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‘Newsworthy enough?’: media framing of Canadian LGBTQ persons’ sexual violence experiences

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined media frames in relation to the sexual violence experiences of LGBTQ persons in Canada, as members of these marginalised groups currently experience disproportionately high rates of sexual violence, as compared to straight cisgender persons. Sixty-two news articles focusing on sexual violence cases, featuring 31 LGBTQ victims and 31 straight cisgender victims, were identified using purposive sampling. The following variables were assessed: demographics and portrayal of the victims and the accused (e.g. positive, neutral, or negative tone, level of detail provided); article length, headlines, and pictures; and description of non-consensual sexual behaviours. Thematic analyses were employed to explore patterns in the news reports. Results indicated that news reports tended to dehumanise LGBTQ victims, and sensationalise their sexual violence experiences by explicitly describing non-consensual sexual acts. The individuals who were accused of sexually victimising LGBTQ persons were allocated greater coverage than the LGBTQ victims. The findings of this study implied that Canadian news media frame LGBTQ sexual violence experiences in ways that stigmatise them, and perpetuate institutional discrimination against them. The strengths and limitations of this study as well as directions for future research are outlined.

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Media framing; sexual violence; LGBTQ; straight; cisgender; victims; accused

Sexual and gender minority persons constitute one of the most stigmatised groups in Canada, particularly in terms of sexual victimisation. Statistics Canada reports that rates of sexual assault, which is defined by the Supreme Court of Canada as any non-consensual sexual activity, including rape and unwanted sexual grabbing, kissing, and fondling, or any violation of a person’s sexual integrity (Conroy & Cotter, 2017), are six times higher for LGB (lesbian, gay, and bisexual) Canadians (10.2% of the LGB population) than for straight Canadians (1.7% of the straight population). Additionally, police-reported hate crimes (e.g. sexual and physical assault, and robbery) targeting sexual minority persons were likely to: be violent (71%), cause injury (44%), target men (82%), and involve those under the age of 25 (43%; Gaudet, 2018). In the year 2017, the proportion of hate crimes targeting sexual minorities increased by 16%. From 2010 to 2017, 31 police-reported hate crimes were directed towards transgender or asexual persons, of which, 15 incidents occurred in 2017 alone (Armstrong, 2019). Media reports of sexual violence have gained momentum in recent decades (i.e. increased coverage of child sexual abuse occurred in the mid-80s [Kitzinger, 2004], and 2017 saw the emergence of the #metoo movement [Rotenberg & Cotter, 2018]). Researchers have
noted improvements in the quality of media reports of sexual violence towards straight women, such as decreased victim blaming (Kitzinger, 2004), yet the quality of such reports on LGBTQ populations remains largely unexplored.

Media select news stories based on the audience’s expectations and, thus, tend to depict LGBTQ individuals stereotypically by conforming to the mindset of the audience – an audience that is likely straight and cisgender. For example, mainstream media advertisements depict heteronormative relationship dynamics between LGBTQ couples (Johnston, Friedman, & Sobel, 2015; Nölke, 2018). The majority of research in this area has been conducted in the United States of America (e.g. Grozelle, 2014). Research on Canadian news media is essential as cultural differences may exist between these two countries. To illustrate: in comparison to their Canadian counterparts, American straight persons have been found to endorse more blatant forms of homonegativity (i.e. prejudice towards and discrimination against sexual minorities or persons presumed to be LGB; Morrison & Morrison, 2002; Morrison, Morrison, & Franklin, 2009). This study will elucidate how contemporary Canadian culture’s public forums depict a serious issue that affects LGBTQ Canadians.

The purposes of this study are to: a) analyse how Canadian news media frame LGBTQ persons’ sexual violence experiences; b) determine if LGBTQ victims are considered to be ‘newsworthy’ (i.e. what may be perceived as a story worth telling; Gilchrist, 2010); and c) establish whether news media dehumanise LGBTQ victims. First, the relevant literature on LGBTQ individuals’ experiences with sexual violence and their representation in North American news media will be reviewed. Second, the hypotheses of the current study will be outlined, followed by the methodology and analyses that were employed, and the key findings that were obtained. Finally, the implications of this research and avenues for further inquiry will be discussed.

LGBTQ persons’ experiences of sexual violence

Researchers have documented the prevalence of sexual violence within LGBTQ communities. Utilising North American population-based health surveys, Saewyc et al. (2006) found that gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents reported more incidents of sexual and physical abuse than their straight counterparts. Further, bisexual adolescents were twice as likely to report abuse compared to straight adolescents, with significantly stronger differences for boys (Saewyc et al., 2006). The psychological correlates of such experiences of sexual violence have also been investigated. For instance, Morrison (2011) conducted an online survey, and examined the associations between perceived discrimination and the psychological wellness of Canadian gay men and lesbian women. The author reported that lesbian women’s sexual assault experiences were related to their increased psychological distress, depression, and internalised homonegativity (i.e. gay men and lesbian women’s internalisation of negative attitudes towards homosexuality that stems from living in a heterosexist and anti-gay society; Mayfield, 2001), as well as decreased life optimism. Similarly, among gay men, the number of sexual assault incidents occurring over their lifetime were positively correlated with psychological distress, depression, and internalised homonegativity (Morrison, 2011). Further, Logie, Alaggia, and Rwigema (2014) found that, out of 439 sexual minority Canadian women, 40% reported experiencing sexual violence in conjunction with deteriorating health, such as depression, low self-esteem, and a deprived sense of belonging and social support. As well, queer-identifying women reported greater incidents of sexual violence than lesbian participants, indicating that certain groups within the LGBTQ constellation may be subject to greater levels of discrimination. Bauer and Scheim (2015) conducted research on the consequences of sexual violence experiences for transgender Canadians. They found that 21% of 380 transgender Canadians had experienced physical or sexual assault (Bauer & Scheim, 2015). Although this study utilised respondent driven sampling, which is capable of producing generalisable findings, it is possible that the actual proportion of assaults is higher, as fear of stigmatisation may prevent some transgender persons from reporting sexual victimisation (Gaudet, 2018). Despite the prevalence of sexual
violence amongst LGBTQ persons, there is a notable absence of research documenting how news media report the effects of sexual violence directed against members of these populations.

**Newsworthiness and media framing of LGBTQ sexual violence**

A media ‘frame’ involves selecting elements of a perceived reality as newsworthy, and directing audiences towards certain aspects and interpretations (Shaw & Giles, 2009). Media framing can be interpreted by framing theory (Johnston et al., 2015), which states that news media posit a selective range of topics within subjective meanings, and adopt episodic or thematic perspectives. An episodic perspective focuses on case studies, with attention directed towards individuals, rather than society, in terms of how to address a social problem. For example, news reports adopt an episodic perspective when the readers may relate to the victims or the accused, rather than being concerned with a broader social problem, such as the prevalence of sexual violence targeting persons with certain demographic characteristics (Johnston et al., 2015). Conversely, with a thematic perspective, public issues are contextualised, as society is positioned at the centre of solving a social issue. The thematic lens on sexual violence allows the readers to contemplate the contextual factors of sexual violence; for instance, attributing homonegativity as the cause of LGBTQ sexual victimisation (Johnston et al., 2015).

Media use various framing devices, such as catchphrases, depictions, images, and sentence structures to present a news story in a certain manner (Tankard, 2001). Media frames significantly influence public opinion and are often generated by political elites for their own benefits (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997). For example, Rose and Baumgartner (2013) documented that, since the 1970s, the American media has framed poverty within neoliberal narratives that position individuals as solely responsible for their own financial situation. These authors speculate that this framing was pivotal to the practical implementation of policies that work to reduce government generosity towards the poor.

Researchers have identified the ways LGBTQ persons are represented in American news media. For example, Kharchilava and Javakhishvili (2010) discovered that lesbian women were often invisible in the state of Georgia’s print media, as only 20% of 272 articles mentioned ‘lesbianism,’ while the remainder provided explicit and derogatory coverage of gay male sexuality. Still, lesbianism was associated with social deviance, such as criminal behaviour, drug addiction, and alcoholism, and situated as a threat to national traditions, values, and religion (Kharchilava & Javakhishvili, 2010). It is our understanding that only Grozelle’s (2014) study explicitly focuses on media framing of lesbian women’s sexual violence experiences. This study operationalised these experiences as hate crimes against lesbian women, and analysed the content of American news media. Grozelle (2014) conducted a content analysis of 81 news articles on two rape-and-murder cases, and found that the news reports lacked sufficient details about the sexual assault and, due to the resultant ambiguity, increased the potential for victim blaming. Further, hate crimes against lesbian women targeting their sexual orientation were seldom highlighted, as media represented these cases as hate crimes against women in general. As well, most news articles contained a picture of the accused; thus, the victims became more of an abstraction, which potentially decreased the readers’ emotional connection to the victims. A majority of these news stories emphasised the accused and depicted them in either a positive or a neutral manner. The lack of attention allocated to the victim might be perceived as disseminating the message that their experiences are secondary in importance (Gilchrist, 2010; Grozelle, 2014).

Concerning media framing of transgender persons, June (2017) conducted a qualitative framing analysis on the ways digital American news media presented transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming murder victims. Findings indicated that trans-identifying victims were misgendered in 36% of 106 news articles which covered their cases. Further, the victims were often dehumanised, subjected to victim-blaming, and criminalised. Transgender victims of colour also were
underreported in these artefacts. However, the reports examined by June (2017) also contained themes such as trans empowerment (e.g. use of correct pronouns and no mention of previously-held names) and visibility (e.g. education provided on the transgender community).

In sum, the existing literature indicates that, despite more frequent sexual victimisation with negative psychological outcomes, LGBTQ persons’ sexual violence experiences are underrepresented in Canadian news media outlets.

**Current study**

This study advances knowledge about the media framing of Canadian LGBTQ persons’ sexual violence experiences by addressing two limitations: 1) Most of the empirical research on media framing of LGBTQ persons’ experiences of sexual victimisation has been conducted in the United States of America; and 2) No research studies, to date, have examined whether there are differences in Canadian news media representations of sexual violence between persons embodying minority, as compared to majority sexual and/or gender identities. Therefore, the current study focuses on a comparative framing analysis of LGBTQ versus straight cisgender sexual violence experiences, as the intent was to focus on the default cultural assumptions of heteronormativity and cisnormativity that exist in Canada (Habarth, 2008).

The study has three objectives: 1) To assess if Canadian news media present the experiences of sexual violence of LGBTQ persons as ‘less newsworthy’ than similar experiences of persons who present as straight and cisgender; 2) To explore whether news media dehumanise LGBTQ victims of sexual violence; and 3) To investigate if news media position LGBTQ individuals as being responsible for their sexual victimisation. The preceding objectives are examined through a comparison group of straight cisgender sexual violence victims, whom mainstream society considers as personifying majority sexual and/or gender identities.

Three hypotheses were tested: 1) Straight cisgender persons’ experiences of sexual violence will be presented as more newsworthy compared to LGBTQ individuals’ experiences; 2) News media will dehumanise LGBTQ victims; and 3) News media will tend to blame LGBTQ individuals for their experiences of sexual violence compared to straight cisgender individuals.

**Methodology**

**Sample**

News media websites (i.e. the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [CBC], CTV, and Global News), and Canadian News-stream: Major Dailies online database were reviewed to identify news stories about sexual violence directed towards Canadian LGBTQ as well as straight cisgender persons. News sources targeting LGBTQ communities were excluded as their infiltration into the ‘mainstream’ (read: straight and cisgender) community is questionable. Thus, popular Canadian news articles that reach, and impact, mass audiences, and are widely perceived as reliable, were targeted.

Articles were selected using a purposive sampling method by combining keywords such as ‘sexual violence’ and ‘sexual assault’ with the words ‘LGBTQ,’ ‘gay,’ ‘lesbian,’ ‘bisexual,’ ‘transgender,’ and ‘queer.’ The term ‘homosexual,’ along with other outdated terms to describe queer persons, were not included in the search terms because these words are no longer employed by any of the modern news sources targeted for use in this study. The inclusion criteria were: 1) the news articles should report sexual violence experiences of LGBTQ versus straight cisgender victims; and 2) the news reports should contain sufficient information for analysis.

First, news reports on LGBTQ persons’ sexual violence experiences were searched. When no additional news stories were identified, the search process was terminated. Thirty-one news reports on LGBTQ sexual violence experiences were located. For comparison purposes, 31 news articles on straight cisgender persons’ sexual violence experiences were purposively selected from the same
news media websites and online database. Of particular importance was that the news reports on straight cisgender persons’ sexual violence experiences should be similar to LGBTQ news articles in terms of their publication timelines.

The news articles that were found date from 2001 to 2018, with 69% of these articles published in 2018. The news reports did not explicitly mention the sexual orientation or gender identity of the victim each time. Consequently, the authors relied on how the news reports presented the victims and the accused individuals. When the news media presented the victims and the accused as members of the same-sex, or victims as trans-identified, or implied through mentioning queer settings or contexts (i.e. gay bar or use of a gay dating app), they were categorised as news reports focused on LGBTQ persons’ sexual violence experiences. In cases when the news reports presented the victims and the accused as members of the opposite sex, and did not include information on their trans status, they were included as a straight cisgender news report. It should be noted that this classificatory process was conservative (i.e. it is possible that some LGBTQ persons were mislabelled as straight/cisgender). Thus, any differences that emerge in our analyses may be seen as underestimates.

Content analysis

To analyse the media framing of LGBTQ versus straight cisgender individuals’ sexual violence experiences, content analyses were conducted. A systematic mixed-method approach was employed, as per Gilchrist’s (2010) and Grozelle’s (2014) methodological frameworks. These methods allow for the measurement of a wide range of constructs and variables (Neuendorf, 2017), while determining the meaningfulness of news stories (Newbold, Boyd-Barrett, & Van Den Bulck, 2002).

Three of the authors jointly coded the news reports in this study. Coders mutually analysed the reports while compiling data into an Excel file, and engaged in discussing the analysis of each variable to arrive at a 100% consensus.

Codebook variables

To examine the first hypothesis (i.e. whether LGBTQ or straight cisgender persons’ sexual violence experiences were considered more newsworthy), the length of the articles and headlines was determined by calculating the mean word count. The news articles were analysed for potential themes, and overlapping themes were grouped together. In addition, the coders analysed the words and phrases used in the headlines, examining whether they were employed to communicate implicit messages concerning LGBTQ sexual violence experiences.

The second and third hypotheses (i.e. dehumanising LGBTQ victims and positioning them as being responsible for their sexual victimisation) were addressed by examining whether the news reports included the demographic information of the victims and the accused; how the reports portrayed these individuals in the content and photographs of the articles; and if the news reports contained an explicit description of non-consensual sexual acts (i.e. containing a high level of sexual details) between the victims and the accused. Demographic information about the accused individuals and the victims, as reported by the news articles, were collected: name, age, sexual orientation, gender, perceived ethnicity, and education and/or occupation. The portrayal of the victims and the accused was analysed based on positive, negative, or neutral dimensions. While favourable descriptions or adjectives (e.g. ‘successful,’) indicated positive representation, disparaging adjectives or descriptions (e.g. ‘sadistic,’ ‘lack of empathy’) represented negative portrayals. Excerpts from the articles that evidenced media framing of the involved individuals (i.e. the accused and the victim) also were recorded. Photographs of the accused and the victim were coded in accordance to who or what was depicted, and whether persons in the photos were presented in a humanising fashion (i.e. with family members; being well-dressed; and having positive facial expressions) or a dehumanising fashion (i.e. blurry photographs or unflattering facial expressions [i.e. expressions that served to present the person in the photo as less attractive]). Additionally, the
coders utilised dichotomous categories (1 = Yes; 2 = No) to determine whether these articles furnished explicit details of non-consensual sexual activities between the victim and the accused.

**Results**

All data were manually exported to IBM SPSS Version 25. Frequency analyses were conducted on the codebook variables, as were independent samples t-tests and chi square tests for determining statistically significant differences and/or associations. Majority and minority representations of sexuality and gender (i.e. straight cisgender versus LGBTQ) were compared. No separate gender-based analyses were conducted due to a small number of transgender victims (n = 4). Additionally, thematic analyses were utilised to explore patterns in the news reports.

**Hypothesis 1: newsworthiness of LGBTQ versus straight cisgender experiences**

**Length of articles and headlines**

The articles from Canadian media reports of sexual violence experienced by LGBTQ persons contained an average of 560.6 words (SD = 360.9). Reports focusing on straight cisgender victims had an average of 330.3 words (SD = 248.9). An independent samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference, with longer articles being published about LGBTQ incidents of sexual violence; t (60) = 2.925, p = .005, d = .74 (approximates a large effect size).

The headline length of Canadian media reports of LGBTQ sexual violence was an average of 11.8 words (SD = 4.1). The mean average headline length of news reports about straight cisgender victims was 9.9 words (SD = 2.5). An independent samples t-test indicated that the headlines for news articles covering the sexual assaults of LGBTQ victims were significantly longer; t(60) = 2.200, p = .027, d = .56 (a medium effect size).

**Hypotheses 2 and 3: dehumanisation and blaming LGBTQ victims**

**Demographics of the victims**

Table 1 outlines the demographics of LGBTQ and straight cisgender victims of sexual violence cases covered by news media in Canada.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Demographics of the victims.</th>
<th>LGBTQ</th>
<th>Straight Cisgender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name (Mentioned)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education or Occupation (Mentioned)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implied</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender Men (assigned female at birth)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender Person</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>83.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LGBTQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. N = 31 (Total number of articles, N = 62).
**Name of the victims.** The names of LGBTQ victims of sexual violence were mentioned in three of the 31 reports analysed. The names of straight cisgender victims were not listed in any of the reports. A chi-square test indicated that these proportions did not differ significantly; $\chi^2 (1, N = 62) = 3.153$, $p = .076$, Cramer’s $V = .225$ (approximates a medium effect size).

**Age of the victims.** The mean age of LGBTQ victims of sexual violence was 25.8 years ($SD = 9.37$). The mean age of straight cisgender victims was 26.8 years ($SD = 11.80$). An independent samples t-test indicated that LGBTQ and straight cisgender victims did not differ significantly by age; $t(26) = -.235$, $p = .816$, $d = .09$ (a small effect size).

**Education and/or occupation of the victims.** The education and/or occupation of the victim was listed in 10 of the 31 reports on LGBTQ cases (32.3%), and seven of the 31 reports on straight cisgender cases (22.6%). A chi-square test revealed that mentioning a victim’s educational or occupational credentials was not related to the sexual orientation or gender identity status of the victim; $\chi^2 (1, N = 62) = .729$, $p = .393$, Cramer’s $V = .108$ (a small effect size).

**Sexual orientation of the victims.** Sixteen out of 31 LGBTQ sexual violence cases (55%) involved an explicitly stated gay male victim, one incident included a lesbian victim, and 14 out of 31 (45%) of the news reports on the victimisation of LGBTQ persons implied the sexual orientation of the victim (i.e. due to the context of the article, such as working at a gay bar, or using a gay dating app).

**Gender of the victims.** In the 31 LGBTQ sexual violence reports, 23 victims (74%) appeared to be cisgender men, three (10%) were described as transgender men who were assigned female at birth, and one victim (3%) was framed as a transgender person whom the article referred to as ‘they.’ One LGBTQ case involved a victim identifying as a cisgender woman (3%). The remaining three reports (10%) did not mention the gender of the victim. All of the cases involving straight cisgender sexual violence experiences involved cisgender women as victims.

**Perceived ethnicity of the victims.** A majority of the Canadian media reports of LGBTQ sexual violence did not specify the victim’s ethnicity (26 cases out of 31 total cases analysed, 84%). Three cases mentioned a White victim (9.7%), and two cases mentioned an Asian victim (6.5%). None of the straight cisgender persons’ reports stated the victim’s ethnicity. A chi-square test revealed that proportion of articles reporting the victim’s ethnicity did not differ between LGBTQ versus straight cisgender articles; $\chi^2 (1, N = 62) = 5.439$, $p = .066$, Cramer’s $V = .296$ (approximates a large effect size).

**Demographics of the accused**

Table 2 details the demographics of the individuals who were accused of sexual violence in LGBTQ cases in comparison to straight cisgender cases.

**Name of the accused.** The names of individuals who were accused of sexual violence were provided in 25 of the 31 reports on LGBTQ sexual violence (81%), and 17 of the 31 reports on straight cisgender sexual violence (55%). A chi-square test revealed that the names of the accused were mentioned more frequently in news reports about sexual violence towards LGBTQ persons than similar reports about sexual violence towards straight cisgender persons; $\chi^2 (1, N = 62) = 4.724$, $p = .030$, Cramer’s $V = .276$ (approximates a large effect size).

**Age of the accused.** The mean age of the accused individuals was 51.8 years ($SD = 15.88$) in LGBTQ sexual violence reports and 39.1 years ($SD = 16.08$) in straight cisgender reports. An independent samples t-test indicated that individuals accused of sexual violence against LGBTQ versus straight cisgender victims differed significantly by age; $t(38) = 2.522$, $p = .016$, $d = .80$ (a large effect size).
Education and/or occupation of the accused. The education level and/or occupation of individuals who were accused of LGBTQ cases of sexual violence was provided in 27 of the 31 reports that were analysed (87%). For those accused of sexual violence against straight cisgender individuals, the number was smaller (18 of 31 reports, 58%). A chi-square test revealed that news reports on sexual violence against LGBTQ persons were more likely to provide information about the accused’s educational and/or occupational credentials, compared to the reports on straight cisgender persons’ sexual violence experiences; $\chi^2 (1, N = 62) = 6.565, p = .010, \text{Cramer’s } V = .325$ (a large effect size).

Sexual orientation of the accused. Seventeen of 31 news articles on LGBTQ sexual violence involved an accused individual who was identified as gay (55%). (14 of these 31 news reports [45%] did not explicitly state the accused’s sexual orientation.) None of the straight cisgender sexual violence news reports directly specified the sexual orientation of the accused.

Gender of the accused. Almost all ($n = 29; 93.5\%$) of the individuals who were accused of LGBTQ sexual violence were cisgender men. All of the 31 cases (100%) involving straight cisgender sexual violence experiences involved cisgender men who were accused of victimising cisgender women.

Perceived ethnicity of the accused. Eighteen out of 31 (58%) Canadian media reports on LGBTQ sexual violence specifically mentioned the ethnicity of the accused as White, while ethnicity was not specified in nine of these 31 (29%) reports. Fifteen out of 31 (48%) Canadian media reports of straight cisgender sexual violence incidents did not state the ethnicity of the accused, while 12 out of 31 (39%) of these reports identified the accused person’s ethnicity as White. A chi-square test indicated that reporting the accused persons’ ethnicity in LGBTQ news articles did not differ significantly, as compared to reporting the accused individual’s ethnicity in straight cisgender cases; $\chi^2 (1, N = 62) = 5.900, p = .207, \text{Cramer’s } V = .308$ (a large effect size).

Portrayal of the victim

Table 3 outlines the tone in which the victims were portrayed (positive, neutral, or negative) in Canadian news reports of sexual violence among LGBTQ versus straight cisgender persons. No multidimensional portrayals of the victims were discovered; the articles depicted both either positively, negatively or neutrally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics of the accused.</th>
<th>LGBTQ cases</th>
<th>Straight Cisgender cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name (Mentioned)</strong></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education or Occupation (Mentioned)</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual Orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender Person</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Mentioned</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LGBTQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. $N = 31$ (Total number of articles, $N = 62$).
Chi-square tests were used to determine the association between the victim’s LGBTQ status and the tone of victim portrayal. No significant association was observed for positive ($\chi^2 [1, N = 62] = .662, p = .430, \text{Cramer’s } V = .100$ [small effect size]) and negative portrayals ($\chi^2 [1, N = 62] = 1.449, p = .229, \text{Cramer’s } V = .153$ [small effect size]), indicating that the portrayal of victims of sexual violence did not differ as a function of the victim’s LGBTQ versus straight cisgender status. Proportions of neutral portrayals were identical across the two groups (i.e. 51.6% of both LGBTQ and straight cisgender news reports depicted the victims in a neutral manner).

**Portrayal of the accused**
Table 4 summarises the tone (positive, neutral, or negative) in which Canadian news media portrayed the accused individuals in LGBTQ and straight cisgender sexual violence cases. No multidimensional portrayals of the accused were discovered; the articles depicted both either positively, negatively or neutrally. Chi-square tests were used to determine the association between the victim’s LGBTQ status and the tone of the portrayal of the accused. No significant association was observed for positive ($\chi^2 (1, N = 62) = 1.908, p = .167, \text{Cramer’s } V = .175$ [approximates a moderate effect size]) as well as neutral portrayals ($\chi^2 (1, N = 62) = 1.060, p = .303, \text{Cramer’s } V = .131$ [small effect size]), indicating that the portrayal of those accused of sexual violence did not differ as a function of the victim’s LGBTQ versus straight cisgender status. The proportions of negative portrayals were identical across the two groups (i.e. 41.9% of both LGBTQ and straight cisgender news reports portrayed the accused persons negatively).

**Details of non-consensual sexual acts**
Table 5 presents data on whether the details of non-consensual sexual acts or behaviours were described in the news reports of LGBTQ victims of sexual violence compared to straight cisgender victims. Most news reports, 21 out of 31 (68%), on LGBTQ victims of sexual violence provided detailed descriptions of the non-consensual sexual acts between the victims and the accused. A smaller proportion (nine out of 31 [29%]), of articles on straight cisgender sexual violence reported an explicit narrative of the

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 3. Portrayal of victim.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ Victims</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
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LGBTQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. ns = 31 and 31. (Total number of articles, N = 62). The authors interpreted that the victims were portrayed positively if favourable descriptions or adjectives such as ‘successful’ were used; negatively when descriptive words or adjectives such as ‘sadistic’ or ‘lack of empathy’ were used. Neutral portrayal of the victims (or accused) was inferred when the news reports did not describe the victims or the accused with any adjectives, but rather reported the sexual assault incident only.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Portrayal of the accused.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
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<td>Negative</td>
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<td>Neutral</td>
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LGBTQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. ns = 31 and 31. (Total number of articles, N = 62). The authors interpreted that the accused were portrayed positively if favourable descriptions or adjectives such as ‘successful’ were used; negatively when descriptive words or adjectives such as ‘sadistic’ or ‘lack of empathy’ were used. Neutral portrayal of the victims (or accused) was inferred when the news reports did not describe the victims or the accused with any adjectives, but rather reported the sexual assault incident only.
non-consensual sexual acts that occurred. A chi-square test indicated that non-consensual sexual acts were considerably more likely to be described in news reports covering LGBTQ sexual violence compared to straight cisgender sexual violence; $\chi^2(1, N = 62) = 9.300, p = .002, \text{Cramer's } V = .387$ (a large effect size).

**Thematic analysis**

*Hypothesis 1: newsworthiness of LGBTQ versus straight cisgender experiences*

**Descriptive reporting of LGBTQ victims’ sexual violence experiences**

News reports of LGBTQ victims’ experiences of sexual violence were more illustrative, as compared to the reports that covered straight cisgender victims’ experiences. News articles on LGBTQ victims contained more vivid descriptions of the non-consensual sexual acts between the victim and the accused. For example, in five of the 11 (45.5%) news reports on the sexual violence case against Skipp Anderson, a nightclub owner, a rich description of gay sex and the non-consensual sexual encounter was provided. These descriptions included language such as: ‘sitting on his lap in the hot tub and then kissing and stroking him’ (Zakreski, 2018a), and ‘gay sex is difficult to do . . . ’ (Zakreski, 2018b). In another news report about serial killer Bruce McArthur, an explicit quotation from one victim is included: ‘He was basically raping my throat’ (Russell, 2018). In contrast, straight cisgender news reports presented the details of sexual violence in a neutral manner, using terms such as sexual activity, sex crimes, sexual assault, and rape.

**Sensationalising the headlines**

The headlines for the news reports on LGBTQ victims were more sensationalised (i.e. presented in a dramatic fashion, provoking interest and excitement) than the reports on straight cisgender victims. Out of 31 news articles on LGBTQ incidents of sexual violence, 11 (35.5%) news reports contained sensationalistic headlines, which undermine the seriousness of sexually victimising LGBTQ persons. Some striking examples of such headlines include: ‘Nightclub owner “crawled into bed with the intention of having sex” Crown alleges at sexual assault trial’ (Zakreski, 2018c), ‘Transgender Montrealer says police laughed at allegations of sexual assault, robbery’ (Krishnan, 2018), and ‘Psychiatrist who treated patients for their homosexuality had sex with male patients in his office’ (Gallant, 2018). The remaining 20 news reports (64.5%) on LGBTQ sexual violence contained headlines that communicated neutral messages: ‘Winnipeg taxi driver charged with sexual assault’ (CBC News, 2016a).

Three (9.7%) of the 31 news reports on straight cisgender victims contained headlines that were sensationalised, although in a manner that could induce favourable emotional reactions among readers: ‘The courts failed my daughter, says accuser’s mom after sexual assault acquittal’ (Conners, 2018). Twenty-eight (93%) of the news reports on straight cisgender victims consisted of neutral headlines: ‘Calgary massage therapist charged with sexual assault’ (CBC News, 2018f).

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LGBTQ Victims</th>
<th>Straight Cisgender Victims</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>71.0</td>
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LGBTQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. *ns = 31 and 31.* (Total number of articles, *N = 62*).
Hypotheses 2 and 3: dehumanisation and blaming LGBTQ victims

Detailed focus on the accused in LGBTQ cases of sexual violence

The individuals who were accused of sexual violence directed against LGBTQ victims systematically received greater focus in the news reports as compared to the articles on straight cisgender sexual violence cases. For example, in an article on sexual assault charges against a Calgary-based psychiatrist, the accused individual’s accomplishments were described in great detail, including his experiences in foreign militaries as a psychiatrist, previous directorships, and academic contributions towards exposing the abusive treatment of lesbian women and gay men in the military (CTV Calgary, 2011; Gallant, 2018). In contrast, no such background information was provided on the victims.

Positive portrayal of straight cisgender and transgender victims compared to gay male victims

In the news reports, the straight cisgender and transgender victims of sexual violence were portrayed positively compared to gay male victims. For example, in the article reviewing the sexual assault case against a former Manitoba Bible college counsellor, the gay male victim was described as a ‘sexually confused man’ (McIntyre, 2008). In contrast to the news media’s propensity to blame gay male victims, the article discussing a transgender man’s experiences of sexual violence emphasised the psychological impact of sexual assault on the victim: ‘… I have nightmares and they don’t go away’ (CBC News, 2016b). Similarly, a news article, which discussed a straight cisgender Newfoundland high school male charged with sexual assault, quotes a school principal commenting on the diminished mental health of the victims: ‘A lot of [the victims and others in the school] are having nightmares …’ (Bailey, 2018).

Transgender victims, similar to straight cisgender victims, were portrayed in a more humanised fashion by popular news media. Within the four articles (12.9%) on transgender victims, all emphasised struggles specific to transgender persons. For example, a report about the sexual assault of a transgender man discussed the transphobia of the accused, with the victim stating that ‘[the accused] still continued to call [him] a woman even though [he] had explicitly told [the accused] [he] was a male and [he] had been transitioning for a while now’ (CBC News, 2016b). Similarly, another news report discussed a transgender person’s experience of institutional transphobia with the police department: ‘They wouldn’t give me a glass or anything … The state I was in, the other constables in the room were laughing’ (Krishnan, 2018).

Lack of humanisation of LGBTQ victims in the photographs

Of the 31 articles on LGBTQ sexual victimisation, only four (13%) included a photograph of the victims, with half of these photographs (n = 2; one gay man and one transgender person) depicting them in a humanising manner (see Table 6). In one report, the photographs of six victims were depicted in a context that does not allow the reader to humanise, or sympathise, with them: 1) a mug shot of a man with a black eye (emphasising criminality and aggression); 2) a neutral, passport photograph (void of affect or context indicative of their lived experience); 3) a close-up of a man with

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<th>Table 6. Images of photographs.</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accused</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accused and Victim</td>
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<tr>
<td>Object only</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location only</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Picture</td>
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LGBTQ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. ns = 31 and 31. (Total number of articles, N = 62).
a friendly expression (pictures that do not depict persons in relation to others or physical settings may fail to evoke sympathy and the reader’s ability to relate to the lived experience of persons being depicted); (4) a self-portrait of a man donning a dull expression (void of affect or context indicative of their lived experience); 5) a blurry photograph of a suited man (diminishing their presence and respectability); and 6) a dark-lit photo of a man with a neutral expression (void of affect and diminishing their presence and respectability; Russell, 2018).

One out of 31 articles (3.2%) on straight cisgender sexual violence depicted photographs related to the victims. Specifically, one photo presented the victim’s mother’s interlocked hands, while another photograph depicted the mother holding a used tissue in her lap (Conners, 2018). This was a positive portrayal of the victim’s family; the photographs emphasise and facilitate emotional responses, such as empathy, among the readers.

**Positive portrayal of the accused in the photographs of LGBTQ reports**

Eighteen out of 31 articles (58.1%) on LGBTQ sexual violence included photographs of the individuals who were accused of the crime (see Table 6). None of these reports portrayed the accused negatively. Five of these 18 reports (27.7%) contained photographs that presented the accused individuals in a neutral manner, and 13 (72.2%) depicted the accused in a humanised fashion. For example, the article covering the case against Bollywood star Shiamak Davar included a photograph of the accused and the victim in an intimate embrace, both expressing joy, indicating a close and friendly relationship between them (Clancy, 2015). Further, Aubrey Levin, a psychiatrist who was charged with 12 counts of sexual assault, was portrayed walking away from court in layers of warm clothing using a walking aid with the help of his wife, emphasising his elderly status and vulnerability (Graveland, 2013).

 Twelve out of 31 (38.7%) straight cisgender sexual violence articles included photographs of the accused individuals. Ten of these 12 reports (83.3%) contained photos that portrayed the accused in a negative manner. For example, Matthew Percy, a former university groundskeeper found guilty of sexual assault and voyeurism, was shown being escorted by two police officers with his head bowed and hands bound behind his back (Rhodes, 2018b). Of these news reports, none included photographs depicting the accused in a neutral manner, and only two articles (16.7%) included an image that portrayed them in a humanised light. Specifically, motel-owner John Pontes, found guilty of sexual assault, was portrayed smiling and waving to the reporters in a video still (Piller & Lesko, 2018).

Differential portrayals of the accused, be they positive or negative, are problematic as they contravene a core element of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; namely, that an accused person is ‘to be presumed innocent until proven guilty’ (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982, s 11d). It should be noted that laws on defamation is not applicable to truthful reporting of these cases as a civil tort of defamation is only applicable to publication of false claims (Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, 2015).

**Discussion**

The objective of the study was to assess the media framing of LGBTQ victims of sexual violence compared straight cisgender victims in Canada. Results indicated support for two of the three hypotheses.

**H1: Straight cisgender persons’ experiences of sexual violence will be presented as more newsworthy in the news media compared to LGBTQ experiences of sexual violence.**

Contrary to the first hypothesis, news media presented LGBTQ sexual violence experiences as more newsworthy compared to straight cisgender sexual violence experiences (i.e. the former had lengthier articles as well as longer and more sensationalised headlines). However, this type of newsworthiness is problematic. It was found that the sexual victimisation of LGBTQ individuals
was presented in an embellished manner suggesting that news reports were motivated by the desire to satisfy readers’ curiosity since LGBTQ sexual violence incidents are less commonplace and, potentially, more titillating. Our findings also revealed that headlines of LGBTQ reports were notably more sensationalised than the headlines of straight cisgender reports is consistent with heteronormative assumptions that position LGBTQ sexualities as abnormal and exotic (Cameron, 1993; Halperin, 1995).

**H2: News media will dehumanise LGBTQ victims.**

As hypothesised, news articles tended to dehumanise LGBTQ victims more than straight cisgender victims. LGBTQ victims were dehumanised, as their sexual victimisation was deemphasized in lieu of news media focusing on the accused who were often portrayed in a positive light. Further, LGBTQ bodies were objectified by explicitly emphasising the non-consensual sexual acts between the accused and the victims. The news reports on LGBTQ sexual violence provided more demographic details of the accused individuals, such as their name and education and/or occupation, compared to straight cisgender sexual violence articles. This type of coverage, which highlights a ‘fall from grace,’ may increase readers’ sympathy for the accused, while overshadowing the experiences of the victims and the sexual assault that was committed against them. Similarly, the accused individuals’ life history and past accomplishments were extensively outlined, frequently in a positive manner, in the reports of LGBTQ sexual violence. Additionally, photographs in the LGBTQ news articles portrayed the accused in a humanised fashion more often than the victims, as compared to straight cisgender cases. Hence, Canadian news media tended to undermine the trauma and impact of sexual violence on LGBTQ victims by redirecting attention towards the accused. These findings are consistent with Grozelle’s (2014) study, which reported insufficient framing of LGBTQ victims, and greater allocation of attention towards the accused.

Non-consensual sexual acts were described more frequently in the LGBTQ sexual violence news reports than in the reports on straight cisgender sexual violence. This accentuates the overall disdain for LGBTQ victims’ bodies, as research demonstrates that sexual assault is a humiliating experience to recount, even privately, and that public reporting of sexual assault is often devastating for victims (Engel, 2017). As well, public media reports that include intimate details about episodes of sexual coercion objectify the victims’ bodies which shows an indifference towards, and capitalisation upon, victim trauma (Engel, 2017). Moreover, sexual objectification dehumanises individuals because it exchanges the whole person for only a part of their body, such as a penis, rendering them objectified (Nussbaum, 1999). Researchers have demonstrated that individuals being sexually objectified also report adverse psychological outcomes, such as shame and anxiety (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). The privacy of victims (including privacy about sexual identities) was not respected within articles that covered sexual violence towards LGBTQ persons, as compared to articles that covered sexual violence towards straight cisgender persons.

**H3: The news media will tend to blame LGBTQ victims for their experiences of sexual violence compared to straight cisgender victims.**

The third hypothesis was partly supported, in that news media tended to direct blame towards gay male victims for their sexual violence experiences, more often than straight cisgender as well as transgender victims. The gay male victims were blamed for their sexual violence experiences, as the news reports contained information about their clothing and/or sexual interactions with the accused individuals, rather than their experiences of psychological trauma as a result of sexual victimisation. This finding aligns with previous research, which specifies that gay male victims are more likely to be blamed for experiencing sexual assault than straight male victims because the former are perceived to violate sexual scripts (i.e. willingness to be sexually dominating), and gender norms of masculinity (i.e. physical strength, and ability to stay in control; Abdullah-Khan, 2008). Furthermore, media
framing theory indicates that media select stories based on the audience’s perceptions and, thus, conform to social stereotypes (Johnston et al., 2015). Our findings are consistent with this theory, since a common stereotype about gay men, namely that they are sexually promiscuous (Pinsof & Haselton, 2017), was exploited by sensationalising their experiences of sexual violence.

Overall, findings indicated that Canadian news media sources stereotypically presented the sexual violence experiences of LGBTQ persons through sensationalism, dehumanisation, and objectification of LGBTQ bodies, possibly because their experiences were perceived as less familiar by general public. This stereotypical representation is pervasive in other forms of popular media such as television. To elucidate: McInroy and Craig (2017) found that LGBTQ young adults perceived that television depicted LGBTQ people as unidimensional and stereotypical (e.g. portraying them as weak, insecure, and bullied, and their self-identification as LGBTQ as a struggle or ‘an issue that has to be dealt with’ [p. 40]). These young adults also noted that television did not adequately represent LGBTQ sub-groups and communities (e.g. queer people of colour; McInroy & Craig, 2017).

**Implications**

Results of this study indicate that the Canadian news media is deficient in the fair representation of LGBTQ persons. There is a dire need for strategic interventions that help to ensure that the news media does not sensationalise and dehumanise LGBTQ sexual violence experiences or blame them for their sexual victimisation. One strategy that the news media could adopt is *transformative media organising*, which involves active partnership with LGBTQ communities and organisations, and working to prioritise LGBTQ individuals in sharing their stories to the general audience (Costanza-Chock, Schweidler, & Transformative Media Organizing Project, 2017). Another strategy that could work to alleviate the stigmatisation of the LGBTQ community is news media attention on transformative impact stories from within the LGBTQ community, including healing, personal and communal growth, and leadership development within LGBTQ organisations (Costanza-Chock et al., 2017). As well, in our study, 45% of the news reports did not explicitly mention the victim’s sexual orientation, and 10% did not mention the victim’s gender identity. Resultantly, Canadian news media failed to report LGBTQ sexual violence experiences as anti-LGBTQ hate crimes. Paradoxically, media reportage of sexual orientation enhances LGBTQ individuals’ visibility while, at the same time, heteronormative reporting fails to justly frame the victimisation of LGBTQ persons as hate crimes (Grozelle, 2014; Hancock & Haldeman, 2017). The news media should consider not only whether LGBTQ violence should be reported, but also how to report these circumstances in such a way to prevent further violence towards LGBTQ communities (Hancock & Haldeman, 2017). Finally, the mainstream media should not emphasise single issues, but report LGBTQ experiences from an intersectional (i.e. the ways in which institutional marginalisation based on sexual orientation and gender identity traverses with discrimination based on race, class, immigration status, disability, age, poverty, and so on; Crenshaw, 1991) lens. The sample of our study contained a majority (84%) of LGBTQ reports, where the victim’s or the accused’s ethnicity was not documented. The absence of this data excludes LGBTQ persons of colour for whom the impact of sexual violence may be severe due to their embodiment of both racial and sexual and/or gender minority statuses (Costanza-Chock et al., 2017; Daley, Solomon, Newman, & Mishna, 2007).

**Limitations and future directions**

Three limitations of this study warrant attention. First, the sample size was small (n = 31), which may be attributed to an overall lack of coverage of LGBTQ experiences. It should be noted, however, that an absence of coverage is not tantamount to sexual assault being irrelevant to the communities in question (i.e. over 10% of LGB Canadians [Conroy & Cotter, 2017] and over 20% of transgender Canadians [Bauer & Scheim, 2015] have reported experiencing sexual violence.) The small sample size also may have resulted in our analyses lacking sufficient power to identify statistically significant
differences between LGBTQ and straight cisgender news reports. However, it should be noted that we provided effect sizes for all of our statistics and, thus, furnished metrics of statistical as well as practical significance. The reporting of effect sizes, which has been recommended for a number of years by statisticians concerned about psychologists’ reliance on $p < .05$ (see Gliner, Leech, & Morgan, 2002) enables one to gauge the magnitude of an observed relationship (also see Kirk, 1996). Second, there were no news media reports detailing the sexual violence experiences of bisexual victims, and only one article concerned a lesbian victim. The limited coverage of bisexual victims may reflect ‘bisexual invisibility,’ and the perception of bisexuality as a ‘silent’ sexual orientation by mainstream media. Accordingly, a bisexual woman is likely to be labelled straight when victimised by a man, whereas a bisexual man is likely to be labelled gay when victimised by a man (Barker et al., 2012). Third, the news media articles did not document the ethnicity of the individuals involved in these episodes of sexual violence. To gain a better understanding of the role of ethnicity in the news reportage of LGBTQ sexual violence, researchers should examine the media framing of sexual minorities with ethnic minority statuses. The current study included a news story on a Black male charged with sexually assaulting a straight cisgender female victim. The sensationalistic headline read: ‘Man gets 12 years for “sadistic” sexual assaults of 2 vulnerable women, girl barricaded in rooms’ (Hoye, 2018). Whether the depiction of this incident is unique or reflective of headlines associated with the ethnicity of the accused is a noteworthy of future research.

**Conclusion**

The study is one of the first to examine how LGBTQ sexual violence experiences are reported by Canadian news media, utilising a mixed-methods approach. It was found that news reports covering sexual assault cases tended to dehumanise the experiences of LGBTQ victims and failed to grant them, as well as the emotional or psychological impact of their assaults, sufficient coverage. By comparing the portrayal of sexual and gender minority victims to straight cisgender victims, which acted as an ersatz control group, we were able to identify several novel findings. Specifically, our results indicated that Canadian news media were more likely to sensationalise the LGBTQ cases of sexual violence compared to cases involving straight cisgender victims. Furthermore, using purposive sampling, only news reports from the three most popular news agencies in Canada were selected, which indicates that results are relevant to a large population of Canadian news media consumers. As these articles are easily accessible to the public, they can covertly shape readers’ views on the experiences of victims of sexual assault. Taken together, the present study highlights several notable disproportionalities in Canadian news media framing of LGBTQ victims’ experiences of sexual violence. Research on the news coverage of LGBTQ sexual victimisation will facilitate greater understanding of the inequities that these marginalised communities continue to experience in Canada.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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