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Aimee-Rose Wrightson-Hester
Edith Cowan University

Alfred Allan
Edith Cowan University

Maria Allan
Edith Cowan University

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**Kissing, Grabbing and Grinding: Young Australians' Personal and Social Norms
Regarding Nightlife Sexual Behavior**

Aimee-Rose Wrightson-Hester^{a*}, Alfred Allan^a and Maria Allan^a

*^aSchool of Arts and Humanities, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, Western Australia,
Australia*

*awrights@our.ecu.edu.au Orcid : [0000-0001-9601-0745](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9601-0745)

Alfred Allan orcid: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7039-797X>

Kissing, Grabbing and Grinding: Young Australians' Personal and Social Norms Regarding Nightlife Sexual Behavior

Many patrons in nightlife settings around the world experience and engage in behavior that some find distressing and others find a useful method of interacting with potential sexual partners. Some of these behaviors nevertheless meet the World Health Organizations' definition of sexual violence. Recent research suggests the social norms in Australian nightlife settings might be encouraging patrons to engage in or tolerate sexual violence when it occurs, even though it violates their own personal norms. Our main aim was to clarify young Australian nightlife patrons' personal and descriptive norms regarding three sexual behaviors (Kissing, Grabbing and Grinding), to identify their injunctive norms, and to investigate how gender and consent affected these norms. A further aim was to explore the relationships between the different types of social norms to understand how they work together to influence and perpetuate nightlife patrons' perceptions of these behaviors. We used an anonymous online survey to collect data from 197 young Australian nightlife patrons. We found that both genders think these behaviors are significantly more unacceptable than they think their peers do and are less acceptable if performed by men, yet they believe these behaviors are typical of men.

Keywords: social norms; gender differences; sexual behavior; nightlife

Kissing, Grabbing and Grinding: Young Australians' Personal and Social Norms Regarding Nightlife Sexual Behavior

Like in other parts of the world (e.g., Kovac and Trussell, 2015) nightclubs, bars, and pubs (nightlife settings) cater for, and have become the central focus of, many young Australians' leisure activities (Cantillon, 2015). Young people "indulge in drug-and alcohol-fueled hedonism" (Kavanaugh, 2015, p. 489) in nightlife settings and some try to attract sexual partners (Ronen, 2010). The sexual behaviors in these settings fall on a continuum (see Kavanaugh, 2013) and some would be deemed inappropriate in other settings, such as workplaces (e.g., McDonald and Charlesworth, 2016; Pina and Gannon, 2012) or public settings (e.g., Fileborn, 2013; Wesselman and Kelly, 2010). These behaviors are often unwanted (e.g., Fileborn, 2012; Graham et al., 2014; Kavanaugh, 2013; Palamar and Griffin, 2020; Ronen, 2010) and meet the World Health Organisation's (WHO; 2010, p. 11) definition of sexual violence: "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, ... against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person ..., in any setting". Further, uninvited, and unwelcome behaviors such as kissing, grinding and grabbing can cause distress to those who experience them (Becker and Tinkler, 2015; Fairchild and Rudman, 2008; Fileborn, 2017; Kavanaugh and Anderson, 2009; Kavanaugh, 2013).

In the only relevant Australian study that we are aware of Wrightson-Hester et al. (2019) found that Australian patrons' perception was that unsolicited sexual behaviors (Kissing, Dancing, Grabbing and Grinding), occur on about half of their visits to nightlife settings. Yet, these behaviors violate most Australian nightlife attendees' personal norms (i.e., what an individual deems acceptable behavior; Schwartz, 1977), especially when performed by men. However, the study had several limitations including a relatively small sample of men compared to the sample of women (39 and 342 respectively); this imbalance might have contributed to the large gender differences identified. Further, the study only

investigated the descriptive norms (individual's perceptions of how people typically behave in a setting; Cialdini et al., 1990) and personal norms of nightlife patrons, which does not fully explain the continuation of sexual violence in Australian nightlife settings. Wrightson-Hester et al. (2019) posited that descriptive norms were not the only social norm (i.e., informal rules that govern behavior in groups and societies) that could explain this continuance and that researchers should also examine the role of nightlife patrons' injunctive norm (i.e., what they believe patrons consider to be acceptable behavior in the setting; Cialdini et al., 1990). Social norm theorists (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1990) purport that people are generally guided by their personal norms, but when they enter a specific setting they want to do the socially acceptable thing and they will then be guided by social norms such as their perception of what is acceptable behavior in the setting (injunctive norm) and their perception of how people typically behave in the setting (descriptive norm). Wrightson-Hester et al.'s findings (mentioned above) indicate that a strong descriptive norm exists in nightlife settings informing patrons that sexual violence is commonplace and occurs frequently. In accordance with social norm theory, patrons might therefore irrespective of their personal norms consider sexual violence to be appropriate in nightlife settings, even if they personally disagree with the behavior (Rimal and Lapinski, 2015). Although people often misperceive the prevalence of unacceptable or deviant behavior (Lapinski and Rimal, 2005; Berkowitz, 2010; Borsari and Cary, 2003), and their descriptive norms consequently do not necessarily reflect reality, prevalence studies of sexual violence in nightlife settings do suggest these behaviors are experienced by many patrons (Fileborn, 2012; Kavanaugh, 2013; Graham et al., 2014; Ronen, 2010; Palamar and Griffin, 2020).

Researchers state that people will be guided by their descriptive norms if the injunctive norms are unclear or if their perception is that people typically ignore those injunctive norms (see Doran and Larsen, 2016; Dwyer et al., 2015; Kallgren et al., 2000;

Weiss, 2009). Prior to the current study, no one has to our knowledge measured the injunctive norms of nightlife settings in Australia, so it is unclear if and how these social norms influence the behavior of nightlife patrons. Researchers in North America nevertheless found that male college students who perceived higher levels of peer approval of sexual violence are more likely to have engaged in similar behaviours and/or reported they would be more likely to in the future (Edwards and Vogel, 2015; Franklin et al., 2012; Pedneault et al. 2020). Fileborn's (2017) qualitative research findings furthermore show that Australian patrons believe that those who engage in these sexual behaviors receive little or no social sanctions, which suggests that the injunctive norms do not prohibit these behaviors. Non-responsive patrons also inadvertently reinforce the perception that these sexual behaviors are acceptable in nightlife settings (Rimal and Lapinski, 2015). Theorists further posit that there is a relationship between the injunctive and descriptive norms whereby the one that is more salient can influence the other (Berkowitz, 2010; Eriksson et al., 2015; Rimal and Lapinski, 2015). Potentially, patrons who form a strong descriptive norm that sexual violence is typical in a setting could therefore conclude that it is also the injunctive norm that the behavior is acceptable (Eriksson et al., 2015).

Misinterpretations of the injunctive norm by nightlife patrons could provide further explanations for the continuation of sexual violence in nightlife settings. First, people often misjudge their peer's behavior and/or attitudes, leading to overestimates of peer approval of behavior, a phenomenon that is sometimes referred to as pluralistic ignorance (for reviews see Marks and Miller, 1987; Mendes et al., 2017). Nightlife patrons might therefore tolerate, or participate in, behavior contrary to their personal norms when they believe that such behavior is in accordance with the social norms of the setting, while this belief that the behavior is acceptable is wrong (Berkowitz, 2010; Borsari and Carey, 2003; Prentice and Miller, 1993). Second, those nightlife patrons who hold a personal norm accepting of the

relevant behaviors might be encouraged to engage in the behaviors if they wrongly believe that their personal norms are in accordance with the injunctive norm and that other patrons therefore share their norm, a phenomenon sometimes called false consensus or the illusion of universality (Ostrom et al., 2017; Ross et al., 1977).

Managers of nightlife settings might, by crowding many people in small spaces, using dim lighting, and providing props, such as poles for patrons to dance on, promote intimacy and sexual behavior (Cantillon, 2015), and thereby blur the distinction, or patrons' ability to distinguish, between consensual and non-consensual behaviour. This might reinforce the view of those who hold injunctive norms supportive of sexual violence that non-consensual behavior is an appropriate and useful way to behave (Pedneault et al. 2020) especially as Ronen (2010) observed recipients often appeared receptive to behaviors such as grinding, enjoyed them and indicated sexual interest in the actor. Actors also assume that recipients who appear to enjoy and respond to behaviors such as grinding are sexually interested, but they generally do not continue their advances when recipients appear to reject them (Ronen, 2010). Further, Fileborn (2017) found that nightlife patrons did not want all sexual behaviors in nightlife settings to be policed and stopped, further suggesting some forms of sexual behavior are welcomed and acceptable in nightlife settings. Consent could therefore be a factor in nightlife patrons' assessment of the acceptability of sexual behaviors.

Given the dearth of knowledge regarding Australian nightlife patrons' social norms regarding sexual violence in nightlife settings and policy makers' interest in stopping such violence, our aim with this study was to extend the current knowledge to better understand why these behaviors continue given initial indications that nightlife patrons find the behaviors personally unacceptable. To do this, we replicated Wrightson-Hester et al. (2019) whilst addressing the limitations previously mentioned, including the relatively low number of men in the sample and extended the study to explore several factors not previously examined.

Therefore, the behaviors used in this study were adapted from Wrightson-Hester et al. (2019), however we decided to omit the fourth behavior, Dancing, as it was deemed very similar to Grabbing. This also allowed us to include questions investigating the injunctive norm and the influence of consent on both the injunctive and personal norms of nightlife patrons, both previously unexamined, without the survey being unnecessarily long. Finally, this study further explored the relationships between the norms to determine how, if at all, the norms influence each other. Therefore, our specific research questions were:

Research question 1: What are the personal, descriptive, and injunctive norms of patrons of nightlife settings regarding the three sexual behaviors?

Research question 2: What effect does gender have on the personal, descriptive, and injunctive norms of patrons of nightlife settings regarding the three sexual behaviors?

Research question 3: Is there a difference between the personal and injunctive norms of nightlife attendees regarding the three sexual behaviors?

Research question 4: Are the descriptive, personal, and injunctive norms of nightlife attendees regarding the three sexual behaviors related to each other?

Research question 5: Does consent affect the personal norms of nightlife attendees regarding the three sexual behaviors?

Method

The study was approved by our institutional ethics committee (Project 20578). We used a quantitative, quasi-experimental independent group design and an anonymous online survey hosted by Qualtrics to collect the data. The two independent variables were gender of the participants (between-subjects) and the gender of the actors and recipients (within-subjects) in the survey vignettes. To establish the descriptive norms of nightlife patrons, the dependent variable was level of agreement with the statement “Do you agree or disagree that this is typical nightlife behavior”, rated on a sliding scale 0-100, with 0 being *strongly disagree* and

100 being *strongly agree*. To establish the personal norms of nightlife patrons, the dependent variable was the acceptability of the three sexual behaviors as rated by the participants. To establish the injunctive norms of nightlife patrons, the dependent variable was the participants' ratings of the acceptability of the three sexual behaviors according to *most other nightlife attendees*. Finally, to establish whether consent affected participants' personal norms regarding the three sexual behaviors, the participants rated the acceptability of the three behaviors again but with the description changed to indicate consent (see Table 1). All the acceptability ratings used a sliding scale 0-100, with 0 being *totally unacceptable* and 100 being *totally acceptable*.

We recruited participants through social media, advertisements on campus and through a newspaper article that was published in several Australian community newspapers. The first author and colleagues also handed out flyers containing a link and QR code to the study's Qualtrics survey to pedestrians in the Northbridge area in Perth, Western Australia that has a high concentration of nightlife settings.

The study's Qualtrics survey provided information about the study to potential participants and informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Those who agreed to participate were then invited to answer demographic questions and questions about their nightlife attendance to ensure they fit the selection criteria. As per Wrightson-Hester et al. (2019), participants had to be people between 18 and 30 years of age who lived in Australia and who had attended a nightlife setting in the previous six months. Participants then read the following short passage: "John, Daniel, Sarah and Patricia have never met before. They are all in the same nightlife setting, such as a nightclub or bar and none of them are intoxicated."

Then participants were in turn presented with vignettes (see Table 1) describing each of the three sexual behaviors, once with a man as the actor and a woman as the recipient and

again with a woman as the actor and a man as the recipient and asked all the questions in each case. The order in which participants were presented with these six scenarios was randomized to counteract any order effects that might affect the results.

[TABLE 1]

Jamovi (The jamovi project, 2020) was used to analyze the data. We performed nine mixed model analyses of variances (ANOVAs) to determine how participants' gender and gender of the actor affected nightlife patrons' norms and to identify possible interactions between these two variables in their effect on patrons' norms. We performed an ANOVA for each of the three sexual behaviors for each of the three questions relating to the different types of norms being studied. We used an overall α level of .05 for each of the different norms, but to reduce the risk of making a Type 1 Error a Bonferroni correction was used to account for the familywise error rate within each norm, giving an adjusted α of .017. Post hoc testing was used to investigate significant interactions and we used an overall α level of .05 again, and the Bonferroni adjusted p -value that Jamovi provided for each test to reduce the possibility of Type 1 error.

To examine the difference between the personal and injunctive norm, and whether consent affected the personal norms of nightlife attendees, participant gender was not considered a factor and therefore responses for both men and women were pooled. Six paired sample t -tests were used to compare each participant's personal ratings with his or her perceived peer ratings for all three behaviors for both actor genders, and another six to compare each participant's personal acceptability ratings for the non-consensual and the consensual version of each of the three sexual behaviors.

According to social norm theory important relationships to be assessed are those between descriptive and personal norms, descriptive and injunctive norms and injunctive and personal norms. We also investigated the relationship between the personal norm in the

consensual and non-consensual conditions. To assess the size and direction of the relationships between the different norms, bivariate Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated. Correlations were calculated for the total sample (both men and women), men and women participants across all behaviors for both actor genders. We evaluated the strength of our correlations according to Cohen's (1988) recommendations. He suggests that the effect size of a correlation can be regarded as large if the coefficient is .5 or above, medium if between .3 and .49 and small if below .3, while a coefficient of 1 means a perfect correlation and 0 no correlation. This applies irrespective of whether the correlations are positive or negative.

Results

There were 197 participants (117 women and 80 men) who met all the selection criteria and did not withdraw early from the survey. Table 2 provides information regarding the participants' age, cultural background, and frequency of visits to nightlife settings.

Participants were between 18 and 30 years of age, and the majority (94%) of men and women described themselves as Anglo-Australian. Participants in the Other category identified as Anglo-Australian-Asian, Asian-Australian, Aussie Euro Asian, Australian (2), British, Dutch, New Zealand, Pacific, South African (2) and one participant did not provide any information. In comparison with the latest Australian census data (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017) our sample likely over represents Anglo-Australians and underrepresents other minority ethnicities within the general Australian population, therefore caution should be taken when generalising to the whole Australian population. Seventy-two percent of participants visited nightlife settings once a month or more often, and 75% of participants had visited a nightlife setting within the last month before completing the survey, with the rest having visited within the last six months prior to completion thereof.

[TABLE 2]

Table 3 provides the means and standard deviations of responses to all the questions for all behaviors, separately for the total sample, participant gender groups, and the gender of the actor.

[TABLE 3]

Analysis of Descriptive Norms

Women agreed that these are typical behaviors for men (mean ratings between 67.3 and 79.7), however neither agreed nor disagreed that these are typical behaviors for women (mean ratings between 44.2 and 54.1). Men's ratings of men's behavior (mean ratings between 53.0 and 55.1) indicate slight agreement that these are typical behaviors for men while their ratings of women's behaviour (mean ratings between 42.1 and 47.8) indicate slight disagreement that these are typical behaviors. The ANOVA results for all behaviors and types of norms are provided in Table 4. There were significant main effects for the gender of the actor for all three behaviors, gender of the participant for Grabbing and Grinding, and a significant interaction for Grabbing.

For all the behaviors participants showed significantly stronger agreement that the behavior was typical when the actor was a man than when the actor was a woman. For Grabbing and Grinding, women showed significantly stronger agreement that the behavior was typical than men, irrespective of the gender of the actor. When men engaged in Grabbing, women showed stronger agreement that the behavior was typical behavior than men did ($p < .001$) but there was no significant difference when the actor was a woman. Furthermore, women showed stronger agreement that the behavior was typical behavior for men than for women, whereas there was no significant difference when rated by men.

[TABLE 4]

Analysis of Personal Norms

Both men and women rated all the behaviors as unacceptable for actors of both genders, with women providing mean ratings between 7.2 and 24.0 and men providing mean ratings between 9.5 and 39.2. The ANOVA results show significant main effects for actor gender across all behaviors and participant gender for Kissing and Grabbing. For all behaviors participants rated the behaviors as significantly less acceptable when conducted by a man than a woman. For Kissing and Grabbing, men rated the behaviors as significantly more acceptable than women regardless of the gender of the actor.

Analysis of Injunctive Norms

The injunctive norm ratings varied across behaviors, with women indicating that other nightlife patrons would find some behaviors unacceptable and others acceptable (mean ratings between 39.1 for Grinding and 60.9 for Grabbing). Similarly, men's ratings across all behaviors varied, (mean ratings between 26.6 for Grinding and 62.7 for Kissing). The ANOVA results show a significant main effect for actor gender and significant interaction across all behaviors.

For all behaviors participants rated the behaviors more acceptable if conducted by a woman. When a man engaged in the behaviors, women rated the behavior as significantly more acceptable than men ($p = .027$ for Kissing, $p = .003$ for Grabbing and $p = .033$ for Grinding), while there was no significant difference when women engaged in the behaviours.

Correlations Between the Norms

All the norms were positively correlated with each other with effect sizes ranging from small ($r = .073$) to large ($r = .677$). All the coefficients for men were larger than the equivalent coefficients for women. Due to the disparities between the participant gender groups, correlations will be discussed separately for men and women. See Table 5 for all the correlations for the total sample and the two gender groups.

Descriptive norm and personal norm

For men, there were significant correlations and though the effect sizes were generally small, it was slightly larger for Grinding. For women, the only significant correlation between these norms was for Grabbing performed by a woman, but the effect size was small.

Descriptive norm and injunctive norm

For men, there were significant correlations between the descriptive and injunctive norms for all behaviors with mostly medium effect sizes except for Grabbing performed by a woman which had a small effect size. For women correlations were only significant for Grabbing and Grinding when performed by a man, and these had small effect sizes. However, correlations were significant for Kissing performed by both genders with medium effect sizes.

Personal norm and injunctive norm

The correlations between the personal and injunctive norms were significant for both men and women across all behaviors irrespective of actor gender. For men the effect size of the correlations was large for all the behaviors when performed by a man but ranged from small for Grabbing to large for Kissing when performed by a woman. For women, the correlations all had small or medium effect sizes, with the largest for Kissing.

Personal norms for non-consensual and consensual behavior

The correlations between the personal norm for non-consensual and consensual behavior were all significant. For men, the correlations had large effect sizes for Kissing and Grabbing, but only had a medium effect size for Grinding. For women, the correlations had mostly medium effect sizes, but it was small for Grinding when performed by a man, and large for Kissing when performed by a woman. When the correlations for Grinding were compared with those for the other behaviors by actors of the same gender within each participant gender group, they always had much smaller effect sizes.

Comparison of Personal and Injunctive Norms

The results were similar for both actor genders in that the mean ratings were higher for the injunctive norms than the personal norms for all behaviors (see Table 3). The results of the paired sample *t*-tests (see Table 6) were significant across all behaviors for both actor genders, indicating that participants thought other nightlife patrons find these behaviors significantly more acceptable than they personally do.

Comparison of Personal Norms for Non-Consensual and Consensual Behavior

The mean ratings for the non-consensual behavior were lower than for the consensual behavior across all behaviors, irrespective of the actor gender (see Table 3). Table 6 provides the results of the paired sample *t*-tests which were significant across all behaviors for both actor genders, with participants indicating that consensual behaviors were significantly more acceptable than non-consensual behaviors.

Discussion

The aim with this study was to clarify and extend previous findings regarding young Australian nightlife patrons' personal and social norms, to better understand why these sexual behaviors might continue to occur in Australian nightlife settings. The results indicate that there are discrepancies between nightlife patrons' personal, descriptive, and injunctive norms, along with several gender differences, and some positive relationships between the norms.

We shall discuss how this could impact on young Australians' behavior in nightlife settings.

Actor Gender

Actor gender affected participant responses for every behavior across all three norms. Our descriptive norm results confirm Wrightson-Hester et al.'s (2019) and others (Kavanaugh, 2013; Fileborn, 2012) findings that nightlife patrons' perception is that it is typically men that behave like this. Our study does not allow us to comment on the accuracy of this perception, but other studies indicate that although women also engage in these behaviours, men more often engage in these behaviors with women most likely to be recipients (Graham et al.,

2014; Palarmar and Griffin, 2020). We cannot, however, exclude the possibility that the nightlife patrons' perceptions are influenced by wider societal norms that lead people to stereotypically view men as the perpetrators of sexual or violent behaviors and women as the recipients or victims (Stanziani et al., 2018).

Our personal norm results confirm those of Wrightson-Hester et al. (2019) that nightlife patrons find all three behaviors unacceptable whether performed by men or women. Participants in this and Wrightson-Hester et al.'s study, however, regarded these behaviors as more acceptable when performed by women than by men. Notably therefore, while participants rated these sexual behaviors by men as the least acceptable, they also perceived them to be typical of men's behavior in nightlife settings. The perception that behaviors perpetrated by men are less acceptable than behaviors by women is common across other behaviors, such as intimate partner violence and sexual assault (see Bates et al., 2019; Bates et al., 2018; Stanziani et al., 2018), where men often receive harsher penalties than women who engage in the same behavior (Hodell et al., 2014; Patterson et al., 2019). One possible explanation for this difference is the gender stereotype that women are more vulnerable than men (Glick and Fiske, 1996) and thus should be protected from potentially harmful male behaviors as their capacity to cause harm to women is greater than women's capacity to cause harm to men (see White and Dutton, 2012). Another possible explanation is that women report feeling threatened when they are the recipients of such behaviors by men (Kavanaugh, 2013), whilst men do not report feeling threatened when women behave in this way towards describing it as a compliment or a harmless joke (e.g., Grazian, 2007; Kowalski, 1993; Wade and Critelli, 1998).

For the injunctive norm, the results show that nightlife patrons perceive their peers to share their belief that behaviors performed by women are more acceptable than the same behaviors by men. Therefore, nightlife patrons will be less likely to perceive a problem when

men experience these behaviors, and more likely to perceive a problem if women experience these behaviors. This could lead to bystanders being less likely to intervene or to take the behaviors seriously if they witness these behaviors happening to a man (see Deitch-Stackhouse et al., 2015), and could also make male recipients less likely to speak up if these behaviors affect them.

The significant main effects of actor gender across all three norm types could suggest that wider societal views regarding gendered interactions, namely that men are stereotypically the instigators or perpetrators and women the recipients or victims (e.g., Bates et al., 2019), are also engrained in nightlife settings. However, the significant main effects for participant gender and the significant interactions between actor gender and participant gender we discuss next must also be considered to fully understand why these behaviors continue to occur in nightlife settings.

Participant Gender

The participants' descriptive norms differed with women showing more agreement than men that Grabbing and Grinding were typical in nightlife settings. The reason for this could be that men underestimate other men's involvement in unacceptable sexual behaviors (see McKool et al., 2017). However, another possible explanation, is people's tendency to recall behavior better if it is noticeable to them (see Perkins, 1997). Women might therefore more readily recall problematic behaviors because they are more likely to be the recipients of such behavior or because it violates their personal norms. Men, conversely, might not readily recall such behavior because they are less likely to be the recipients of these behaviors and have personal norms that find these sexual behaviors less offensive if they happen.

Regarding the injunctive norms for the three sexual behaviors by men, women rated the behavior as significantly more acceptable to other nightlife patrons than men did while there was no significant difference when the actor was a woman. Again, this could be

because women are more likely to experience problematic behaviors, so they are also more likely to notice the lack of social sanctions men receive for these behaviors, reinforcing their perception that these behaviors are more acceptable to their peers than they personally find them. Both genders' personal norms were that the three behaviors were unacceptable, but men nevertheless rated Grabbing and Kissing as more acceptable than women irrespective of the actor's gender.

Injunctive Versus Personal Norms

We found a positive relationship between patrons' injunctive and personal norms, however, our *t*-test results show that participants found the behaviors significantly more unacceptable than they think their peers do. They, however, do not think their peers have strong views about the acceptability or unacceptability of these behaviors. The participants' injunctive norm is likely influenced by a lack of social sanctions for these behaviors (Fileborn, 2016) and the belief that these behaviors are normal in nightlife settings (Kavanaugh, 2013). However, due to the diverse crowds in nightlife settings, it is possible that injunctive norms are not as clear to nightlife patrons as with closer reference groups, such as their close friends (Berkowitz, 2005).

Relationship Between Descriptive and Other Norms

Social norm theory posits that although distinct the descriptive and injunctive norms of individuals are related. Our findings suggest that, especially for the men in our sample, descriptive and injunctive norms are positively correlated (with small to medium effect sizes), suggesting that these norms influence each other. Although we cannot determine direction based on our results, some researchers believe the relationship is bidirectional (Berkowitz, 2010; Eriksson et al., 2015; Rimal and Lapinski, 2015), that as one norm becomes stronger it will influence the other to align with it. So, the more nightlife attendees agree that a behavior is typical, the more acceptable they will also perceive it to be to their

peers and vice versa. Therefore, any behavior witnessed by a nightlife attendee that strengthens one of these norms will consequently strengthen the other.

We did, however, not identify this pattern as strongly for the women in our sample, specifically when the actor was a woman, with low and generally non-significant correlations. Women are uncertain whether these behaviors are typical for women and view them as somewhat acceptable to their peers. Both their descriptive and injunctive norms are thus weak, and this could be the reason why they do not influence each other as would be expected based on social norm theory. It is also possible that other social influences, such as gender norms (see Cislighi and Heise, 2020) and stereotypes have more influence on women's injunctive norms for these behaviors by women than their descriptive norms. Our methodology and data do not, however, make it possible for us to examine this possibility.

Further, we also found that the women in our sample's descriptive and personal norms were uncorrelated. Women found most behaviours highly unacceptable, for both genders. The variation in their descriptive norms across behaviors and actor gender, suggests that regardless of how typical they believe a behavior is, women find most forms of sexual violence unacceptable. The men in our sample's descriptive and personal norms were, however, positively correlated. This suggests that men's personal norm might be influenced by their descriptive norm, or vice-versa. Thus, the more they view sexual violence as typical, the more acceptable they will personally find the behavior, or the more personally acceptable they find the behavior, the more they will view the behavior as typical. However, even for the men the correlations tended to be small and more research is needed to investigate the relationship between their descriptive and personal norms further.

Continuation of Behaviors

Overall, the results show that participants personally felt that the three behaviors are unacceptable for both genders but more so when the behaviors are enacted by men. This

could explain why many people, especially women, feel uncomfortable when they experience these behaviors (Kavanaugh, 2013; Fileborn, 2012), but this raises the question why these behaviors continue to occur in nightlife settings (see Fileborn, 2017; Graham et al., 2014; Kavanaugh, 2013; Wrightson-Hester et al., 2019). Social norm theorists suggest that behavior such as these will persist irrespective of people's personal norms, because in social situations people will disregard their personal norms (Berkowitz, 2005), and engage in (or tolerate) deviant or problematic behavior if their perception is that the behavior is supported by their peers and/or is typical behavior in the setting (Cullum et al., 2013; Doran and Larsen, 2016; Dwyer et al., 2015; Kallgren et al., 2000; Lapinski and Rimal, 2015; Paluck and Shepard, 2012; Weiss, 2009). The gender differences we found, however, makes it impossible to apply this theoretical approach without distinguishing between women and men.

In accordance with social norm theory, women most likely tolerate these three behaviors because their descriptive norm, that men typically behave in this way in nightlife settings, is strong. Researchers have demonstrated the influence of strong descriptive norms in several settings (e.g., Barriger and Vélez-Blasini, 2013; Cialdini, 2007; Kormos et al., 2015) and it is therefore possible that even women who personally find these behaviors unacceptable could tolerate or ignore them and behave in accordance with their descriptive norm. Further, the gendered context of nightlife settings, where traditional ideals of masculinity and femininity are emphasized and acted out (Hubbard, 2008; Grazian, 2007), might also inhibit women's response to sexual violence with researchers having found that women often do not complain about sexual violence to avoid further violence, or in some cases to avoid causing offence to the actor (see Graham et al., 2017; Gunby et al., 2020; Kovac and Trussel, 2015). Women's public tolerance of the behaviors might reinforce the perception these behaviors are acceptable and not worthy of social sanctions, thereby

strengthening others' perceptions that these behaviors are normal and acceptable in nightlife settings (see Eriksson et al., 2015).

Consistent with other research (e.g., Graham, Bernards et al., 2014) we found that women are less likely than men to engage in these behaviours, possibly because of the gender norm that women should be the gatekeepers rather than the instigators of sexual behavior (see Seabrook et al., 2017). Neither men nor women in our sample thought that women typically engaged in sexual violence in nightlife settings, but because of the perception that their peers find these acts more acceptable when performed by women than by men some women might be encouraged to behave in this way. Men and women's injunctive norms might further perpetuate women's engagement in sexual violence as women's perception could be that they are less likely to face social sanctions than men, whom they already perceive as not facing many repercussions (see Fileborn, 2016). Men on the other hand, are unlikely to protest when they experience these behaviors, as their perception is that their peers find some forms of sexual violence by women somewhat acceptable.

Men's injunctive norm results indicate that their perception is that their peers find these behaviors moderately unacceptable if performed by men, but their descriptive norm results indicate that they are uncertain whether men typically engage in the three behaviors, whilst they find the behaviors personally unacceptable. This difference between the norms suggests several possible explanations for the continuation of these sexual behaviors in nightlife settings. Men who do not hold strong personal views against these behaviors, might believe that others share their view (i.e., false consensus), a view that is reinforced by the absence of complaints by women, the failure of others to intervene, and a lack of social sanctions (see Fileborn, 2016; Kavanaugh, 2013). They could therefore anticipate that they will get away with such behavior (see Cornish and Clarke, 2003; Graham et al., 2010; Tinkler, Becker, and Clayton, 2018). Further, men may be compelled to engage in sexual

violence, regardless of their own personal norms, due to the prominence of traditional gender norms in nightlife settings that dictate that men should actively seek out sexual interactions (e.g., Grazian, 2007). Finally, research has shown that men often overestimate the level of sexual willingness shown by a woman (Kowalski, 1993; Wade and Critelli, 1998) and therefore possibly perceive their own and other men's behavior as invited or consensual, and consequently acceptable.

Personal Norms for Consensual and Non-Consensual Behaviors

In this study we investigated whether participants regarded these sexual behaviors as acceptable if consensual, or whether they believed these behaviors should not occur in nightlife settings regardless of consent. We found medium to large effect sizes for the correlations between the participants consensual and non-consensual personal norm ratings across all three behaviors, but the consensual behaviors were significantly more acceptable than the non-consensual behaviors. However, the acceptability ratings for consensual behaviors were generally close to the midpoint (50) of the rating scale suggesting that nightlife users are uncertain about the acceptability of these behaviors even with consent, or it could indicate a problem with the manipulation of consent in this study, which is a limitation we will discuss under the next heading.

Limitations and Future Research

Our findings provide possible explanations for why these sexual behaviors continue in nightlife settings, however, the study has limitations. Social norms are context specific (Cialdini et al, 1990), and to explore the social norms of Australian nightlife settings our entire sample lived in Australia. Therefore, the findings should not be generalized outside of Australia. Further issues with generalizability pertain to our sample demographics. As previously mentioned, it likely over-represents Anglo-Australians and we did not explore

other facets of identity such as sexuality. Therefore, researchers should be cautious in applying the findings of this study to other contexts.

Second, as previously mentioned was the possible problem with the manipulation of consent. We presented our non-consensual behaviors as unexpected therefore implying that prior consent could not have been given for the behaviors. The exception was in the case of grinding where the victim's body language (i.e., moving away) most likely reinforced the message that the behavior was non-consensual. However, nightlife settings are loud, dark and dynamic (Grazian, 2007) and we therefore found it difficult to operationalize consensual behaviors in our vignettes, other than to say that the recipient reported that the interaction was an enjoyable experience. Nightlife patrons might not have been convinced that the reporting of pleasure after the event indicated consent to the behavior, because recent events such as the #MeToo movement have led to increased discussion about consent and how it is communicated and a rise in awareness around affirmative consent (see, Rapana, 2018; Cooney, 2018; Tinkler, Clay-Warner and Alinor, 2018). The challenge for future researchers is to find a way to manipulate consent that is ecologically valid. Qualitative research could be used to investigate how consent is communicated in nightlife settings, which could then inform larger scale quantitative studies to investigate the effect of consent on nightlife patrons' norms.

Third, we did not consider other relevant factors that might influence normative behavior such as group identity and outcome expectations (see Lapinski and Rimal, 2015). Actors' affinity or desire to connect with a group (Lapinski and Rimal, 2015) could lead them to engage in risky sexual advances in nightlife settings if they believe they need to do that to be accepted by the group (Abbey et al., 1998; Grazian, 2007). Actors' belief that engaging in these behaviors will have a beneficial result (Bandura, 1986; Pedault et al. 2020) might also encourage such behaviors, because Ronen (2010) found that they are sometimes an effective

way of attracting a sexual partner in nightlife settings. Future research should aim to incorporate factors such as group identity and outcome expectations to investigate their influence on sexual behavior in nightlife settings.

Finally, our paper highlights the limitations of social norm theory in understanding behavior in nightlife settings where gender is so pertinent and broader gender norms external to individuals are therefore influential. Social norm theory is useful in examining what is considered normal and acceptable behaviors for patrons of nightlife settings, but as gender is so prominent gender norms might also influence patrons' attitudes and behavior which could lead them to deviate from the social norms within nightlife settings as much as personal norms could (see Cislighi and Heise, 2020). Researchers should in future augment the findings of this study by specifically focusing on how gender norms that are embedded in laws and policies and how other institutions (e.g., media messages) need to change for social norm interventions to be successful in nightlife settings.

Conclusion

Our findings suggest that some men find the three behaviors unacceptable, especially if the actor is a man, but some men likely continue engaging in them because of a lack of strong social norms condemning these behaviors, a lack of social consequences, and possibly because such behavior is in accordance with prevailing gender norms. Women share the view that these behaviors should not take place, and that they are less objectionable when the actors are women. They believe that these behaviors are typical for men, but that their peers find the behaviors significantly less unacceptable than they do. Both women and bystanders therefore most likely do not complain when exposed to the three behaviors by men.

Given the relationship between the descriptive and injunctive norms, patrons' continued engagement in, and widespread tolerance of, these behaviors therefore serve to further strengthen nightlife patrons' perception that these behaviors are normal and

acceptable within nightlife settings. Interventions that target and attempt to alter nightlife patrons' social norms might be effective in changing patrons' behavior, but the significant actor and participant gender differences suggest that any intervention in nightlife settings should reflect these differences.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The dataset will be made available on our institutes data repository upon acceptance.

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Tables

Table 1

Sexual Behaviors Included in Survey

Behavior	Vignettes	Questions
Kissing	John unexpectedly tries to kiss Sarah after she accepts a drink from him.	Do you agree or disagree that this is typical nightlife behavior?
Grabbing	Daniel is dancing in a crowd and Patricia who is a part of the crowd unexpectedly grabs his bum.	How acceptable is [Actor]'s behavior to you? How acceptable would [Actor]'s behavior be to most nightlife attendees?
Grinding	John starts grinding on Sarah and touching her body, Sarah tries to move away, John doesn't stop.	How acceptable would [Actor]'s behavior be to you if [Recipient] reported [she or he] found this a positive experience?

Note. Typical behavior anchor points 0 = *Strongly disagree*, 25 = *Disagree*, 50 = *Neither agree or disagree*, 75 = *Agree* and 100 = *Strongly agree*. Acceptability anchor points 0 = *Totally unacceptable* and 100 = *Totally acceptable*.

Table 2

Participants' Age, Cultural Background and Frequency of Visits to Nightlife Settings

	Women (<i>n</i> = 117)	Men (<i>n</i> = 80)
Age (years)		
Mean	23.7	23.6
Standard deviation	3.4	3.39
Cultural background (%)		
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1	4
African	0	1
Anglo-Australian	77	70
Anglo-European	15	13
Asian	1	3.5
Hispanic or Latino	0	1
Other	6	7.5
Frequency of visits (%)		
More than once a month	39	47.5
Once a month	33	25
Less than once a month, but at least once a year	28	27.5
When last visited (%)		
Within last 2 weeks	48	50
Within last month ¹	25	24
Within last 6 months ²	27	26

Note. ¹but not within the last 2 weeks. ²but not within the last month.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for the Total Sample, Women, and Men for all Dependent Variables

Participants	Women (<i>n</i> = 117)				Men (<i>n</i> = 80)				Total Sample (<i>n</i> = 197)				Significant effects
	Man		Woman		Man		Woman		Man		Woman		
Behaviors	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
	Descriptive Norm												
Kissing	67.3	28.7	44.2	29.3	53.0	26.6	42.1	27.6	61.5	28.7	43.4	28.6	AG
Grabbing	79.7	27.0	54.1	30.2	55.1	29.9	47.8	28.4	69.8	30.6	51.6	29.6	AG, PG, AG x PG
Grinding	72.3	29.6	49.4	31.7	54.5	27.8	42.3	28.0	65.2	30.1	46.6	30.4	AG, PG
	Personal Norm												
Kissing	16.8	22.0	24.0	25.8	26.6	23.6	39.2	27.6	20.8	23.1	30.3	27.5	AG, PG
Grabbing	10.3	16.9	18.6	23.8	16.1	22.9	32.6	28.0	12.6	19.7	24.2	26.4	AG, PG
Grinding	7.2	14.0	11.4	20.6	9.6	14.6	18.7	23.2	8.11	14.2	14.3	21.9	AG
	Injunctive norm												
Kissing	48.5	26.6	58.3	24.0	38.1	26.1	62.7	26.9	44.3	26.8	60.1	25.2	AG, AG x PG
Grabbing	47.9	24.4	60.9	25.3	35.1	26.3	62.1	25.4	42.6	25.9	61.4	25.3	AG, AG x PG
Grinding	39.1	28.3	49.2	28.6	26.6	21.5	48.3	29.1	34.1	26.4	48.8	28.7	AG, AG x PG
	Consensual behaviors												
Kissing	47.5	32.6	58.0	32.5	60.6	33.1	66.6	31.5	52.8	33.3	61.5	32.3	
Grabbing	38.9	33.6	48.6	32.1	48.4	34.2	56.4	34.2	42.6	34.1	51.6	33.1	
Grinding	50.0	33.3	49.2	34.4	57.4	34.4	55.7	34.1	52.8	33.8	51.8	34.3	

Note. Typical behavior anchor points 0 = *Strongly disagree*, 25 = *Disagree*, 50 = *Neither agree or disagree*, 75 = *Agree* and 100 = *Strongly agree*. Acceptability anchor points 0 = *Totally unacceptable* and 100 = *Totally acceptable*. AG = Actor Gender main effect, PG = Participant Gender main effect, AG x PG = Actor Gender x Participant Gender interaction.

Table 4

ANOVA Results for Descriptive, Personal and Injunctive Norm Items

	Descriptive				Personal				Injunctive			
	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Kissing												
Participant gender	180	4.92	.028		183	12.5	.001	0.05	178	1.14	.286	
Actor gender	180	50.91	.001	0.08	183	45.68	.001	0.04	178	83.6	.001	0.09
AG x PG	180	3.86	.051		183	3.61	.059		178	17.4	.001	0.02
Grabbing												
Participant gender	186	18.30	.001	0.06	185	9.85	.002	0.04	180	2.92	.089	
Actor gender	186	47.40	.001	0.07	185	66.73	.001	0.07	180	113.2	.001	0.12
AG x PG	186	10.90	.001	0.02	185	5.55	.02		180	17.5	.001	0.02
Grinding												
Participant gender	183	11.60	.001	0.04	188	4.19	.042		174	3.01	.084	
Actor gender	183	46.25	.001	0.07	188	20.19	.001	0.03	174	52.64	.001	0.07
AG x PG	183	4.31	.039		188	2.11	.148		174	6.59	.011	0.01

Note. AG x PG = Actor Gender x Participant Gender. η^2 included for significant results. Adjusted $\alpha = .017$.

Table 5
Correlations Between the Different Norms

Behaviors	<i>Descriptive and Personal</i>	<i>Descriptive and Injunctive</i>	<i>Personal and Injunctive</i>	<i>Personal and Consensual</i>
	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>
Total Sample				
Man Actor				
Kissing	.104	.436 ***	.440 ***	.531 ***
Grabbing	.070	.373 ***	.374 ***	.519 ***
Grinding	.175 *	.309 ***	.387 ***	.267 ***
Woman Actor				
Kissing	.213 **	.311 ***	.453 ***	.568 ***
Grabbing	.176 *	.155 *	.271 ***	.527 ***
Grinding	.193 **	.191 **	.305 ***	.375 ***
Men				
Man Actor				
Kissing	.226 *	.446 ***	.677 ***	.583 ***
Grabbing	.251 *	.419 ***	.620 ***	.549 ***
Grinding	.331 **	.322 **	.570 ***	.343 **
Woman Actor				
Kissing	.299 *	.336 **	.520 ***	.631 ***
Grabbing	.232 *	.294 *	.236 *	.625 ***
Grinding	.306 **	.315 **	.405 ***	.423 ***
Women				
Man Actor				
Kissing	.117	.378 ***	.363 ***	.462 ***
Grabbing	.032	.221 *	.253 **	.487 ***
Grinding	.129	.223 *	.349 ***	.205 *
Woman Actor				
Kissing	.183	.305 ***	.386 ***	.501 ***
Grabbing	.189 *	.073	.302 ***	.430 ***
Grinding	.156	.118	.243 *	.327 ***

Note. *N* differed across correlations as a result of missing data. Total sample $n = 176 - 192$, Men $n = 71 - 77$, Women $n = 102 - 116$. Descriptive, personal and injunctive refer to norms for non-consensual behavior, while consensual refers to the personal norms for consensual behavior.

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$.

Table 6

Comparisons of Injunctive, Personal and Consensual Norms for Two Actor Gender Scenarios

	Man				Woman			
	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Injunctive and Personal								
Kissing	12.2	184	<.001	0.89	14.1	180	<.001	1.05
Grabbing	15.8	188	<.001	1.15	15.9	183	<.001	1.17
Grinding	14.4	184	<.001	1.06	15.1	182	<.001	1.12
Personal and Consensual								
Kissing	14.6	181	<.001	1.08	14.1	175	<.001	1.06
Grabbing	13.9	187	<.001	1.01	11.9	181	<.001	0.88
Grinding	18.5	186	<.001	1.35	15.0	183	<.001	1.11

Note. Personal and injunctive refer to norms for non-consensual behavior, while consensual refers to the personal norms for consensual behavior.