ATTACHMENT CHARACTERISTICS AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT PERPETRATION AND RECEIPT AMONG ADOLESCENT PEERS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the association between adolescents' perceived attachments to mothers and fathers and their sexual harassment experiences with peers via attachment characteristics. Using the Sexual Harassment Survey and the Adolescent Attachment Questionnaire, grades eight to twelve students ($N = 475$, 43.8% male, $n = 208$; 55.4% female, $n = 263$) in a public school in western Canada self-reported on their sexual harassment behaviour and experiences with peers and their perceived current attachments to mothers and fathers. Hierarchical regression analyses, controlling for gender and previous engagement in social-sexual relations, revealed that adolescents' perceptions of mothers' availability was negatively related to perpetrating peer sexual harassment. Adolescents' perceived paternal angry distress showed a positive association to perpetrating this behaviour, however, the interaction between adolescents' perceived paternal angry distress and availability accounted for slightly more variance in the dependent variable than angry distress alone. Finally, adolescents' perceptions of fathers' availability showed a negative relationship to receiving peer sexual harassment. Distinctions between mother-child and father-child interactions throughout childhood and adolescence are discussed as the basis for the differences in results between mothers and fathers. The implications of a parent-adolescent attachment model for understanding the emergence of peer sexual harassment in adolescence are addressed.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Christina and Burapha - mom and dad,
for their endless love and support for me throughout my years of education.

Attachment Characteristics and Sexual Harassment Perpetration

and Receipt Among Adolescent Peers

Investigations of sexual harassment define this problematic behaviour as "improper behaviour [of a] sexual dimension" (O'Donohue, Downs, & Yeater, 1998, p. 2). Sexual harassment research has focused on its occurrence in the workplace, attributing its presence to two reasons: (1) pressure for sexual favours as a condition of employment (known as quid pro quo harassment) and (2) verbal or physical behaviour between two adults that leads to a hostile work environment (Lee, Croninger, Linn, & Chen, 1996). In 1993, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) extended research in this area to investigate sexual harassment in high schools. According to the AAUW, many adolescents reported having experienced sexual harassment at some point in their school lives with the vast majority of it being perpetrated by their peers. The negative impact of peer sexual harassment for both perpetrators (Pellegrini, 2002) and victims (AAUW, 1993; Duffy, Wareham, & Walsh, 2004; Fineran & Bennett, 1998; Lacasse, Purdy, & Mendelson, 2003; Lee et al., 1996) indicates the importance of investigating the antecedents of both adolescent perpetration and receipt of this behaviour.

To date, sexual harassment perpetration has been linked to socio-biological transitions in adolescence (McMaster, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2002; Pellegrini, 2002) and to psychopathology (Lee et al., 1996), however, no research has explored the possibility of parent-adolescent attachments as potential social antecedents to perpetrating peer sexual harassment. Moreover, the receipt of sexual harassment in adolescence has been linked to contextual and situational dynamics of adolescents' relationships with peers (Lee et al., 1996), but has ignored the potential for parent-adolescent attachments to protect against receiving this behaviour. In recent years, attachment theory has emerged as a useful theory in attempting to explain various adolescent behaviours and experiences, including involvement in romantic relationships (Feeney, Noller, & Patty, 1993), friendship formation (Zimmermann, 2004), acting out aggressive

behaviours (Moretti, DaSilva, & Holland, 2004; Simons, Paternite, & Shore, 2001), and the perpetration and receipt of bullying (Olweus, 1995; Pellegrini, 2002). These associations indicate how attachments to parents are predictive of both appropriate and aversive social behaviours as well as positive and negative social interactions in adolescence.

Speculating that parent-adolescent attachments may influence adolescents' experiences with peer sexual harassment, this investigation explores the possibility that both perpetration and receipt of this behaviour can be explained from the same theoretical framework. Therefore, the present study expands the adolescent sexual harassment literature into the realm of attachment theory, an important undertaking which may offer insight into the social factors underlying adolescent experiences with peer sexual harassment.

Attachment Overview

Attachment in Infancy and Childhood

Bowlby's attachment theory is a normative model of human development conceptualized to illustrate ontogenetic development (1969; 1973). At the heart of attachment theory is the idea that the quality of attachment relationships throughout the lifespan stems from interactions between infants and their primary caregivers. Within these interactions, attachment behaviour is characterized as a normative control system organized to restore safety via proximity to an attachment figure under conditions of danger or threat, as well as exploration of the environment during periods of safety. Starting from an early age, infants engage in attachment behaviours that either signal interest in interaction (i.e. smiling, reaching, and vocalizing) or need for interaction and comfort (i.e. crying) from an attachment figure. Regardless of the motivation, both behaviours have similar functions: to bring the attachment figure to the infant. The responsiveness and sensitivity of the caregiver to the infant's attachment behaviour lays the groundwork for which infants and children come to rely on them as a source of security (Thompson, 1999).

Ideally, attachment figures should be available and perceived as willing to act responsively as caregivers in order to effectively deal with attachment-related distress and anxiety that may be experienced in children (Bowlby, 1973; Hazan & Zeifman, 1994; West, Rose, Spreng, Sheldon-Keller, & Adam, 1998). Consistent availability and adequate responsiveness to children's attachment needs helps them build confidence in their attachment figures as a secure base, enabling them to explore their surroundings with confidence and mastery (Bowlby, 1973; Hazan & Zeifman, 1994). *Availability* is the term used to describe the physical and emotional responsiveness of attachment figures as perceived by their children. Availability is used to guide the extent to which children can depend on attachment figures as reliably accessible and responsive to most of their attachment needs (West et al., 1998).

However, attachment figures are not always available and responsive to their children's attachment desires and needs. The term *angry distress* is used to describe the negative affective response to the perceived unavailability and lack of response or protection from attachment figures when they are wanted (termed separation protest) or needed (termed safe haven), consequently generating feelings of abandonment and fear (West et al., 1998). These feelings disrupt attachment relationships and personal development, reducing a child's capacity for self-efficacy and trust in others. Angry distress functions as a signal to attachment figures that their children's attachment desires and needs are not being met. However, Bretherton and Munholland (1999) argue that normal children are not passive participants in the attachment relationship formation and given the opportunity, can establish a goal-corrected partnership (termed proximity seeking) toward the end of the second year of life.

Between the ages of two and five years, children begin to recognize their attachment figure as someone with his or her own plans and goals (Hazan & Zeifman, 1994). As children mature, their cognitive capabilities become strikingly more sophisticated allowing them to recognize these plans and goals as different than their own, including the desire to maintain

physical closeness (e.g. proximity seeking) to each other (Bowlby, 1969). The term *goal-corrected partnership* reflects children's consideration of empathy for the needs and feelings of attachment figures (West et al., 1998).

According to attachment theory, the attachment experiences that children have with their attachment figures are, over time, internalized in such a way that they come to form a prototype of ongoing and future interactions inside and outside the family (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Bowlby, 1973; Kobak, 1999; Kobak & Sceery, 1988). Bowlby (1973) labels these internalized representations as *internal working models*. Following Bowlby, West et al. (1998) identified internal working models as comprised of differing levels of availability, angry distress, and goal-corrected partnership. These three parent-adolescent attachment characteristics are the focus of this investigation linking attachment to peer sexual harassment experiences.

Internal working models. Bowlby (1973) identifies two key features of working models of attachment in children: "(a) whether or not the attachment figure is judged to be the sort of person who in general responds to calls for support and protection; [and] (b) whether or not the self is judged to be the sort of person towards whom anyone, and the attachment figure in particular, is likely to respond in a helpful way" (p. 204). The former concerns the child's image of others as responsive and trustworthy or unresponsive and untrustworthy; the latter concerns the child's image of the self as worthy or unworthy of attention and care from others. A model of the self where one is valued and competent is constructed from parents being emotionally available, protective against imposing danger, and supportive of exploratory activities. Conversely, a model of the self where one is devalued and unworthy of attention stems from parents rejecting or ignoring their children's attachment behaviour in childhood. When parents are supportive and cooperative in their interactions with their children, their children are more likely to develop 'secure' working models that enable them to initiate, develop, and maintain positive relationships with others (Feeney & Noller, 1996). In contrast, children with

unsupportive and/or absent parents are more likely to develop 'insecure' working models that inhibit their ability to form and maintain positive relationships with others (Feeney & Noller, 1996).

Clearly, internal working models, whether it is secure or insecure, provide a framework for how older children and adolescents relate to their social and physical world (Simons et al., 2001). Behavioural adjustments of secure and less secure adolescents remain distinct from each other because individual differences in internal working models imply different expectations of self and others (Feeney & Noller, 1996; Rice, 1990). Literature focusing on attachment beyond childhood conceptualizes adolescent and adult attachment as cognitive representations of the self and others stemming from attachment relationships with parents in childhood.

Attachment beyond Childhood

In his early writings on attachment theory, Bowlby (1973) claimed attachment to be an integral part of human behaviour from 'the cradle to the grave' (p. 208), emphasizing the continuity of attachment patterns from infancy to adulthood. Furthermore, he acknowledged the continued importance of parent-child attachments during the period from preadolescence to early adulthood arguing that close relations with parents foster the growth of individuation. In terms of attachment organization, adolescents continue to internalize and reflect on their childhood experiences and how these experiences affect their perception of themselves in relation to others (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). These internalized representations, or internal working models, act as guides for the interpretation of ongoing experiences and expectations of future interactions with parents and others (Bretherton, Golby, & Cho, 1997; Bretherton & Munholland, 1999).

The interpretation of ongoing experiences and interactions, guided by adolescents' internal working models, showcase the affective stability of working models in adolescence; however, affective change in working models has been documented (Bretherton & Munholland,

1999). For example, a securely attached child does not always become a securely attached adolescent (Allen, McElhaney, Kuperminc, & Jodl, 2004; Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000). Likewise, an insecure child may develop into a securely attached adolescent. To illustrate, if a previous empathetic and supportive parent suddenly becomes deeply depressed or highly stressed owing to life-altering events such as chronic illness or parental divorce and threatens to abandon their child, the child's confidence in them as a secure base may be altered. This leads the child to reconstruct his or her working model of self as devalued and others as uncaring. Conversely, if life circumstances improve for parents, they may become more attuned to their child's attachment needs, leading the child to reconstruct his or her working model of self as valued and others as caring. Thus, affective change in individual working models can be triggered when stressful situations are encountered or when circumstances improve (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). To gain a sense of how parent-adolescent attachments are associated with adolescents' perceptions of self and others and ultimately their behaviour with others, an examination of their current representations of attachment to parents, characterized by their perceived levels of availability, angry distress, and goal corrected-partnership (attachment characteristics), is needed.

<div align="center">Adolescent Peer Sexual Harassment</div>

The recognition that sexual harassment occurs in high schools among adolescent peers emerged in 1993 in a study conducted by the AAUW. Since that study, researchers have attempted to define peer sexual harassment but have remained unsuccessful at achieving an acceptable definition of this problematic behaviour within the academic arena. For instance, McMaster and her colleagues (2002) define peer sexual harassment as "unwanted sexual attention" (p. 92). This definition, however, is indistinguishable from previous definitions of sexual harassment, including sexual harassment perpetrated by persons with authoritative power over a student (i.e. teacher). Some of the literature focuses on sex harassment being perpetrated

by school employees toward students (Timmerman, 2003); thus, including a description of a perpetrator within the peer group distinguishes peer sexual harassment from previous definitions. Therefore, the current study presents a behavioural-psychological definition of peer sexual harassment as any *unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favours, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature by a peer or group of peers that attacks any part of another peer's sexuality.* This definition is behavioural, because specific behaviours constituting harassment are defined, and psychological, because the victim's perception of the behaviour is salient.

Several reasons may account for sexual harassment being commonplace in academic environments including pubertal development and an increased participation in mixed-gender peer groups. One of the most important new facets of peer interactions to develop during adolescence is that of romantic and sexual relationships (Allen & Land, 1999). Puberty typically characterizes the activation of this physiological system in the human body. Recent attempts have been made to link pubertal development to sexually harassing behaviour. According to McMaster et al. (2002), sexual harassment among high school peers is a crude and aggressive attempt to express developmentally appropriate sexual interest. This, combined with the increase in cross-gender peer groups and opportunity to engage in social-sexual relations, may account for the emergence of cross-gender sexual harassment perpetration in adolescence. Likewise, as adolescents gain sexual maturity, opposite-sex friends can become romantic partners, thus changing these friendships from gaining affiliative rewards to offering potential sexual rewards (Lacasse et al., 2003).

Sexual harassment conceptualized as a form of social aggression also shows promise in helping to explain this phenomenon. Using systematic research by Olweus (1995; 2003), Pellegrini (2002) conceptualizes sexual harassment among peers as a form of proactive bullying. He defines bullying as a "form of social aggression that persists overtime [and is] characterized

by imbalance, in that a more dominant, and typically bigger and tougher individual repeatedly victimizes a smaller and weaker subordinate individual" (p. 152). In accordance with this definition, sexual harassment can take the form of one gender victimizing others of the same gender *or* one gender victimizing others of the opposite gender. Though the latter may be more indicative of the prevailing incidences of peer sexual harassment in high schools (Lee et al., 1996), this definition recognizes the harassing nature of behaviours common among members within the same gender group, such as a male student calling another male student 'gay' or a female student calling another female student a 'dyke'.

Sexual harassment is one form of victimization that occurs among adolescent peers. Within the literature, several studies have examined factors influencing receipt of this behaviour. Lee et al. (1996) and McMaster et al. (2002) indicate that students who have harassed their peers are more likely to be harassed themselves than students who have not harassed others. Lee et al. (1996) also found gender, the acceptability of harassment within the school culture, and whether or not one's friends experienced harassment, as factors associated to receiving harassment from peers. Moreover, Craig, Pepler, Connolly, and Henderson (2001) conclude that adolescents' timing of sexual maturity and transfer from same-gender only to cross-gender peer groups to be associated with peer victimization.

Assessments of sexual harassment perpetration and victimization require attention to possible differences in the sexual harassment experiences of male and female adolescents. Adolescent males tend to perpetrate sexual harassment more often than adolescent females, regardless of the victim's gender (AAUW; 1993, Fineran & Bennett, 1998; McMaster et al., 2002; Roscoe, Strouse, & Goodwin, 1994). Adolescent females, however, are considerably more likely than adolescent males to be victims of peer sexual harassment (AAUW, 1993; Fineran & Bennett, 1998; Lee et al., 1996; Roscoe et al., 1994; Timmerman, 2003). Since gender differences in sexual harassment perpetration and receipt are not the focus of this study, the sex

of the adolescent is controlled for in tests of the associations between attachments to parents and peer sexual harassment.

Attachment and Peer Sexual Harassment

In adolescence, adolescents show a growing interest in spending time with peers relative to parents, turning to them for comfort and support except when parents are wanted (Allen & Land, 1999; Hazan & Zeifman, 1999). Peer relationships at this time begin to take on many of the functions that they will serve for the remainder of the lifespan, including being an important source for intimacy, feedback about social behaviour, social influence and information, and attachment relationships (Allen & Land, 1999; Feeney et al., 1993). For adolescents who have established a secure working model, they are likely to be successful in initiating and developing attachment relationships with their peers by behaving in developmentally appropriate ways. Conversely, adolescents who have not established a secure working model are still likely to seek out attachment relationships with others, but may approach them in inappropriate, sometimes aggressive, ways. Because the present study is the first to link adolescent attachment to peer sexual harassment, it is necessary to extrapolate research findings linking attachment to bullying and aggression to help explain why adolescents perpetrate and receive sexual harassment from their peers.

Attachment and Bullying

Bullying typically resembles physically rough behaviours such as pushing, poking, and shoving (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999; Pellegrini, 2002). These behaviours typically occur in less than playful, harassing ways, especially in aggressive boys (Craig et al., 2001). According to Olweus (1995), bullies are distinctive in that they possess specific attachment-related characteristics that separate themselves from their peers. He identifies two child-rearing factors that are particularly important for the development of an aggressive reaction pattern in boys: (1) the basic emotional attitude of the primary caretaker(s) toward the child during early

years (i.e. indifference, lack of warmth and involvement), and (2) the parental permissiveness for aggressive behaviour perpetrated by the child. According to attachment theory, parental indifference and lack of involvement generates feelings of abandonment and fear with the consequence of eliciting angry distress responses in children. Moreover, permissiveness for aggressive behaviour perpetrated by children indicates a perceived lack of availability in both physical and emotional response from parents, leading to children's perceptions that they are not worthy of others' attention. Thus, based on theory and in terms of attachment characteristics, it is likely that adolescents who perceive having high levels of angry distress or low levels of availability in their attachments to parents are more likely to bully others than those who perceive having low levels of angry distress or high levels of availability.

Typical victims of bullying have higher levels of anxiousness and insecurity than their less anxious and more secure counterparts (Olweus, 1995). Victims who possess these characteristics often suffer from low self-esteem and have negative views of themselves and their situation. From an attachment perspective, low self-esteem and negative views of oneself indicates a susceptibility to being bullied or made fun of from peers. However, empirical research examining specific child-rearing factors that may make adolescents more susceptible to receiving bullying from peers is lacking; therefore, it is unclear whether attachment characteristics may be associated with receiving this behaviour in adolescence.

Attachment and Aggression

Similar to the bullying literature, research linking adolescent attachments to being on the receiving end of aggressive behaviours by peers requires more extensive research. Fortunately, research supporting the link between parent-adolescent attachments and aggressive behaviour perpetration explains the association according to attachment styles: children and adolescents with insecure attachment patterns have significantly more behavioural problems and engage in more aggressive behaviours than their secure counterparts (Allen, Moore, Kuperminc, & Bell,

1998; Simons et al., 2001). However, no study has yet looked at specific characteristics of attachment and their association with perpetrating these behaviours. Therefore, examining attachment characteristics and their associations to adolescent peer sexual harassment takes an important step towards understanding how each characteristic relates to adolescent experiences with this behaviour.

Since the present study examines attachment characteristics rather than attachment styles, a discussion of how each characteristic relates to peer sexual harassment is warranted. For perpetrators, high levels of angry distress, as derived from consistently unavailable and rejecting parental behaviour, may lead adolescents to deliberately use this tactic to achieve status within their peer group because of the lack of attention they receive at home. Combined with increased contact with peers of both sexes and an increased interest in dating and sexual relationships (Allen & Land, 1999), sexual harassment may emerge as a form of behaviour in which to achieve this status (Pellegrini, 2002). On the other hand, high levels of goal-correction enable adolescents to consider and have empathy for the needs and feelings of others (West et al., 1998). Having empathy for others may decrease the likelihood of behaving in a manner which may negatively affect their social status within their peer group, consequently decreasing the likelihood of engaging in sexually inappropriate behaviour. Finally, high levels of availability may lead adolescents to approach peer relationships with confidence and view others as trustworthy (Simons et al., 2001); therefore, it is unlikely that individuals will engage in sexually inappropriate behaviour to attract attention because of the possibility of being alienated by their peer group.

For victims of sexual harassment, it is theoretically and empirically unclear how attachment characteristics relate to receiving sexual harassment from peers. According to Lee et al. (1996), contextual factors are more strongly associated with receiving sexual harassment than demographic and psychological factors supporting the notion that sexual harassment in

adolescence is most likely related to the social dynamics among adolescents and their peers. However, it may be worthwhile to explore how attachment characteristics relate to receiving sexual harassment from peers as these characteristics may act as protective factors against victimization.

The Present Study

The goal of this study is to extend the attachment literature by investigating the relationship between adolescent attachment characteristics and adolescent experiences with both perpetrating and receiving peer sexual harassment. Two research questions are formulated in an attempt to uncover the characteristics that best account for the variability in peer sexual harassment: (1) How are attachment characteristics associated to perpetrating peer sexual harassment in adolescence? and (2) Are attachment characteristics associated to receiving sexual harassment from peers in adolescence? If attachment characteristics are associated to receiving sexual harassment from peers, how are they associated? No hypotheses are made for the receipt of peer sexual harassment due to the lack of theoretical and empirical literature in this area.

Guided by both the theoretical and empirical literature reviewed in this investigation, the following hypotheses are derived:

H1:   Angry distress is positively related to perpetrating peer sexual harassment.

H2:   Availability is negatively related to perpetrating peer sexual harassment.

H3:   Goal-correction is negatively related to perpetrating peer sexual harassment.

Method

Participants

Five hundred and eight students attending a grade eight to twelve public school in western Canada provided data on their attachment relationships with their parents and experiences with peer sexual harassment. Among these respondents, the following 31 cases (6.5%) were excluded from the study: seven cases (1.5%) were living in homestay arrangements

and were instructed to answer all questions about their homestay parents; one case (0.2%) lived in a foster home and did not indicate how long they had been living there; four cases (0.8%) lived with persons other than a parent or parent figure; and six cases (1.3%) did not provide enough data for the variables being studied. An additional 13 cases (2.7%) were excluded from the dataset because their responses were not serious; for example, three of the 13 cases responded to every item in the survey at one extreme end of the measurement scale, including reverse coded items.

The final sample (N = 475) consisted of 208 males (43.8%), 263 females (55.4%), and four respondents who did not indicate their sex (0.8%). The age of the sample ranged from 12 to 18 years with a mean age of 14.4 (SD = 1.41) years. The respondents varied in ethnicity, with 55% being Caucasian/European (n = 263), 27% East Asian (n = 131), 3% South/Southeast Asian (n = 14), 1% First Nations/Native (n = 5), 1.5% African (n = 8), and 1% Latino/Hispanic (n = 3). A total of 29 cases indicated a mixed ethnicity: 5% are Caucasian/European and Asian (n = 21) and 1.5% are Caucasian/European and First Nations/Native (n = 8). Five percent of the sample did not indicate their ethnicity (n = 22). Among the diversity of ethnic backgrounds, 331 respondents were born in Canada (70%), 135 respondents were born outside of Canada (28%), and nine respondents did not answer this question (2%).

Respondents were asked to indicate their family living situation. Three hundred and thirty-four (70%) respondents live in intact families (e.g. married parents), the most prevalent family configuration within the sample. Sixty-eight respondents (14%) live with their mother most of the time compared to only nine respondents (2%) who live with their father most of the time. The remainder of the sample represented various family configurations, including living with divorced or separated parents equally (n = 9, 2%), living with one's mother while one's father worked in another country (n = 6, 1%), living with grandparents (n = 1, 0.2%), and living with an older brother (n = 1, 0.2%). A total of 21 cases currently live with their mother and her

partner most of the time (4.4%). Likewise, 20 cases currently live with their father and his partner most of the time (4.2%). Six respondents (1%) did not indicate who they were currently living with.

Procedure

The data set is from Wave 2 of a five-wave cohort-sequential study exploring adolescent life among high school students. Participants were recruited with the consent and cooperation of the School Board, school administration, and parents. Consent forms were distributed to every student in the first week of classes (see Appendix A). As an incentive for students to return signed consent forms, prizes (i.e. pizza party and gift certificates) were awarded to homeroom classes with the highest response rate, regardless of parental consent or parental non-consent to participate in the study. Seven hundred and seventy-two consent forms were returned (585 with consent and 187 without consent) for an overall response rate of 65%. Students with parental consent were escorted to computer labs which contained individually secure desktop computers during a pre-scheduled social studies class. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, participants were allowed to choose any computer at random. Student numbers, which were required to log into the computer survey, were coded and separated from student's given names.

Trained research assistants explained assent to the participants prior to completion of the survey. Participants were assured of confidentiality and reminded of the voluntary nature of the research. The entire survey took approximately an hour to complete. Participants were asked not to discuss the contents of the survey with other students after their completion of the task. After data collection was complete, all data was downloaded onto the principal investigator's secure computer and locked away in a file.

Measures

Demographic information. Participants were asked to provide their sex, age, ethnicity, country of origin, and family living situation (see Appendix B).

Engagement in social-sexual relations. Participants were asked whether they had previously engaged in social-sexual relationships with a partner (see Appendix C).

Adolescent Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ; West et al., 1998*).* The AAQ is a self-report instrument used to assess adolescents' perceptions of their attachment relationships to parents via attachment characteristics (West et al., 1998). Items from the AAQ were modified for this study to assess *current* attachment relationships rather than past experiences.

The modified AAQ consists of three scales of three statements each, with Likert-type responses ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree.* The three scales measure availability, goal-corrected partnership, and angry distress. Higher scores on each measure indicate a higher level of that particular attachment characteristic. The original AAQ demonstrated high convergent validity across all three attachment characteristics with the Adult Attachment Interview, which is considered to be the 'gold standard' for classifying attachment status in adolescents and adults (West et al., 1998).

Since attachment is a dyadic phenomenon, the AAQ scales were further modified to include items representing attachment relationships with both parents separately. For example, "my mother only seems to notice me when I am angry", and "my father only seems to notice me when I am angry" (see Appendix D and E). This differs from West et al.'s (1998) study because participants in their study were allowed to choose the attachment figure they wanted to report on, for example, "my parent only seems to notice me when I am angry." Cronbach's alpha for adolescents' perceived availability, goal-corrected partnership, and angry distress for mothers are moderately high: .83, .83, and .70, respectively. Cronbach's alpha for adolescents' perceived father availability, goal-corrected partnership, and angry distress are also moderately high: .88, .91, and .79, respectively.

Sexual Harassment Survey (SHS, McMaster et al., 2002*).* Sexual harassment behaviours among peers were measured using the items McMaster et al. (2002) modified from the AAUW

Sexual Harassment Survey (AAUW, 1993). In order to distinguish both perpetration and victimization of sexual harassment among adolescents, the SHS scales were modified to include items representing both dimensions. The questionnaire instructions explicitly state that participants are to report on only *unwanted* sexual behaviours in the past month of completing the survey. For example: "How many times in the past month has another student: ["Touched, grabbed, or pinched you in a sexual way"] that was not wanted." The same questions were modified to reflect the perpetration of sexually harassing behaviour. For example, "How many times in the past month have you: ["Touched, grabbed, or pinched someone in a sexual way"] that was not wanted." The items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 = *never* to 4 = *almost everyday*, with higher scores indicating more frequent experiences of sexual harassment from or towards peers. The internal consistencies of the items in the SHS are moderately high. Cronbach's alpha for perpetration and receiving peer sexual harassment are .76 and .72, respectively.

The items included in McMaster et al.'s (2002) version did not include two items that referred to sexual coercion, which were included in the original AAUW survey. As illustrated in Appendix F and G, this study used the same general structure and questions as McMaster et al.'s (2002) study, but with two minor modifications. First, students were asked to report on harassment occurring in the past month rather than in the last six weeks. Second, one out of the ten items assessing harassment was modified to include the term 'gay' (i.e. called someone/you ['gay'], 'fag', 'dyke' 'lezzie', or 'queer'). This term was included into the measure because of its sexually harassing nature and common usage in adolescent peer communication.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Mean scores, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for each of the measures used are presented in Table 1. For the AAQ, mean scores for each attachment characteristic were

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations between Sex, Age, Participation in Social-Sexual Relations, Attachment Characteristics for Mother and Father, and Perpetration and Receipt of Peer Sexual Harassment (N =475)

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Sex	Age	Soc-sex	Attachment to Mother			Attachment to Father			Harassment Perpetration
						Angry	Avail	Partnership	Angry	Avail	Partnership	
Sex	.56	.49										
Age	14.4	1.4	-.03									
Social-Sexual	.35	.47	-.04	.22**								
Mother												
Angry Distress	2.02	.99	-.03	.07	.17**							
Availability	3.94	.99	.01	-.09*	-.15**	-.46**						
Goal-corrected Partnership	3.92	.87	.12**	-.08	-.11*	-.34**	.61**					
Father												
Angry Distress	1.82	.98	-.01	.17**	.17**	.53**	-.30**	-.20**				
Availability	3.67	1.12	-.08	-.10	-.12*	-.25**	.35**	.25**	-.47**			
Goal-corrected Partnership	3.83	1.06	.06	.05	-.05	-.27**	.37**	.54**	-.44**	.64**		
Perpetration	.28**	.48	-.30**	.06	.34**	.15**	-.22**	-.20**	.21**	-.14**	-.13**	
Receipt	.46**	.58	-.15**	.06	.48**	.19**	-.19**	-.18**	.23**	-.19**	-.14**	.67**

Note. Sex was coded as 0 = male, 1 = female.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

calculated separately for mothers and fathers. For the SHS, mean scores for adolescent peer sexual harassment perpetration and receipt were calculated. Similar to previous studies that found sexual harassment experiences to be quite low among adolescent peers (AAUW, 1993; McMaster et al., 2002), mean scores for sexual harassment perpetration ($M = .28$, SD = .48) and receipt ($M = .46$, SD = .58) for the sample were low.

Both males and females reported perpetrating and receiving peer sexual harassment, yet consistent with previous studies (AAUW, 1993; Lacasse et al., 2003; Lee et al., 1996; McMaster et al., 2002; Timmerman, 2003), males were significantly more likely to report perpetrating this behaviour than their females counterparts ($r = -.30$, $p < .01$). Surprisingly, males also reported being on the receiving end of this behaviour more often than females ($r = -.15$, $p < .01$). It is notable that studies examining gender differences in sexual harassment victimization (e.g. Lee et al., 1996; McMaster et al., 2002) have shown inconsistent results. No significant correlations were found between age and sexual harassment perpetration and receipt.

Previous engagement in social-sexual relations was also associated with adolescent sexual harassment experiences. Significant positive associations were found between engagement in social-sexual relations and sexual harassment perpetration and receipt. These results indicate that if adolescents reported engagement in previous social-sexual relations with a partner, they were more likely to perpetrate ($r = .34$, $p < .01$) and receive ($r = .48$, $p < .01$) peer sexual harassment. Gender and engagement in social-sexual relations were thus entered into all analyses predicting adolescent peer sexual harassment to ensure that any attachment effects obtained were not simply artifacts of demographic characteristics of the sample.

Attachment differences may be based on ethnic and cultural scripts (Van IJzendoorn & Sagi, 1999). To rule out the possibility of ethnic and cultural differences in attachments to parents, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with ethnicity as the independent variable and attachment subscales as the dependent variables. Because 82% of the

sample was represented by two ethnic groups (i.e. Caucasian/European [n = 263] and East Asian [n = 131]), three separate groups were created to compare mean scores across each group and their overall attachments to parents. Respondents from all other ethnicities within the sample were placed in the third group (n = 59). Ethnic group comparisons indicated only one significant model, that of availability of mothers, $F(2, 463) = 3.07$, $p = .047$. Scheffe's method of comparing means was used as a post hoc comparison to determine whether differences existed between the ethnic groups for perceived availability with mothers. The post-hoc tests revealed no significant cultural differences. Because ethnic and cultural differences were ruled out as a potential factor affecting the variance in attachments to mothers and fathers, ethnicity was not included in the regression analyses.

Primary Analyses

Hierarchical ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions were used to assess the relationships between adolescents' attachments to mothers and fathers and adolescent peer sexual harassment perpetration and receipt. In all regressions, gender and engagement in social-sexual relations were entered as control variables on the first step. Attachment characteristics (e.g. angry distress, availability, goal-corrected partnership) were entered on the second step of the regression. To rule out the possibility of linear combinations of attachment characteristics being associated with peer sexual harassment experiences, three two-way interaction terms (between the three attachment characteristics) were entered in the third step of the regression. The fourth step included one three-way interaction involving all three attachment characteristics. Following Aiken and West (1991), the independent variables were centered before creating the interaction terms to protect against multicollinearity effects between first-order variables and interaction variables.

A step-down procedure was used to simplify the final equations for each regression. This means that tables included in this study are presented at the highest step terms indicating the

contribution of the independent variable on the dependent variable were significant. The *F* change is reported to show the change in the regression model when the main effects and interaction terms are considered over and above the control variables. Significant interactions were probed by creating conditional values of the attachment characteristics (above and below the mean for the sample) and assessing the simple slopes of the dependent variable regressed on the independent variables, as suggested by Aiken and West (1991).

Associations between adolescents' perceived attachments to mothers and sexual harassment perpetration were assessed first. Adolescents' perceived mothers' availability (see Table 2) showed a significant negative association ($\beta = -.144, p < .01$) with perpetrating sexual harassment towards peers, $F\Delta(5, 450) = 28.52, p < .001$. In contrast, adolescents' perceived maternal angry distress ($\beta = .017, p = .71$) and goal-correction ($\beta = -.041, p = .44$) showed no significant associations with harassment. Interactions terms were also not statistically significant.

Following the analyses pertaining to attachments to mothers, associations between adolescent attachment characteristics for fathers and sexual harassment perpetration were assessed. Table 3 illustrates these associations. Unlike for mothers, adolescents' perceived father availability showed no significant association ($\beta = -.048, p = .41$) with perpetrating peer sexual harassment. However, regression analyses examining adolescents' perceived paternal angry distress revealed different results, with angry distress and sexual harassment perpetration being significantly positively related ($\beta = .147, p < .01$). Further, adolescents' perceptions of attachments to fathers revealed a significant interaction between angry distress and availability, over and above all other variables, $F\Delta (8, 435) = 17.86, p < .001$.

Consequently, follow-up probes of the simple slopes of the interaction between angry distress and availability for fathers were conducted. As illustrated in Figure 1, above the mean on angry distress, father availability was not significantly associated with peer sexual harassment

Table 2

Hierarchical Regressions Predicting Peer Sexual Harassment Perpetration from Attachment to Mothers Controlling for Sex and Engagement in Social-Sexual Relations (n =455)

Variable	B	SE B	β
Step 1			
Sex	-.284	.041	-.292***
Social-sexual relations	.342	.042	.339***
Step 2			
Sex	-.279	.040	-.287***
Social-sexual relations	.313	.042	.311***
Angry Distress	.008	.023	.017
Availability	-.069	.027	-.144**
Goal-corrected partnership	-.022	.029	-.041

Note. R^2 = .209 for Step 1; ΔR^2 = .232 for Step 2.

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

perpetration (β = .025, p = .68), but below the mean on angry distress, a significant negative association was found (β = -.124, $p < .05$).

Regression analyses examining the receipt of peer sexual harassment followed the same procedures as for the perpetration of this behaviour. As illustrated in Table 4, no significant main effects were found for perceived attachments to mothers and the receipt of sexual harassment from peers. Additionally, interactions between any two attachment characteristics and all three attachment characteristics for adolescents' attachments to mothers showed no significant associations with receiving this behaviour from peers.

Table 3

Hierarchical Regressions Predicting Peer Sexual Harassment Perpetration from Attachment to Fathers Controlling for Sex and Engagement in Social-Sexual Relations (n = 443)

Variable	B	SE B	β
Step 1			
Sex	-.287	.042	-.292***
Social-sexual relations	.346	.043	.339***
Step 2			
Sex	-.294	.042	-.299***
Social-sexual relations	.316	.043	.310***
Angry Distress	.076	.026	.147**
Availability	-.021	.025	-.048
Goal-corrected partnership	-.002	.026	-.004
Step 3			
Sex	-.285	.042	-.290***
Social-sexual relations	.317	.043	.311***
Angry Distress	.100	.029	.195***
Availability	-.018	.025	-.044
Goal-corrected Partnership	.001	.028	.004
Angry distress x availability	.052	.027	.152*
Angry distress x goal-corrected partnership	-.019	.028	-.057
Availability x goal-corrected partnership	.006	.017	.020

Note. R^2 = .209 for Step 1; ΔR^2 = .229 for Step 2; ΔR^2 = .233 for Step 3.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Probes of the Interaction Between Perceived Availability and Angry Distress with Fathers on Sexual Harassment Perpetration
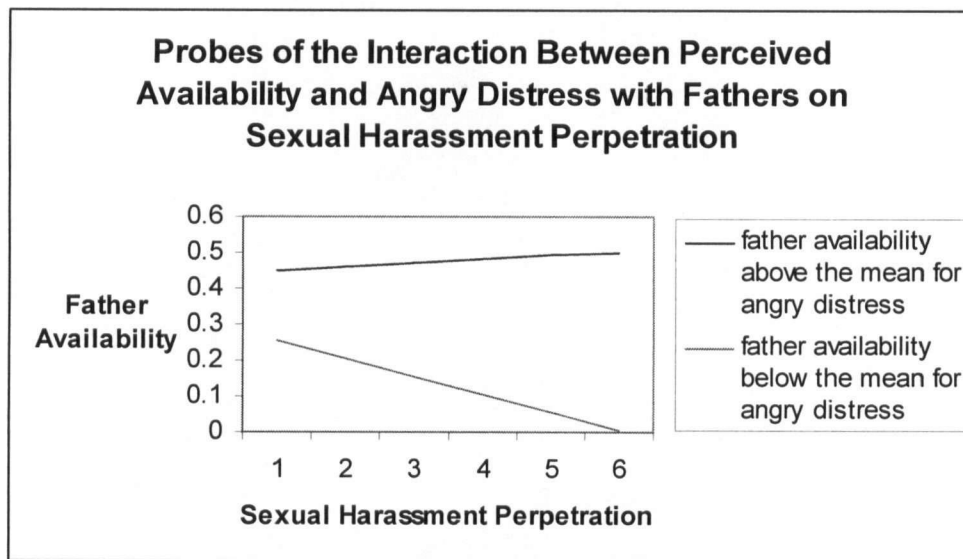

Figure 1. Interaction of angry distress and availability in attachments to fathers predicting adolescent peer sexual harassment perpetration.

Adolescents' perceived paternal angry distress and goal-correction showed similar results to what was found for mothers. Specifically, for perceived attachments to fathers, angry distress and goal-correction showed no significant associations with sexual harassment victimization (see Table 5). In contrast, analyses examining perceived father availability and victimization revealed a significant negative association ($\beta = -.116$, $p < .05$) between the two variables, $F\Delta$ (5, 444) = 37.71, $p < .001$. However, interactions for adolescents' perceived attachments to fathers and receiving peer sexual harassment were not statistically significant.

Discussion

Within the attachment literature, there is growing evidence of a relation between attachments to parents and adolescents' competence in initiating, developing, and maintaining peer relations with both opposite and same-sex peers. Researchers examining adolescents' attachments to parents hypothesize that internal working models mediate the linkage between attachment relations and peer relations throughout development (Ladd, 1992). This study investigated the association between adolescents' perceived attachments to mothers and fathers

Table 4

Hierarchical Regressions Predicting Peer Sexual Harassment Receipt from Attachment to
Mothers Controlling for Sex and Engagement in Social-Sexual Relations (n = 459)

Variable	B	SE B	β
Step 1			
Sex	-.171	.046	-.150***
Social-sexual relations	.580	.047	.490***
Step 2			
Sex	-.163	.046	-.143***
Social-sexual relations	.550	.048	.465***
Angry Distress	.040	.026	.070
Availability	-.032	.030	-.056
Goal-corrected partnership	-.030	.033	-.047

Note. R^2 = .269 for Step 1; ΔR^2 = .279 for Step 2.

*** $p < .001$

and their sexual harassment experiences with peers via attachment characteristics.

Mean scores for sexual harassment perpetration and receipt were consistent with previous studies (McMaster et al., 2002; Timmerman, 2003) that asked respondents to report on the frequency of sexual harassment experiences within a specific timeframe (e.g. six weeks). Preliminary analyses revealed that mean scores for both dimensions of sexual harassment were low. Studies that have reported high incidents of harassment experiences among adolescents often ask respondents to report on these experiences throughout their entire stay in high school (see AAUW, 1993; Lee et al., 1996). In the present study, low scores for perpetration and victimization within the sample were not surprising as respondents were asked to report on

Table 5

Hierarchical Regressions Predicting Peer Sexual Harassment Receipt from Attachment to
Fathers Controlling for Sex and Engagement in Social-Sexual Relations (n = 449)

Variable	B	SE B	β
Step 1			
Sex	-.169	.047	-.147***
Social-sexual relations	.585	.048	.491***
Step 2			
Sex	-.180	.046	-.157***
Social-sexual relations	.554	.048	.465***
Angry Distress	.045	.028	.078
Availability	-.058	.028	-.116*
Goal-corrected partnership	-.003	.029	-.005

Note. R^2 = .269 for Step 1; ΔR^2 = .290 for Step 2.

* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

their experiences within the past month of completing the survey.

Gender was found to be a significant factor in experiences with peer sexual harassment. In accordance with previous studies, male respondents reported perpetrating this behaviour more often than their female counterparts. Surprisingly, males were also more likely to receive this behaviour. This result stands in contrast to the AAUW (1993), Lee et al., (1996), and Timmerman (2003), who found adolescent females to be significantly more likely to experience sexual harassment than adolescent males. Other studies have reported no gender differences in experiencing sexual harassment from peers (Duffy et al., 2004; McMaster et al., 2002). When compared to previous research, the finding that males were more likely to experience peer sexual

harassment than females may be attributed to gender differences in the expression of aggressive behaviour.

According to Crick and colleagues (1999), males and females differ in their expression of aggression in early adolescence. Whereas males tend to express aggression in overt and direct forms, females' aggression is often indirect and focused on relationships rather than individuals. Because the items used to assess sexual harassment receipt from peers in this study focus largely on direct forms of physical and verbal harassment, males' greater receipt of peer sexual harassment in this investigation is warranted. Alternatively, it is also possible that females do not use sexual content when they are relationally aggressive (McMaster et al., 2002). Instead, females may aggress by attacking another female's appearance or intellect, such as calling them 'fat', 'ugly', or a 'dumb blonde'.

McMaster and colleagues (2002) revealed that cross-gender harassment was linked to participation in mixed-gender peer groups. This study found that engagement in previous social-sexual relations significantly predicted whether adolescents were likely to perpetrate and/or receive sexual harassment from peers. This association suggests that adolescents who have participated in cross-gender relationships that have a sexual dimension have more opportunities to engage in and receive sexual behaviour that is inappropriate and unwelcome. Unfortunately, this study cannot identify whether these behaviours are being perpetrated towards or received by peers or romantic partners.

To examine the associations between adolescents' attachments to mothers and fathers and their sexual harassment experiences with peers, hierarchical OLS regressions were conducted, controlling for gender and previous engagement in social-sexual relations. The first hypothesis, which proposed that perceived angry distress would be positively related with perpetrating peer sexual harassment, was not supported for adolescents' attachments to mothers. However, within the model, this hypothesis was supported for fathers accounting for approximately 23% of the

variance in the dependent variable. Interestingly, adolescents' perceptions of paternal angry distress combined with their perceptions of paternal availability accounted for slightly more variance (23.3%) in peer sexual harassment perpetration than angry distress alone. Follow-up probes of this interaction revealed that adolescents' perceived father availability was significantly negatively related to perpetrating peer sexual harassment when adolescents' reports of angry distress were below the mean. For adolescents scoring above the mean on angry distress, perceived father availability did not add to explaining the variance in perpetrating this behaviour. Previous research documenting differences in maternal and paternal involvement with children helps to explain the unique contributions of angry distress, in combination with availability, on peer sexual harassment perpetration in adolescents' perceived attachments to fathers.

Studies of mother-child and father-child dyads in middle childhood and adolescence have pointed to differences in the content of interactions between the two (Collins & Russell, 1991; Parke, 2002). Mother-child interactions tend to include tasks that involve caregiving responsibilities (e.g. going to the doctor) and mundane chores (e.g. cleaning up around the house). Moreover, the expectations for mothers, particularly in adolescence, are that they provide love and ongoing support, access to resources, and empathy for tensions in the transition to adulthood (Barnard & Solchany, 2002). In contrast, fathers spend a greater percentage of time available for interaction in play activities (Collins & Russell, 1991; Parke, 2002). The quality of play in father involvement also includes more activities that encourage group dynamics and shared problem solving (Parke, 2002). Because father-child interactions are more oriented towards play and group dynamics than mother-child interactions, attention received from fathers may have a stronger effect on behaviour in peer relations than interactions with mothers. Following Parke's (2002) notion of mother/father differences in the content and quality of involvement with children, the findings in this study suggest two possible pathways – one for

mothers and one for fathers - between adolescents' perceptions of availability and peer sexual harassment perpetration.

Most adolescents are relatively well-adjusted and do not engage in sexually harassing behaviour with their peers (McMaster et al., 2002). This study hypothesized that adolescents' perceived availability to parents would be negatively related with perpetrating peer sexual harassment. This hypothesis was supported for mothers but not fathers. Adolescents' perceptions of their attachment figures as available and responsive to their attachment needs enable them to approach peer relationships with confidence and view others as trustworthy (Simons et al., 2001). According to Barnard and Solchany (2002), mothers are primarily expected to provide love, support, and empathy to their children. These qualities help adolescents evaluate their values, beliefs, and the consequences of their decisions, thus, helping them to discover their emerging sense of self. The pathway between perceived availability and peer sexual harassment perpetration then, for adolescents' attachments to mothers, is likely characterized by adolescents being confident and trusting of others. Consequently, they do not feel the need to attract attention by sexually harassing their peers and want to avoid alienating them from their peer group.

For fathers however, the significance of adolescents' perceived paternal angry distress on perpetrating peer sexual harassment is contingent on their perceptions of paternal availability. Since perceived father availability was only significantly negatively related to this behaviour when perceptions of angry distress were low (see Figure 1), differences in adolescents' perceptions of fathers as responsive to their attachment needs helps to explain the results that were found. More specifically, some adolescents may believe that their fathers are available only because they are signaling to them that their attachment needs are not being met. On the other hand, some adolescents believe that their fathers are meeting their attachment needs without having to demand their attention. If adolescents perceive that their fathers are available

only when they demand attention from them (i.e. high perceived angry distress), availability as an attachment characteristic may not protect them against perpetrating sexual harassment because they may use this type of behaviour as a way to gain attention when their peers fail to provide the attention they want. Alternatively, engaging in sexually harassing behaviour may not be a strategy employed by adolescents to gain attention and achieve status with peers if fathers are genuinely available (i.e. low perceived angry distress) and responsive to meeting their attachment needs. In fact, behaving in a manner which objectifies or degrades another person may, to adolescents, be understood as an inappropriate way to interact with peers of either gender (Roscoe et al., 1994; Terrance, Logan, & Peters, 2004).

The third hypothesis, which predicted that adolescents' perceived goal-correction would be negatively associated to perpetrating peer sexual harassment, was not supported for both mothers and fathers. The lack of support for this hypothesis suggests that adolescents' consideration of the needs and feelings of their parents has no significant effect on their consideration of the needs and feelings of peers with respect to engaging in sexually inappropriate behaviour. Perhaps, goal-correction within adolescents' relationships with parents does not contribute to empathy within adolescents' peer relationships because goal-correction may not transfer across relationships.

In addition to peer sexual harassment perpetration, this study tested the possibility of associations between attachments to parents and peer sexual harassment receipt. Hierarchical OLS regressions revealed one significant association. Adolescents' perceived father availability showed a weak, but nonetheless, significant negative association with receiving peer sexual harassment, indicating the potential for this characteristic to protect against being a victim to this behaviour. Possibly, father-child interactions, characterized by play fostering group dynamics and problem-solving skills (Parke, 2002), enable adolescents to employ strategies that allow them to successfully develop and maintain close relations with peers more so than mother-child

interactions, which help foster self-evaluation and self-discovery (Barnard & Solchany, 2002). When fathers are available and responsive to adolescents' attachment needs, adolescents are able to learn how to socialize with peers in an appropriate fashion. According to Lee et al. (1996), if adolescents interact with peers in an appropriate way, they are less likely to become a victim to peer sexual harassment. Future research examining attachments to parents and sexual harassment victimization should begin by looking at potential differences in mother-child and father-child interactions and how these differences uniquely contribute to the pathways that lead adolescents to receiving sexual harassment from peers.

Overall, the results show some support for the link between attachment characteristics and peer sexual harassment experiences in adolescence. However, several limitations lend caution to the interpretation of these findings. First, this study obtained its data from a convenience sample. This study emerged through a concern of problematic behaviours in a local public high school where participants' experiences with perpetrating and/or receiving sexual harassment with peers may not accurately reflect its prevalence within the adolescent population in Canada. Indeed, the distribution of scores within the sample for both sexual harassment perpetration and receipt revealed significant positively skewed responses. A caveat of skewed distributions is that the limited range in responses makes it difficult to predict potential associations between the variables under investigation.

Second, the use of survey techniques introduces the possibility that some of the variance accounted for in the models is attributable to the use of self-reports. According to Paulhus (1991), people's reports of their own traits may involve systematic biases that obscure measurement of the variables under investigation. Among the response biases cited by Paulhus (1991), this study was likely subjected to two types of method variance: consistent responding and social desirability bias (responding to items in an ideal rather than accurate fashion). The

latter may be particularly problematic for items asking about sexual harassment perpetration and receipt because of the social non-acceptance of this type of behaviour.

Likewise, the data obtained for this study requires to some extent, the ability to recall past events. Because the sexual harassment scales are retrospective in nature, inaccuracies of memory may affect the findings of the study. The inability to recall specific events, especially if the respondent does not recognize sexually harassing behaviour as sexually harassing (see Lacasse et al., 2003), can affect the validity of respondents' reports. However, the use of self-report instruments may be the most accurate way to assess adolescents' attachments to parents and experiences with peer sexual harassment because adolescents are the most knowledgeable about their own experiences.

Lastly, peer influences on adolescent sexual harassment behavior are not addressed in this study beyond social-sexual relations. Inclusion of a variable measuring engagement in social-sexual relations can only account for developmentally appropriate sexual interest in peers. In adolescence, peers become paramount for modeling various behaviours, including appropriate and inappropriate ways to approach others sexually (Connolly, Furman, & Konarski, 2000). Thus, peer group norms help dictate whether an individual's harassment experiences continue, escalate, or decline; that is, peer groups will differ in the extent to which they model and reinforce sexual harassment (McMaster et al., 2002). Indeed, contextual factors have been documented to be strong predictors of sexual harassment perpetration in high schools (Lee et al., 1996; Roscoe et al., 1993). To effectively deal with this oversight, future research should compare peer influences to attachment influences to see which of the two can account for more variability in adolescents' experiences with peer sexual harassment.

In spite of these limitations, this investigation extends the body of literature on attachment theory and adolescent peer sexual harassment in several ways and can be used as a stepping stone to more extensive research to be conducted in this area. From a methodological

standpoint, examining attachment categories of respondents reduces variation among samples. This study uses continuous scores rather than attachment categories, making it easier to detect individual differences in parent-adolescent attachments. An analysis of the role each attachment characteristic plays in adolescents' harassment experiences extends existing literature on attachment by moving away from attachment categories and identifying the attachment characteristics that can best predict for the variability in perpetrating and receiving this type of behaviour.

From a theoretical standpoint, research has illustrated that attachments to parents has implications for engaging in aggressive behaviour in childhood (Moretti et al., 2004; Olweus, 1995), but has largely ignored the implications it may have on aggressive behaviour in adolescence, specifically sexual harassment. This study explores the possibility that peer sexual harassment is a potential outcome of attachments to parents. Further, this study examines the receipt of adolescent peer sexual harassment from an attachment framework. To date, empirical literature examining both dimensions of this behaviour extrapolates ideas originating from multiple frameworks. Therefore, this investigation is the first to explore both dimensions of adolescent peer sexual harassment as a potential outcome of parent-adolescent attachment relationships.

The results of this study may also have practical implications for educational institutions. Peer sexual harassment has been linked to poor outcomes for victimized adolescents in terms of psychological and emotional well-being and avoidance behaviour (AAUW, 1993; Duffy et al., 2004; Fineran & Bennett, 1998). Identifying adolescents who may be more susceptible to experiencing these negative outcomes due to sex harassment may enable school professionals to develop and maintain supportive relationships with them. School professionals cannot act as substitutes for parents, but research has illustrated that supportive networks can help buffer the negative consequences associated with different types of harassment or degradation experienced

by adolescents in the high school setting (Fineran, 2002; Fineran & Bennett, 1998; Pellegrini, 2002).

A recent study conducted by York University on adolescent reporting of sexual harassment in high schools claims that 75% of secondary school students report having been victims to peer sexual harassment (Latchford, 2005). This indicates that approximately the same percentage of students, if not a higher percentage, perpetrate this behaviour (Latchford, 2005). However, perhaps the more frightening finding of Latchford's (2005) study is that the majority of incidents go unreported. The present study illustrates that specific attachment characteristics can increase the likelihood of committing sexual harassment towards one's peers, thus, high schools may implement or restructure professional development training for its school professionals enabling them to identify those adolescents who may initiate sexually harassing behaviour as well as strategize ways to effectively handle these harmful situations for both the perpetrator and victim. Stone and Couch (2004) report that teachers and school professionals are willing to take positive action to stop sexually harassing behaviour when it occurs, but could only recognize its occurrence after it had already taken place and only if it was a severe form of such misconduct. If neither students (Lacasse et al., 2003; Latchford, 2005) nor school professionals (Stone & Couch, 2004) can recognize who is more likely to perpetrate this behaviour, neither can act accordingly to prevent it from occurring. In this case, peer sexual harassment will continue to be a problematic aspect within the school culture for both perpetrators and victims.

The current study represents an important step in the exploration of a model to link parent-adolescent attachment and peer sexual harassment in adolescence. Evidence was found for a model in which adolescents' perceived attachments to mothers and fathers were uniquely related to adolescent self-reported experiences with peer sexual harassment perpetration and receipt. Distinctions between mother-child and father-child interactions throughout childhood

and adolescence may be the basis for these unique differences. Further, the findings provide a basis for suggesting that intervention of sexual harassment behaviour among high school peers should not neglect the role attachments to parents may have on their children's ability to initiate, develop, and maintain successful relationships beyond the parent-child relationship. Specifically, adolescents' perceptions of mothers' availability and responsiveness and their perceptions of paternal angry distress and availability are important ingredients in how they handle the developmental changes associated with individual maturation and interpersonal behaviour.

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Appendix A

Lord Byng Student Life Survey
Parental Informed Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Dr. Sheila Marshall
Social Work and Family Studies
(604) 822-5672

Co-Investigators: Grant Charles, Lisa Catto, Carla Haber, Alice Balter, & Derek Wun
Social Work and Family Studies
Phone: 822-5672

Dear Parent,

We are writing to request permission for your son or your daughter to participate in a research project that is being conducting at Lord Byng School. This project is a collaborative project between Lord Byng Secondary School and researchers from the School of Social Work & Family Studies at the University of British Columbia. Part of this study is being conducted to fulfill the thesis requirements for a Master of Arts degree for Lisa Catto and Derek Wun under the direction of Dr. Sheila Marshall.

The overall purpose of the study is to attempt to understand whether the dress code and other programs over the school year are related to students' perceptions of safety and well-being and their day-to-day decision making. The goal for embarking on the study, as established by Lord Byng Secondary School is:

- To improve levels of social responsibility in all students at Lord Byng in order to foster a positive school climate which stimulates student learning.

The objectives are:

- To reduce the amount of theft, vandalism, and graffiti by strengthening the bond between school and student.
- To create awareness, through education and modeling positive language to build a safe and caring learning community.
- Promote respectful and responsible attitudes and safe behaviours around sexuality including body image, sexual expression, and sexual orientation.
- To strengthen student to student relationships.

The research study will examine how students make important decisions about what to wear to school, how to act with same sex and opposite sex friends, scheduling and sleep. Additionally, the research project will track students' feelings of safety and well-being at school. The information that we will acquire from this study will be useful for the educators at Lord Byng, counsellors, and parents of adolescents.

We write this letter to invite your adolescent child to participate in this study. Participation is completely voluntary. You may refuse to allow your child to participate without any consequences. Whether your child participates or not will have no affect on his or her marks or grades.

Involvement in this study includes filling out a questionnaire at the beginning of the school year. In the next 3 years (2006, 2007, 2008), students will have an opportunity to continue participating in the study. Convenient times will be arranged with teachers to ensure that core curricula are not affected. The questionnaires will take about 1 hour to complete. The questionnaires will not be linked to students' names, nor will students write their names on the questionnaires. Students who do not participate will be engaged in self-assigned tasks related to their school work (e.g., finishing homework, reading) while the others complete the questionnaires.

Participants can refuse to answer any question, and may withdraw from the study at any time. To maintain privacy, your child's name will not be recorded at any time.

There are no known risks associated with being involved in this study. In the unlikely event that your child feels uncomfortable as a result of the questions, he or she will be provided with the opportunity to speak to a counsellor.

All information collected for this research will be kept in a locked filing cabinet on the UBC Point Grey campus. No names or other identifying information will appear in any reports of the completed study. Only the research team will have access to the data.

Consent:

Your child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw your child from the study at any time without penalty.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Please indicate whether you consent for your son/daughter to participate in the study with you by checking the appropriate box below:

☐ YES, I consent to my child's participation in this study.
☐ NO, I do not consent to my child's participation in this study.

Child's legal given name (please print):_____

Child's call name (please print): _____

Child's home room number: _____

Child's student number: _____

Parent Name (please print): _____

_____   _____
Parent Signature   Date

Please return this form to the school.

Appendix B

Demographic Information

Tell us about yourself:

Are you male or female? (select)

- o Male

- o Female

What is your age? _____ (years)

Were you born in Canada? (select)

- o Yes

- o No

What is your cultural background? (check all that apply):

- o First Nations/Native

- o Caucasian/European

- o Latino/Hispanic

- o African

- o South Asian (e.g. India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka)

- o East Asian (e.g. China, Japan, Korea)

- o South East Asian (e.g. Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand)

Who do you live with most or all of the time? (check one)

- o I live with both my parents, who are married to each other and/or living together.

- o I live with homestay parents. (All questions about parents in this survey should be answered about your homestay parents).

- o I live with one of my parents only, most of the time.
  I live mostly with (select one):

  - o Mom

  - o Dad

o I live with my mom and her partner (a person married to or living with my mom).
   My mom's partner is (select one):

    o Male

    o Female

o I live with my dad and his partner (a person married to or living with my mom).
   My dad's partner is (select one):

    o Male

    o Female

o I do not live with my parents. I live with another family member.

   Who? _____

o I live in a situation different from any of the ones listed.

   Describe it: _____

Appendix C

Engagement in Social-Sexual Relations

Sex includes many behaviours. These behaviours include kissing, fondling genitals, vaginal-penile intercourse, oral sex or touch mouth to genitals, and masturbating with a partner. Have you ever done *any* of these behaviours with a partner?

- o Yes

- o No

Appendix D

Adolescent Attachment Questionnaire (West et al., 1998)

Choose the rating you feel is best for you (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*)

- My mother only seems to notice me when I am angry.

- I often feel angry with my mother without knowing why.

- I get annoyed at my mother because it seems I have to demand her caring and support.

- I'm confident that my mother will listen to me.

- I'm confident that my mother will try to understand my feelings.

- I talk things over with my mother.

- I enjoy helping my mother whenever I can.

- I feel for my mother when she is upset.

- It makes me feel good to be able to do things for my mother.

Appendix E

Adolescent Attachment Questionnaire (West et al., 1998)

Choose the rating you feel is best for you (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*)

- My father only seems to notice me when I am angry.

- I often feel angry with my father without knowing why.

- I get annoyed at my father because it seems I have to demand his caring and support.

- I'm confident that my father will listen to me.

- I'm confident that my father will try to understand my feelings.

- I talk things over with my father.

- I enjoy helping my father whenever I can.

- I feel for my father when he is upset.

- It makes me feel good to be able to do things for my father.

Appendix F

Sexual Harassment Survey (McMaster et al., 2002)

Sometimes people do things to others that are not wanted. Think back over the past month.

How many times in the PAST MONTH has another student DONE SOMETHING TO YOU

THAT WAS NOT WANTED? (0 = *never* to 4 = *almost everyday*).

- o Made sexual comments, jokes, gestures, or looks.

- o Touched, grabbed, or pinched you in a sexual way.

- o Brushed up against you in a sexual way on purpose.

- o Spread sexual rumours about you.

- o Pulled at your clothing in a sexual way.

- o Showed, gave, or left you sexual pictures, photographs, messages, or notes.

- o Wrote sexual messages or graffiti (e.g. on bathroom walls, in lockers, in a note or book) about you.

- o Called you "gay", "fag", "dyke", "lezzie", or "queer".

- o Flashed or "mooned" you.

- o Made comments about or rated the parts of your body that makes you a boy or girl.

Appendix G

Sexual Harassment Survey (McMaster et al., 2002)

Think back over the past month. How many times in the PAST MONTH have YOU done something to another student that was NOT WANTED? (0 = *never* to 4 = *almost everyday*).

- o Made sexual comments, jokes, gestures, or looks.

- o Touched, grabbed, or pinched someone in a sexual way.

- o Brushed up against someone in a sexual way on purpose.

- o Spread sexual rumours about someone.

- o Pulled at someone's clothing in a sexual way.

- o Showed, gave, or left someone sexual pictures, photographs, messages, or notes.

- o Wrote sexual messages or graffiti (e.g. on bathroom walls, in lockers, in a note or book) about someone.

- o Called someone "gay", "fag", "dyke", "lezzie", or "queer".

- o Flashed or "mooned" someone.

- o Made comments about or rated the parts of someone's body that makes them a boy or girl