

Was it good for you too?: An analysis of gender differences in oral sex practices and pleasure ratings among heterosexual Canadian university students

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Oral sex has become a standard component of the heterosexual sexual script, though little is known about the level of pleasure men and women experience from giving and receiving oral sex and the extent to which relationship context is associated with levels of pleasure. The purpose of this study was to investigate gender differences in giving and receiving oral sex, and associations with pleasure experienced and partner type. Participants were 899 heterosexual university students who reported on their sexual activities in their most recent sexual encounter in an online survey. Over two-thirds of participants reported that their last sexual encounter included giving and/or receiving oral sex. More women (59%) than men (52%) reported giving oral sex to their partner. More men (63%) than women (44%) reported receiving oral sex. Most men (73%) and women (69%) reported that receiving oral sex was “very pleasurable.” Though most participants rated giving oral sex as at least “somewhat pleasurable,” men were significantly more likely than women to report that giving oral sex was very pleasurable (52% vs. 28%). Overall, ratings of pleasure for giving oral sex were higher for men, but no gender differences were found for overall pleasure ratings of receiving oral sex. Regardless of gender, higher pleasure ratings were reported when giving and receiving oral sex with more committed partners compared to more casual ones. Findings highlight the utility of discussing gendered norms for sexual behaviour with young people, and including pleasure-enhancing information in sexual health education programs.

KEY WORDS: oral sex, pleasure, gender differences, university students

INTRODUCTION

Emerging adulthood is a life phase where adult intimate relationships begin to form and individuals often engage in partnered sexual activity (Arnett, 2000; Fraley & Davis, 1997). Research indicates that this is an important developmental period with regard to family formation, sexual interactions and the establishment of romantic attachments (Halpern & Kaestle, 2014; Kaestle & Halpern, 2007). Though sexual activity is a well-documented component of intimate relationships, little attention has been paid to the oral sex experiences of emerging adults (Kaestle & Halpern, 2007; Vannier & O’Sullivan, 2012). Analyses of historical data demonstrate that during the 20th century, oral sex became a common, if not standard, component of the heterosexual sexual script in North America (Gagnon & Simon, 1987). More recent

research has also confirmed a long-term secular trend positioning oral sex as an increasingly prevalent behaviour within heterosexual relationships (e.g., Chambers, 2007; Kaestle & Halpern, 2007; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994; Leichliter, Chandra, Liddon, Fenton, & Aral, 2007). Large national studies completed in the United States have found that reported oral sex experiences have become progressively more prevalent among younger cohorts of people (Laumann et al., 1994), with 75% of men and women aged 15–44 reporting that they have ever engaged in oral sex (Leichliter et al., 2007). Similarly, in a national probability sample of American participants, Hebernick et al. (2010) reported that more than half of their sample aged 18–49 had engaged in oral sex within the past year. Further, studies indicate an increase in the reported prevalence of oral sex among adolescents (Boyce et al.,

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2006; Newcomer & Udry, 1985), university students (Pitts & Rahman, 2001) and emerging adults (Kaestle & Halpern; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012).

Examining the context and characteristics of oral sex experiences among emerging adults may enrich our understanding of current sexual scripts and can have implications for the implementation of sexual health promotion and education programs on university campuses. Many university programs address sexual health concerns and offer information on risk reduction and safer sex practices. Despite these facts, limited research has been conducted on the *experience* of giving and receiving oral sex among emerging adults, beyond largely descriptive prevalence studies (Herold & Way, 1983; Jozkowski & Satinsky, 2013; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012). Gender and relationship context have been considered variables of primary interest in these investigations. The purpose of the current research was to investigate gender differences in giving and receiving oral sex, taking into account overall pleasure experienced during the last oral sexual experience, and partner type among a national sample of heterosexual Canadian university students.

Oral Sex and Gender

Sexual Script Theory suggests that different expectations are afforded to men and women regarding the initiation of sexual interactions, the pursuit of sexual pleasure and the context in which partnered sexual activity occurs (Simon & Gagnon, 1984; 2003; Wiederman, 2005). The learning of differential sexual scripts is influenced by several factors, including gender, sexual desire and attraction for same or other-gender individuals (Sakaluk et al., 2014; Simon & Gagnon, 1984; Wiederman, 2005). According to this theory, heterosexual men are frequently expected to be sexual initiators and experience physical pleasure within a variety of relational contexts (i.e., casual, dating, committed partnerships). Women's approach to sexuality is considered to be more relational in nature and they are encouraged to restrict their sexual behaviour to committed relational contexts. Sexual scripts may inform perceptions of what it means to be the giver or the receiver in an oral sex interaction. That is, within the heterosexual script, women are often expected to be in the passive/submissive role of the giver, whereas men are expected to be in the more dominant role of the receiver (Baumeister, 1988; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012).

Research generally supports predictions made in accordance with Sexual Script Theory (Simon & Gagnon, 1984). The results of three recent studies that have focused specifically on oral sex among young adults have indicated that women in heterosexual relationships gave oral sex more frequently to their male partners than they received it (Chambers, 2007; Jozkowski & Satinsky, 2013; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012). Chambers assessed oral sex behaviours and attitudes with a college sample, using an online survey. Women perceived that they gave oral sex more often than they received it. Men perceived that they received more oral sex than they gave.

Similarly, Jozkowski and Satinsky (2013) surveyed 1400 college students about their oral sex experience within the past 30 days and assessed their sexual activity at their most recent sexual event. Men were significantly more likely than women to report receiving oral sex within the past 30 days, whereas women were significantly more likely to report giving oral sex within the past 30 days. In addition, men were more likely to report receiving oral sex at their most recent sexual event when compared to women. Vannier and O'Sullivan examined both the context and motivation for engaging in oral sex in an online community sample of 431 Canadian heterosexual men and women. Participants were asked to report on their most recent sexual event within the past 30 days. Almost all of the sexual interactions (>90%) included fellatio, but only 46% of the sexual interactions included cunnilingus. In addition, of the interactions that were considered unidirectional (i.e., a partner performed oral sex without receiving oral sex or engaging in intercourse) only four included cunnilingus while 44 included fellatio. In addition, one study used data from a national survey in the United States to examine whether participants aged 15–21 had ever given or received oral sex in their lifetime (Brewster & Tillman, 2008). Women were less likely than men to have ever received oral sex, however, they were equally likely to have ever given it to a partner.

Oral Sex and Relationship Context

In addition to gender, relationship type has also been identified as a contextual variable that influences a person's oral sex experiences (Backstrom et al., 2012; Fielder & Carey, 2010; Leichter et al., 2007; Roberts, Kippax, Spongberg, & Crawford, 1996; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012). Young adults appear to engage in oral sex within a variety of casual and committed relationships (Bay-Cheng & Fava, 2011; Fielder & Carey, 2010; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012). Fielder and Carey (2010) examined the prevalence and characteristics of sexual hookups among first-semester female college students. Over the course of the semester, 56% of the 118 women reported ever engaging in oral sex. Oral sex was more likely to occur in sexual events between partners in romantic relationships (44%) compared to sexual events with hookup partners (27%). Although the researchers separated the hookup and romantic relationships, they did not differentiate between giving and receiving oral sex, thus it is not possible to determine if relationship type moderated the relationship between gender and giving or receiving oral sex.

Qualitative research also supports the notion that relationship context influences men's and women's attitudes related to giving and receiving oral sex (Backstrom, Armstrong, & Puentes, 2012; Roberts, Kippax, Spongberg, & Crawford, 1996). Roberts et al. (1996) interviewed 95 university students and community members and conducted five focus groups examining the sexual experiences of young heterosexual adults. Men indicated that they would not give oral sex to a one-night stand, however, they would give oral sex to their committed girlfriend. When it came to receiving oral sex, most

men in the sample indicated that they would consider receiving oral sex within either type of relationship. When a distinction was made, men reported that they would prefer a one-night stand partner to perform oral sex on them, rather than their steady girlfriend, as some considered oral sex to be a less respectable sexual behaviour (i.e., one that committed girlfriends should not engage in). In contrast, women in the study made little distinction between partner type when giving oral sex. However, women did report a difference in their comfort level when receiving oral sex: they stated that they would not be comfortable receiving cunnilingus from a one-night stand, but would enjoy it from a committed partner whom they knew well. Similarly, Backstrom et al. (2012) identified two themes related to relationship type with regard to receiving oral sex in their qualitative study of college women; participants considered oral sex to be standard practice with the context of a committed partnership, but did not expect, or even avoided, oral sex during a hookup relationship.

Oral Sex and Pleasure

Oral sex is associated with a range of positive and negative emotions (Malacad & Hess, 2010). However, there are currently few studies that examine women and men's pleasure during oral sex. Bay-Cheng and Fava (2011) examined feelings of pleasure and desire among a sample of young adult women, asking them about their experiences of both giving and receiving oral sex. They were also asked to report on how pleasurable they perceived giving and receiving oral sex to be for their partner. Participants indicated that giving and receiving cunnilingus would be pleasurable activities. However, participants reported that they thought fellatio would be highly pleasurable for their partner to receive, but reported little pleasure for themselves when giving it.

Nonetheless, research on oral sexual motives indicates that pleasure is a primary motivator for young adult men and women. Vannier and O'Sullivan (2012) examined young adults' motives for, and the contexts of, oral sex experiences. Participants endorsed physical reasons most often, with the pleasure subscale receiving the highest mean score across genders and across relationship type (i.e., committed or casual). Participants reported higher levels of physical motives when they engaged in both oral sex and intercourse, rather than oral sex alone. This is similar to the motives identified in Chambers' (2007) study of oral sex behaviours in young adults. The online survey identified that pleasure for the receiver was the number one reason for both giving (78.4%) and receiving (78.3%) oral sex, regardless of gender. While both of these studies examined aspects of oral sex enjoyment and addressed pleasure via participants' motivations, neither study included a measure examining the pleasure experienced during the oral sex event.

Rationale for the Present Research

There is currently little research that examines the oral sex experiences of young adults in a systematic manner. Existing research has often focused on the prevalence rates of engaging in oral sex, with few studies assessing participants' pleasure

experienced while giving/receiving oral sex (Chambers, 2007; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012). While there is evidence that heterosexual women are more likely to give oral sex and heterosexual men are more likely to receive oral sex (Chambers, 2007; Jozkowski & Satinsky, 2013; Schwartz, 1999; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012), few studies have examined these potential differences at the event level (e.g., Jozkowski & Satinsky, 2013; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012). Much of the past research in this area has assessed participants' overall lifetime oral sex experiences and asks them to report on sexual interactions that may have occurred years earlier (e.g., Malacad & Hess, 2010; Leichter et al., 2007). Research indicates that recall fades with the passage of time, and errors in reporting an event may occur as the length of the reference period increases (McAuliffe, DiFranceisco, & Reed, 2007; Tourangeau, Rips, & Rasinski, 2000). Asking participants about their most recent oral sexual event may reduce recall bias and enable researchers to gain a better understanding of how oral sex interactions are typically experienced within young adult relationships (McAuliffe et al., 2007; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012). Further, although research has been conducted with large national samples in the United States, no parallel research has been conducted among Canadian young adults. As well, most, but not all, research that has been conducted has failed to take into account pleasure giving and receiving oral sex, as well as partner type. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to investigate gender differences in giving and receiving oral sex, taking into account overall pleasure experienced during the last oral sexual experience, and partner type among a national sample of heterosexual Canadian university students.

To examine whether gender differences exist in regards to the engagement of oral sex behaviours, we addressed the following research question:

- 1) Are there gender differences in the proportion of male and female study participants who reported giving and/or receiving oral sex at their most recent sexual encounter?

To study the impact of gender and relationship context on pleasure experienced giving and/or receiving oral sex we addressed the following research questions:

- 2) Are there gender differences in reported pleasure ratings for giving and receiving oral sex?
- 3) Do men's and women's pleasure ratings for giving and receiving oral sex differ by partner type at the last sexual encounter?
- 4) Is there a significant interaction between gender and partner type in terms of reported pleasure ratings for giving and receiving oral sex?

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 1500 Canadian university students between the ages of 18 and 24. Six individuals who did not identify as men or female were excluded from the analysis as data was

analyzed by gender. In addition, 167 individuals who did not identify as heterosexual were excluded as the current investigation examined gender differences in giving and receiving oral sex in heterosexual relationships. Further, 336 participants who indicated that they had never had a sexual encounter of any kind were excluded, as were 92 participants who did not answer the questions about either giving and/or receiving oral sex during their last sexual encounter. Therefore the analytic sample for this study comprised 899 individuals (387 males and 512 females) individuals with a mean age 20.94 (SD = 1.78).

All provinces and the Northwest Territories were represented in the sample, however, most participants were from Ontario (43.3%, n = 389), Quebec (23.1%, n = 208), British Columbia (10.3%, n = 93), and Alberta (9.0%, n = 81). The majority (82.9%) were completing their Bachelor's degrees, and most (57.8%) were in the first or second year of their program. Almost one-half of participants indicated that they were in a committed dating relationship (41.0%, n = 369), with approximately one-quarter of participants reporting that they were not dating anyone (29.0%, n = 261) and 15.9% (n = 143) indicating they were casually dating. A minority of participants reported that they were living together (9.1%, n = 82), or engaged or married (4.1%, n = 20). Seven participants indicated that they were separated or chose not to answer the question.

Procedure

The study was designed by the second author in partnership with the Trojan Sexual Health Division of Church & Dwight Canada to better understand the sexual health needs of young adult Canadians. Data was collected between December 6, 2012 and January 2, 2013, by Leger Marketing, a professional marketing company, in partnership with Uthink Online, a market research organization that specializes in students and youth. Participants were Leger and Uthink research panellists. The Leger panel was created using a random telephone recruiting method and comprises approximately 460,000 members representative of the Canadian population. For the current study the Leger panel was supplemented by the Uthink Online panel to ensure that an adequate sample of regionally diverse Canadian university students was obtained.

Eligible panellists were invited to participate via email from Leger Marketing, and a single email reminder was sent to those who did not respond to the initial message. The participant clicked on a link which led to the study portal to complete the survey. Survey responses were transmitted over a secure, encrypted SSL connection and stored on a secure server. Participants received \$1 for completing the questionnaire, and the opportunity to enter into a monthly draw for \$1,000, \$100 and an iPod touch. Approval for secondary data analysis was received from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Guelph.

Measures

The *Trojan/SIECCAN Sexual Health Study* comprised 69 items related to the sexual health of university students. For

the purposes of the current investigation, survey items from the following categories were included.

Demographic questions

The questionnaire began with several items assessing demographic variables including gender, sexual orientation, age, relationship status, university status (degree program and year), province/territory of residence and country of origin.

Sexual encounters and oral sex behaviour

Participants were asked to report when their most recent sexual encounter occurred (this item was used to remove participants who indicated they had never had a sexual encounter). Participants were asked about giving and receiving oral sex during their most recent sexual encounter with the following items: "In your most recent sexual encounter, did you give oral sex to your partner(s)?" "In your most recent sexual encounter, did you receive oral sex from your partner(s)?" Response choices were: *yes*, *no*, and *I prefer not to answer*.

Pleasure ratings for giving and receiving oral sex

If respondents indicated that they had given or received oral sex in their last sexual encounter, they were asked to rate how pleasurable the experience was for them ("how pleasurable was it for you?") using a 4-point Likert-type response format (1 = *not at all pleasurable* and 4 = *very pleasurable*).

Partner type

Participants were asked to report on their partner type during their most recent sexual encounter, with response options as follows: *one time sexual encounter (i.e., hookup/one night stand)*, *sexual partner with whom you are friends with but not committed (i.e., friends with benefits)*, *sexual partner with whom you are occasionally meet for sex but for no other purpose (i.e., booty call)*, *dating but not committed*, *committed dating*, *living together in a monogamous relationship*, *engaged*, *married*, *other*, *I don't know/prefer not to answer*. For the purposes of analyses related to oral sex during the most recent sexual encounter, this variable was recoded into three categories: *casual partners* (comprised of the first four response choices); *committed dating partners*, and *cohabitating/engaged/married partners*.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics were computed for demographic variables such as age, province/territory of residence and university status. Variables assessing pleasure giving and receiving oral sex were recoded to contrast "very pleasurable" with all other responses for the majority of the analyses, and the partner type variable was recoded as described above. Item-level comparisons of dichotomized variables were conducted using Chi-squares analyses and the more conservative $p < .001$ was adopted for all comparisons. To determine if participants' pleasure ratings for giving and receiving oral sex differed by

partner type, a 2×3 ANOVA was conducted (gender \times relationship type). All data was analyzed using SPSS v. 22.

RESULTS

Giving and receiving oral sex at last sexual encounter

Overall, more than two-thirds of participants (73.4% of men and 69.9% of women) reported that their most recent sexual encounter involved either giving or receiving oral sex, or both of these activities. The majority of men (65.9%) and women (71.9%) reported that their last sexual encounter occurred during the past month, and 98.6% of these encounters happened with an other-gender partner. Over half of participants reported that they gave oral sex to their partner in their most recent sexual encounter. There were no significant differences in giving or receiving oral sex by partner type (i.e., receiving oral sex was not significantly more likely to occur in dating versus cohabitating relationships) for either gender (data not shown). More women than men reported giving oral sex to their partner (59.4% vs. 51.7%), though this difference was not statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level. More men than women reported receiving oral sex in their last sexual encounter (63.3% vs. 43.6%; $\chi^2(1) = 34.46, p < .001$). Using the items related to giving and receiving oral sex, participants were grouped into four categories: gave and received oral sex, gave but did not receive oral sex, received but did not give oral sex, and neither gave nor received oral sex (See Table 1). The majority of men and women reported both giving and receiving oral sex (41.6% and 33.0%, respectively) or neither giving nor receiving oral sex (26.6% and 31.0%, respectively). However, gender differences were found among those who

did give or receive oral sex. Men were significantly more likely than women to report *receiving but not giving* oral sex during the last sexual encounter ($\chi^2(1) = 21.12, p < .001$), while significantly more women reported *giving but not receiving* oral sex ($\chi^2(1) = 37.47, p < .001$).

Pleasure Experienced Giving and Receiving Oral Sex

Most participants reported that giving oral sex was at least somewhat pleasurable (see Table 2). However, men were more likely than women to report giving oral sex was very pleasurable (52.3% vs. 28.1%; $\chi^2(1) = 29.585, p < .001$). There were no gender differences in terms of pleasure experienced when receiving oral sex; the majority of men and women (71.1%) reported receiving oral sex was very pleasurable (see Table 2).

Chi squares were used to determine if men and women were more likely to rate giving oral sex as “very pleasurable” if they had also received oral sex in the same encounter. Women were more likely to report giving oral sex was very pleasurable if they had both given and received oral sex, rather than only given it. Specifically, 36.3% of women who gave and received oral sex reported that giving oral sex was very pleasurable, compared to 17.9% of women who gave oral sex but did not receive it ($\chi^2(1) = 12.478, p < .001$). Among men, pleasure when giving oral sex was not significantly associated with also receiving it. Ratings of pleasure experienced when receiving oral sex were not different among those who both gave and received versus only received, for either gender.

Pleasure ratings reported for giving and receiving oral sex were subjected to a two-way ANOVA, with two levels of gender (men/women) and three partner types (casual, committed dating, cohabitating, engaged, or married).

Table 1. Gender differences in giving and receiving oral sex during the last sexual encounter

	Men % (n)	Women % (n)	Chi Square	<i>p</i>
Gave and received	41.6 (161)	33.0 (169)	7.01	0.008
Gave but did not receive	10.1 (39)	26.4 (135)	37.47	<.001
Received but did not give	21.7 (84)	10.5 (54)	21.12	<.001
Neither gave nor received	26.6 (103)	30.1 (154)	1.30	.26

Table 2. Gender differences in pleasure experienced when giving and receiving oral sex

	Giving Oral Sex ¹		Receiving Oral Sex ²	
	Men % (n)	Women % (n)	Men % (n)	Women % (n)
Very pleasurable	52.3 (103)	28.1 (85)	73.0 (176)	68.9 (151)
Somewhat pleasurable	40.6 (80)	54.6 (165)	24.1 (58)	26.5 (58)
Not very pleasurable	5.6 (11)	14.2% (43)	2.5 (6)	4.1 (9)
Not at all pleasurable	1.5 (3)	3.0 (9)	.4 (1)	.5 (1)

Note: ¹ $\chi^2(3) = 32.52, p < .000$; ² $\chi^2(3) = 1.46, p = .691$

Table 3. Mean pleasure rating for giving and receiving oral sex by partner type

	Partner type		
	Casual	Committed dating	Cohabiting, engaged, married
Giving oral sex			
Men	3.32 (.78)	3.50 (.59)	3.50 (.62)
Women	2.91 (.85)	3.11 (.66)	3.33 (.72)
Overall	3.10 (.84) ^a	3.26 (.66)	3.38 (.69) ^a
Receiving oral sex			
Men	3.63 (.56)	3.72 (.53)	3.84 (.50)
Women	3.48 (.69)	3.66 (.56)	3.85 (.36)
Overall	3.57 (.62) ^a	3.69 (.54)	3.85 (.41) ^a

Note: ** = $p < .01$. Standard deviations appear in parentheses beside means. Means with differing superscripts within rows are significantly different at the $p < .05$ based on Tukey's HSD post hoc paired comparisons. (1 = not at all pleasurable and 4 = very pleasurable)

When comparing pleasure ratings when giving oral sex, the main effect of gender yielded an F ratio of $F(1, 482) = 15.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .031$. Means indicated that men reported higher pleasure ratings when giving oral sex than did women, independent of partner type (3.44 (.67) vs. 3.08 (.73)). The main effect of partner type yielded an F ratio of $F(2,482) = 5.07$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = .021$. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that higher pleasure ratings were reported with cohabitating, engaged or married than casual ones, independent of gender (See Table 3). These main effects were not qualified by an interaction between gender and partner type ($F(2,482) = .617$, $p = .540$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$).

When comparing pleasure ratings when receiving oral sex, the main effect of gender was not significant ($F(1,441) = 1.082$, $p = .299$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$). The main effect of partner type yielded an F ratio of $F(2,441) = 5.785$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .026$. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that higher pleasure ratings were reported with cohabitating, engaged or married than casual ones, independent of gender (See Table 3). The interaction effect was non-significant ($F(2,441) = .571$, $p = .565$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$).

DISCUSSION

This study investigated gender differences in giving and receiving oral sex, taking into account pleasure experienced and partner type among a national sample of heterosexual Canadian university students. Results confirmed that oral sex is a normative behaviour among heterosexual young adults; the most common experience in the last sexual encounter among our participants was both giving and receiving oral sex. However, women were more likely to report giving oral sex and men were more likely to report receiving it. The majority of men and women (no significant gender difference) rated receiving oral sex as "very pleasurable." However, men were more likely than women to report that giving oral sex was "very pleasurable." In the multivariate analyses, men reported higher pleasure ratings when giving oral sex than did women, but there was no significant gender difference in terms of

pleasure reported when receiving oral sex. Regardless of gender, higher pleasure ratings were reported when giving and receiving oral sex with more committed partners (cohabitating, engaged, and married) compared to more casual ones (one time sexual encounter, friends with benefits, booty call, uncommitted dating partner).

That the largest proportion of men (44%) and women (33%) reported mutual oral sex experiences, or neither giving nor receiving (27% of men and 30% of women) suggests for the majority of our participants, no gender difference was experienced. This may indicate a shift toward more egalitarian sexual scripts. Nonetheless, that women were more likely than men to give and not receive and men were more likely than women to receive and not give suggests that for some young adults a double standard remains. In their convenience sample of young men and women, Vannier and O'Sullivan (2012) found that fellatio was more frequently reported among their participants than was cunnilingus. They further identified that, within their sample, there were many reported unidirectional oral sex events involving fellatio and very few involving cunnilingus. Social norms regarding fellatio and cunnilingus differ, which may explain these gender differences. The sexual scripts which situate heterosexual men in a sexual initiation role and women in a sexually passive role are still prevalent among emerging adults (Hunt & Curtis, 2006; Tolman, 2005; Sakaluk et al., 2014; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012). Giving oral sex is often associated with the passive or submissive role in heterosexual relationships while receiving oral sex is associated with the aggressive/initiator role (Baumeister, 1988; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012).

The discrepancy between giving and receiving oral sex among men and women may also reflect different motivations to engage in various types of oral sex. For example, in the Vannier and O'Sullivan (2012) study, the researchers found that although both men and women reported physical reasons for engaging in oral sex, women more frequently endorsed emotional reasons than did men. Perhaps for some women, giving oral sex may be a way to express love toward their partner and feel connected to their partner. As well,

there is evidence that women may be less comfortable receiving oral sex than men (Chambers, 2007; Kaestle & Halpern, 2007; Roberts et al., 1996). Heterosexual women often view oral sex as highly intimate (Chambers, 2007; Roberts et al., 1996); some women consider it more intimate than vaginal intercourse (Backstrom et al., 2012). Studies have found that women will often not engage in oral sex within the context of a casual relationship and may also be reluctant to receive oral sex early on in their committed relationships (e.g., Roberts et al., 1996). Scholars have proposed that women's discomfort around receiving oral sex is related to the negative cultural representations of female genitals as smelly, dirty and/or shameful (Braun, 2005; Braun & Wilkinson, 2001; Reinholtz & Muehlenhard, 1995). In their interviews with young heterosexual women, Roberts et al., (1996) discovered that women's comfort with receiving oral sex was closely related to how they felt about their bodies. Women indicated that they would not be comfortable receiving oral sex from a partner unless they had just finished showering/bathing, due to feelings of self-consciousness about the way they smelled. This interfered with their ability to focus on their own pleasure and led to feelings of anxiety when receiving oral sex was a possibility. Taken together, these findings suggest that the gender discrepancy in giving/receiving oral sex between men and women could be attributed to several variables, including motivation to engage in oral sex, level of comfort with receiving oral sex, and the socio-cultural norms and assumptions regarding men's and women's sexual roles and bodies.

Overall, participants reported high pleasure ratings for receiving oral sex. Thus, though women may be reluctant to engage in oral sex because of body shame or discomfort, those who do receive oral sex appear to find it at least somewhat pleasurable. With regard to giving oral sex, pleasure experienced when giving oral sex to a partner was higher among individuals who also reported receiving oral sex during the same encounter (i.e., mutual oral sex). However, when pleasure ratings for men and women were considered separately, men were significantly more likely to report giving oral sex was "very pleasurable" than were women (a finding replicated in the multivariate analyses). Although no research has specifically investigated the experience of pleasure when giving and receiving sex among young adults, the male sexual script which posits men as "purveyors of sexual pleasure" and "sexual performer" (Sakaluk et al., 2014) may in part explain the pleasure men who gave oral sex reported experiencing during this activity. In another study, receiving oral sex increased the likelihood that a woman experienced orgasm in both hook-up and romantic relationships (Armstrong et al., 2012). Men may recognize that receiving oral sex can be a highly pleasurable experience for women, and as such, may find giving it to their partners enhances their own feelings of sexual pleasure. Though those that gave oral sex were most likely to rate this experience as "very pleasurable," about one half of men in the current sample did not give oral sex during their last encounter. This is in contrast to almost 60% of women who gave oral sex in their last encounter, with only

about one-quarter reporting this activity was very pleasurable. Questions remain about why men who can conceivably find giving oral sex highly pleasurable are not giving it as often as their female counterparts, and why many women who do not experience giving oral sex as highly pleasurable report doing so anyway.

There were no differences in giving/receiving oral sex depending on partner type. This provides further evidence that oral sex is a normative component of the heterosexual sexual script among emerging adults. Young adults engage in oral sex within the context of both casual and committed relationships, but appear to experience greater pleasure when they are with a more committed partner. Consistent with some previous research, level of relationship commitment made a difference in pleasure ratings when giving and receiving oral sex, over and above the influence of gender. Armstrong et al., (2012) found women had more orgasms and enjoyed oral sex more within the context of a relationship compared to a hook up. Interestingly, this was true for men in our study as well. Traditionally, the social rules regarding sexuality have authorized and rewarded men's sexual engagement in a variety of contexts and relationships, while stigmatizing women for engaging in sex outside of a committed, married partnership (Crawford & Popp, 2003; Risman & Schwartz, 2002). Scholars in the field have suggested that contemporary manifestations of this sexual double standard are more complex and multi-dimensional (Crawford & Popp, 2003). However, in our data, both genders reported more pleasure when giving or receiving oral sex in more committed relationships. Elements of this have been seen in other research, i.e., men in Roberts' et al.'s (1996) study reported a preference for giving oral sex to more committed rather than casual partner. Perhaps for both genders, the comfort and familiarity of a known and trusted partner makes the act of giving and receiving oral sex more pleasurable. Further, that no gender difference was found in terms of pleasure experienced when receiving oral sex suggests there may be a shift in conceptualizations about who is entitled to sexual pleasure.

This is the first study to investigate gender differences in giving/receiving oral sex, by partner type in a national sample of Canadian university students. Findings suggest a shift in some aspects of sexual scripts; namely men and women commonly reporting the experience of mutual oral sex and suggesting no gender difference in pleasure reported when receiving oral sex. It is one of the few studies to examine oral sex at the event level and to include a direct measure of pleasure for both giving and receiving oral sex. This type of analysis may reduce the potential bias associated with longer recall timeframes (e.g., lifetime sexual experiences). In analyzing data by partner type, we were able to provide a more refined understanding of oral sex behaviours than has been previously discussed in the literature. Nevertheless, several limitations need to be considered. Though the participants were part of a national sample of university students, only heterosexual individuals were included in this analysis. It is likely that the sexual scripts and social norms regarding oral

sex differ among women and men in lesbian, bisexual, or gay relationships, especially in those where oral sex may play a more prominent role in the sexual repertoire. Such normative differences may impact both a person's comfort with their body and their level of pleasure during oral sex. Unfortunately, results cannot be generalized beyond men and women in heterosexual relationships, or beyond a university student sample. Future research with large community samples of young adults would enhance our understanding of these issues. Further, the findings are subject to social desirability bias which may be particularly relevant in sexuality research (Alexander & Fisher, 2003). Nonetheless, this research highlights that oral sex is a normative component of heterosexual university students' sexual scripts, and provides further support for the gendered nature of norms related to giving and receiving oral sex. Findings highlight the utility of discussing gendered norms for sexual behaviour with young people, encouraging men and women to consider their motives for engaging in sexual behaviours which do not give them pleasure. As well, sexuality and sexual health educational programs should include information men and women can use to enhance the pleasure they receive when giving and receiving oral sex.

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