps shield noticing this stuff or at least prolong picking up on some of the cues" (P16).

Further, women in the present study mentioned how men would coerce them by "tailoring their messages" because behind a screen, "men can think about exactly what they want to say" (P14). Other studies have found that dating apps provide the opportunity for strategic misrepresentations through features like editability and asynchronous communication (Toma & Hancock, 2012). This means that users can delay their responses, allowing them more time to craft their messages and potentially present themselves in a more favorable light (Markowitz & Hancock, 2018). These features were found to contribute to the potential for deliberate misrepresentation on dating apps and, as a result, experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence for the women in this study.

Several studies exploring self-deception rely on Goffman's (1959) theory of impression management. Goffman's theory is grounded in the concept of a dramaturgical metaphor, which likens human interaction to a theatrical stage where they strive to control and shape how others

perceive them by manipulating their setting, appearance, and behaviour. Goffman compares individuals to theatrical actors, who, when assuming roles, expect their audience to consider their impressions seriously (Ranzini & Lutz, 2017; Goffman, 1959). In the case of dating app platforms, the platforms provide users of all genders a stage to perform (Ward, 2017).

Exaggerating a dating profile, overstating interests, and enhancing photos are commonly recognized as impression management strategies employed by dating app users (Ellison et al., 2006; Ranzini & Lutz, 2017; Ward, 2017). Studies indicate that individuals craft their online dating profiles to showcase their ideal self to other dating app users (Ellison et al., 2006; David and Cambre, 2016). The results of this study affirm that on dating apps men can employ anonymity and impression management strategies to establish trust with women and foster engagement under false pretenses, which the findings of Scannell (2019) similarly report. Moreover, perpetrators can target victims by adapting their online presentation and manipulate their behavior and characteristics to deceive and exploit women (Malesky, 2007; Pooley & Boxall, 2020). Engaging in impression management and deception to secure dates is a longstanding practice (Rowatt et al., 1998). The anonymity provided by dating apps, however, enables users to effortlessly create a fabricated or fictional profile and online persona (Phan et al., 2021), which increases the likelihood of engaging in deceptive behavior (Drouin et al., 2016). Whether it is to impress other users (DePaulo, 1992) or, as observed in this study, victimize other users, the anonymity of dating apps makes self-deception easier.

It is important to note that researchers have warned against the tendency to associate misrepresentation and online sexual harassment solely with dating app design. This conflation can inadvertently absolve users who engage in deceptive or harassing behavior on dating apps by reducing the issue to one of technology rather than acknowledging the underlying societal

attitudes and beliefs that contribute to gender hierarchy and misogyny (Hlvaka, 2014; Hollander, 2001; Pascoe & Hollander, 2016). Dating app design alone cannot solely be blamed for deceptive behavior that contributes to dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, but rather the intersection of dating app design, user behavior, and societal norms need to be considered.

Further, deceptive behaviors on dating apps frequently resulted in instances of in-person sexualized violence because women's interactions with men on the apps gave them a "a feeling of safety that was not accurate" (P18). This participant further explained her own experience of sexual assault from a man she met on a dating app:

> I had matched with a gentleman, and in my mind, he seemed safe. That's the best way for me to put it. I was talking with him for weeks before we actually met up in person. And I mean, close to a month just on the app chatting. In my head, I perceived him as safe. When we met in person, he ended up making advances towards me and I couldn't really…you know, I said no that I wasn't interested…but basically, he ended up having sexual intercourse with me. Honestly, the person that I met in person wasn't the person I was interacting with on the app, at least during the assault. It felt like it was a completely different interaction with two completely different people…because we had been chatting for so long, I felt like I knew this person and instead they turned out to be the exact opposite of everything that they had said. (P18)

Similarly, previous studies have indicated that dating app users may perceive their matches as familiar or safe, which can create a false sense of security (Green et al., 2018; Castro & Barada, 2020). This can be problematic as perpetrators of sexualized violence can exploit this trust within the context of dating apps. Online relationships tend to develop rapidly compared to offline relationships (Choi, 2018), known as mobile intimacy (Timmermans & Courtois, 2018). Mobile intimacy also leads individuals to believe they have established a strong connection with someone that they have only met online and not in person, blurring the line between familiarity and being strangers (National Crime Agency, 2016). As found in this study, this heightened trust can expose women to vulnerability and risk of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence (Choi, 2016).

The view that dating apps are an anonymous space also contributed to men's lack of accountability when perpetrating dating app-facilitated sexualized violence:

> At any instance, either person can unmatch and then never hear from the person again…because of that sort of level of anonymity people are bolder in things that they are willing to say and willing to try. Whereas in public spaces, there are bystanders and a level of acceptable societal behaviour…dating apps are a space where you actually don't have to worry about repercussions like that. (P9)

The difference between the accountability in public spaces versus online spaces was consistently addressed by participants: "Men are more willing to say some of this shit when they think no one else is paying attention or going to see it" (P5).

> If you're matching with someone that you don't know and you send them an inappropriate message, what can they do in that moment? Yes, they can report you to the app or they can block you but there's no immediate consequence for what they're saying. Whereas if they're in person and they say something like that…say to a woman in a bar…there's the bouncers that you'll have be accountable to …they can get kicked out of the bar, or he'll get yelled at or he'll get physically hurt by someone, there's more immediate concrete repercussions when it's said in person versus if they're saying it behind the protection of the screen where's no one there to witness if anything happens. (P15)

Another woman commented that compared to being in person where "there's more visual and evident consequences…being unmatched or blocked is different than someone physically trying to push you off them" (P18).

In general, participants spoke to the lack of accountability men faced on dating apps, with there being "little to no consequences for their actions" (P10); "the whole thing about dating online is that there is zero accountability…you can do whatever the hell you want and you're rarely going to face repercussions" (P13). "Men can say whatever they want online…they send a very crude or aggressive message and what is their match going to do, block them? Oh, big woof" (P7). Even if banned, women discussed that they can just "change their phone number…get a new SIM card…there are no real ramifications by behaving badly on these apps" (P6). As a result of such little accountability, "men know that they can get away with so much

more…. they know they have the power, and they can get away with it and that's why they do it (p14). In turn, dating apps have become an environment where "you've got a whole boatload of men who are like *this works for me, nobody's telling me to stop, so I'm just going to keep going*" (P9), "which enables these men to continue treating women like shit or doing really fucked up things on the apps" (P6). In relation to sending 'dick pics', lack of accountability was often discussed as a leading factor, "men are like, *oh, well, if I send this dick pic, there won't be any consequences*…whereas if you walk up to someone and you just show them your dick, there's going to be consequences" (P18). Another participant echoed, "men are aware that if you flash your dick in public, you could be arrested or fined…but not on a dating app" (P16). These findings extend the feminist theoretical analysis of Kathleen Barry (1979) on sexual slavery, in which she states that men do these things to women because 'there is nothing to stop them' (p. 254). While dating platforms generally have policies against harassment, intimidation, and abuse, it has been argued that these guidelines grant platforms significant discretion, leading to inconsistent and unaccountable enforcement. Moreover, this fragmented approach not only neglects violent behaviour on the apps but fails to address both the cultural norms and technological features and affordances that perpetuate dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women (Duguay et al., 2020).

The Futility of Reporting

All dating apps have a reporting feature. When it came to reporting dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, however, women would often report to the apps to no avail: "I've reported a few times, and all that was said was *thank you, we will investigate*…and then I didn't hear anything else" (P15). Other women echoed: "I've never heard anything back after I reported someone" (P11), "I have never gotten any response or told if actions were taken" (P1), and "I

deleted the app because I didn't want to run into him again, even though I did report, it was one of those things where I knew nothing was going to come of it" (P18). One participant elaborated:

> There was one gentleman, and I knew it was a fake profile, and I reported it. I got nothing from it. A gentleman that did end up actually assaulting me - I reported it to the app and there was nothing. And then someone else sent me a video of him jacking off on the app. And again, there was nothing. I've given up on reporting because there's no response, there's no results. (P18)

Another participant described an instance of reporting a user to the dating app platform and receiving the response "that it did not violate their guidelines" (P12). This participant went on to say, "I remember thinking, well, it should because I'm uncomfortable and I'm telling you that" (P12). The literature supports that women who make reports to the dating app platforms often do not receive a response about the actions taken, if any, to address the offending users' behavior (Stardust et al., 2023). Additionally, when women have reported instances of sexualized violence to dating app platforms, it has been found that they generally did not receive a response (Picciani, 2020).

The women in the present study reiterated that they didn't bother reporting because of the feeling that "nothing will happen" (P16). One participant commented, "if I thought that they [dating app platform] would consider doing something that would be anywhere near effective, I would probably go to them" (P2). This finding reflects a broader criticism made by radical feminists regarding the inadequacy of existing systems, such as legal institutions and frameworks, to address women's experiences of sexualized violence. This is because patriarchy constitutes a network of systems and establishments devised by males to maintain and perpetuate male dominance while subordinating women. Additionally, socialization procedures are implemented to ensure that both women and men adopt behaviors and belief systems aligned with the powerful or powerless groups to which they are affiliated (Rowland & Klein, 1996),

such as women engaging in victim blaming and fear of being stigmatized or not believed. Individuals who took part in Gillett's (2019, 2023) research also refrained from reporting instances of dating app abuse because of uncertainty about the app's potential response and the available actions it could take to address the violence. Without transparent information regarding the outcomes and consequences of reports on dating apps, users are furthermore left feeling that reporting is ineffective (Suzor et al., 2019). Another participant explained that she didn't report her experience of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence to the app because she knew the app may delete the users account and then the user would create a new one:

> Another reason why I don't report when they go sexual is because I don't want them to delete their account and then they come back on, and I have to swipe away from them again…I don't even want to potentially see them again so I just unmatch and leave it at that. (P19)

This worry was not unfounded as other women commented how reporting users and having the app delete their account "doesn't stop anybody from being able to easily re-offend or get a whole new account with a fresh slate" (P12). As one participant further confirmed:

> There was one time that I got a response saying we actually had numerous users report this person and now they are banned for life, so I was like *oh, that's great*. And then three months later I saw the guy's profile come back up again. (P3)

Another study similarly found that due to the ease of creating dating app profiles, individuals who have been banned from using the platform can easily create alternative profiles that allow them to continue engaging in harmful behaviors (Cama, 2021). Additionally, when one participant was asked if she had reported the harassment she described to the dating app, she responded: "Oh, I didn't even know you could do that" (P17).

The inadequacy of reporting mechanisms on dating apps exacerbates women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence because they are extremely insufficient in addressing instances of sexualized violence on their platforms. Given that the reporting tools

are poorly designed and unresponsive, there is lack of accountability for men who perpetrate dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women. Consequently, this perpetuates a dating app culture that tolerates the presence of sexualized violence and, therefore, normalization and desensitization of such behaviours. The well-established issue of women underreporting instances of sexualized violence due to concerns of retaliation, social stigma, or doubts that meaningful action will be taken prevails. As a result, the full extent of dating app-related sexualized violence also remains unknown, which hinders development of effective strategies to adequately address this issue. Creating a safer and more supportive dating app environment, where women are comfortable reporting and sharing their experiences, is a critical step towards reducing women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence.

Resistance to Dating App-Facilitated Sexualized Violence

This theme includes the subthemes: "Claiming Safety", "Transforming Digital Spaces", and "Education: A Key Role in Building Good Online Citizens".

Although dating apps can serve as platforms where various forms of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women occur, they are also utilized by women to challenge and undermine the heteronormative narratives that contribute to these harms, along with the features and affordances that enable them (Cama, 2021). This theme aligns with a consistent call of technofeminist scholars to recognize and empower women's agency in relation to technology, as opposed to embracing excessively negative or technology-deterministic perspectives (Wajcman, 2004, 2006). Resistance extends beyond physical actions and encompasses a variety of other responses. In the context of the present study, resistance most often entailed verbally opposing the behavior of abusive men and/or the control they attempted to exert over women. This theme will display how the women in this study utilized dating apps

to set boundaries, advocate for consent and healthy relationships, and implement safety precautions to challenge and resist dating app-facilitated sexualized violence; commenting that "virtual resistance is a lot easier than physical resistance" (P18). Through these acts of resistance, women asserted their right to be treated equally and respectfully, reclaimed power and agency, and empowered themselves to stay safer. Additionally, all participants proposed solutions for a pathway forward to work towards preventing and addressing dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, which is also a form of resistance.

All women in this study discussed how they resisted accepting acts of sexualized violence from men because "regardless of what men have been told their whole life about being the dominant gender, women would now rather work three jobs than have a partner who sucks" (P17). This extends the argument of radical feminists that for liberation women need economic power and independence (Rowland & Klein, 1996):

> Women without economic independence cannot sustain themselves without a breadwinner. They cannot leave a brutal husband, they cannot withdraw sexual, emotional, and physical servicing from men, they cannot have an equal say in decisions affecting their own lives, such as where they might live. (Rowland & Klein, 1996, p. 279)

Women most often resisted violent behaviour by ignoring, unmatching, or blocking users – advocating to not "let the behaviour continue when you have the choice not to" (p12). As one participant summarized:

> Sometimes I'll be like, *hey, that's not okay*. Other times I'm just going to block the person and just not talk to them anymore. Other times I'll even just leave them on read and ghost them. (P1)

Another participant explained that her choice to "unmatch, or block, or say something back like *what's wrong with you?"* (P16) was dependent on her "level of patience that day or how bad the comment was" (P16). Generally, women would "ignore the message at first" (P4) and if the user was "still persistent, despite being very clear about not wanting to be contacted again then it

would be a block". (P4) Some participants did not confront users at all because they believed that men were looking for a reaction and they "didn't want to give them any kind of reaction" (P7). As Kelly (1988) stated, resistance often entails declining to react in the way that men expect, which was supported by women's reactions in this study. Most women, however, would confront users before blocking them or before getting blocked themselves:

> I'll usually block or unmatch, but I'm pretty salty first. So, I usually make a sassy remark of like, *oh, I'm sorry, was that supposed to impress me?* Or one time I responded with a picture of a blob fish and then blocked them. (P3)

Similarly, another participant explained:

> Sometimes I'll screw around with them for a few minutes. Give them a bit of their own medicine. Be like, *wow, that's super classy* and make a few comments to them and then I will block. (P5)

If women challenged the messages men sent them, men would often unmatch or block them first. As one woman described:

> One man said to me *you look like you'd do a really good job on your knees*. So, I responded *I don't understand what you're saying. Can you explain it?* They just reiterated the same thing, and I was like, *oh, I still don't understand*. Then they did explain it and I said *do you really think saying something like that is okay?* And then they unmatched me. (P1)

Dating app users have been found in other studies to strategically utilize the security features available on the apps, such as the blocking and reporting, to stop unwanted advances (Albury & Byron, 2016). These safety features, however, have been criticized because they place the onus on the individual to appropriately utilize these features and recognize that poor behaviour is occurring. This makes them accountable for preventing their own victimization and diverts attention from the fundamental issues of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence (Pruchniewska, 2020; Zytko et al., 2021). Further, with the normalization of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, recognition of behaviour that requires blocking or reporting may not be obvious to women and, therefore, never happen (Zytko et al., 2021). This aligns with the

feminist perspective that women must be able to identify their experiences as sexualized violence, which is difficult to do if their personal experiences deviate from their understanding of how sexualized violence is defined (Kelly, 1988). While the current research study adopted a comprehensive definition of sexualized violence, which was clearly communicated to participants to encourage exploration of their non-physical experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, it's worth noting that most participants mentioned that they didn't previously characterize sexualized violence in this way.

Many participants did choose to confront men's crude remarks and comments by telling them their behaviour was "flat out inappropriate" (P13), "asking if they would send their mother or sister that message" (P1), and/or "asking them "does this ever work for you?" (P9). In cases like these, women refused to play the performative game of dating apps (Sales, 2015) and instead challenged the heterosexism present in the original performance (Hess & Flores, 2018). Research has discovered that women may challenge, dismiss, or expose men's sexist remarks and unwelcome advances in this way on dating apps because they are less apprehensive about potential repercussions and physical harms, compared to in-person encounters (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014). Engaging in verbal resistance has also historically served as a strategic means for women to actively oppose and reject men's efforts to exert control over them (Kelly, 1988; Kavanaugh, 2013; Rintaugu et al., 2014), which continues to prevail on dating apps. Further, "making men feel good is work, which women are required to undertake in a patriarchal society; refusing to engage in such work is a form of resistance" (Spender, 1983, p. 373).

Some women did declare that it was not their job to teach men how to behave so they would choose to block or ignore them instead of confronting the behaviour: "Usually I'll just block because it's not my responsibility as a woman to do it, to be teaching them how to behave"

(P1). Similarly, another woman explained: "If they open with *I want to choke you out* well that needs to be corrected. But I'm not about to do that. That isn't my job" (P15). Other research has found that silence is meaningful and serves as a signal to men that their attempts to gain a women's attention were ineffective and will not be dignified with a response. Silence not only serves as a strategy to intentionally halt all communication but can also be a deliberate and meaningful response to evade instances of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence (Hess & Flores, 2018).

When deciding to confront or ignore, participants would often consider the repercussions to their safety. As one woman elaborated, "if I feel like calling them out but then know I could run into them and I'll be in an unsafe situation, I won't call them out" (P15). One woman revealed that she always avoided confronting men's poor behaviour because she had "the thought that if I call them out, they're going to bash me" (P8), which women did often experience: I've had guys yell at me because I didn't want to have sex with them. So that sucks…it sucks that we have to be put in that situation or that we're like ridiculed for just saying "no" (P8). This finding supports Kelly's (1988) acknowledgement that

> to resist requires feeling strong enough to take the risk that the incident might escalate; in some situations, resistance may prevent or limit violence, whilst in others it may result in greater levels of violence. Women are seldom able to assess accurately which of these outcomes is more likely. (p. 346)

This finding also supports the work of feminist scholars Sally Cline and Dale Spender (1987), displaying that "women have good reasons for being frightened to name men as the enemy…women are not fools. We know the kind of punishment which may be meted out for exposing patriarchy and its mechanisms" (Rowland & Klein, 1996, p. 297). Further, previous research has also found that women who rejected men's advances were subjected to harassing messages from men on dating apps (Hess & Flores, 2018; Shaw, 2016; Sobieraj & Humphreys,

2021). According to Andrighetto et al. (2019), men might view women's refusals as a challenge to their internalized sense of masculinity and social dominance, leading them to seek validation and uphold traditional gender norms through aggressive behavior. Therefore, when engaging in resistance, women often employ an escalation calculation to determine the safest way to proceed (Vera-Gray, 2016).

Less frequently, participants would report users to the dating app platforms for their violent behaviour:

> I've reported a few people for comments where I'm like, *oh my God, why would you even say this?* Opening lines about me sitting on their face or swallowing their dick or something like that, immediately I report because you shouldn't even be on here. (P12)

Another participant described that she wouldn't report crude comments or pick up lines, but would report unsolicited 'dick pics':

> I have reported before, but it's occasional…if he either sends me 'dick pics' or is really gross I end up reporting that kind of thing more so than I would if someone sent me a shitty pickup line - I would just unmatch them. (P8)

Another woman agreed, stating, "the unsolicited 'dick pics'… as soon as somebody does that it's an automatic report because I'm not doing this" (P5).

Several participants vocalized that they set "hard limits" (P1) around sending explicit images over the apps. As one participant explained about being asked to send nudes: "I'm not sending anything…and if you can't respect that, then I'm just not going to continue messaging you" (P5). Another participant described an instance where a man said to her "I actually don't want to finish getting to know you until I see what your body looks like" so she sent a picture of her "just standing there…it wasn't a nude". When he went on to say that it was "not what he meant and that she clearly must be very immature to have thought that" she responded by saying "No. I know what you're asking for. I'm just not comfortable sending it" (P12).

When men would push women's boundaries after being told no, women described this as men thinking that women were just "playing hard to get and thinking they just needed to try harder" (P3). When faced with these scenarios, women would advocate for consent, by communicating "NO. I told you to stop. I am polite and kind but no means no. You need to stop" (P3). Women would also utilize dating app platforms to test how men handled being told no. As one participant explained:

> I will see how men respond to being told no for no reason. When they give me their number I will say *no, I prefer to keep it on the app*, they will say *do you want to go to this restaurant with me* and I will say *no, no thank you*… I will find a way to say no without explanation. You can tell a lot about someone by how they respond to being told no. (P17)

Participants explained that in response to dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, they too could behave as an "asshole" (P6): "I think women have learned to adjust to the way that men communicate to us. So now both sides aren't necessarily being as respectful as they should be" (P6). From a radical feminist perspective this could be because "the system has not changed; women simply have learned to operate like men" (Halbert, 2004, p. 122). Women would preface the description of some of their behaviour as being "mean" (P15) or "purposefully emasculating" (P14):

> If you send me an unsolicited pic…I'm going to emasculate you as much as possible. If I say no, and you send one anyways, I'm going to make you feel the same way I did so you know how I feel. I'm going to go on Google. I'm going to find the biggest dick I can find. I'm going to send that back to you. And every time they're like*, yo, what's this? Why would you send that*? Well, why would you send yours? How is it different? I got an unwanted nude photo. You got an unwanted nude photo. (P14)

Another participant remarked about receiving unsolicited 'dick pics':

> If I'm choosing to acknowledge it, I'm really going to go in and make them feel bad about it. I've fully been mean. Although they're sending an unsolicited dick pic. Are my comments really that mean? I don't think so. They're kind of deserved, but I'll make fun of their dick. I didn't ask for it. So, I'm going to shame you into never doing this to anyone ever again. (P15)

This finding aligns with Kelly's (1988) finding that responding with a cutting remark commonly results in women feeling less violated by the situation. This could be attributed to the expression of their anger, which prevents them from internalizing feelings of shame or self-blame, or because it allows them to assert some level of control over the situation.

Claiming Safety

All women in this study empowered themselves amidst the surge of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence by taking precautions to protect themselves from experiencing it, recognizing that "as a woman, the number one priority is safety" (P18) and that "men have a lot more safety on dating apps" (P16). This supports other research findings that discovered women are more concerned about their safety than men in relation to dating app-facilitated sexualized violence (Albury et al. 2019); women are concerned with their safety and men are concerned with trying not to appear creepy (Lundquist & Curington, 2019). As a result, women use several safety precautions to help protect themselves and make dating apps feel safer (Albury et al., 2019). The women in the present study used various safety precautions that were dependent on if they were on the app or transitioning off the app to meet in person.

On dating apps participants talked about how it was "a long process of learning what not to swipe right on" (P10). One participant described:

> I noticed that if a man didn't have a bio, it's usually because he didn't have the greatest things to say. So, I would look for men who have something in their bio…talking about what they like to do, maybe where they go to school, what they're studying in school…to kind of gauge maybe what kind of person this is. So basically, the more information I got, the safer I felt on swiping right. (P10)

Women were cautious and "analytical" (P8) about who they would both match with and meet in person. They found that having the choice of who to swipe right on, or not, or who to go on a date with, or not, was empowering and helped keep them safer by allowing them to "get a

better idea of the people before matching" (P18) as well as a better sense of the persons "values and morals before agreeing to a date" (P17). Byron and Albury (2018) similarly found that since dating apps provide limited opportunities for observing and understanding how to interact, it is only through engaging in conversations, setting up dates, or hooking up, which they referred to as 'practicing', that individuals gradually become familiar with how to be safer on dating apps. In the present study, 'practicing' was also how women became familiar with the profiles they deemed safer to swipe right on. All participants spoke to utilizing dating apps to screen men and deem them to be "safe or unsafe" (P1) and some women avoided matching with men who "had anything sexual in their profiles" (P19). One participant expressed:

> I'll talk to them a little bit before I agree to go out with them. I'll see where they're steering the conversation and if they're steering it to be overly sexual, I sort of weed them out. Not because that's not what I'm looking for, but because I don't want to put myself in a situation where if I meet them in person and when I don't want it to go anywhere, they'll be like, oh, well, we talked about this on the app and so now you're going to do it. (P15)

Other research has reported that due to safety concerns, women devote a significant amount of time to carefully evaluating potential partners and their personal information (Pruchniewska, 2020), especially before meeting in-person (Cama, 2019; Couch & Liamputtong, 2008).

Women in this study also spoke to resisting men who held the belief that women were meant to "fix men" (P3):

> My job isn't to raise you. I find it shocking that within our society there's still this idea that as women, we're supposed to try to fix men into being better people. No, that's not, that's not my job. I don't have the time to teach some 35-year-old dude named Michael how to treat a woman. Like, no, like, figure it out yourself. Do better. (P3)

Another participant agreed, stating she was "done being a healing center for broken men" and used dating apps to "weed out men" (P17) who thought otherwise. Some dating apps require that the women message first and some women liked this feature, stating "at least I'm in control of who I message (P3). However, women also noted that on these apps they generally had less

success “because it's the only app that women are actually in control” (P16). This woman went on to explain that “barely anybody will respond because they don't get the first move…it kind of flips the script…men don't have that power anymore” (P16). Although imperfect, women did believe that having the ability to choose who they matched or engaged with gave them an increased sense of safety and control.

Keeping conversations on the app for as long as possible was a useful safety practice that many women implemented – “having at least a few days, if not a week or two of talking to know a little bit more about them” (P5). One participant elaborated: “I definitely take more precaution and get to certain questions. Trying to talk to them more before I meet them in person so I can really try to gauge what kind of person they are” (P10). This woman went on to say, “I know that they could easily fake it if they wanted to, but it helps me feel better” (P10). Keeping conversations on the app also prevented women from sharing their phone numbers, which women expressed made it easier to “block and report” (P7) or “ghost them” (P1) if they didn’t “feel safe telling them this isn't working out” (P1). Similarly, the participants reported avoiding giving men their personal information, such as their location, place of work, or other social media handles, which made it easier to “separate from a match” (P8). They did, however, look for the men’s other social media accounts to verify their identities and better “vet them” (P16). One participant explained, “I typically would kind of do my own little background check online, you know see their Instagram or Facebook or LinkedIn. Just to kind of confirm that they are who they say they are” (P4). This woman went on to say, “I know that doesn’t mean that I'm necessarily going to be safe, but it’s confirmation that they are who they're presenting to be” (P4). Another participant similarly described that she would “creep their Facebook to get a sense of what their values are (P1)”. This woman noted that she found “the biggest red flags come

from men with conservative views" (P1). Another red flag for women was when men appeared "too good to be true" (P13):

> I'm more reluctant to not buy into the "it looks too good to be true". I'm definitely mindful of people being like, *oh, you're so beautiful, I don't want anything from you, I just want to be with you*. Bullshit. That's definitely something that would be red flag central. (P13)

Similarly, participants in other research studies detailed the extensive measures they undertook to examine their matches, which included investigating their profiles on alternative platforms, such as Facebook, and posing probing questions with the intention of gauging their beliefs (Cama, 2019; Stardust et al., 2023).

When meeting someone in person, the women would adopt extra safety measures compared to their approach while using the app, due to the perceived increase in potential threats to their safety. As one participant commented, "I feel like it's definitely not as dangerous for men who date women on apps as it is for women who date men, especially if you're meeting people in person" (P15). Another participant agreed, stating:

> Even if you look at media, all the news stories we see relating to dating apps is women going missing, women getting assaulted and stuff like that. And you really don't hear stories of men having to be scared or sending their friends their location, telling their friends I'm going to be here, this is what the person looks like. (P16)

Before women would meet a dating app match in person, they would "try to do a FaceTime or even a phone call to try and prove their identity" (P5). Women would choose public settings for their dates, making sure to "always meet publicly" (P19); "never going to their house or having them over for a first date" (P4). One participant specified:

> I'll make it something super casual where it's easy to leave if it's not going well. So usually something like coffee, because you know, it doesn't have to last longer than an hour. And part of the thing too, is a lower cost date so I can always pay for myself. I'll also offer to pay for whoever I go out with because I don't want to feel obligated or like I owe them anything or have them feel like I owe them something too. (P1)

Other participants additionally stated that they would "try and meet at a spot that is close to

home" (P18) so it was easier to leave, and they would have dates "when it was still light out – early evening dates, kind of thing" (P9). Transportation was another factor women highly considered when meeting someone from a dating app in person. Women would avoid getting into their dates personal vehicle or being picked up for the date. As one participant explained: "I meet them in person and I'll often have a friend pick me up so that I have an out – *my friend is here, got to go*…and then they can't follow me home as I walk home either" (p15). Another participant similarly described: "I'll drive myself there, even if it's close, because then I have a quick escape in the privacy of my own car rather than public transit" (P9).

Before leaving for a date, participants would always notify a friend or family member and "come up with an escape plan to be on the safe side" (P18). They would also share their location with multiple people they trusted and provide them the details of who they were meeting:

> When I do meet them in person, one of my friends always has my location. I tell multiple people where I'm going and what time I'm expected to be home, and I'll screenshot their profile and send it to a friend. (P15)

These findings align with a body of other literature that has explored the safety precautions that women take when meeting men in person. The list of safety precautions are extensive and include meeting in public or neutral places, preferably in familiar settings that are well-populated areas during daylight hours; ensuring their phone battery is fully charged; arranging for personal transportation rather than accepting a ride from the date; informing friends or family about upcoming dates; sharing details about the person being met; creating safety measures such as arranging for a friend to call 30 minutes after the expected end time of the date or having them ready with an excuse to leave; sending "home safe" messages; carrying self-defence items like mace or pepper spray; and choosing attire that is modest to avoid any misinterpretation of

consent (Albury et al., 2019; Bauermeister et al., 2010; Beauchamp et al., 2017; Byron et al., 2021; Cama, 2019; Couch & Liamputtong, 2007; Fansher & McCarns, 2019; Gillett, 2021; Padgett, 2007; Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020).

One woman in this study described how she made clothing choices with her safety in mind:

> I wore a skirt that it was an actual pair of shorts that had three snaps, two buttons and a zipper. And then there was an over skirt that had three snaps and a tie and then a belt that interwove between the shorts and the skirt piece that also tied onto my body because it was kind of just a safety mechanism for me to make myself feel safer, where, if anything did get attempted to happen, I would at least have multiple layers of things to protect me. (P18)

This woman also discussed that she "keeps a massive keychain, that's probably about the size of a small child's fist to swing if need be" (P18). Vera-Gray's (2016, 2018) research further discovered that women would use barriers, such as sunglasses or headphones to establish a sense of distance or invisibility from their surroundings. Similarly, the women in this study utilized clothing and objects to achieve a similar goal of creating a physical separation from themselves and unsafety.

The term 'safety work' has been used by radical feminists to refer to these safety measures that women are expected to undertake to stay safe from men in public spaces (Kelly, 2012). The findings of this study show that this concept remains relevant in the realm of dating apps, where women engage in safety work to try and prevent dating app-facilitated sexualized violence from occurring (Albury & Byron, 2016; Gillett, 2023). This work occurs pre-emptively, before any potential harm, which often renders the potential role of women in preventing sexualized violence unnoticed and invisible because of the absence of the predicted outcome, i.e., the occurrence of sexualized violence (Vera Gray & Kelly, 2000; Wise & Stanley, 1987). The women in this study echoed the sentiment that although the safety precautions they implement

"generally work pretty well" (P1), they "shouldn't have to worry about sending a location to five people, carrying a massive keychain, and meeting in a bar that they've gone to five times to meet someone" (P18). Once again, the discussion of safety measures highlighted in this context emphasizes the burden on women to address and reduce the dangers associated with dating app-facilitated sexualized violence (Cama, 2019). The women participating in this study expressed feelings of exhaustion in response to this responsibility. This highlights the emotional strain that women experience from having to constantly exercise vigilance in their interactions with men, coupled with an ongoing apprehension about potentially having to handle unforeseeable behaviour that might jeopardize their safety. This burden is indicative of the radical feminist position that broader gender dynamics and power imbalances created by patriarchy disproportionately task women with preventing their own victimization**.**

Transforming Digital Spaces

The women of this study spoke at length about a pathway forward that could help eliminate dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women, which is also considered a form of resistance. Some women joked the solution was to "sit all men down and say, *HEY! How you're acting is not o*kay" (P10) or "to get rid of dating apps completely – scrub them from history" (P12). More seriously, women spoke to the need for more accountability from dating app companies, amended dating app features, and further education and discussion on the topic of dating app facilitated sexualized violence. Overall, women were hopeful that with their suggestions being considered, a dating app could be developed to help eradicate dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women: "I'm just really, really hoping that there's something better to come for women – a dating app that actually takes us into consideration and prioritizes our safety and needs" (P6).

Demanding Increased App Accountability. All the women who participated in this study believed that dating app companies should be taking more responsibility and accountability for their users' safety, echoing that "it's the dating apps job to make sure that their users are feeling safe and respected and there's actual protections in place for their well-being" (P9). The participants also believed that if dating app companies "step in there would be more being done about the poor behaviour on the app, and they'd be creating less opportunity for violent behaviour" (P13), "helping to create a safer environment" (P3). As one participant commented "the moment dating apps introduce accountability, not all the bad behavior disappears, but some of it will" (P13).

Some women spoke with conviction about how the dating app companies currently weren't doing much to protect them, expressing that doing anything would be an improvement: "literally anything…just to do something because honestly I don't think they're doing much" (P12). As another participant noted: "I feel like the apps aren't doing enough to protect the people that are on them when there's people who are getting assaulted and raped and it's just one of those things where I'd rather be safe and single, than sorry" (P18).

Different opinions amongst the participants existed here, however, as some women expressed that the onus for safety should not be solely on the dating app. Some women expressed that the onus needed to be on the dating app and the individual because "unfortunately, the behaviour is not always detectable on the app…someone could be on their best behavior on the app and then when you move to talking off the app, they act different. So that's why I feel like it's both" (P10). Another participant commented:

> I think the onus is mostly on the person who is saying the inappropriate things or like, harassing people more so than it is on the dating apps. But I do think the apps have some sort of responsibility to make sure that people are using their products appropriately. I don't know where that line is. (P15)

Other participants believed that putting onus on the individual was problematic because "people are never going to take the responsibility" (P9). Some participants believed that it was not their responsibility to take:

> Where the line is crossed and whether it's actual sexual abuse or if it's just highly inappropriate behavior, there needs to be more repercussion for those actions. And the repercussions need to come from the app. It's not the girl that's talking to the guy that's being treated like shit that has to take all the onus. (P13)

Other research has similarly found that the responsibility for preventing victimization currently falls on individual users. While a few dating apps implement safety features, they mostly endorse guidelines and regulations that place the burden on users to safeguard themselves against victimization. These individual prevention approaches pose a problematic risk of attributing the violence inflicted upon vulnerable users, such as women, to their own responsibility (Pooley & Boxall, 2020). In recent years, dating apps have begun creating and implementing different safety measures. Although the actual impact of these recent safety features is still unknown, they do suggest that the platforms are, at the very least, giving the impression that they are placing a higher priority on ensuring user safety (Stardust et al., 2023). Further, the safety features being introduced are generally reactive in nature, meaning they rely on users experiencing harm, and recognizing it as harmful, before attempting to rectify the problem with a technological tool or feature (Aljasim & Zytko, 2023; Duguay et al., 2020). This largely results in superficial features that neglect to tackle the root causes of sexualized violence against women (Duguay et al., 2018).

One participant explained that currently, with a lack of app responsibility for user safety,

> it's kind of like letting a roomful of kindergartners do their arts and crafts. You have a room full of scissors and are like, okay, well, don't run with the scissors, but we're going to step out. And it's like dating app companies are just letting these men run around with scissors (P3).

This woman's description reflects the idiomatic expression that "boys will be boys" when left to their own devices on dating apps. Kimmel (2008) termed 'boys will be boys' behavior as "Guyland" (p. 72). Guyland is a place where boys learn to be boys, and then eventually how to be men. Their conduct is influenced by societal norms, the expectations of their peers, and their own personal standards. In "Guyland", there are girls who shape their identities based on the expectations set by men, and these girls are allowed to stay and play. If the girls, however, insist on respect and equality, they are effectively excluded from participating in Guyland. The findings of this study support that dating apps, in many ways, have become the modern day Guyland where "boys will be boys" and women are expected to tolerate dating app-facilitated sexualized violence if they want to stay and play, aka use dating apps. Likewise, adopting a radical feminist point of view, a patriarchal society often segregates women who undergo sexualized violence into categories of "good" and "bad" women. According to men who uphold patriarchal ideologies, women who 'behave' will be spared from sexualized violence, and women who do not receive justifiable abuse (Barry, 1979).

Participants did understand that there were barriers to dating app companies taking more responsibility and accountability for user safety, one being that "a lot of these dating apps are all owned by the same corporation and the best interest for their company is making money and not the kind of initiatives that would make sure these dating apps are safe" (P1). A few participants could not think of ways that the app could improve their safety that would have any meaningful change, commenting "what is the app gonna do? (P2) or "I don't know what they could do…that's the thing." (P6). Contrarily to these comments, many participants did propose suggestions for how dating app companies could increase user safety and help prevent dating

app-facilitated sexualized violence as discussed next – "working towards making them the safest way for women to date instead of the most dangerous" (P17).

Revitalizing and Innovating Dating App Artifacts. Participants discussed how current dating app features could be amended, and new features could be implemented, to improve their safety when using dating apps and decrease their likelihood of experiencing dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. Current features that women identified as needing improved include verification processes, banning violent users, photo sharing, and reporting procedures. New features that women recommended incorporate ways to communicate amongst each other, more information about mutual connections, and greater supports and resources from the dating app companies.

***Verifying Users*.** Participants believed that "dating apps could do a better job of verifying users" (P8) and that verification should be "mandatory" and more "robust" (P15). Most apps currently have a face authentication step, but as one woman pointed out, "you have to take a picture to prove that's your face, but that's what you prove…you don't prove your name, you don't prove anything else….so some more accountability is needed to verify like, are you who you say you are?" (P16). Another participant echoed that there needed to be more effort to verify the users "right age and right information" (P3). This woman went on to say that "if there's a way for apps to actually verify that, that would be chef's kiss [an idiomatic expression used to convey appreciation and praise]" (P3). Women agreed that users

> can lie through that process, but there should still be some way to know the people on the platform are who they say they are…even just a few more barriers to get on the apps so it's not just open to everyone with not one barrier in place to verify your information (P12).

It has been made clear however, by other research findings, that the requirement of mandatory verification and authentication through legal identity documents, facial recognition technologies,

and social media logins do not inherently ensure user safety. Instead, it can potentially expose certain individuals to increased risks, especially if members of marginalised communities (Boyd, 2012; Kornstein, 2019). Many women additionally suggested background checks and verifying profiles with the use of government identification "because it's so easy to lie about your age and information" (P8). As one participant noted, however,

> how many men out there who are actually abusers have it on record that they are an abuser or that they harass women or do any of these shitty things? Probably not on record because it's not recorded…so what is a background check going to do? (P6)

In the United States, Match Group, which is a leading online dating company that operates a portfolio of most mainstream dating apps, partnered with a third-party company to facilitate running background checks on users. This partnership was met with backlash, as it was argued that it would worsen the existing problem of criminal record discrimination and disproportionately affect communities that were already subject to heightened police scrutiny, such as people of colour and gender diverse individuals. Moreover, concerns were raised that the individuals with non-violent criminal records would be unfairly stigmatized (Stardust et al., 2023). As mentioned by the women in this study, sexualized violence is often carried out by individuals who do not have a criminal record or any prior convictions, possibly rendering criminal record checks an ineffective mechanism for preventing dating app-facilitated sexualized violence.

Profile Information. Most dating apps currently require a certain amount of personal information be included in a user's profile such as height, age, education level, substance use, family plans, religion, and other basic information. Women in this study mentioned that dating apps could include required prompts that generated answers of greater substance and usefulness to women's safety:

> I would say a lot more information…if we can disclose that we smoke or we drink or we are this height and this star sign, we can also have stuff around intimacy level…we need more prompts that are more authentic and genuine around intimacy…and intentions. (P19)

Sending Photos. Some dating apps currently allow users to send photos to each other, which woman believed was "a recipe for disaster" (P16). Although many apps use artificial intelligence to blur sent photos, with the intention to signal that they are potentially lewd and inappropriate, some participants commented that "they shouldn't be letting it happen in the first place" (P16). To date, some dating apps have prohibited image sharing altogether. Beyond trying to moderate for lewd images, participants believed there was a lack of content moderation on the apps and "increased moderation to make sure people aren't behaving poorly would probably do a lot to change the dating environment and establish a culture of safety" (P1). Other research has found support for further content moderation to detect instances of sexualized violence (Razi et al., 2021). Content moderation, however, is automated and this technology has also been criticized for over detecting offensive language while missing the everyday intrusions women experience (Gillet, 2019). Further, content moderation can have the effect of suppressing consensual sexually explicit messages and other consensual sexual activities within dating apps that can hinder important conversations about consent and sexual interactions or desires (Parry, 2023).

Reporting and Banning. The women in this study largely agreed that there "needs to be better reporting systems" (P13): "Having a reporting feature nowadays unfortunately just isn't enough" (P18). One consistent complaint made by participants was that women wanted to ensure that once unmatched, they still had access to the conversation for digital evidence and reporting purposes. Currently "when a user unmatches, it all disappears and then you no longer have a record unless you took screenshots" (P15). One participant explained, about a man she met on a

dating app who sexually assaulted her in person, “my inaction may have put five other girls in the same position as I was…I wish that I could have shut that down. But once you're unmatched, there's not much that you can do” (P13). An investigation conducted by Australian media outlets Triple J and Four Corners revealed that dating app users were exploiting the unmatch function to erase traces of their interactions with women they had victimized. As a result, dating app administrators have been faced with significant scrutiny to eliminate this feature from their platforms (Dias et al., 2020). In response, some dating app platforms have introduced new functionalities to stop the unmatch option from eliminating incriminating evidence, but not all dating apps have followed suit (Perez, 2020).

Currently when a user chooses to unmatch, they are asked for a reason as to why. One participant criticized, however, “you can't just ask me whether or not I've met this person in real life and if I'm going to see them again. You have to ask me has this person acted inappropriately towards you? Did this person ghost and disappear? Do they understand consent? (P13). Participants also mentioned that apps could do a better job at “banning these men from the sites [men who are reported or unmatched for inappropriate behaviour] and doing a more diligent job of making sure that they don't just resign up to circumvent the ban” (P1). Another participant added that the apps “should have a database. So, if you can see that this person's been banned four times from this IP address, then maybe they don't need another account” (P12). Whereas now, participants consistently noticed that the people they had “reported for abusive behavior online or for sending unsolicited pictures would have a new account with the same photo that was associated with the old account” (P3). The women in this study overall expressed that dating apps needed to take more action and accountability when receiving a report – “banning guys that are creepy, banning guys that suck” (P16) because “when you see someone that's back on the app

that made you feel unsafe and uncomfortable, it's like: “Really? Again?” It's discouraging” (P3). It is important to note that reporting tools and banning users is not sufficient to address dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, but it does play a role in helping to create a safer dating app space. Further, the women in this study did not think that dating apps punishing violent men would prevent or end dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, but they did feel that violent men on the apps should be appropriately penalized, which supports the finding of Kelly’s (1998) research on women’s experiences of sexualized violence.

Whisper Networks and Mutual Connections. The women in this study consistently mentioned the need for a way to communicate with each other about the users they had negative encounters with, whether it be a rating system, or a virtual whisper network integrated into the dating apps. One participant discussed a Facebook group that “was made for a lot of women who are using these dating apps and there's a giant Excel spreadsheet of all these really shitty guys on dating apps” (P6). She went on to state that these are the types of resources “that are actually healthy for women” (P6). Women discussed how they rely on this type of information when dating, “asking people hey, do you know this person? Do you know anything about this person?” (P10). Accessing this type of information is increasingly hard on dating apps given the abundance of people that are outside of women’s typical social networks. One participant stated that “if you can find out any information about the men you match with on a dating app from a friend or friend of a friend, it’s a stroke of luck” (P6). Technofeminists have discussed how women are utilizing technology to establish online networks for women that both empower women and resist the male domination of online spaces (Burke, 1999; Harcourt, 2000; Sherman, 2001), Online whisper networks serve to do so by fostering solidarity and enlightening other women on men’s harmful behaviours against women.

Other research studies have discussed revamping the design of dating apps to foster a collaborative atmosphere where users can depend on one another to stay informed about other users, and in turn stay safer (Aljasim & Zytko, 2023). This supports the longstanding concept that collective responsibility ensures safety - encouraging women to remain in groups while out at night and to avoid being alone or interacting with strangers (Stanko, 1990). Fileborn (2016) similarly discussed how women often purposefully occupy public spaces with other women who can serve as guardians. By collectively inhabiting public spaces alongside other women, women can better defy patriarchal control and counteract the exclusionary consequences of male-dominated public environments (Mehta, 1999). Another design suggestion that has been broached in the literature is incorporating user reviews and ratings to document past encounters with dating app users. While this feature could potentially offer valuable insights to women in assessing potential risk, concerns have been raised about the potential for misuse, racial bias, and uncertainty that it would be implemented widely by dating app users (Aljasim & Zytko, 2023).

In a similar vein, participants talked about a dating app feature that allowed them to see who they had mutual connections with, like how Facebook and Instagram do. One participant elaborated:

> Adding a feature like that, that shows you mutual connections. It's like, okay, I can go to one of them and pre vet my match. It’s like when you meet someone in person through friends, you have people in common, so it feels a little bit safer. (P15)

Many dating apps do allow links to other social media platforms, which are meant to serve as a reliable cue to impede deception and promote accountability (Duguay et al., 2018; Murphy, 2018; Zytko et al., 2021). Linking Facebook in particular has been found to be used by dating apps as a guarantor of authenticity and, therefore, a safeguarding tactic (Duguay, 2017; MacLeod & McArthur, 2019). This can be problematic, however, because it can falsely enhance user

perception of safety due to the perception that men appear more genuine on social networking sites such as Facebook (Albury et al., 2019; Stardust et al., 2023). In another research study, this was found to create a shared perception among participants that online dating could offer a greater sense of safety compared to meeting men offline and in person (Stardust et al., 2023), which the findings of this present study would not support.

***Services, Resources, and Supports*.** Having access to 24/7 customer support directly embedded within the dating app, such as an immediate chat function, was deemed necessary by the women in this study. One woman criticized the current lack of customer support stating:

> They [dating apps] are instant messaging chat platforms, but they don't even have a chat function…or a contact to send an email. You submit a request, and they'll get back to you in 7 to 10 business days. It's absurd. I don't have 7 to 10 business days to tell you that this person is harassing me right now. (P12)

Another woman elaborated how this was problematic when her stalker found her on dating apps:

> I had a friend who stalked me for several years. And every time that I use a dating app, he messages me and starts harassing me again. There's no way for me to reach out to the dating app company and say "this is the person's name. Just any account with this name. Just don't let them contact me. (P2)

Participants expanded on the lack of resources and supports generally, declaring that they needed "more resources from the apps on how to stay safe on the apps and have safe during in-person meetings" (P12). This woman specifically spoke to the need for supports and resources for "people who are sexually assaulted or sexually harassed after they transition off of dating apps" (P12). She stated the need for apps to better "support victims, especially because they introduced these people who most likely would have never crossed paths if it was not for the dating app" (P12). She continued:

> At the very least the dating apps can provide resources for every single city that they have their dating app in. Like specific resources…. even though it is an online platform, it's an online platform being run by real people. So, the real people that work for these apps should be supporting the real people who use them. (P12)

Another participant echoed, "I think if the app had really defined clear resources, telling me, *hey, you realize something six months after the fact, we can still help you do something about it - click here.* Yeah, of course I would have done it" (P13). Supports and resources that focus on dating app-facilitated sexualized violence remain scarce. However, some victim support services (e.g., National Network to End Domestic Violence in the United States; Women's Services Network [WESNET]) in Australia) initiated the development of online toolkits and materials to enhance the understanding of victims and health professionals regarding the occurrence of technology-facilitated sexualized violence and how to respond to it (Henry et al., 2020). Since Henry et al. (2020) reported on the production of these materials, there has been various toolkits produced and published through organizations such as BC Society of Transition Houses, Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, United Nations, and various sexualized violence-based organizations. These resources still largely exclude dating app specific information, however. The development of women's health centres that provide preventative resources and supports for survivors is an essential part of activism for radical feminists (Rowland & Klein, 1996). Feminists "were instrumental in developing services that center on women's needs and do not focus on helping women adapt to sexist structures" (Saulnier, 1996, p. 44–45). We are in need of such services today that focus on, or at the very least incorporate, dating app-facilitated sexualized violence.

Education: A Key Role in Building Good Online Citizens

All participants were passionate about the importance and necessity of education for both men and women in helping to eradicate dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. The women in this study recognized that they were not educated about the risks of dating apps or how to use them safely. One participant explained:

> When I first started using them, I was not educated. I didn't realize how often sexualized violence happened and I didn't fully understand the situation I was putting myself in. (P8)

Due to lack of education, women had to learn a lot of lessons as they went, which some woman described as "the hard way" (P1). One participant elaborated:

> It's all been just learned experience or advice from other people. There is no one teaching you how to use a dating app, let alone how to use it safely… it's unfortunately almost a niche thing to learn about these sorts of experiences and how to navigate these parts of your life. (P10)

As a result, dating app-facilitated sexualized violence was a topic that participants believed should be taught about in the school system:

> I feel like the education system should do it. Educate people about how to be safe online, what consent is, and all that kind of stuff. It would have made me more cautious about what could have happened and what did happen to me. (P8)

Another participant agreed that teaching about consent specifically, and all it encompasses is important, because there are so many "underlying levels of consent that people are not aware of" (P19). She went on to explain:

> We all know it's supposed to be like, *yes, I want to have sex with you, period*. But there's so many underlying levels of consent and being aware of those so that you know what you are comfortable with and what you aren't comfortable with…especially for men. Consent is one word, but it encompasses so much. It's definitely a big, big thing. (P19)

These findings align with Wajcman's (1991) technofeminist perspective, emphasizing that the most effective safeguard for girls and women is not technology-based but rather the establishment of a society in which women are empowered to make informed, educated choices, and where men are educated to respect women. Education plays a crucial role in achieving this goal. For example, Wajcman (1991) argued,

> the best protection against heterosexually transmitted AIDS is not the technology of the condom but the ability to ensure that girls have the resources to grow up to be financially independent and that boys learn to respect women. Only in this context will it be possible for young women to negotiate safer sex. (Gill, 2005, p. 101)

The need for education on emotional health was also addressed by several participants, noting that “emotional health is a really big piece for these men who end up becoming perpetrators of sexual violence and aggression” (P1) because “there's a culture perpetuating that men don't have emotions or experience emotions like women do and they're programmed with those gender roles like men don't cry and all that nonsense” (P12). This woman went on to say that she thinks “if men were able to understand themselves a little bit better, then they'd be able to understand people that they're having relationships with better too” (P12). Other participants spoke to the importance of language and giving “both men and women more accessible language” (P19) to help avoid experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence.

Participants agreed that such education needs to start when people are younger –because “all of a sudden, we're adults who are expected to know this stuff. But we don't” (P5). Participants expressed the need for “learning from a younger age about what sexually is and what is and is not okay, about what boundaries are, and that no means no…when someone says no, that's the end of it” (P11):

> I think it's really that kind of upstream prevention. Early on, you know, from when they are in high school or even a little bit before that. Start talking about what a healthy relationship looks like, about sex education, telling people how to conduct themselves online. (P1)

Another participant stated that “if we can educate them as they're growing up, before they start using the apps, they'll be better equipped to deal with violence when it arises and hopefully know better than to harass people” (P15). Another participant elaborated on the importance of teaching young people to

> identify red flags of not only what grooming is, but also this is what creepy guys on dating apps are like, and this is what abuse in relationships looks like, and this is coercion. And coercion is sexual assault. Redefining for young people what violence is, and what violence is online. (P16)

One participant pointed out that education on this topic is especially relevant now that young people are expected to date entirely online, before they have any other dating experiences:

> Having been on the apps at such an early age and at such an early point in my dating life, I got accustomed to the behavior. I did not do much dating prior to getting on the app, so online dating was sort of my introduction to what dating was like and what to expect and I had nothing to compare it to. So, I think it skewed some of my perspectives of what dating and consent and rejection should and shouldn't feel like. (P13)

The need for young men in particular to be educated on "the patriarchy, vulnerability, weakness, consent, healthy relationships, and sexualized violence" (P19) "before they become sexually active" (P1) was consistently conveyed by participants, with the overall goal of "preventing men from becoming perpetrators" (P1).

Providing safe spaces for both men and women to have open and honest conversation and being "genuinely intimate and vulnerable with other human beings" (P14) was deemed necessary for further educating people on dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. Having educational spaces where people can learn how to "better converse and appropriately communicate" (P5) was seen as currently lacking and, therefore, negatively contributing to a toxic online discourse. A lack of safe spaces for men to express their feelings and to "self-reflect and find empathy" (P17) was especially seen as lacking. One participant advocated:

> There is a need to create spaces where boys and men can be vulnerable, where they can talk about things that are on their mind. If they have their own experiences with having their consent violated, giving them the language and space to talk about it. I think it's hard for them to vocalize anything, or even recognize "hey, this dynamic was non-consensual". So, giving them the language and the space, I think is the biggest thing. (P19)

This woman went on to explain how these spaces are valuable for woman too because they allow woman to "share knowledge and experiences of their real-life accounts and how to handle and avoid" (P19) dating app-facilitated sexualized violence.

The ability for men to learn how to put themselves "in a women's shoes" (P5) and "think from the other person's perspective" (P18), was emphasized as being a critical component of education in relation to dating app-facilitated sexualized violence:

> Educating more men on the female experience and having them understand what we're subjected to. And I think right off the bat there, you will see a decrease in some of the behavioral stuff that we are exposed to online, which is oftentimes not malicious, just guys putting themselves first as opposed to considering how it may or may not impact the other person. (P13)

Participants agreed that men didn't "understand what women go through on a daily basis when it comes to negative interactions with men" (P18). Expanding on her point, this woman shared a story about a man she met on a dating app who appeared at her workplace unannounced:

> I really think he thought he was just being kind, trying to meet up. I don't think he thought he was being creepy or weird. I think it was just one of those, *oh, well, I'm in the area, so I'll just stop by…maybe we can chat, get to know each other a little better in person*. When for me it's like, this is my workplace. So oftentimes, I think they just don't think from the other person's perspective…they don't fully realize that what they're doing can come across as harmful and or predatory. And until they start to realize that their actions cause harm and make people uncomfortable, I don't think any change is going to happen. (P18)

In Quinn's (2002) research on 'girl watching' described earlier, it was found that when men were tasked with examining the concept of 'girl watching' through a woman's viewpoint, they comprehended the detrimental effects of sexualized violence. This provides evidence that educating men on a women's perspective can have value.

Other participants similarly explained that men act violently on dating apps because "they're not aware that it is a really uncomfortable and unsafe feeling for women. There is a disconnect because a lot of men don't get that experience or have ways of understanding how that feels" (P3):

> It's because they've never had to consider their safety. A lot of times they've never gone out with someone and thought that maybe that person could hurt them because generally they're bigger or stronger than us…they've just never had to consider those things. I've had conversations with my male friends where they're like, oh, well, worst case scenario when

> I go on a date is I'm out $100…and I'm like, okay, well, worst case scenario for me is he follows me home and kills me. (P15)

Berkowitz et al. (2021) similarly outlined that men fear being catfished and women fear being raped and murdered; noting that it's discouraging that these same findings were reported in 1992, concluding that "as society changes, the gendered scripts persist and even get rewritten into new forms during times of ambiguity" (p. 505). This is further evidenced by women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence described in the present study.

Participants agreed that increased education is "the best thing that we can hope for" (P2) in working towards protecting woman on dating apps, changing the attitudes and behaviours of men, and ending dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, noting that "it's so much harder to unlearn something than it is to learn something" (p14). Nonetheless, viewed through the lens of radical feminism, the process of unlearning remains possible. As Mackay (2015) argues, "the most important and relevant lesson [radical] feminism has taught us is that male violence against women is not biological, it is political. And if it is made, it can be un-made; if it is learnt, it can be un-learnt" (p. 11); women do not need to accept that male domination is unchangeable. Participants also advocated for more research and dissemination on the topic of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. As one participant pronounced:

> More frickin research on this stuff is so important. When we're getting the word out, whether it be mouth to mouth, or through a thesis, or through a research paper, it's showing people that these issues exist. Let's start paying attention to them. It's not just a one-off experience for one woman. We all have similar experiences, which goes to show that not only do we need to talk about it, but let's publish it. Let's show the world that this is a really big issue (P19).

These findings corroborate previous research that has examined ways to proactively address sexualized violence through educational initiatives. Many of these initiatives have focused on programs that aim to educate youth on a variety of relevant topics such as fostering

respectful relationships, challenging gender stereotypes and power dynamics, promoting respect, discussing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) prevention, navigating condom usage, understanding sexual consent, and recognizing and countering sexual coercion (Haberland, 2015; Henry & Powell, 2014; Kimmel et al., 2013; Marques & Ressa, 2013). Additionally, this research aligns with other research studies that underscore the sense of personal responsibility that women often bear for their own safety, and how this sense of responsibility can contribute to feelings of self-blame, shame, fear, and anger following experiences of sexualized violence. Such findings emphasize the need for careful consideration when selecting the language used to educate youth about consent and sexualized violence, with a focus on reinforcing the message that there is no justification for sexualized violence (Sinko, 2021). Messages concerning gender expectations, violence, and societal norms can be internalized during early stages of development, which influence how individuals perceive and interpret their experiences of sexualized violence in adulthood (Aghtaie et al., 2018; McCarry & Lombard, 2016).

There is evidence that interventions that are carefully planned, long-lasting, personally meaningful, and timed appropriately can facilitate constructive discussions about sexualized violence and bring about attitudinal changes (Neville & Heppner, 2002). For example, Abebe et al. (2018) evaluated the effectiveness of a “gender transformative program”, Manhood 2.0, which encompasses the thoughtful examination, questioning, and ultimate reshaping of detrimental societal expectations regarding gender and sexual norms that perpetuate sexualized violence against women. Abebe et al. (2018) found that the implementation of this program, which incorporated healthy sexuality education, open and in-depth discussions that promote gender norm changes, and the development of bystander skills to intervene in peers' disrespectful

and harmful behaviors, has the potential to effectively reduce the number of men that perpetrate sexualized violence against women and conclude that similar programming is urgently needed (Abebe et al., 2018). The women participating in this study overwhelmingly agreed that educational programs and interventions aimed at preventing sexualized violence against women, particularly in the context of dating apps, were widely inadequate and/or absent altogether for both men and women.

Health and Healing in the Digital Aftermath of Dating App Facilitated Sexualized Violence

As with in-person experiences of sexualized violence, online experiences of sexualized violence can also result in physical and psychological harms (Couch et al., 2012; Fairbairn, 2015; Henry & Powell, 2018; Scarduzio et al., 2018; Thompson, 2018). It is therefore unsurprising that all women in this study talked about the negative impacts that dating app-facilitated sexualized violence had on their health and wellbeing. Participants repeatedly stated that their experiences had been "detrimental to mental health" (P6). After experiencing dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, participants had higher anxieties around using dating apps in general. As one woman expressed: "I do get like a lot of anxiety…anxieties around the fear that it will lead to gender based violence again or just anxieties around men's actions being unwanted generally" (P19). Most participants would take a break from dating after experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence because they were "repulsed by the idea of sex and intimacy" (P19), had feelings of "not wanting to date anymore" (P2), and were "more wary when interacting with and trusting men" (P15).

Kelly's (1988) interviews with survivors of sexualized violence revealed that shifts in women's perspectives on sexual relationships and men were among the most prevalent effects of such violence. Kelly (1988) also argued that the attitudinal changes, such as distrust and anger

towards men and celibacy, were a healthy and self-protective response to sexualized violence. Women, therefore, may take breaks from dating apps after experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence to engage in a process of reconstructing their personal safety. By reflecting on their own behavior, women may aim to identify what they could have done differently to prevent future victimization (Kelly, 1988), which in the context of the women in this study, resulted in the avoidance of dating apps. Another study that explored how women construct and navigate the urban landscape to avoid sexualized violence found that because the visible presence of the male stranger in the nighttime reminds women of their comparative powerlessness in this context, they avoided occupying the nighttime to protect themselves (Roberts et al., 2022). Vera-Gray (2018) argued that women choosing to avoid being alone outdoors at night was a means of exercising agency - exchanging their freedom for their safety. In this study, women may have avoided dating apps as a precaution to safeguard themselves, akin to nighttime settings.

After having an experience of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, participants discussed how it changed their thinking and behaviour. One woman said that her experience resulted in "a lot of catastrophic thinking, a lot of negative views around sex, intimacy, rehashing it, always having it at the forefront of my brain, which was not healthy whatsoever" (P19). This woman went on to state that she carried her experience of dating app facilitated-sexualized violence into every interaction she had with men, "completely closing off" (P19). Another participant similarly stated:

> I used to be someone who actually was very outgoing. I liked to go out, and now, because of how I've had some of these experiences, I keep more to myself. And I don't like doing as much of the stuff that I used to. And even just talking to people, I can come off a lot more cautious. So, I can't get deeper with people" (P11).

This reflection reinforces the notion that women who experience sexualized violence tend to internalize cultural narratives that result in disconnection and isolation (McAllister & Vennum, 2022; Tseris, 2013). Such narratives that normalize sexualized violence can significantly impact women's ability to label their experiences, make meaning of them, and heal after dating app-facilitated sexualized violence (Harned, 2005; Sinko et al., 2019; Sinko et al., 2021; Sinko & Saint Arnault, 2019).

The participants also spoke of how their self-esteem was negatively impacted by their experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. They made comments such as "I'm still not feeling respected as a person; it does take a really big hit to your self-esteem (P14). Other participants echoed that it made them question "am I worthy of love? Is it me? Am I the problem? (P12). This challenge to self-esteem perpetuated the thoughts the participants tended to already have of "I am less than or not worthy of love" (P9). This finding supports that experiencing constant messaging that devalues one's worth based on gender, as women do, has tangible effects on wellbeing and can intensify emotional and mental distress following experiences of sexualized violence (Root, 1992; Tseris, 2013). Further, two recent studies also found a relationship between experiencing sexual harassment on dating apps and low levels of self-esteem (Echevarria, 2021; Leinung, 2019).

When women were feeling insecure and inadequate because of their experiences with dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, some women used dating apps in harmful ways. One participant explained:

> I ended up actually continuing to match with people, except I was only looking for sexual relationships because my thought process was, I'm not worth anything anymore… what's the point? I'm just going to do whatever. So, in that first four or five months after the assault, I was having one-night stands, a lot of casual hookups with people… I was gone every single night, I was drinking. I was just kind of doing everything that I didn't do before. (P8)

Another participant echoed: “I wasn't doing well after the incident…I started seeking people online in a way that led to a lot of dangerous or exploitative kind of moments which caused my mental health to be worse” (P1). These findings are supported by other research that has discovered in response to internal depressive feelings resulting from sexualized violence, some women may compulsively search for sex and casual partners (Briere & Elliott, 1994). This behavior has been found to serve as an attempt to alleviate internal depressive suffering through engaging in sexual encounters (Hooley & Wilson-Murphy, 2012; Fontanesi et al., 2021; Ribak, 2009) as well as way to secure affection and intimacy (Homma et al., 2012). Kelly (1988) found that after sexualized violence, women may have “a period of promiscuity” (p .437). Kelly (1988) found this behaviour was linked to women's need to have control over sex after experiencing sexualized violence, arguing that “all forms of male violence contain a sexual aspect. It is, therefore, not surprising that experiences of violence affect women’s feelings about sex” (Kelly, 1988, p. 433).

Participants further discussed how a lack of self-esteem resulted in eating disorder behaviours as they wondered “how am I being perceived? How are people seeing and consuming me?” (P16). As participants believed that they were putting themselves “out there to be shopped for” (P16) their body image and eating disorder behaviours were negatively impacted because their “self-consciousness got ramped up” (P16). In recent studies, researchers have begun investigating the link between dating app use and eating disorders. The findings reveal that individuals using dating apps are more likely to engage in unhealthy weight control behaviors compared to those who do not use dating apps (Coor et al., 2016; Tran et al., 2019). In a comprehensive study conducted by Tran et al. (2019), which included nearly 1800 adults, it was found that dating app users were significantly more likely to engage in unhealthy weight control

behaviours such as laxative use, self-induced vomiting, and use of anabolic steroids when compared to non-users. Additional studies have revealed that swiping through dating apps can lead to negative body image perceptions (Albury et al., 2020) and women who use dating apps experience a notable decrease in face and body satisfaction, an increase in appearance comparisons, and a heightened sense of body shame (Strubel & Petrie, 2017). Last, women who experience sexualized violence have also been found to be impacted by eating disorders and unhealthy eating habits such as fasting, vomiting, diet pill abuse, and overeating (Faravelli et al., 2004; Löbmann et al., 2003).

As mentioned previously, objectification of other users may increase self-objectification (Koval et al., 2019) which has been associated with adverse mental health outcomes such as clinical symptoms of depression and eating disorders (Calogero, 2012; Jones & Griffiths, 2015; Register et al., 2015). The emphasis placed on physical appearance on dating apps can create a sense of pressure among users, driven by the desire for success in terms of number of matches and messages received. In pursuit of increasing matches and messages, individuals may be inclined to engage in potentially harmful behaviors to conform to societal beauty standards and gain acceptance from other dating app users.

As a result of the mental anguish these participants suffered after experiencing dating app facilitated sexualized violence, they had trauma to work through, which one participant admitted she "did not process" (P19). Another participant shared that after being raped in person from a man she met on a dating app, she was admitted to an inpatient facility for two weeks in which she was diagnosed with PTSD (P8). A few participants spoke about receiving a diagnosis of PTSD because of the dating app-facilitated sexualized violence they experienced, with one woman saying it "was going to be with me a long time – haunt me for a long time" (P2).

Participants less often discussed the impacts of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence on their physical health. All experiences of physical health consequences that participants discussed were in relation to women meeting men from dating apps in person, who then perpetrated offline sexualized violence. A few participants talked about their experiences of contracting STIs from men they had met on dating apps, as one woman stated: “He actually ended up giving me chlamydia” (P15). In their study, Choi et al. (2016) investigated the link between dating app use and risky sexual behaviors among college students. They discovered that using dating apps was connected to a higher number of sexual partners, increased engagement in unprotected intercourse, a greater likelihood of inconsistent condom use, and a decreased use of condoms in the participants' most recent sexual encounter. Similarly, Sawyer et al. (2018) found that individuals who use dating apps were twice as likely to have engaged in unprotected sex. Engaging in unprotected sex can pose health risks such as unintended pregnancy and the transmission of STIs. To address these emerging risks, it has been recommended that healthcare practitioners adopt a harm reduction approach that involves developing innovative interventions to promote safe usage of dating apps and enhance psychological, relationship, and sexual health. Additionally, it has been suggested that targeting dating app users for sexual health screening, risk assessment, and risk stratification may assist in addressing these concerns effectively (Choi et al., 2016; Ciocca, 2022).

One participant described her experience of being date raped by a man she had met on a dating app, and how her physical health was impacted as a result:

> I was in the bathroom, and I was going to wipe myself, and on the second go, there was a little spot of blood coming from my rectum. And I was like, *I've never had that before. Is that from a tear? How does that happen?* At which point I question, *where did I get that?* I knew that just sort of from our interactions and our hookup that he was into ass play. Now I can look back and say, I wouldn't be surprised if you raped me. So that was sort of this initial, not necessarily thought process, but that's sort of where my brain went when I saw

> the spot of blood. Also worth noting, a few days after this date, I got my period, and I got a yeast infection at the same time. And I've never had a yeast infection in my life, or at least not a severe one. I will never actually know whether or not I was raped, but I know. (P13)

Although many participants described their experiences of physical sexual assault and rape from the men they had met on dating apps, most participants focused on how dating app-facilitated sexualized violence impacted their mental health and wellbeing and not their physical health and wellbeing.

To help heal from experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, participants engaged with various approaches to personal and collective healing. This healing has been referred to by Kelly (2017) as violence work, which encompasses the efforts made by women after experiencing sexualized violence to restore their sense of identity and belonging. It involves undoing the harms inflicted upon them to create livable lives. While some aspects of this work remain hidden, such as internal reflection, other aspects are more observable, such as engaging in counselling and seeking support. Kelly (2017) comments that it is important to note that this work requires significant time and energy, which diverts resources from other aspects of women's lives.

One personal healing practice that participants often pursued was therapy. One participant explained:

> Post therapy…I feel like I was able to go back on the apps with a healthier mindset. Knowing my power, knowing my agency, and knowing that if a situation does arise, I am able to have that power to say no and to leave to ensure my mental and physical safety… post therapy is really when I realize that I do have this choice and I do have the words and language to be able to tell someone to stop…I do have agency and control and can say no without fear of how these men will react. (P19)

Through talk therapy, many women had self-realizations that their experiences were valid and not their fault. As one participant explained:

> I wasn't able to label it as sexual assault at the time. I kind of thought it was a bad experience like I've had with other people before…a miscommunication. And when I brought up that miscommunication with him, he got really, really, defensive. And so, I thought it was totally my fault. Like, I really believed that it was my fault, and I did something wrong. I didn't label it as a sexual assault until after talking to a counsellor and realizing through that process that it was sexual assault. (P8)

Other participants had self-realizations on their own without the help of therapy. For example, one participant realized when studying for a summer course that she was sexually coerced and violated on a dating app: "I was doing one of my summer courses, and I was doing one of the readings, and I went… "this is what happened to me". And I was actually able to sit back and actually realize that that is exactly what had happened to me" (P18).

Therapy and engaging in self-reflection play crucial roles in fostering self-compassion. They have demonstrated significant efficacy in assisting women as they progress through the healing process after experiencing dating app-facilitated sexualized violence (McAllister & Vennum, 2022). Additionally, these approaches contribute to improved mental health results. By addressing the distinct symptoms of trauma, such as self-judgment and feelings of isolation, therapy and self-reflection encourage non-judgmental attitudes, cultivate self-kindness, and facilitate connections with the shared human experience of suffering (McLean et al., 2018).

Participants additionally recognized the importance of collective healing, particularly in the form of consciousness raising and education. As one woman shared:

> I tell everybody that I was sexually assaulted online and that it is a real thing…alerting women that, yes, this does happen, and the validity does not depend on if it was in person. If it was unwanted, then it is sexual violence, period…It's such an important fucking topic to be talking about… important to not only myself and my story, but also just for the safety of women and users on the apps. (P19)

Participants felt compelled to share their experiences with people so "other girls didn't find themselves in the same position" (P13). This could be because women who attributed their past vulnerability to a lack of knowledge or naive trust believed that being aware of the potential for

sexualized violence served as a protective measure (Kelly, 1988). Participants also felt they were empowering others with knowledge that they may benefit from:

> For women that haven't had the experiences directly, I feel like they take it very well just because again, they don't have this knowledge, so they feel a little bit more empowered knowing that, hey, if you do go into a situation like this, it's not okay and you have a right to say no. Step back immediately. Block If you have to, whatever, to make sure that you are safe. (P19)

Further, participants found healing in knowing that they were not alone and "that other people have these experiences too" (P10). This finding supports the explanation for why there was an unprecedented amount of sexualized violence disclosure via Twitter in 2017 using the hashtag #MeToo (Sayej, 2017).

When participants were able to share their experiences with loved ones or other women with similar experiences, they also felt supported and safe. However, most women spoke to the lack of support they received, voicing that "no one's talking about how you feel after this man just showed you his penis. There's no one asking, *hey, are you okay? That was something really disturbing that just happened…let's talk about it"* (P10). One participant similarly commented that "women talking to other women about these experiences is as important as woman talking to each other about what they make" (P9). Even though "it's tough to speak up about it [dating app facilitated sexualized violence] …if we don't, it's going to get worse. That is what is going to happen" (P10). These findings reflect the important concepts of consciousness-raising and sisterhood within radical feminism; consciousness-raising being instrumental in enlightening and educating women and collective action and sisterhood emerging as a result (Rosewarne, 2020). The technique of consciousness-raising is recognized for creating the essential setting where women can openly discuss sensitive and sometimes distressing experiences. Within this supportive environment, for example, discussions about rape took place with honesty and

without judgment. Those involved in the radical movement began to recognize rape as a shared experience among women, one that carried political significance (Bevacqua, 2000). Sisterhood similarly emphasizes the importance of women creating cohesive and revolutionary groups to challenge male authority and domination (Rowland & Klein, 1996), and radical feminist stress that sisterhood is powerful (Morgan, 1970). Through sharing and exchanging stories, women not only recognize their common experiences of subordination but also understand the imperative of collective action for instigating change (Morgan, 1970): “Since a woman's problems are not hers individually but those of women as a whole, they cannot be addressed except as a whole” (MacKinnon, 1989, p. 91). Given that dating app-facilitated sexualized violence is only recently being discussed amongst women, a cohesive sisterhood has yet to fully develop in response to this issue. However, we have seen consciousness-raising be successful in recent times in relation to sexualized violence with the #MeToo movement, in which there was a reshaping of the institutional landscape to promote greater focus on matters related to sexualized violence (Grosser & Tyler, 2021).

In a qualitative review, it was identified that relating to others and feeling a sense of safety was critical in the process of recovery after experiencing sexualized violence (Draucker et al., 2009). Kelly (1988) similarly found that the most mentioned source of help, support, and insight for women coping with the aftermath of sexualized violence was talking to other women. Further, connecting with others who have experienced similar trauma can help survivors replace avoidance with compassion, reduce feelings of shame and self-blame, and normalize trauma responses (Kelly, 1988). A critique put forth by hooks (1984) challenges the tendency of (white) women to bond over shared victimization rather than focusing on their strength and ability to act; hooks suggests that true liberation and the end of sexualized violence requires collective action

and a shift from individual survival to collective resistance. The women who participated in this study recognized the possibility and significance of social change and acknowledged the need for collective action to help end dating app-facilitated sexualized violence (Kelly, 1988).

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to explore how gender and technology shape women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. Through employing a feminist thematic analysis, informed by technofeminism and radical feminism, I theorize that both gender and technology intersect to shape women's experiences of this phenomenon through three central themes: "Dating App Culture", "Dating Apps as Violent Tools", and "Resistance to Dating App-Facilitated Sexualized Violence". Radical feminism and technofeminism lay the grounding that dating apps are embedded in a larger socio-cultural environment where gender relations and user culture intersect with dating app technology to influence the perpetuation, and at times the amplification and resistance, of sexualized violence against women. The impact of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence on women's health and well-being, as well as their journey towards healing and recovery, was also reflected upon by participants and outlined in the previous chapter. This chapter concludes my dissertation by discussing the significance, implications, and limitations of the present research.

Significance of Research

To my knowledge, this work is the first of its kind to qualitatively explore women's experiences of dating app facilitated sexualized violence in Canada, thereby contributing to an advancement of knowledge in this emerging field of study. Employing a feminist lens to examine this phenomenon facilitated exploration through a gendered and intersectional lens, which was critical when aiming to better understand the causes and consequences of sexualized violence against women. Radical feminist Charlotte Bunch (1983) has written that theory is not "simply intellectually interesting", but that it is "crucial to the survival of feminism" (p. 248). Even though radical feminism emerged more than fifty years ago, the findings of this study indicate that it continues to hold significance in addressing contemporary issues of sexualized

violence and gender inequities, contributing to the sustained survival and progress of feminism. Additionally, the concept of patriarchy remains in a state of constant evolution, adapting to various historical eras and socio-political and cultural contexts (Bleier, 1987). This was displayed regarding hookup and dating app culture in my research, for example. Whether manifested in online or offline contexts, the aspiration of radical feminism to eradicate sexualized violence against women is far from being achieved, and the persistent issue of sexualized violence against women emphasizes the enduring relevance of radical feminist theory and activism today (Rosewarne, 2020). Morgan's (1978) position continues to hold true: progress to date may have pruned the branches but the roots of oppression against women remain embedded (p. 9).

Feminist scholarship and theory that highlights the role of technology is pertinent in keeping feminism alive, as to echo another technofeminist researcher,

> I think for the younger feminists there is no feminism without technology because they cannot imagine how they would possibly articulate it. How they would network around it, how they would archive it, how they would understand it in dialogue with other people. (DeVoss, 2019, p. 75)

Technofeminism is not widely used in current literature, yet this research illustrates its multifaceted and intersectional approach to comprehending dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. It clarifies how dating apps can both perpetuate and challenge sexualized violence, intersecting with broader social structures to (re)produce harm against women. Despite dating apps offering a radically new mode of communication, the findings of this research affirm the fundamental technofeminist assertion that technology operates within pre-existing gender relations and inequalities (Wajcman, 2004), thus reproducing gender discrimination experienced offline. Through a technofeminist perspective, this study theorizes how experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence are influenced by both gender and technology, countering

extremist viewpoints associated with radical feminism that are either overly idealistic or excessively pessimistic regarding technology's impact on women's liberation. Technofeminism aids in framing dating apps as not inherently empowering or fundamentally distinct from older technologies. However, this study also employs a technofeminist lens to analyze how dating apps can offer women opportunities for empowerment and resistance against sexualized violence.

As stated by Kelly (2013), “much feminist theory has centred on men’s all too frequent use (abuse) of power and control and, in so doing, has paid insufficient attention to analysing and documenting women’s persistent and consistent resistance to it” (p. 392). This research paid particular attention to women’s resistance of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, contributing to this much needed perspective in sexualized violence research. Documenting and validating these experiences of resistance make it possible to understand the complexity of women’s dating app experiences (Kelly, 2013). The findings of this study further support the technofeminist position that “technology is neither inherently patriarchal nor inherently liberating for women” (Wajcman, 2004, p. 7). Dating apps both reinforce traditional gender norms and gender inequities that are harmful to women and can be a liberating tool that help women exercise resistance, sexual agency, and assert power over men. For feminists, an important question is how, and if, technologies are providing new opportunities for gender relations. The findings of this present work display that dating apps have introduced new dimensions to gender relations, both positive and negative. However, as continually pressed throughout this research, contemporary technology, such as dating apps, have not achieved the type of gender equity early feminists sought because until the root of oppression against women is uprooted, “technology will simply reproduce inequality, not eliminate it” (Halbert, 2004).

Another important question for technofeminist researchers to address is "how and why women access technology in their daily lives?" (Blair, 2012). From this research, it is known that many women access dating apps in their daily lives to seek companionship, form meaningful connections, and explore potential intimate and/or romantic relationships. Despite the risks, woman will continue to date and will continue to use dating apps. It is also projected that most young people today will date entirely online (Grand View Research, 2023) and, therefore, there is an urgent need to educate young people on the importance of safeguarding themselves against the risks of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, ensuring their online interactions are respectful, consensual, and as safe as possible. This research study provides valuable insights on how to prevent and combat dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, which, if implemented, would promote a more equitable and safer dating app environment.

Last, the notion that conducting research on sensitive topics can be detrimental to participants is being questioned by recent research (Dragiewicz et al., 2023), and this study adds to that growing body of literature. Dragiewicz et al. (2023) references several studies that find participation in research on traumatic experiences to be low risk and less stressful than everyday events; generally positive and beneficial to research participants; and advantageous to society by assisting with preventing future violence, improving support services and resources, and enhancing training of researchers and practitioners. Within the context of my data collection, participants voiced appreciation for a safe space to discuss their experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. They emphasized the need for women to be able to openly discuss these topics with other women, for both preventative and healing purposes. The women who participated expressed their gratitude for being able to participate in this research and contribute to enhanced awareness and knowledge generation in an area that has been

insufficiently explored and poorly understood. The heartfelt expressions of appreciation from the research participants underscore the profound impact of including women who have experienced sexualized violence in research and highlights the importance of continuing to conduct research that addresses, and aims to eradicate, dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. Overall, women who have experienced sexualized violence can provide the most profound insights into their own experiences, making their perspectives the most valuable source of information for guiding efforts to prevent and address sexualized violence. To reiterate Dragiewicz et al. (2023), "research on the implications of asking about violence and abuse raises questions about the costs of *not* asking about it" (p. 1147). Failing to ask women about their experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence overlooks an important aspect of women's safety and well-being in today's digital dating landscape, as well as maintains women's silence and lack of awareness regarding this phenomenon.

Implications for Health, Practice, & Future Research

The findings of this research have implications for the health and healing of women, dating app companies, educational initiatives, and future research. These implications are discussed below.

Health

This study highlights that online experiences of sexualized violence can lead to physical and psychological harms that are similar to those experienced from in-person sexualized violence. All women in this study discussed the negative impacts of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence on their mental health and well-being. They experienced anxieties around dating apps and had higher levels of caution and mistrust towards men. Many participants took breaks from dating apps to cope with the traumatic experiences and sought therapy to process

their emotions and realize that they were not at fault. Their self-esteem was negatively affected, which led some participants to engage in harmful behaviors like unsafe sexual encounters and disordered eating behaviours. A couple of the participants also received a diagnosis of PTSD after their experience. In addition to mental health impacts, several participants experienced physical health consequences, such as contracting STIs from men they met on dating apps. Healing from dating app-facilitated sexualized violence involved personal and collective approaches, including therapy, consciousness raising, education, and connecting with other survivors to share experiences, seek support, and challenge patriarchal structures.

Overall, the findings of this study emphasize the profound impact that dating app-facilitated sexualized violence can have on the mental and emotional health, as well as the physical well-being, of women who experience it. Healthcare professionals can use these findings as a starting point for enhancing prevention and intervention strategies, as well as to improve the provision of care, support, and resources needed to assist women in their recovery after experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. Dating apps may also be a useful platform for implementing health initiatives aimed at preventing sexualized violence and reducing the transmission of STIs. It is imperative that healthcare providers are well-informed about dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, as based on the interviews with women in this study, women may be hesitant to discuss and/or label online experiences of sexualized violence as sexualized violence. Healthcare providers should also refrain from assigning blame or stigmatizing women based on their use of dating apps. It is essential for healthcare providers to recognize that these platforms are commonly used tools that can facilitate violence, and women who use dating apps are not responsible for the harm – the men who perpetrate it are.

Practice

The women in this study recognized that dating apps exacerbate sexualized violence against women through their design, affordances, and features. Participants expressed their desire for a safer dating app that prioritized the safety and needs of women, and for dating app companies to assume greater responsibility and commitment towards ensuring user safety and combating dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. Dating app companies could use these findings to implement significant changes to their platforms, prioritizing not only the safety and well-being of women but all their users. Such changes need to involve the amendment of current features and the implementation of new ones; improved verification processes; prohibiting photo sharing; actively addressing toxic behaviors within their user communities; banning of violent users; and implementing stricter moderation and reporting mechanisms. More specific feature suggestions are presented below in Table 3. Developers and app designers can apply these findings to improve features that are contributing to, and/or have the potential to mitigate, the prevalence of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. By taking proactive steps to address dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, dating app companies can contribute to creating a safer and more inclusive online dating environment.

Table 3 Suggestions for Dating App Design & Features

Suggestions for Dating App Design & Features Re: Improving Dating App-Facilitated Sexualized Violence
• Increase requirements for profile substance that reveals authentic information about a person (e.g., asking users more about their backgrounds, interests, communication preferences, intentions, and expectations) • Decrease the focus on physical appearance in profiles • Limit access to how many profiles users have access to at once • More robust verification mechanisms to better ensure users' identity and authenticity • Examine the user matching process, removing low-effort features and avoiding elements that could mimic the addictive aspects of gaming and gambling, such as the swiping mechanism • Prohibit photo sharing

- Limit GPS technology on dating apps to safeguard user privacy and prevent potential misuse, such as stalking
- Increase content moderation
- Improve reporting systems re: efficacy and transparency
- Aid in collection of digital evidence
- Improve methods for barring banned users from rejoining the dating app
- Introduce user communication features for sharing information about negative encounters and potentially dangerous individuals, such as incorporating a virtual whisper network or a rating system within the dating app
- Ability to view mutual connections between matches and current social networks (e.g., connecting Facebook, Instagram, or other social networking profiles)
- Embed access to 24/7 customer support within the dating app
- Embed supports and resources regarding sexualized violence within the dating app
- Prioritize safety over profitability when making design choices and developing new features
- Include women in the design and development of dating apps

This study highlights the need for more inclusive design practices that consider women's safety needs and current experiences to help mitigate dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. Therefore, it is imperative to expand the technofeminist perspective into the design and development of dating apps by actively engaging women in the design and development process, rather than viewing them only as passive users of the technology (Wajcman, 2010). The lack of racial neutrality in dating apps can also be attributed to their development being primarily by white men, which leads to a replication of that specific worldview. This further supports the calling for the inclusion of women from diverse backgrounds in the development of dating app technology.

All women in this study took various precautions to protect themselves from dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, recognizing that there are gendered safety concerns associated with their dating app use. Women carefully evaluated potential matches, engaged in conversations to gauge personal values, and used social media to verify identities. Participants also resisted and challenged men who held sexist beliefs and made sure to keep conversations on the app before meeting in person. When meeting someone in person, participants opted for

public places, shared their location with friends, and devised escape plans. Some even made clothing choices with safety in mind. Women in general can utilize these suggestions to help protect themselves from experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. However, it is important to note that participants expressed frustration with the burden of such safety work, believing they shouldn't have to go to such lengths to protect themselves. This study highlights the need for dating apps and society as a whole to address the issue of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence and shift the responsibility away from the individual. In absence of this reality, however, the safety work and resistance strategies utilized by the women in this study could prove beneficial to other women in enhancing their self-protection.

The women in the study emphasized the importance of education for both men and women to combat dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. They acknowledged that they were not adequately educated about the risks of dating apps and how to use them safely; as a result, learning many lessons the hard way. Participants believed that education on this topic should be incorporated into school curricula, starting from a young age, to teach about consent, healthy relationships, and safe online behavior. Providing safe spaces for open and honest conversations was seen as essential for educating people about dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, particularly young men. It was expressed that young men should be educated about the perspective of women specifically, to foster empathy and understanding of the women experience and how it differs. Overall, women saw increased education as a crucial step towards ending dating app-facilitated sexualized violence and promoting safe and respectful interactions online. Enhancing educational programs and initiatives can aid not only in preventing dating app-related sexualized violence but also in online violence more broadly.

Future Research

It is evident that more qualitative and quantitative research is needed on dating app-facilitated sexualized violence to further understand its pervasiveness, related consequences, and the experiences of those affected by it. Research in this field should not solely focus on the technology itself but also consider the sociocultural contexts in which dating apps exist and are used. While outside the scope of this study, research is needed on the experiences of men in relation to dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, considering their roles as both perpetrators and victims. Further, understanding the profiles of men who perpetrate dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, as well as their reasons for perpetrating it, could better contribute to prevention strategies and educational initiatives related to dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women.

The intersection and synergy between radical, techno, and intersectional feminism in the context of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence warrants a more in-depth exploration from feminist scholars. This is an understudied area and further attention is particularly required to explore how various forms of identity (e.g., age, race, class, physical ability) intersect and overlap to create unique experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. Additional research in this area is essential for developing comprehensive prevention and intervention approaches that can effectively address the multi-layered nature of this issue. Such research will also better enable the creation of inclusive support systems and resources that consider the diverse and varied experiences of women who encounter dating-app facilitated sexualized violence. As explained further below, research that focuses on cultural and regional differences to determine the extent to which different contexts create different experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence for women is also needed.

How to improve consent and communication on dating apps presents another gap in the current research. Research should further examine how consent is negotiated and understood on dating apps, considering perspectives from both men and women. By better understanding communication and consent patterns, and how they could be altered, occurrences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence could be reduced. How to build consent culture on dating apps, and how technology may be able to assist with doing so, also warrants further attention.

Little remains known about the mental and physical health consequences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. Further research should explore such consequences, the coping mechanisms employed by those who experience it, and the individual and collective healing strategies that have been successful for women. It would be beneficial to explore if online communities and whisper networks, where women can share their experiences and receive support, are useful in serving as a prevention and healing strategy. Determining if educational information, supports, and resources delivered through the apps themselves contribute to mitigating dating app-facilitated sexualized violence would also be a valuable area of investigation. Exploring these topic areas from a longitudinal perspective would be helpful in better understanding how dating app-facilitated sexualized violence evolves over time and its long-term impact on both individuals and broader societal attitudes and responses. Future research efforts should also extend to investigating the legal implications of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. This research should assess various possibilities for modernized legislative actions, law enforcement procedures and protocols, legal frameworks, investigative processes, and industry regulations with the objectives of reducing the risks associated with dating app use, protecting users from harm, improving reporting mechanisms, and establishing legal accountability for perpetrators.

Limitations

Given the qualitative nature of this work, it is important to note that these findings are not generalizable and may not be representative of the larger population of women who experience dating app-facilitated sexualized violence and/or women who use dating apps. This work also relied heavily on my interpretation and analysis, and different researchers with different personal backgrounds may have analyzed the data differently and, therefore, generated different interpretations. All the participants in this study were women residing in Canada, and the findings are specific to this setting and cultural context. As Wajcman (1991) argues, technofeminism is not a singular position and, therefore, how technology is used will vary depending on an individual's position within the socio-technical network. Women who reside outside of Canada, and particularly North America, are very likely to have contextually specific experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence that differ from the findings of this study; the mutual shaping of gender and technology and how women understand and respond to their experiences of sexualized violence greatly depends on the social, cultural, political, and temporal context within which the experience occurs within (Kelly et al., 1996). Further, forms of identity such as age, gender, race, class, and physical ability impact how women experience dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, which may also limit the transferability of these findings.

This study explored the experiences of women between the ages of 18 and 34 years of age. It is important to note that women of all ages are increasingly using dating apps and, therefore, risk experiencing dating app-facilitated sexualized violence; various age groups warrant additional research focus. This study is also limited to a specific subset of the population, i.e., women who have self-identified experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized

violence. Without a comparison group of women who have not experienced dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, it us unknown how common these experiences are more generally. Recruitment for this study was exclusively conducted on Instagram and women without Instagram accounts would likely not have seen the advertisement and missed the opportunity to participate. Last, given the resource constraints of a PhD research project, participant compensation was not offered. This was a deterrent for several women who were interested in participating but not without being compensated for their time and sharing of their personal experience in relation to this research.

Closing Remarks

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to the women who participated in this study and generously shared their experiences with me. Their participation has been instrumental in taking a much-needed step towards better understanding women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. I stand in solidarity with these women and the countless others who have had similar experiences. This work has brought attention to the pervasive issue of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women and has provided a catalyst for change in our collective pursuit of safer online spaces.

This research aims to help break the silence surrounding dating app-facilitated sexualized violence and empower other woman to speak out about their experiences and seek the necessary supports. Sharing the findings of this study will ideally help prevent other women from experiencing dating app-facilitated sexualized violence, as well as aid in the development of prevention and healing strategies. Moreover, this research identified common perpetrator patterns and behaviors that are both a result of societal norms and technological tools. These insights can be valuable for dating app users, educators, practitioners, and developers in their

efforts to promote a safer online dating environment for women. Overall, better understanding and purposefully addressing dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women is a vital step toward promoting gender equality in today's digital age. Women deserve the freedom to fully participate in dating app culture without fear of pervasive and haunting sexualized violence: in the spirit of radical feminism, to enjoy ourselves while we do it (Chester, 1979). The findings from this study aim to propel us closer to actualizing this reality.

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Appendix A: Ovid MEDLINE All Search Strategy

1	Gender-Based Violence/
2	Rape/
3	Sexual Harrassment/
4	Sex Offenses/
5	or/1-4
6	exp Cell Phone/
7	exp Computers, Handheld/
8	Mobile Applications/
9	Social Media/
10	or/6-9
11	5 and 10
12	(dating adj2 (abuse* or assault* or harass* or violen*)).ti,ab.
13	(gender* adj2 (abuse* or assault* or harass* or violen*)).ti,ab.
14	misogyn*.ti,ab.
15	(partner? adj2 (abuse* or assault* or harass* or violen*)).ti,ab.
16	(rape? or rapist?).ti,ab.
17	((sex or sexual*) adj3 (abuse* or abusing or aggress* or assault* or coerce? or coercing or coercion? or crime? or criminal* or disturb* or explicit or exploit* or groom* or harass* or obsess* or offen* or oppress* or perpetrat* or predator* or unsolicited or unwanted or trauma* or victim* or vilificat* or violen*)).ti,ab.
18	(sexism or sexist?).ti,ab.
19	(sexploitation or sextortion).ti,ab.
20	stalk*.ti,ab.
21	or/12-20
22	10 and 21
23	((dating or gender* or partner? or sex or sexual*) adj3 (abuse* or abusing or aggress* or assault* or coerce? or coercing or coercion? or crime? or criminal* or disturb* or explicit or exploit* or groom* or harass* or obsess* or offen* or oppress* or perpetrat* or predator* or unsolicited or unwanted or trauma* or victim* or vilificat* or violen*) adj5 (cell* phone? or cellphone? or iphone or mobile phone? or smart phone? or smartphone? or ipad? or ipod? or tablet? or social media or facebook or instagram or snapchat or twitter or sexting or text messag* or texting or cyber* or technolog* or virtual* or online or internet or web)).ti,ab.
24	((dating or gender* or partner? or sex or sexual*) adj3 (abuse* or abusing or aggress* or assault* or coerce? or coercing or coercion? or crime? or criminal* or disturb* or explicit or exploit* or groom* or harass* or obsess* or offen* or oppress* or perpetrat* or predator* or unsolicited or unwanted or trauma* or victim* or vilificat* or violen*) adj5 ((cellular or cyber* or dating or geosocial or hookup or hook-up or lesbian* or match mak* or matchmak* or mobile or sexual network* or social network*) adj2 app*)).ti,ab.
25	((dating or gender* or partner? or sex or sexual*) adj3 (abuse* or abusing or aggress* or assault* or coerce? or coercing or coercion? or crime? or criminal* or disturb* or explicit or exploit* or groom* or harass* or obsess* or offen* or oppress* or perpetrat* or predator* or unsolicited or unwanted or trauma* or victim* or vilificat* or violen*) adj5 (ashley madison

	or badoo or (bumble not bee) or clover or coffee meets bagel or eharmony or happn or hily or hinge or okcupid or "match.com" or pickable or "plenty of fish" or "the league" or tinder or zoosk)).ti,ab.
26	((misogyn* or rape? or rapist? or sexism or sexist? or sexploitation or sextortion or stalk* or cyberstalk*) adj5 (cell* phone? or cellphone? or iphone or mobile phone? or smart phone? or smartphone? or ipad? or ipod? or tablet? or social media or facebook or instagram or snapchat or twitter or sexting or text messag* or texting or cyber* or technolog* or virtual* or online or internet or web)).ti,ab.
27	((misogyn* or rape? or rapist? or sexism or sexist? or sexploitation or sextortion or stalk* or cyberstalk*) adj5 ((cellular or cyber* or dating or geosocial or hookup or hook-up or lesbian* or match mak* or matchmak* or mobile or sexual network* or social network*) adj2 app*)).ti,ab.
28	((misogyn* or rape? or rapist? or sexism or sexist? or sexploitation or sextortion or stalk* or cyberstalk*) adj5 (ashley madison or badoo or (bumble not bee) or clover or coffee meets bagel or eharmony or happn or hily or hinge or okcupid or "match.com" or pickable or "plenty of fish" or "the league" or tinder or zoosk)).ti,ab.
29	or/23-28
30	11 or 22 or 29
31	Female/ or exp Women/ or (female? or girl? or wom#n or wom#ns).ti,ab,kw,kf.
32	Male/ or exp Men/ or (boy? or male? or man or men or mens).ti,ab,kw,kf.
33	32 not 31
34	30 not 33
35	exp Health Services Administration/
36	(qualitative* or ethnograph* or content analys?s or thematic analys?s or phenomenolog* or theory or theoretical or case stud* or narrative or interview* or focus group* or mixed method* or survey* or questionnaire* or feminist or feminism or cyberfeminism or technofeminism).ti,ab,kw,kf.
37	px.fs.
38	or/35-37
39	34 and 38

Appendix B: Summary of Included Studies

First author, year	Title	Aim of study	Method	Participants	Type of technology facilitated sexualized violence experienced by women
Amundsen, 2021	'A male dominance kind of vibe': Approaching unsolicited 'dick pics' as sexism	Examine women's accounts of receiving unsolicited 'dick pics' from men	Qualitative one-on-one interviews; thematic analysis	44 women aged 18–38 years based in Cambridgeshire, UK. 30 identified as heterosexual, 10 as bisexual, 1 as queer, 1 as lesbian and 2 as not sure. Thirty-five described themselves as White British or White Other, with four identifying as South Asian, two as East Asian, two as Mixed British/ African, and one as Mixed British/Asian. Twenty-two were in relationships and 22 were single. 42 of the 44 women were either in the process of undertaking a higher education degree, or they had already taken 1 or more such degrees	Unsolicited dick pictures; misogyny; harassment
Chen, 2020	'You really have to have a thick skin': A cross-cultural perspective on how online harassment influences female journalists	Understand how women journalists navigate the digital sphere of online commenting and what influence harassment in that space has	Qualitative interviews; thematic analysis	75 female journalists aged 21 -60 years (average: 34 years). Participants had been on the job from 9 months to 35 years and worked or had worked in Germany, India, Taiwan, the United Kingdom,	Online gender-based harassment; misogyny; sexist comments

		on their journalistic routines		or the United States of America in a media outlet: newspaper (31), TV/radio (23), web only (16), and magazines (5). Participants were Asian (36), White (28), Black (7), and Hispanic/Latina (4)	
Clevenger, 2021	The "third-victimization": The cybervictimization of sexual assault survivors and their families	Help provide insights into the experiences that primary and secondary survivors experience	Qualitative semi-structured interviews; thematic content analysis	48 women survivors of sexual assault, 18-71 years of age with an average age of 32 years, identified as heterosexual (77%), bisexual (6%), lesbian (17%) and Caucasian (40%), Multiracial (29%), African American (17%), Hispanic (13%), and Asian (2%) 89 secondary survivors 19-78 years old. Most secondary survivors were family members: grandmothers (9%), mothers (26%), sisters (24%), female spouses (22%), and friends (19%)	Cybervictimization: cyberstalking; harassment; cybersexual exploitation/sextortion; image-based sexual abuse (e.g., revenge porn)
Eckert, 2018	Fighting for recognition: Online abuse of women bloggers in Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States	Explore the negative situations women bloggers encounter and how they respond	Qualitative semi-structured interviews; textual analysis	109 bloggers who write about feminism, family, and/or maternity politics: 19 in Switzerland, 34 in Germany, 19 in the United Kingdom, and 37 in the United States. Most	Abusive comments; misogyny; stalking; harassment; rape threats; encounters that materialize in offline life

				participants were citizens of the country where they resided and identified as mothers (62.6%), Caucasian (79.3), heterosexual (70.1), held a university degree (76.2), and married (53.3). Age ranged from 22-69 years; median age was 38 years. 22 participants had blogged for 6 months to 2 years, 55 participants 2–6 years, 26 participants 6–10 years, and 6 more than 10 years	
Emelianchik-Key, 2022	Dating violence and the impact of technology: Examining the lived experiences of sorority members	Understand the dating violence experience and perpetration of college-age women, to understand how college-age women conceptualize violence in dating relationships, and to learn more about the role of technology within their lived experiences	Mixed-methods; qualitative focus groups (phenomenology) and TSDV standardized instrument (SPSS for descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlations)	70 sorority members aged 18–21 years. 69 self-identified as cisgender women, and one participant identified as a trans woman. The participants racially identified as follows: 61 Caucasian, one African American, two Hispanic, four Asian American, and two Multiracial. Of the sample, 66 participants identified as heterosexual, three participants identified as lesbian, and one participant identified as gender-expansive. Of these participants, 45.7%	Monitoring/stalking; harassment

				reported currently being single, 51.4% dating, 1.4% married, and 1.4% other (not specified)	
Freed, 2018	"A stalker's paradise": How intimate partner abusers exploit technology	Detail how abusers in intimate partner violence contexts exploit technologies to intimidate, threaten, monitor, impersonate, harass, or otherwise harm their victims	Qualitative focus groups and semi-structure interviews; thematic analysis	89 participants (39 survivors and 50 professionals) from five Family Justice Centres Survivor participants were all female, ranged in age from 18 to 65 years (average = 42 years), came from a wide range of countries (Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Central America, Europe, North America, South America), and had diverse educational backgrounds. All except one reported that they no longer lived with their abuser The 50 professional participants consisted of 45 females and five males, ranging in age from 22 to 56 years (average = 33 years). Our participants worked in a wide range of roles, including social workers, case workers, attorneys, and police	Ownership-based access; account/device compromise; harassment; cyberstalking; revenge porn; coercion; encounters that materialize in offline life
Freed, 2017	Digital technologies and	Develop a nuanced	Qualitative semi-structured	40 professionals who work at the	Ownership-based access; digital

	intimate partner violence: A qualitative analysis with multiple stakeholders	understanding of the role played by digital technologies in the intimate partner violence (IPV) ecosystem	interviews and focus groups; thematic analysis	Family Justice Centers and 32 survivors of IPV who visit the Family Justice Centers to receive services and support Clients included 32 females with an average age of 35 (min age 25, max age 65). Countries of origin include Argentina, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru, Russia, USA, UK Professionals included case manager/case workers (16), social workers (10), attorneys/paralegals (8), and police officers (6). There were 35 females and 5 males with an average age of 33 (min age of 22 and max age of 56)	security/privacy; cyberstalking; harassment
Golzard, 2016	Negotiating intimacy through social media: Challenges and opportunities for Muslim women in Iran	Offer insights into the ways in which Muslim Iranian women use social media platforms (blogs, Facebook and dating sites) to overcome the boundaries of	Qualitative in-depth interviews; thematic analysis	10 female Muslim users of social media between the ages of 18 and 40. Participants were identified as users of Facebook, blogs or dating sites	Censorship; harassment; misogyny; unsolicited explicit pictures

		physical space and create intimate relationships online			
Gray, 2012	Intersecting oppressions and online communities: Examining the experiences of women of color in Xbox Live	Focus on oppressions experienced by women of color in Xbox Live, an online gaming community	Qualitative; ethnographic participant observations and narrative interviews	12 Black women from Xbox Live community (19-31 years). 8 identified as African American and 4 as Puerto Rican; 7 identified as lesbian, 2 as heterosexual, and 3 as bisexual	Sexism; harassment; mysogyny
Hodson, 2018	I get by with a little help from my friends: The ecological model and support for women scholars experiencing online harassment	Understand the different mechanisms for support that women scholars rely upon following experiences of online harassment	Qualitative interviews; thematic analysis	14 self-identified woman scholars who experienced online abuse (ages 26-70). The highest degree attained by most participants was a PhD (13); one person had an M.A (1)	Online abuse and harassment; misogyny; sexism; unsolicited explicit pictures
Jane, 2018	Gendered cyberhate as workplace harassment and economic vandalism	Map and study the history, manifestations, nature, prevalence, etiology, and consequences of gendered cyberhate	Qualitative in-depth, semi-structured, interviews; grounded theory; casuistic approach to case study vignettes	52 Australian women ages 19-52 who experienced gendered cyberhate.	Abuse; misogyny; sexism; harassment; cyberstalking; encounters that materialize in offline life
Lewis, 2018	Misogyny online: Extending the boundaries of hate crime	Considers whether online misogynistic abuse is a form of hate crime	Qualitative; questionnaire and interviews; thematic analysis	227 women complete the questionnaire: 18-56 years of age; White (83%), Asian (4%), Black (3%), Mixed 4%), Other (6%); heterosexual (55%), bisexual	Misogyny; sexism; encounters that materialize in offline life

				(24%), lesbian (16%), other (5%). From the women who completed the questionnaire, 17 completed in-depth interviews	
Messing, 2020	Intersections of stalking and technology-based abuse: Emerging definitions, conceptualization, and measurement	Describe data on stalking and technology-based abuse that were collected from survivors of intimate partner violence	Mixed methods. Secondary data analysis of stalking and technology abuse from two different studies. Study A: mixed-methods survey and qualitative interviews. Study B: a longitudinal, web-based quantitative study. Qualitative description for quantitative findings and structural/thematic coding for qualitative interviews	Women 18 years of age or older and self- reported a history of intimate partner violence. Over a period of 6 years (2012–2018), data were collected from survivors of intimate partner violence (n = 1137) receiving services from domestic violence programs (including shelter). Survey n=1037; interviews n=100	Cyberstalking; harassment; cyber revenge; encounters that materialize in offline life
Miller, 2022	Journalists, harassment, and emotional labor: The case of women in on-air roles at US local television stations	Investigates the emotional labor – the work of managing one's emotions to keep others happy – that is required for journalists negotiating harassment	Qualitative in-depth interviews; thematic analysis	19 women working in on-air journalism roles at US local television stations; 23 to 34 years old, with a median age of 25. Years of experience ranged from 1 to 12 years, with a median experience level of 4 years	Harassment as unwanted sexual advances, threats, and criticisms; unsolicited explicit pictures

Pashang, 2019	The mental health impact of cyber sexual violence on youth identity	Apply an anti-oppression approach and a gender-transformative health promo-tion framework to explore the mental health implications of cyber sexual violence	Qualitative; focus groups, in-depth interviews, art-making session, textual analysis, and policy analysis; grounded theory, deductive analysis, for the images data visual methodologies and analytical approach were applied	25 emerging young women living in the Grater Toronto Area (GTA) between the ages of 19 to 29, who come from diverse regions of the world, including North America, Africa, Caribbean, Europe, Middle East, Asia, and Australia, and who have experienced cyber-sexualized violence [in]directly	Harassment; revenge porn; encounters that materialize in offline life
Recio, 2022	Blurred lines: Technologies of heterosexual coercion in "sugar dating"	Explore whether Seeking.com's discursive construction of sugar dating could be understood as "technology of heterosexual coercion", and whether this "technology" allows sexual consent to be clearly and freely communicated	Empirical data from Seeking.com and Qualitative semi-structured interviews; triangulation through critical discourse analysis	4 UK-based women between the ages of 18 and 30 who were sugar dating or had previously done so	Coercion; encounters that materialize in offline life
Salerno-Ferraro, 2021	Young women's experiences with technology-facilitated sexual violence from male strangers	Explore women's experiences of stranger perpetrated TFSV in the 21st century, and the forms that it may take in an online space, specifically looking at the prevalence, frequency, and	Mixed methods; descriptive and thematic analysis	388 women from an introductory psychology class at a large Canadian University. Ages ranged from 18-38 years. The sample was ethnically diverse, with 33.35% identifying as South Asian, 28.61% identifying as White, 10/82% identifying as Black, 10.05% as	Harassment; sexually inappropriate messages; sexist remarks or comments; seductive behaviour or come-ons; unwanted sexual attention; unsolicited explicit pictures

		nature of harassment online, as well as the emotional impact that such harassment has on women and the strategies, they employ to deal with unwanted online male attention		East Asian, 9.54% as Middle Eastern, and 7.74% identifying as a mixed or other heritage	
Vandeweerd, 2016	Positives and negatives of online dating according to women 50+	To understand the positives and negatives of online dating according to the lived experiences of women 50 years of age and older	Qualitative interviews; thematic analysis	45 women aged 50+ who lived within 50 miles of the zip code 33602 (Tampa, Florida) and reported using the Internet to meet new people. Ages ranged from 50-77 years (average age of 57.3). 13% were African-American/Black (n = 6), 7% were Hispanic/Latina (n = 3), 78% were White (n = 35), and 2% reported their race as “other” (n = 1)	Harassment; sexual aggression; stalking; encounters that materialize in offline life

Appendix C: Eligibility Screening Questionnaire in Opinio

1) Are you between 18 and 34 years of age?

Yes
No

2) Do you reside in Canada?

Yes
No

3) Do you identify as a woman?

Yes
No

4) In the last 12 months, have you used dating apps on at least a monthly basis?

Yes
No

5) Do you primarily seek men online?

Yes
No

6) Have you experienced dating app-facilitated sexualized violence (eg. Unsolicited nudes, sexist/misogynist messages, online sexual harassment, cyberstalking, coercion into an unwanted sexual act)?

Yes
No

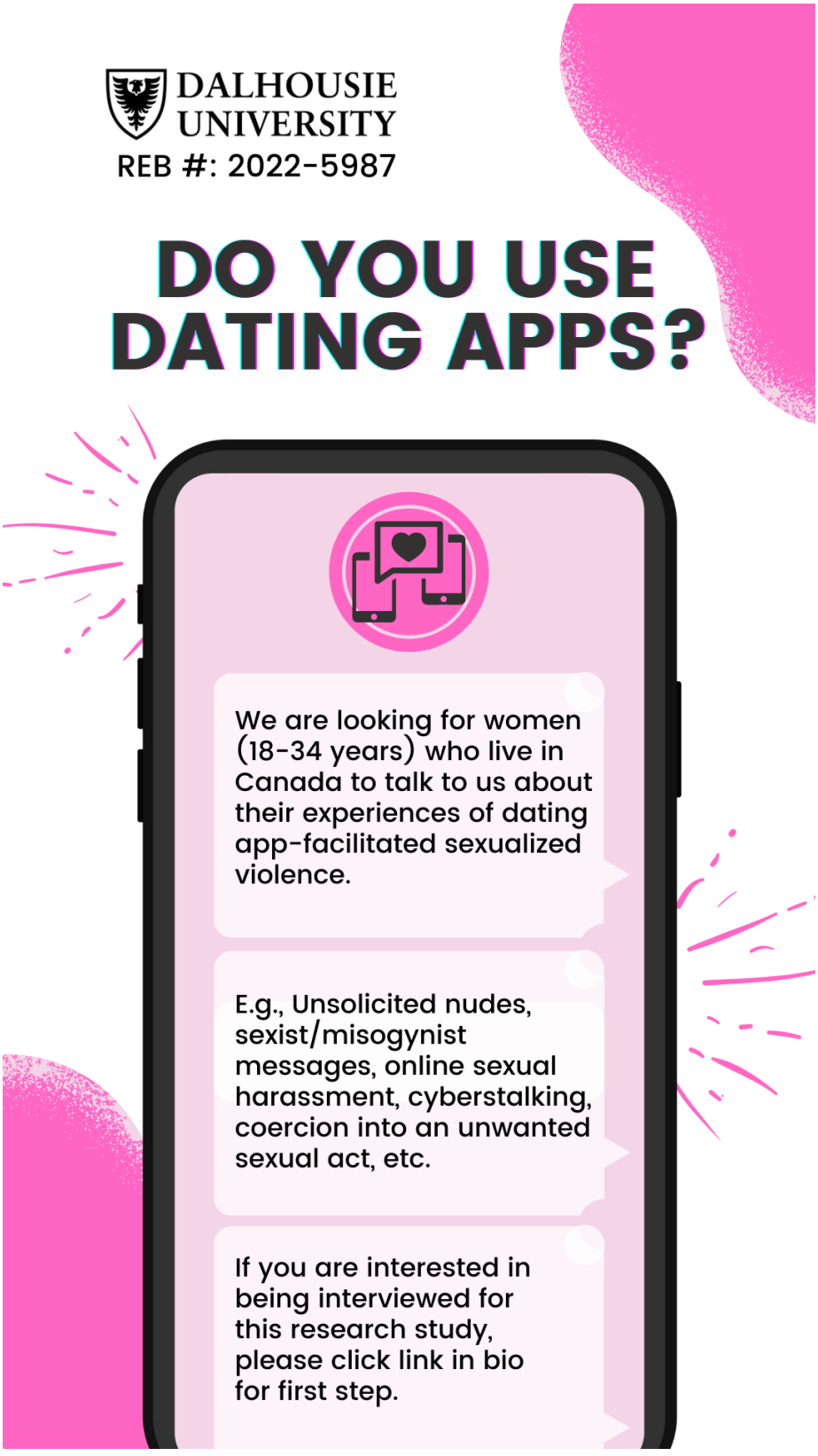
Please provide the best email address to contact you for the next phase of the research:

_____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this eligibility screening. You will be contacted via email if you are eligible to participate in this research study further, which will include your participation in one phone interview that will be approximately 60 minutes long.

Appendix D: Instagram Feed Advertisement

Appendix E: Instagram Story Advertisement



Appendix F: Informed Consent Form

Project title: A new platform for sexualized violence: A feminist analysis of women's dating app experiences

Lead researcher: Nicole Doria, PhD(c), Dalhousie University, Nicole.doria@dal.ca

Other researchers
Supervisor: Dr. Alice Aiken (AA), Dalhousie University, Alice.Aiken@dal.ca
Committee Member: Dr. Diane Crocker (DC), Saint Mary's University, Diane.Crocker@smu.ca
Committee Member: Dr. Marion Brown (MB), Dalhousie University, Marion.Brown@Dal.Ca

Introduction
I invite you to take part in this research study that aims to explore women's experiences of dating app facilitated sexualized violence. The study is being conducted by myself, Nicole Doria, and I am a PhD in Health student at Dalhousie University. Choosing whether to take part in this research is completely voluntary. The information below tells you about what is involved in the research, what you will be asked to do, and about any benefit, risk, or discomfort that you might experience. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to reach out to me at any time at Nicole.doria@dal.ca.

Purpose and Outline of the Research Study
It is well established that dating has contributed to sexualized violence against women, as intimate relationships can be a primary source of violence and abuse. As dating has moved online and the number of dating app users continues to grow, it is critical to examine how sexualized violence may also be moving and being (re)produced online. This research will use a feminist lens to explore how the intersection of dating apps, gender, and sexualized violence are (re)producing and facilitating sexualized violence against women 18-34 years of age across Canada (both on and offline). This research will also aim to better understand women's experiences of dating app facilitated sexualized violence and the impact of these experiences on their health and wellness. Overall, this work will aim contribute to the literature on dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women, as well as how a feminist analysis contributes to our understanding of this phenomenon.

Who Can Take Part in the Research Study
You may participate in this study if you are a self-identifying woman between 18-34 years of age who has experienced dating-app facilitated sexualized violence perpetrated by men. Sexualized violence for the purposes of this research is defined as any verbal, physical, and/or psychological violence carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality. This includes sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent/sexualized exposure, degrading sexual imagery, sharing sexual photographs without permission, and/or unwanted comments or jokes. In order to be eligible to participate, you need to be a current and active dating app user (monthly user during the last 12-month period) on one or more of the various dating apps (e.g., Tinder, Bumble, Hinge, etc.).

What You Will Be Asked to Do
If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to participate in one phone interview. The interview will be approximately 60-90 minutes in length and will be audio-recorded so that I can listen to and transcribe our conversation. During the interview you will be asked to speak about your experiences of dating-app facilitated sexualized violence perpetrated by men. Direct quotes of things you say may be used, but never by name or by other characteristics that may identify you. All interviews will be conducted by myself, Nicole Doria, in my private home when no one else is present. It is recommended that you also be in a private and quiet environment for the duration of the interview to protect your privacy. You will also need to read and sign this consent form (signature page below) to indicate that you understand what this research entails.

Possible Benefits, Risks and Discomforts
Benefits: Though there are no direct benefits being provided to you, it is hoped that participating in this study will be interesting for you and may prompt reflection of your own experiences, which may benefit yourself and others. A copy of the final dissertation and other dissemination materials will also be provided to you as they become available if you are interested.

Risks: You will be discussing your firsthand experiences of dating app facilitated sexualized violence, which is a sensitive and challenging issue to discuss. There is a possibility that this topic of conversation may cause you distress. If you experience distress at any time during the interview, you can skip any questions as well as stop the interview at any time. Contact information for local sexual assault centers will also be provided to you prior to the interview via email so you can contact a counsellor if needed before or after the interview.

How your information will be protected:
Your participation in this research will be known only to myself, Nicole Doria.

Your identification and the information that you provide will be kept confidential. Only I, Nicole Doria, will have access to any identifying information. All your identifying information (such as your name, contact information, and consent form) will be securely stored separately from your research information/responses to research questions on OneDrive. After the two-week period of data removal, only deidentified records will be kept. A participant number (not your name) will be used for written and computer records so that the research information we have about you contains no names. During the study, the recorded interview and transcribed interview will be kept secure on OneDrive, which is automatically encrypted. After the audio recordings have been transcribed and checked for accuracy, audio-recordings will be deleted from OneDrive.

The results from this research will be shared in my dissertation, presentations, public media, journal articles, and other forms of dissemination. Only group results and not individual results will be reported. This means that you will not be identified in any way in dissemination materials.

You will be asked questions about your experiences of sexualized violence on dating apps. All the information you provide will be held in strict confidence. The research team will not report to law enforcement authorities any information about your experiences of sexualized violence on

dating apps unless required by law to reveal it.

Two weeks after the interview your data will be de-identified. Once the study is over, the transcribed and deidentified data will be kept one OneDrive for three years before being destroyed.

If You Decide to Stop Participating
You are free to leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating during the study, you can decide whether you want any of the information that you have provided up to that point to be removed or if you will allow us to use that information. After participating in the study, you can decide for up to two weeks if you want us to remove your data. After that time, it will become impossible for us to remove it because it will already be deidentified and integrated into the analysis. You are free to withdraw all data or parts of your data from the study by emailing Nicole.doria@dal.ca, until two weeks after your interview is complete. After two weeks, the data will be transcribed, and de-identified/any identifying information will be removed and replaced with a participant number/pseudonym.

How to Obtain Results
A copy of the final dissertation and other dissemination materials will be provided to you as they become available if you are interested. You can obtain these results by including your email at the end of the signature page.

Questions
We are happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you may have about your participation in this research study. Please contact Nicole Doria at Nicole.doria@dal.ca any time with questions, comments, or concerns about the research study.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may also contact Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-3423, or email: ethics@dal.ca (and reference REB file # 2022-5987).

Signature Page

Project Title: A new platform for sexualized violence: A feminist analysis of women's dating app experiences

Lead Researcher: Nicole Doria, PhD(c), Dalhousie University, Nicole.doria@dal.ca

This signature page should be signed and dated by the research participant or by the person authorized to sign on behalf of the research participant (e.g., a parent or caregiver). In the latter instance, the participant's name must also be clearly indicated.

I have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I have been asked to do the following:

- Take part in one phone interview, approximately 60-90 minutes in length
- That the interview will be audio recorded
- The purpose of the interview is to discuss my experience of dating-app facilitated sexualized violence perpetrated by men

I understand direct quotes of things I say may be used without identifying me.

I agree to take part in this study. My participation is voluntary, and I understand that I am free to withdraw all my data or parts of my data from the study by emailing Nicole.doria@dal.ca until two weeks after the completion of my interview.

_____	_____	_____
Name	Signature	Date

Please provide an email address below if you would like to be sent study findings and dissemination materials.

Email address: _____

Appendix G: Interview Guide

Introduction/Project Overview:
Hello! I am Nicole Doria, and I am a PhD in Health Candidate at Dalhousie University. Thank you for agreeing to chat with me today. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I will start off with some demographic questions.

Demographic Questions:

Age:
Sex at birth:
Gender Identity:
Sexual Orientation:
Racial Identity:
Relationship status:

SECTION I: WARM UP

To start with, please tell me about your experiences as a dating app user – which dating apps have you used, for how long, have you had both good and bad experiences using dating apps?

- Which dating apps have you used?
- What motivated you to use dating apps?
- What do you think makes some apps better than others? Do your experiences differ between dating apps and how?

SECTION II: EXPERIENCES

Sexualized violence can take many forms on dating apps. Such behaviors include online sexual harassment, gender- and sexuality-based harassment, cyberstalking, image-based sexual exploitation, coercion into an unwanted sexual act. In hearing this list, can you tell me about any experiences you may have had with dating app facilitated sexualized violence?

Have you had more than one of these experiences?

> **[IF NOT PROCEED TO PROMPTS}**
>
> **{IF YES} Which experience would you like to talk about first?**

Tell me a bit about the experience, what led up to it and what happened?

> **Probes:** "and then what happened", "what did the person do next", "what did you do next", "how did the person react to what you did" "what did you do?" "can you tell me more about that experience?" "how did that make you feel?", "were you surprised that happened?"

- How did the app play a role in this experience?
- Has this experience changed you view of dating apps or which ones you choose to use?
- How do you think being a woman impacted how this experience played out?

{FOR THOSE WITH MORE THAN ONE EXPERIENCE}

- You said you had another experience. Would you like to share another experience? We can take a break if you need to.

{IF YES, PROCEED BACK THROUGH PROMPTS}

{REPEAT AS MANY TIMES AS THEY WANT TO SHARE EXPERIENCES}

What is it like to be a woman on dating apps? How do you think that dating apps have affected your own perceptions of being a woman?

- Can you describe what men on dating apps are typically like?
- How do you believe the experiences on dating apps are different for men?
- What is difficult about being a woman on dating apps if anything?
- What would you like to be different for woman on dating apps if anything?
- How do you think dating apps have impacted the dating experiences of woman, if at all?

SECTION III: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS
Thanks for sharing that/those experiences. These are not easy to talk about.

What are your hopes for the future of dating apps? How do you want them to change in the future? In what ways do you want they become different, if at all?

Anything else you would like to add/tell me about?

Thanks so much for your time today.

Appendix H: Ethics Application & Approval Letter

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARDS
APPLICATION FORM

Prospective Research

This form should only be used if new data will be collected. For research involving only secondary use of existing information (such as health records, student records, survey data or biological materials), use the *REB Application Form – Secondary Use of Information for Research.*
This form should be completed using the *Guidance for Submitting an Application for Research Ethics Review*.

SECTION 1. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION [File No: office only]

Indicate the preferred Research Ethics Board to review this research:
[ ] Health Sciences OR [X] Social Sciences and Humanities

Project Title: A new platform for sexualized violence: A feminist analysis of women's dating app experiences

1.1 Research team information				
Lead researcher (at Dalhousie)	Name	**Nicole Doria (ND)**		
	Email (@dal)	**Nicole.doria@dal.ca**	Phone	**(902) 452 8021**
	Banner #	**B00544691**	Academic Unit	
Co-investigator names, affiliations, and email addresses	PhD Committee: Supervisor: Dr. Alice Aiken (AA), Dalhousie University, Alice.Aiken@dal.ca Member: Dr. Diane Crocker (DC), Saint Mary's University, Diane.Crocker@smu.ca Member: Dr. Marion Brown (MB), Dalhousie University, Marion.Brown@Dal.Ca			
	Name			

Contact person for this submission (if not lead researcher)	Email		Phone	
Study start date		Study end date		

1.2 For student submissions (including medical residents and postdoctoral fellows)			
Degree program	PhD in Health		
Supervisor name and department	Dr. Alice Aiken, Vice President Research & Innovation		
Supervisor Email (@dal)	Alice.Aiken@dal.ca	Phone	902.494.6513
Department/unit ethics review (if applicable). **Undergraduate minimal risk research only**.			
Attestation: [ ] I am responsible for the unit-level research ethics review of this project and it has been approved. Authorizing name: Date:			

1.3 Other reviews		
Other ethics review (if any) for this research	Where?	
	Status?	
Scholarly/scientific peer review (if any)		
Is this a variation on, or extension of, a previously approved Dal REB submission?	[ ] No [ ] Yes Dal REB file #_____	
If yes, describe which components of the current submission are the same as the previously approved submission (list section numbers), and which components are different from the previously approved submission (list section numbers). You may also use highlighting to clearly indicate revised text.		

1.4 Funding [X] Not Applicable

Funding (list on consent form)	Agency	
	Award Number	
	Institution where funds are/will be held	[ ] Dalhousie University [ ] Other: _____
Was a Dal release of funds agreement issued for this award?		[ ] Yes Date of RoF Agreement: _____

1.5 Attestation(s). The appropriate boxes *must* be checked for the submission to be accepted by the REB

[X] I am the **lead researcher** (at Dalhousie) named in section 1.1. I agree to conduct this research following the principles of the Tri-Council Policy Statement *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS) and consistent with the University *Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans*.

I have completed the TCPS Course on Research Ethics (CORE) online tutorial.
[X] Yes [ ] No

For Supervisors (of student / learner research projects):

[ ] I am the **supervisor** named in section 1.2. I have reviewed this submission, including the scholarly merit of the research, and believe it is sound and appropriate. I take responsibility for ensuring this research is conducted following the principles of the TCPS and University Policy.

I have completed the TCPS Course on Research Ethics (CORE) online tutorial.
[ ] Yes [ ] No

SECTION 2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 Lay summary

2.1.1 In **plain language**, describe the rationale, purpose, study population and methods to be used. Include a summary of background information or literature to contextualize the study. What new knowledge, or public or scientific benefit is anticipated? [maximum 500 words]

It is well established that dating has always contributed to sexualized violence against women, as intimate relationships are a primary source of violence and abuse (Rubio-Garay, López-González, Carrasco, & Amor, 2017; Stanko, 1990). As dating moves online and the number of dating app users continues to grow, it is critical to examine how sexualized violence is also moving and being (re)produced online. To date, there is a scarcity of research examining dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women, with nearly no qualitative studies on the phenomenon (Gillett, 2018; Henry & Powell, 2018; Pooley & Boxall, 2020). Further, current research in this area lacks feminist analysis. As a result, this study will employ a qualitative design to answer the following research question:

How do gender and technology shape women's experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence?

This research will use a feminist thematic analysis to explore how the intersection of dating apps, gender, and sexualized violence are (re)producing and facilitating sexualized violence against Canadian women 18-34 years of age (both on and offline). This research will also aim to better understand women's experiences of dating app facilitated sexualized violence and the impact of these experiences on their health and wellness. Overall, this work will aim contribute to the literature on dating app-facilitated sexualized violence against women, as well as how a feminist analysis contributes to our understanding of this phenomenon.

[ ] This is a pilot study.
[X] This is a fully developed study.

2.1.2 Phased review. If a phased review is being requested, describe why this is appropriate for this study, and which phase(s) are included for approval in this application. Refer to the guidance document before requesting a phased review.
[X] Not applicable

2.2 Research question

State the research question(s) or research objective(s).
How do gender and technology shape women's experiences of dating app-

facilitated sexualized violence?

2.3 Recruitment

2.3.1 Identify the study population. Describe and justify any inclusion / exclusion criteria. Also describe how many participants are needed and how this was determined.

The intended sample is 12 to16 self-identified women across the Maritime provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) who self-identify as having experienced dating app-facilitated sexualized violence. This sample size has been determined based on when data saturation in thematic analysis is likely to occur (Braun & Clarke, 2021), which is a concept in qualitative research where no new information or themes emerge from the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Braun and Clarke (2021), however, argue that data saturation is not consistent with reflexive, deductive, thematic analysis and, therefore, finalizing the sample size in advance of data collection is problematic. Braun and Clarke (2021) recommend proposing a range in sample size that is likely to generate adequate, rich, and meaningful data. Based on data saturation experiments, the range of 12 to16 was chosen as the range for this research (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The final number of participants will be decided within the data collection process based on the

adequacy of the data to answer the proposed research question, and saturation of themes during analysis.

The population of interest is anyone who self-identifies as a woman and chooses to speak to their experiences of dating app-facilitated sexualized violence perpetrated by men. Although anyone can experience sexualized violence, women (aged 18-34) are primarily the victims of sexualized violence and men are typically the perpetrators (Breiding et al., 2014; Powell et al., 2020; Tarzia et al., 2017). Experiences of online sexualized violence have also found to be experienced differently for men and women (Powell et al., 2020). Studies suggest that young women are most vulnerable to experiences of sexualized violence (Conroy & Cotter, 2017; Langenderfer-Magruder et al., 2016; Powell et al., 2020), and a 2018 review of the literature on technology-facilitated sexualized violence reported that women (including bisexual and trans women) are at an increased risk of being the targets of online abuse (Henry & Powell, 2018).

Participants for this research will therefore be women between 18 and 34 years of age, who have experienced dating app-facilitated sexualized violence perpetrated by men. Sexualized violence will be defined to participants as any verbal, physical, and/or psychological violence carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality. This will include sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent/sexualized exposure, degrading sexual imagery, sharing sexual photographs without permission, and/or unwanted comments or jokes (Benoit et al., 2015; Victoria Sexual Assault Centre, 2014; World Health Organization, 2021). Participants will also need to be current and active dating app users (monthly user during the last 12-month period) on one or more of the various dating apps (e.g., Tinder, Bumble, Hinge). This inclusion criteria will allow participants to speak to the current dating-app environment.

Women who only seek same-gender dating will be excluded from this sample as there are specific dating app platforms for women seeking women and, therefore, unique contexts are present for this population. The experiences of women on same-gender dating apps, as well as experiences of abuse in same gender relationships, are distinctly different than women who seek relationships with men (Choy, 2018; Laskey et al., 2019; Watson et al., 2019). As such, the experiences of this population are beyond the scope of the proposed study.

2.3.2 Describe recruitment plans and append recruitment instruments. Describe who will be doing the recruitment and what actions they will take, including any screening procedures.

Online advertisements will be used for recruitment (Appendix A). Recruitment materials will be advertised on Instagram and Facebook (through a dedicated email/page/account for this research project) with the use of paid targeted advertisements. Prospective participants who respond to the online advertisement will be directed to screening questions on Opinio (Appendix B) to be screened for eligibility based on inclusion and exclusion criteria by Nicole Doria (ND). Participants will be notified that they will only be contacted if they are eligible. If they are eligible, they will be contacted via

email (Appendix C) at the email address they provide on Opinio to set up an interview date and complete the informed consent (Appendix C, Appendix D).

Throughout recruitment, ND will continue to monitor the sample of participants and their demographics. If it is identified that a certain group or area is underrepresented, then recruitment for overrepresented sample will be discontinued/person will be thanked for their time and told they did not meet eligibility criteria or the sample size for their cohort is full.

2.3.3 If you require permission, cooperation, or participation from a community, organization or company to recruit your participants, describe the agreement obtained from the relevant group(s). Attach correspondence indicating their cooperation and/or support (required). Describe any other community consent or support needed to conduct this research. (If the research involves Indigenous communities complete section 2.11).

[X] Not applicable

2.4 Informed consent process

2.4.1 Describe the informed consent process:

A) How, when and by whom will the study information be conveyed to prospective participants? How will the researcher ensure prospective participants are fully informed?

Once participants express interest in taking part in this study, they will be emailed an informed consent form (Appendix D). The informed consent form will explain the research aims, outline the research process/procedures, and identify potential risks and discomforts. At this time, the participant will have the opportunity to email any questions or concerns they have and/or request a phone call to discuss the research further before consenting to an interview. Once the informed consent form is signed and returned via email, the interview will be scheduled. Consent will be obtained by electronic or written signature on the informed consent document.

Participants will also be able to ask any questions/express concerns immediately before the interview begins. Participants will also be reminded at this time that they are free to skip any questions that make them uncomfortable, as well as end the interview at any time. They will also be reminded that the interview is being recorded. Participants will also have up to two weeks after their interview date to decide if they would like to remove their interview data. Participants are free to withdraw all my data or parts of my data from the study by emailing Nicole.doria@dal.ca, until two weeks after my interview is complete. After two weeks, the data will be transcribed, and de-identified/any identifying information will be removed, and the participants name will be replaced with a participant number.

B) Describe how consent will be documented (e.g., written signature, audio-recorded, etc).

Written signature.

[X] Append copies of all consent information that will be used (e.g., written consent document, oral consent script, assent document/script, etc).
Note: If the research will involve third party consent (with or without participant assent), and/or ongoing consent, ensure these are described above.

2.4.2 Discuss how participants will be given the opportunity to withdraw their participation (and/or their data) and any time (or content) limitations on this. If participants will not have opportunity to withdraw their participation and/or their data explain why.

Participants will also have up to two weeks after their interview date to decide if they would like to remove their interview data. After two weeks, the data will be transcribed and de-identified/any identifying information (names, locations, place of work etc.) will be removed and the participants name will be replaced with a participant number.

2.4.3 If an alteration/exception to the requirement to seek prior informed consent is sought, address the criteria in TCPS article 3.7A. If the alteration involves deception or nondisclosure, also complete section 2.4.4.
[X] Not applicable

2.4.4 Describe and justify any use of deception or nondisclosure and explain how participants will be debriefed.
[X] Not applicable

2.5 Methods, data collection and analysis

2.5.1
A) Where will the research be conducted?
Recruitment will be completed online via Instagram and Facebook. Interviews will be conducted over the phone.

B) What will participants be asked to do?
Participants will be asked to participate in a one on one semi-structed phone interview (approximately 60-90 minutes) and review and sign the informed consent from in advance of the
interview.

C) What data will be collected using what research instruments? *(Note that privacy and confidentiality of data will be covered in section 2.6)*

Open-ended questions, using an interview guide (Appendix E), will explore participants experiences of dating app facilitated sexualized violence and how these experiences are informed by broader sociocultural factors that influence sexualized violence against women (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Open-ended, probing, and follow-up *why* or *how* questions will be asked (Newcomer et al., 2015).

D) How much of the participant's time will participation in the study require?
Approximately 60-90 minutes.

[X] Append copies of all research instruments (questionnaires, focus group questions, standardized measures, etc)
[ ] This is a clinical trial (physical or mental health intervention) – ensure section 2.12 is completed

2.5.2 Briefly describe the data analysis plan. Indicate how the proposed data analyses address the study's primary objectives or research questions.

Thematic analysis will be applied to extract the participants' experiences, perspectives, behaviour, and practices in relation to dating app facilitated sexualized violence (Braun & Clarke 2006). Thematic analysis is a method for "identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data" (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 297) and is compatible with a range of theoretical frameworks and research paradigms (Braun & Clarke 2006). This research is situated within a critical paradigm, which is focused on power, inequality, and social change (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Reeves et al., 2008). Research within this paradigm aims to foster positive change in both people and the systems that are biased against them, as well as explore and change power imbalances (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Reeves et al., 2008). For the purposes of this research, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps to thematic analysis (see Table 1) will be used to analyse the data from a radical and technofeminist lens.

Table 1 Phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

A combined technique of deductive (theory driven) and inductive (data-driven) thematic analysis will be used (Braun & Clarke 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This approach will allow for the tenets of radical feminism and technofeminism (sex, gender, power, inequality, technology) to be integral to the data analysis and interpretation, while also identifying novel themes that emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke 2006; Patton, 1990). Themes will be identified at a latent or interpretative level, which goes beyond the meaning expressed by the participants/surface meanings of the data, and instead requires interpretation and insight to determine the underlying patterns, stories, and assumptions in the data. NVivo software will be used to organize and analyze the research data.

2.5.3 Describe any compensation that will be given to participants and how this will be handled for participants who do not complete the study. Discuss any expenses participants are likely to incur and whether/how these will be reimbursed.

Participants will not be provided with any compensation and participants will not incur any
expenses.

2.6 Privacy and confidentiality

2.6.1
A) Describe who will have knowledge of participants' identities.
Only ND will have knowledge of participants' identities as ND will be conducting all screening eligibility, interviews, and transcribing.

B) Describe the level of identifiability of the study data (anonymous, anonymized, de-identified/coded, identifying) (see TCPS Chapter 5A – types of information for definitions).

Individual study participants will not be identified as all identifying information will be de-identified (persons, places, names, etc.). Participants or persons/places discussed by participants will not be identified in any way in presentations or publications. Instead of participants real name, an alphanumeric code will be used for record keeping and pseudonyms will be used in presentations and publications.

C) Specify which members of the research team (or others) will have access to participants' data and for what purpose.
Only ND will have access to raw data for data collection and analysis. Thesis committee members will receive de-identified data through the writing process.

D) Describe measures to ensure privacy and confidentiality of study documents and participant data during the data collection and analysis phase. *[Note that plans for long term storage will be covered in 2.6.2*]

- Address: handling of documents/data during data collection; transportation or transfer of documents/data; storage of documents/data (during the study).
- If a key-code will be maintained, describe how it will be kept secure.
- For electronic data, describe electronic data security measures, including file encryption and/or password protection as applicable.
- For hard copy documents, describe physical security measures (specify location).

The following measures will be taken to ensure participant data is kept private and confidential. Only the Primary Investigator (ND) will have access to the participants identities – ND will de-identify the interview data when transcribing the interviews prior to other research members having access to the data for analysis purposes. Individual study participants will not be identified in any way in reports, publications, or presentations.

Instead of participants' real names, participants will be identified by their participant number (ex. P1).

All interviews will be conducted over the phone and recorded using the voice memo app on ND's macbook. Interviews will be set to not be stored in icloud. They will be transferred to OneDrive and deleted from the assigned macbook folder (~/Library/Application Support). All interviews will be conducted by ND in her private home when no one else is present. It will be recommended to participants that they also be in a private and quiet environment for the duration of the interview to protect their privacy. Participants will be informed that the conversation is being recorded and will consent in advance to having their interview recorded (consenting to have the interview recorded will be required to participate in this research study). After the audio recordings have been transcribed and checked for accuracy, audio-recordings will be deleted from OneDrive. The transcribed and de-identified data will be kept for 3 years after the dissertation acceptance. After this point in time, the data will be deleted from OneDrive.

All your identifying information (such as your name, contact information, and consent form) will be securely stored separately from your research information/responses to research questions on OneDrive. After the two-week period of data removal, only deidentified records will be kept. A participant number (not your name) will be used for written and computer records so that the research information we have about you contains no names.

[ ] This research involves personal health records (ensure section 2.13 is completed)

2.6.2 Describe plans for data retention and long-term storage (i.e., how long data will be retained, in what form and where). Will the data eventually be destroyed or irreversibly anonymized? If so, what procedures will be used for this? Discuss any plans for future use of the data or materials beyond the study currently being reviewed.

After the interview is completed, the recording will be immediately transferred to OneDrive and deleted from the audio recorder. After the audio recordings have been transcribed and checked for accuracy, audio-recordings will be deleted from OneDrive. The transcribed and de-identified data will be kept for 3 years after the dissertation acceptance. After this point in time, the data will be deleted from OneDrive.

[ ] This research will be deposited in a data repository (ensure section 2.14 is completed)

2.6.3

Describe if/how participant confidentiality will be protected when research results are reported:

A) For quantitative results - In what form will study data be disseminated?

[ ] Only aggregate data will be presented

[ ] Individual de-identified, anonymized or anonymous data will be presented

[ ] Other. If "other", briefly describe dissemination plans with regard to identifiability of data.

[X] Not applicable, only qualitative data will be presented

B) For qualitative results - Will identifiable data be used in research presentations/publications? If participants will be quoted, address consent for this and indicate whether quotes will be identifiable or attributed.

[ ] Not applicable, only quantitative data will be presented

Findings will not identify individual study participants. Direct quotes will be used, which is communicated to participants through the consent form (Appendix D). Participants will not be identified in any way as pseudonyms will be used and any identifiable information will be removed.

2.6.4 Address any limits on confidentiality, such as a legal duty to report abuse or neglect of a child or adult in need of protection, and how these will be handled. Ensure these are clear in the consent documents. (See the guidance document for more information on legal duties and professional codes of ethics).

This research project's study population does not consist of minors as all participants will be 18 years of age or older. The research team will not report to authorities any sexual violence experienced or perpetrated by a participant on a dating app unless required to by law. A statement to this effect has been included in the consent form: "You will be asked questions that may lead you to share information about experiences of sexualized violence on dating apps. All the information you provide will be held in strict confidence. The research team will not report to law enforcement authorities any information about your experiences of sexualized violence on dating apps unless required by law to reveal it".

[X] Not applicable

2.6.5 Will any information that may reasonably be expected to identify an individual (alone or in combination with other available information) be accessible outside Canada? And/or, will you be using any electronic tool (e.g., survey company, software, data repository) to help you collect, manage, store, share, or analyze personally identifiable data that makes the data accessible from outside Canada?

[X] No

[ ] Yes. If yes, refer to the University *Policy for the Protection of Personal Information from Access Outside Canada*, and describe how you comply with the policy (such as securing participant consent and/or securing approval from the Vice President Research and Innovation).

2.7 Risk and benefit analysis

2.7.1 Discuss what risks or discomforts are anticipated for participants, how likely risks are and how risks will be mitigated. Address any particular ethical vulnerability of your study population. Risks to privacy from use of identifying information should be addressed. If applicable, address third party or community risk. (If the research involves Indigenous communities also complete section 2.11)

Participants will be discussing their firsthand experiences of dating app facilitated sexualized violence, which is a sensitive and challenging issue to discuss. The possibility of negative distress will be discussed prior to the interview and participants will be informed that they can skip any questions during the interview, as well as stop the interview at any time. Contact information for local sexual assault centers will be emailed to every participant prior to the interview – this link will be circulated as it comprises all sexual assault centres, crisis lines, and support services in Canada: https://endingviolencecanada.org/sexual-assault-centres-crisis-lines-and-support-services/

2.7.2 Identify any direct benefits of participation to participants (other than compensation), and any indirect benefits of the study (e.g., contribution to new knowledge).

Though there are no direct benefits being provided to participants (incentive/compensation will not be provided), it is expected that participating in this study will allow participants to gain insight into their own experiences through reflective conversation, and that the information provided may benefit themselves and others. Shared experiences analyzed through the research process will be presented and shared in the hopes of creating change. A copy of my approved dissertation and other dissemination materials will also be provided to all consenting participants (Appendix D).

2.8 Provision of results to participants and dissemination plans.

2.8.1 The TCPS encourages researchers to share study results with participants in appropriate formats. Describe your plans to share study results with participants and discuss the process and format.

The research findings will be disseminated through publications, presentations, and knowledge translation materials (ex. infographics/online resources). I am committed to sharing my findings at both local and international conferences, as well as with my participants and community groups/organizations that work to combat sexualized violence against women in the Canada and beyond. I will share my dissertation and any other dissemination materials virtually with participants who consent to be contacted for such purposes (Appendix X).

2.8.2 If applicable, describe how participants will be informed of any material incidental findings – a discovery about a participant made in the course of research (screening or data collection) that is outside the objectives of the study, that has implications for participant welfare (health, psychological or social). See TCPS Article 3.4 for more information.

[X] Not applicable

2.8.3 Describe plans for dissemination of the research findings (e.g., conference presentations, journal articles, public lectures etc.).

The research findings will be disseminated through publications, presentations, and knowledge translation materials (ex. infographics/online resources). I am committed to sharing my findings at both local and international conferences, as well as with community groups and organizations that work to combat sexualized violence against women in Canada and beyond.

2.9 Research Team

2.9.1 Describe the role and duties of all research team members (including students, RA's and supervisors) in relation to the overall study.

ND will be responsible for data recruitment, collection, analysis, and dissertation writing. The PhD supervisor will be responsible for overseeing the data recruitment, collection, analysis, writing and providing support and feedback throughout. Thesis committee members will be responsible for providing feedback, edits and review throughout the entire research process.

2.9.2 Briefly identify any previous experience or special qualifications represented on the team relevant to the proposed study (e.g., professional or clinical expertise, research methods, experience with the study population, statistics expertise, etc.).

ND is a PhD in Health Candidate and has previous experience working in the area of sexualized violence against women (in research and community areas) as well as conducting qualitive research projects in her master's work and through various research assistant roles.

AA has supervised 20+ PhD students whose research has covered a vast area of qualitative and quantitative research methods and diverse research samples. This has included persons who have suffered trauma and mental distress. In all cases, providing information about appropriate counselling services and ensuring participants understand that they may skip any questions that make them uncomfortable have been sufficient to mitigate risk to the participants.

DC is a Professor in the Department of Criminology at Saint Mary's University. Her work explores the use of law to address social problems, particularly those that disproportionately affect women. Dr. Crocker is currently working on a major project that explores sexual violence and "rape culture" on university campuses. DC is currently a member of the Canadian Domestic Violence Prevention Initiative and the Gender-Based Violence Prevention Network and regularly advises government and community agencies on projects related the gender-based violence. DC is very familiar with qualitative research and feminist methodologies.

MB is a registered Social Worker in private practice and a Professor of Social Work at Dalhousie University. MB has focused on community advocacy and therapeutic responses regarding sexualized violence, discrimination, mental health, and institutional settings, on levels both individual and systemic. MB has research experience in the area of women who experience sexualized violence.

2.10 Conflict of interest

Describe whether any dual role or conflict of interest exists for any member of the research team in relation to potential study participants (e.g., TA, fellow student, teaching or clinical relationship), and/or study sponsors, and how this will be handled.
[X] Not applicable

2.11 Research involving Indigenous peoples

Consult TCPS Articles 9.1 and 9.2 in determining whether this section is applicable to your research.
[X] Not applicable – go to 2.12

2.11.1 If the proposed research is expected to involve people who are Indigenous, describe the plan for community engagement (per TCPS Articles 9.1 and 9.2). If community engagement is not sought, explain why the research does not require it, referencing TCPS article 9.2.

2.11.2 State whether ethical approval has been or will be sought from Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch and if not, why the research does not fall under their purview. If the research falls under the purview of other Indigenous ethics groups, state whether ethical approval has been or will be sought.

2.11.3 Describe plans for returning results to the community and any intellectual property rights agreements negotiated with the community with regard to data ownership (see also 2.11.4 if applicable). Append applicable research agreements.

2.11.4 Does this research incorporate OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) principles as described in TCPS Article 9.8?
[ ] Yes. Explain how.
[ ] No. Explain why not.

2.12 Clinical trials
[X] Not applicable – go to 2.13

2.12.1 Will the proposed clinical trial be registered?
[ ] No. Explain why not.
[ ] Yes. Indicate where it was/will be registered and provide the registration number.

2.12.2 If a novel intervention or treatment is being examined, describe standard treatment or intervention, to indicate a situation of clinical equipoise exists (TCPS Chapter 11). If placebo is used with a control group rather than standard treatment, please justify.

2.12.3 Clearly identify the known effects of any product or device under investigation, approved uses, safety information and possible contraindications. Indicate how the proposed study use differs from approved uses.
[ ] Not applicable

2.12.4 Discuss any plans for blinding/randomization.

2.12.5 What plans are in place for safety monitoring and reporting of new information to participants, the REB, other team members, sponsors, and the clinical trial registry (refer to TCPS Articles 11.6, 11.7, 11.8)? These should address plans for removing participants for safety reasons, and early stopping/unblinding/amendment of the trial. What risks may arise for participants through early trial closure, and how will these be addressed? Are there any options for continued access to interventions shown to be beneficial?

2.13 Use of personal health information

[X] Not applicable
2.13.1 Research using health information may be subject to Nova Scotia's *Personal Health Information Act*. Describe the personal health information (definition explained in the guidance document) required and the information sources, and explain why the research cannot reasonably be accomplished without the use of that information. Describe how the personal health information will be used, and in the most de-identified form possible.
2.13.2 Will there be any linking of separate health data sets as part of this research? [ ] No [ ] Yes If yes: A) Why is the linkage necessary? B) Describe how the linkage will be conducted (it is helpful to append a flow diagram) C) Does that linkage increase the identifiability of the participants?
2.13.3 Describe reasonably foreseeable risks to privacy due to the use of personal health information and how these will be mitigated.

2.14 Data Repositories [X] Not applicable
2.14.1 Identify and describe the data repository in which the research data will be deposited. What is its focus, who are its target users, who can access deposited data and under what circumstances? For how long will the data be kept in the repository?
2.14.2 Describe the data set to be released to the repository. If there is personal and/or sensitive information in the data, describe how you will prepare the data for submission to the repository and mitigate risks to privacy. Identify all fields that will be included in the final data set (include as an appendix).
2.14.3 Is agreeing to have one's data deposited a requirement for participation in the study? If yes, provide a justification. If no, indicate how participants can opt in or out.

Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board
Letter of Approval

March 28, 2022
Nicole Doria
Health\School of Health and Human Performance

Dear Nicole,

REB #: 2022-5987
Project Title: A new platform for sexualized violence: A feminist analysis of women's dating app experiences

Effective Date: March 28, 2022
Expiry Date: March 28, 2023

The Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board has reviewed your application for research involving humans and found the proposed research to be in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.* This approval will be in effect for 12 months as indicated above. This approval is subject to the conditions listed below which constitute your on-going responsibilities with respect to the ethical conduct of this research.

Sincerely,
Dr. Karen Foster, Chair