UC Riverside
UC Riverside Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Heterosexual College Men’s Conceptualization, Communication, and Interpretation of Sexual Consent

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4tq2205k

Author

Marg, Logan Zachary

Publication Date

2020

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Heterosexual College Men's Conceptualization, Communication, and Interpretation of Sexual Consent

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

Logan Z. Marg

June 2020

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Tanya Nieri, Chairperson
Dr. Sharon Oselin
Dr. Ellen Reese

Copyright by
Logan Z. Marg
2020

The Dissertation of Logan Z. Marg is approved:

____

____

____
Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing this project and earning my Ph.D. will forever be one of the best decisions of my life. However, doing so would not have been possible without the support of numerous wonderful people in my corner who cheered me on and helped me reach the finish line.

I have deep gratitude and appreciation for each of my committee members, Dr. Tanya Nieri, Dr. Sharon Oselin, and Dr. Ellen Reese, all of whom supported my work since virtually my first day of graduate school. To Dr. Tanya Nieri, your mentorship was everything I needed. Thank you for helping me navigate to fruitful paths when I felt lost, continually affirming my capability and worthiness of earning a Ph.D. and achieving my career goals, and helping me celebrate and recognize my achievements. Every time I needed inspiration, a boost of confidence, and to be pointed in the right direction, your mentorship never wavered. To Drs. Sharon Oselin and Ellen Reese, your early belief in my abilities as a researcher and scholar was critical for my eventual belief in myself and completion of this project. Thank you both for your kindness and wisdom, pushing me to seize opportunities, and ultimately helping strengthen my research and skillset.

I am extremely grateful to Dr. Brandon Brown. I am amazed at and proud of all of the work we accomplished together during the last 3.5 years and feel incredibly fortunate that our paths crossed. Working with him has been a highlight of my graduate career. Thank you for your mentorship, friendship, and for investing in me.

I would also like to thank my amazing team of research assistants. This project would not have been possible without their hard work. I was continually inspired by and

learned so much from working with them. Thanks also to the dozens of young men who took the time to share the most intimate details of their lives with me. Their open and candid descriptions of their thoughts and experiences are the bedrock of this research.

Graduate school would not have been the same without my dear friends and Ph.D. comrades, Phoenicia Fares and Maïko Le Lay. Thank you both for your friendship, advice, shoulders to lean on, and laughter. Thanks also to Dr. Carole Findlay whose guidance and support since my first week in graduate school has profoundly shaped who I am today and helped me navigate and cope with the trials and tribulations of graduate school and beyond.

Thank you to my parents, Kelly and Brian Marg, for always expressing encouragement, love, and belief in me. They listened to my stresses, celebrated my accomplishments, and reminded me of how far I have come. Their love and support have always been beacons that helped me find my way, especially during graduate school.

Finally, and most importantly, thank you to my love and extraordinary partner, Heather Schaal-Marg. Always the first to review and discuss my work, her contributions to my experience completing the Ph.D. and this project cannot be overstated. In traveling this journey and sharing each milestone, setback, and everything in between with me, she has been pivotal to my success. She has been flexible, unsparingly generous and understanding, and often put my needs ahead of her own. I cannot imagine a better partner and am unbelievably lucky to have her by my side.

This dissertation was financially supported by the University of California-Riverside College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, Center for Ideas and Society,

Healthy Campus, Presley Center for Crime and Justice Studies, as well as the University of California Consortium on Social Science and Law. Thank you to the members of the award committees.

Chapter 3 of this dissertation is, in part, a reprint of the material as it appears in the Journal of American Sexuality Education. The full citation for the published version of chapter 3 is:

Marg, Logan Z. 2020. "College Men's Conceptualization of Sexual Consent at a Large, Racially/Ethnically Diverse Southern California University." *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, DOI: 10.1080/15546128.2020.1737291.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Heterosexual College Men's Conceptualization, Communication, and Interpretation of Sexual Consent

by

Logan Z. Marg

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Sociology
University of California, Riverside, June 2020
Dr. Tanya Nieri, Chairperson

Research on how individuals conceptualize, communicate, and interpret sexual consent is relatively scarce. Much sexual consent research is quantitative, employs hypothetical scenarios, and/or does not examine individuals' actual behaviors in their real-life sexual experiences. Because much sexual consent research is devoid of context, it is not well understood how interpersonal, situational, and broad social contexts shape individuals' conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent. Additionally, most sexual consent research focuses on women or on gender differences between men and women. Virtually no studies provide in-depth analyses of heterosexual men's conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent. Using multiple qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, sexual activity daily diaries, and diary debriefing interviews, this study offers a critical expansion of the extant literature by examining how forty heterosexual college men conceptualize, communicate, and interpret sexual consent. Results showed various, nuanced ways in which participants conceptualized, communicated, and interpreted sexual consent, which reflected the

interpersonal, situational, and cultural contexts of participants' sexual experiences, such as the nature of the relationship between sexual partners, the university context, in which sex often occurs under the influence of alcohol, the overarching cultural milieu (e.g., the #MeToo Movement), and larger social forces, such as social relations of domination and ideologies that reinforce those relations (e.g., hegemonic masculinity and gendered sexual scripts). Thus, this study showed that considering the influence of social context, broadly considered, is critical for developing a complete and nuanced understanding of individuals' conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent. The findings have important implications for the design of more effective sexual health and sexual assault prevention education and policy initiatives.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Background and Significance.......... 1

Chapter 2: Research Design and Methods.......... 31

Chapter 3: Heterosexual College Men's Conceptualization of Sexual Consent.......... 45

Introduction.......... 45

Methods.......... 50

Results.......... 52

Discussion.......... 76

Chapter 4: Heterosexual College Men's Communication of Sexual Consent 87

Introduction.......... 87

Methods.......... 92

Results.......... 96

Discussion.......... 108

Chapter 5: Heterosexual College Men's Interpretation of Sexual Consent 117

Introduction.......... 117

Methods.......... 123

Results.......... 127

Discussion.......... 142

Chapter 6: Conclusion.......... 154

References.......... 166

Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview guide.......... 187

Appendix 2: Electronic sexual activity diary.. 193

Appendix 3: Eligibility survey.. 199

Appendix 4: Tables.. 204

Appendix 5: Reflections on the research process... 206

List of Tables

Appendix 4

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of full sample (N = 40)..................... 213

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of subsample (N = 16)...................... 214

Chapter 1: Background and Significance

INTRODUCTION

Approximately one in five women in college are sexually assaulted, compared to about six percent of undergraduate men, but they rarely report the incidents (Cantor et al. 2015; The White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault 2014). Despite many public service campaigns as well as campus and statewide policies enacted to reduce sexual violence, sexual assault rates have not declined in 50 years (Adams-Curtis and Forbes 2004; Carmody 2005; Sampson 2002). Yet, the negative consequences of sexual assault are substantial and enduring.

Sexual consent is central to legal and conceptual definitions of sexual assault. Generally, the difference between criminal and non-criminal actions depends upon whether sexual consent was given, though a widely agreed upon definition or understanding of sexual consent does not exist (Beres 2007; Marg 2020; Muehlenhard et al. 2016). Thus, laws and university policies are open to interpretation and provide loopholes for the exoneration of perpetrators. Many sexual assault educational and awareness campaigns emphasize the importance of obtaining consent before engaging in sexual activity, but it often remains unclear what signifies or "counts" as sexual consent (Muehlenhard et al. 2016). This opacity may stem from the dearth of research about sexual consent and the methodological limitations of such research. Within this body of literature, there is limited understanding of how sexual consent is conceptualized, communicated, and interpreted in general, in specific contexts, and among men. Conceptualization refers to how sexual actors define and understand the concept of

sexual consent (Beres 2007; Beres 2014; Jozkowski et al. 2014b; Marg 2020). Communication refers to how sexual actors communicate their sexual consent to their sexual partners. Interpretation refers to how and in what ways sexual actors understand their sexual partners' sexual consent.

Much existing sexual consent research uses surveys, scales, standardized lists of behaviors, and hypothetical scenarios and mostly finds that young adults generally understand consent as a demonstrable, mutual agreement and willingness to engage in sexual activity (Humphreys and Herold 2007; Humphreys 2004; Jozkowski et al. 2014b), mainly communicate consent indirectly and nonverbally (Beres, Herold, and Maitland 2004; Coy et al. 2013; Hall 1998; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Higgins et al. 2010; Jozkowski et al. 2014a; Jozkowski 2013; Jozkowski and Wiersma 2015), and primarily interpret consent through nonverbal behaviors and contextual clues (e.g., flirting, sensual touching, moving to a secluded place, etc.) (Burrow, Hannon, and Hall 1998; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Humphreys 2007; Humphreys and Herold 2007; Jozkowski et al. 2014b; Willis and Jozkowski 2019). However, sexual consent research that employs these research methods may not accurately account for real-life sexual experiences, which often include a great deal of nuance and are considerably more complicated than such methods allow for or suggest. Indeed, the literature largely neglects participants' actual sexual behaviors, experiences, and the contexts in which they occur. While existing sexual consent research has generated important insights, it is unclear how much research findings that are based on hypothetical situations or potential behaviors illuminate individuals' real-life sexual experiences and behaviors.

It is important to examine individuals' real-life behaviors in actual sexual experiences and situations because they occur in specific interpersonal, situational, and other social contexts (Armstrong, Hamilton, and Sweeney 2006; Bogle 2008; Boswell and Spade 1996) that may influence individuals' sexual behaviors and understanding of sexual consent (Beres 2007; Hirsch et al. 2019; Jozkowski, Manning, and Hunt 2018; Muehlenhard et al. 2016; Willis and Jozkowski 2019). Given the limitations of much existing sexual consent research, numerous scholars point to the urgent need for more qualitative sexual consent research, which can better reveal thought processes and actual sexual behaviors in the full context in which they occur (Beres et al. 2004; Beres 2007; Muehlenhard et al. 2016).

Aside from data collection and measurement issues, most sexual consent research focuses on women or investigates gender differences between heterosexual men's and women's conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent (using the methods previously described). Very few studies focus solely on men's conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent or provide in-depth analyses of heterosexual men's sexual experiences. However, it is especially important to thoroughly understand how heterosexual men conceptualize, communicate, and interpret sexual consent because instances of sexual assault against women are perpetrated by men 98% of the time (Black et al. 2011).

Examining how heterosexual college men conceptualize sexual consent, communicate their own sexual consent, and interpret their partners' sexual consent could lead to more effective sexual health and sexual assault prevention education and policy

initiatives, and as a result, more healthy and consensual sexual experiences and safer college campuses. To fill these gaps in the literature, the present study uses a multi-method qualitative approach to examine how heterosexual college men conceptualize, communicate, and interpret sexual consent. In order to compile a more holistic understanding of this population's thoughts and behaviors related to sexual consent, I conducted multiple forms of data collection that included in-depth interviews, sexual activity diaries, and diary debriefing interviews.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 40 heterosexual college men students at a large university in Southern California. A subsample of 16 participants completed electronic sexual activity diaries for two weeks. At the end of each week, participants engaged in diary debriefing interviews, which allowed me to ask probing questions about diary entries and allowed participants to explain their entries in more detail. The data from these multiple qualitative methods were triangulated, and as such, led to a rich, contextualized understanding of sexual consent and patterns of communication and negotiation that occurred during sexual behavior.

The present research aimed to answer the following research questions: (1) How do heterosexual male college students conceptualize sexual consent? (2) How do heterosexual male college students communicate sexual consent? (3) How do heterosexual male college students interpret sexual consent?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Prevalence and Impact of Sexual Assault against Women

Although a person of any gender can be sexually assaulted, women constitute the majority of sexual assault victims. Most sexual assaults are committed by male perpetrators who are known by victims, such as an acquaintance, friend, romantic interest, or dating partner (Armstrong et al. 2006; Fisher, Cullen, and Turner 2000; Martin 2016). Sexual assault against women, particularly on college campuses, remains a prevalent health and safety issue in the United States. Research shows that college women face increased risk of experiencing sexual assault compared to women in the general population (Carey et al. 2015; Daigle, Fisher, and Cullen 2008). College women are five times more likely to experience sexual assault than other women (Carey et al. 2015). The Association of American Universities found that among students at 27 colleges and universities across the United States, sexual assault prevalence since entering college varied from 13% to 30% (Cantor et al. 2015).

Boswell and Spade (1996) argue that "relations between women and men are shaped by the contexts in which they meet and interact" (139). In this way, sexual assault against college women is grounded in an institutional, organizational, and cultural context that provides the right set of circumstances and resources for it to occur (Boswell and Spade 1996; Britton 2011; Martin 2016; Stombler and Martin 1994). Important contextual factors that contribute to epidemic levels of sexual assault among college women and complicate sexual consent include incoming college students' limited knowledge about sex (Lafrance, Loe, and Brown 2012; Muehlenhard et al. 2016),

gendered sexual and interactional expectations (Armstrong et al. 2006; Byers 1996; Muehlenhard et al. 2016; O'Sullivan and Byers 1992), the prevalence, importance, and expectation of alcohol use and partying (Abbey et al. 1996; Armstrong et al. 2006; Boswell and Spade 1996; Martin 2016; Muehlenhard et al. 2016; Sampson 2002), and hookup culture (Bogle 2008; Fantasia et al. 2014; LaBrie et al. 2014; Lafrance et al. 2012). In short, much research shows that the social context of universities and colleges facilitates sexual assault and makes understanding sexual consent within this context particularly salient.

Hookup culture and the prevalence of partying and alcohol use are especially important for understanding the social context of universities and colleges—as well as sexual assault and sexual consent within this context—because they are central factors that distinguish universities from other institutional, organizational, and social contexts. "Hookup culture" refers to the replacement of, or addition to, traditional dating relationships with hookups, which are characterized by non-committal sexual interactions between women and men (Bogle 2008; Glenn and Marquardt 2001). Hookups have become a primary way that college students begin sexual and romantic relationships, and can consist of virtually any sexual activity, from kissing to intercourse (Bogle 2008).

Campus parties—often at male-controlled spaces (e.g., fraternity houses)—are central places where men and women college students interact and hookup, and alcohol is a key component (Armstrong et al. 2006; Bogle 2008; Boswell and Spade 1996). Indeed, research shows that alcohol is considered essential for facilitating hookups (Bogle 2008; Glenn and Marquardt 2001; Paul, McManus, and Hayes 2000). Alcohol is used to lower

inhibitions enough to indicate one's interest in hooking-up, deal with potential rejection, and as a coercive strategy to lower women's inhibitions enough so that they will agree to (or not refuse) hooking-up (Armstrong et al. 2006; Bogle 2008; Sanday 1990).

While other contextual features of universities (discussed above) are important for understanding sexual assault on college campuses, research has highlighted college hookup culture, as well as pervasive partying and alcohol use as especially important for understanding the prevalence of sexual assault against college women (Boswell and Spade 1996; Flack et al. 2007; Martin 2016; Muehlenhard et al. 2016; Paul and Hayes 2002). These contextual factors of many college campuses intensify the risk of sexual assault, further complicate sexual consent, and amplify the need for increased understanding of sexual consent on college campuses to prevent sexual assault.

Experiencing sexual assault can have profound and lasting effects on survivors' physical, mental, sexual, and financial wellbeing. For example, survivors of sexual assault often experience physical injuries from the assault and higher rates of anxiety, depression, PTSD, and substance abuse (Campbell, Dworkin, and Cabral 2009; Campbell and Wasco 2005; Carey et al. 2018; Lyon 2002; McFarlane et al. 2005; Peterson et al. 2017). Survivors are also more likely to experience pain and discomfort, unpleasant feelings, and/or anxiety during sexual activity, as well as negative feelings about themselves as sexual beings (e.g., feeling sexually unattractive) (Jozkowski and Sanders 2012). Experiencing sexual assault can also be costly. Survivors incur costs from medical and mental health care associated with experiencing sexual assault, lost economic productivity due to missing work because of sexual assault-related mental health issues

(e.g., PTSD), and sometimes criminal justice costs (e.g., lawyers' fees) (Peterson et al. 2017). College student sexual assault survivors also experience decreased academic performance (Jordan, Combs, and Smith 2014; Kaufman et al. 2019).

There are societal costs of sexual assault as well. For instance, one study found that in 1996, rape and sexual assault cost Michigan over $6.5 billion, or $108,447 per victim, where each Michigan resident would have had to pay a "rape tax" of $700 to cover the cost of sexual assault (Post et al. 2002). Another study found that rapes in the United States result in a population burden of approximately $3.1 trillion dollars across the lifetime of survivors, of which government sources pay about $1 trillion (Peterson et al. 2017). Societal costs of sexual assault arise from medical care, mental health services, loss of economic productivity, criminal justice activities, victim property loss or damage, and survivors' lost quality of life and psychological pain and suffering (Peterson et al. 2017; Post et al. 2002). Thus, sexual assault has enormous effects on survivors' lives and society.

The Relationship between Sexual Consent and Sexual Assault

Understanding sexual assault requires understanding sexual consent because this concept is central to legal and conceptual definitions of sexual assault. Though precise definitions vary across jurisdictions (Decker and Baroni 2011; McGregor 1996; West 1996), generally sexual assault is defined as sexual penetration or sexual touching obtained through physical force, threats, intimidation, or intoxication (Koss et al. 2007; Muehlenhard et al. 2016). In other words, sexual assault encompasses any sexual activity in which consent is not sought or where refusal to engage in sexual activity is not obeyed

(Hust et al. 2015) . Thus, the difference between criminal and non-criminal actions depends upon the presence of sexual consent. However, there is no widely agreed upon definition or conceptual understanding of sexual consent (Beres 2007; Jozkowski and Peterson 2013; Marg 2020) , and the meaning of sexual consent and what qualifies as it is continually contested. As a result, laws are open to interpretation and provide substantial loopholes for the exoneration of perpetrators (Decker and Baroni 2011; Gotell 2007). Without adequate understanding of consent, the meaning of sexual assault – that is, what counts as sexual assault – is also contested—often in universities, courts, and legislatures, whose decisions affect countless perpetrators and survivors.

Within most sexual assault legal statutes, there are two primary components of sexual consent: the capacity to consent and indications of consent. The capacity to consent refers to the legal ability to consent to sex. A person's age is a core determinant of the ability to consent (Butler 2012), and age of consent varies across jurisdictions, ranging from 16-18 years old (Volokh 2015). Another determinant of the capacity to consent is a person's mental ability, which is influenced by some developmental disabilities and the ingestion of substances than can affect acuity and decision-making. For example, many jurisdictions preclude individuals who are intoxicated, sleeping, or unconscious from the ability to give consent (Decker and Baroni 2011). The law is much murkier when it comes to determining indications of consent, and it varies across jurisdictions. In some jurisdictions, consent is present when there is *any* agreement to engage in sex, sometimes regardless of coercion (Beres 2014). Other jurisdictions mandate that consent can only occur when coercion

or force are absent (Decker and Baroni 2011). Regardless of jurisdictional differences, judges, jurors, and university officials (e.g., Title IX offices and university hearing boards) are regularly forced to determine the presence or absence of consent. Making such determinations is difficult partially because sexual consent is an understudied, undertheorized, and a complex socio-sexual phenomenon.

Theoretical Complexities of Sexual Consent

Understanding sexual consent requires consideration of the characteristics of sexual consent and the social forces that shape its presence. Overall, there is a general understanding that sexual consent is an agreement to engage in sexual activity, but there are various legal, popular, and scholarly (implied and explicit) definitions of sexual consent. Beres (2007) argues that the concept of sexual consent is an example of "spontaneous sociology," in which academics often employ popular conceptual understandings of consent without critically interpreting the concept or presenting an exact definition. For example, some scholars imply that the presence or absence of sexual consent bifurcates sexual activity into either pleasurable or unpleasurable (Jones 2002), good and bad (Wertheimer 2003), and love and crime (Archard 1998) (see Beres 2007). These assumptive conceptualizations of sexual consent attempt to simplify its inherent complexities but produce more questions than answers.

Muehlenhard (1995/1996) better contends with the complexity of sexual consent. Instead of distinguishing between consensual and non-consensual sexual experiences, she examines what it means to consent to sex by questioning whether giving sexual consent is primarily a psychological or a behavioral act. When considered independently of each

other, both conceptualizations of sexual consent are limited. If sexual consent is primarily a psychological act—an internal decision about whether to engage in sexual activity—then it is difficult for sexual partners to know in absolute terms if someone has consented to sexual activity. With this conceptualization, men, for example, might make inferences about (possible) women's willingness to engage in sexual activity through nonsexual behaviors (e.g., wearing certain clothing, inviting a person to one's home) which may be inaccurate (Muehlenhard 1995-1996). However, conceptualizing sexual consent as a primarily behavioral act—an overt, verbal expression of willingness to engage in sexual activity—is also difficult, because overt verbal expressions of consent may not align with individuals' typical sexual experiences. Overall, conceptualizations of sexual consent as either psychological or behavioral are likely too simplistic and may not accurately capture how sexual consent is conceptualized, communicated, or negotiated in individuals' actual sexual experiences.

Like many theoretical conceptualizations of sexual consent, much research related to sexual consent (i.e., sexual assault research) also implicitly attempts to simplify the concept of sexual consent by providing either a vague definition or no definition at all, which suggests that it is widely taken for granted as "common sense" and assumes that individuals largely hold similar understandings of sexual consent (e.g., Abbey et al. 2001; Monson, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, and Binderup 2000; Willan and Pollard 2003). However, limited and/or unclear conceptualizations of sexual consent affect data interpretation and can lead to unclear findings. Further, the

assumption that there is a "common sense" understanding of sexual consent is not based on empirical evidence.

Some researchers present explicit definitions of sexual consent (e.g., Hall 1998; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Willis and Jozkowski 2019), which is important because research definitions of consent affect the design of measures and data collection, which in turn can affect the validity of results (Muehlenhard et al. 1992). Drawing on Muehlenhard (1995-1996), Hickman and Muehlenhard (1999) define sexual consent as "the freely given verbal or nonverbal communication of a feeling of willingness" (259). In this definition, consent is conceptualized as both a psychological and behavioral act. The definition highlights another important component of sexual consent: the concept of freedom. That is, sexual consent is generally considered present only when it is freely given. Freedom to consent generally means that sexual consent is not present when there is coercion, force, or other forms of undue influence, which many laws stipulate.

Considering the larger social context in which sexual activity takes place and the social forces that impact individuals' behaviors, feminist scholars problematize the concept of freedom and its relationship to sexual consent. MacKinnon (1989) argues that because of men's inherent power over women in heteropatriarchal social structures, such as the United States, women cannot freely consent to sexual activity. Women are never free from coercion, so freely given consent is impossible. Burkett and Hamilton (2012) argue that women's ability to freely consent to sex with men is complicated by heteronormative, gendered discourses and norms of sexual relations between women and men, as well as neoliberal feminist notions of autonomy and choice. Women are at once

expected to be sexually agentic, take charge of their sexual lives and experiences, and "just say no" to unwanted sex. However, these pressures operate in tandem with pressures from heteronormative discourses that, for example, privilege men's emotions and sexual desires over women's (Burkett and Hamilton 2012). These conflicting pressures challenge freely given sexual consent and impede the communication of sexual consent.

Individuals' thoughts about and behaviors related to sexual consent are also constrained and influenced by men's adherence to dominant ideals of masculinity, such as those found within contemporary notions of hegemonic masculinity, which describes a hierarchy of gendered power that privileges dominant forms of masculinities over others and masculinities over femininities. Hegemonic masculinity is the form of masculinity that is most honored or desired locally (e.g., family, workplace, community), regionally (e.g., culture, society), and globally (e.g., transnational politics, business, media) in a particular historical period (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). These three "levels" of hegemonic masculinity are related to and inform one another (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The hierarchical plurality of masculinities rests on the structural dominance over women, which is central to hegemonic masculinity. In other words, the power relations of subordination and domination between men are explained by the subordination and dominance over women (Connell 2000; Connell 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Demetriou 2001).

Hegemonic masculinity is often not the most common or comfortable form of masculinity, and many men are positioned in tension with and distance from it (Connell

2000). Other masculinities are produced at the same time as hegemonic forms—specifically, subordinated, marginalized, and compensatory masculinities (Collins 2004; Connell 2000; Mirandé 1979; Mirandé 1986; Pyke 1996). While marginalized and subordinated men will never be granted the status of hegemonic masculinity, they are motivated to strive for it because of the material and social privileges it offers. Thus, marginalized and subordinated men often engage in an array of strategies to approximate hegemonic masculinity, or cope with preclusion from it, such as compensatory manhood acts, often in the form of violence (Kimmel and Mahler 2003; Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). Indeed, men frequently perpetrate violence to prove or defend their masculinity in an explicit performance of dominance and control (Brownmiller 1975; Connell 2000; Hearn 1998; Kimmel and Mahler 2003; Pyke 1996). In other words, the process of constructing masculinity is often the source of men's violence, rather than the end state of masculinity itself (Connell 2000). Many argue that a prime example is men's violence against women, as the overwhelming majority of domestic abuse, sexual assaults, and rapes are perpetrated by men against women (Brownmiller 1975; Connell 2000; Hearn 1998; Messerschmidt 1999). Sexual violence also allows men to demonstrate their heterosexuality, which is central to attaining high status masculinity (Pascoe 2007). However, sexual violence must appear consensual to maintain sexual desirability to women, such as coercing women to "say yes" or minimizing women's attempts to refuse sexual activity (Sanday 2007). Thus, there is a close relationship between masculinity, sexual assault, and sexual consent.

Seldom discussed in the sexual consent literature is the relationship between men's adherence to dominant ideals of masculinity and belief in rape myths (Marg 2016), which might also influence men's sexual consent behaviors and interpretations of their sexual partners' consent. For example, men who believe in the idea that women usually do not mean "no" when they say so (i.e., "token resistance," a prominent rape myth) and adhere to the notion that it is important to be able to persuade many women to have sex (a dominant masculine ideal within hegemonic masculinity) may ignore sexual partners' indications of sexual refusal and instead focus on perceived indications of women's willingness, which may be fewer and more ambiguous (Warren, Swan, and Allen 2015; Willan and Pollard 2003). West (2002) also discusses the relationship between coercive social forces and sexual activity, but suggests that the impacts of broader social influences on sexual behaviors do not result in inherently nonconsensual sex. Rather, West argues that whether sex is consensual depends on the dynamics of the relationship between sexual partners, such as whether interpersonal coercion or force are present.

Consideration of the impacts of broader social forces, such as gendered power relations, on sexual consent is important because they highlight the complexities of sexual consent. Like all individual behaviors, the giving and receiving of sexual consent does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, these behaviors occur in a specific social context that is shaped by social relations of domination within society and the ideologies that reinforce those relations. That context muddles the parameters of consent, as well as its communication and interpretation. Given the context in which sexual activities and behaviors occur and the social forces that might impact them,

Beres (2007) argues that it is important to conceptualize sexual consent as a "negotiation of social expectations, a way of expressing a social identity, or of fitting in to a certain social world" (99). Indeed, sexual consent appears to be much more than a simple "yes" or other verbal agreement to engage in sexual activity, but more research is needed to elucidate this contention.

Overview of Empirical Sexual Consent Research

There is a small but growing sexual consent literature that is beginning to clarify how people conceptualize, communicate, and interpret sexual consent. However, most sexual consent research does not account for many of the inherent complexities of sexual consent due to methodological issues. What follows is an overview of sexual consent research and findings, followed by methodological critiques of the literature and gaps in the literature that I sought to address in the present study.

Only a handful of studies have examined how men and women conceptualize sexual consent (Beres 2014; Brady et al. 2018; Hirsch et al. 2019; Jozkowski et al. 2014b; Marg 2020; Willis and Jozkowski 2019). These studies have revealed a range of definitions of sexual consent held by men and women, but generally find that young adults understand the concept of consent as a demonstrable, mutual agreement to engage in sexual activity and as essential for participating in legal and morally permissible sexual activity (Beres 2014; Brady et al. 2018; Humphreys and Herold 2007; Humphreys 2004; Jozkowski et al. 2014b). Some studies have shown that people conceptualize sexual consent as less relevant and more implied in committed romantic relationships (Beres 2014; Brady et al. 2018; Humphreys and Herold 2007; Willis and Jozkowski 2019).

Overall, most studies show that people can give a definition of consent when asked to do so, which suggests they have some conceptual understanding of consent and often seem influenced by legal/policy definitions (Muehlenhard et al. 2016).

Some studies have examined the variety of ways that sexual consent is communicated. Hickman and Muehlenhard's (1999) seminal study found that behaviors used to communicate sexual consent fall into five categories: indirect nonverbal consent signals (e.g., sexual touching), indirect verbal consent signals (e.g., asking the partner whether s/he has a condom), direct nonverbal consent signals (e.g., initiating sexual intercourse with the partner), direct verbal consent signals (e.g., saying "I want you to have sex with me") and no response (e.g., not refusing a partner's sexual advances, not saying no).

Overall, most studies have found that sexual consent is more frequently communicated indirectly and nonverbally than directly and verbally (Coy et al. 2013; Curtis and Burnett 2017; Fantasia 2011; Hall 1998; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Higgins et al. 2010; Hirsch et al. 2019; Humphreys 2004; Jozkowski et al. 2014a; Jozkowski et al. 2014b; Jozkowski and Wiersma 2015; Powell 2008). On the other hand, some evidence suggests that consent is communicated verbally more often than nonverbally in certain contexts, such as the first time a couple has sex, and is more likely to occur for penile-vaginal and anal intercourse (Hall 1998; Hirsch et al. 2019; Humphreys 2007; Jozkowski et al. 2014b). Research suggests that the relative infrequency of verbal consent communication maybe due to perceived social norms against direct sexual communication and a perception that verbal consent communication

is awkward (Curtis and Burnett 2017). Additionally, some research shows there are gender differences in the communication of sexual consent (Beres et al. 2004; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Humphreys 2007; Humphreys and Herold 2007; Jozkowski et al. 2014a; Jozkowski et al. 2014b; Jozkowski and Wiersma 2015). Overall, studies find that men are more likely than women to communicate their sexual consent nonverbally, and women are more likely than men to communicate it verbally.

Researchers have also investigated how college students interpret their partners' sexual consent. This research shows that consent is primarily interpreted through nonverbal behaviors and contextual indicators, which often occur simultaneously, such as flirting, sensual touching, genital touching, moving to a secluded place, and active participation in sexual activities (Beres 2010; Beres 2014; Burrow et al. 1998; Curtis and Burnett 2017; Hirsch et al. 2019; Jozkowski et al. 2018; Jozkowski et al. 2014b). In the midst of these behaviors and contextual indicators, verbal consent communication is often seen as unnecessary. When people indicate they used verbal cues to interpret consent, they are often indirect and coded, such as someone agreeing or asking to move to a seclude place or agreeing or asking to obtain a condom (Beres 2010; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Jozkowski et al. 2018). Additionally, some research suggests there are gender differences in consent interpretation, where men are more likely than women to interpret sexual consent through nonverbal behaviors and women are more likely than men to rely on verbal indicators to interpret their partners' consent (Jozkowski et al. 2014b).

Some scholars suggest that gender differences in men's and women's communication and interpretation of sexual consent and the use of nonverbal behaviors to communicate and interpret consent more often than direct verbal behaviors could lead to misinterpreting a partner's consent, and as a result, sexual assault. The idea that miscommunication leads to sexual assault is termed miscommunication theory and is a prominent explanation of sexual assault—pervading professional and lay understandings (Frith 2009; Frith and Kitzinger 1997; Hansen, O'Byrne, and Rapley 2010; Kitzinger and Frith 1999). Miscommunication theory posits that many women do not indicate their refusal for sexual activity clearly enough, and that men misinterpret women's verbal and nonverbal communication as indicating that they want to have sex. To explain why and how heterosexual sexual miscommunication occurs, researchers often draw on script theory, which posits that there is a traditional (heteronormative) sexual script that guides men's and women's heterosexual sexual interactions (Gagnon and Simon 1973). According to script theory, culturally learned scripts determine the kinds and order of sexual activities that occur in heterosexual sex. Sexual scripts are gendered; men are expected to want sex and be sexual initiators and women are expected to want less sex than men and be sexual gatekeepers who respond to men's sexual advances, either allowing or disallowing sexual activities to occur (Byers 1996; O'Sullivan and Byers 1992). Thus, according to the script, it is women's responsibility to clearly refuse sexual activity.

Despite the suggestion that miscommunication between sexual partners explains many instances of sexual assault, there is a growing body of research that finds that men

interpret women's sexual consent accurately, even though women often do not give explicit, unambiguous verbal consent or lack of consent (e.g., "Let's have sexual intercourse" or "I don't want to have sexual intercourse") (Beres 2010; Beres, Senn, and McCaw 2014; Kitzinger and Frith 1999; O'Byrne, Hansen, and Rapley 2008; O'Byrne, Rapley, and Hansen 2006). Such research refutes the idea that many sexual assaults are due to miscommunication. Research also finds that men rely on the possibility of miscommunication as a way to protect themselves against sexual assault accusations – relinquishing them from culpability of possibly perpetrating sexual assault (Hansen et al. 2010; Kitzinger and Frith 1999; O'Byrne et al. 2008; O'Byrne et al. 2006).

Concerns about miscommunication are warranted primarily when examining behaviors used to communicate and interpret consent in isolation from other behaviors and the larger situational context. In this way, studies have often ignored broader social contexts, such as heteropatriarchy, and environmental contextual factors that shape sexual partners' consent communication and interpretation. However, some studies show that behaviors used to communicate and interpret consent seldom occur in isolation from other behaviors and people rarely point to just one behavioral indicator of consent when describing their consent communication and interpretation. Instead, research suggests that the communication and interpretation of consent is an ongoing process that usually includes many interconnected and simultaneous behaviors in a specific context that is central to fully and accurately understanding individuals' consent communication and interpretation (Beres 2010; Beres 2014; Brady et al. 2018; Humphreys 2004; Jozkowski et al. 2018; Muehlenhard et al. 2016; Powell 2008).

While there is a relatively new and emerging body of sexual consent research that has yielded important insights about individuals' conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent, it has sample and data collection limitations. These limitations of the literature are discussed below.

Sample and Data Collection Limitations

Most existing sexual consent research has either examined women's sexual experiences and experiences of sexual consent or gender differences between men's and women's communication and interpretation of sexual consent. There is very little sexual consent research that focuses solely on men's conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent or on men's sexual experiences, which is problematic because men are the primary perpetrators of sexual assault and often key targets of sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives. There are at least three reasons for this. First, college women are much more likely than men to be sexually assaulted while in college and are disproportionately targeted for sexual victimization, especially those who are new to college campuses (Cranney 2015; Krebs et al. 2007). Thus, much research aims to better understand women's sexual experiences, experiences of sexual assault, and behaviors of male perpetrators from women's standpoints. Second, recruiting men for sexuality research is difficult (Allen 2004; Ehrhardt 1997; Powell 2008). Allen (2004) suggests that men might not perceive "discussing sexuality in a research context appropriately masculine" (162). Third, the fact that men give sexual consent is often taken for granted. Men's sexual consent is often assumed and considered ever-present (Beres 2007). However, men's sexual consent is not always present; men can and do

experience sexual assault (Cantor et al. 2015). For example, research shows that about six percent of undergraduate men experience sexual assault (Cantor et al. 2015).

There is limited understanding of men's in-depth sexual experiences and how they conceptualize, communicate, and interpret sexual consent. However, focusing on those who primarily cause the problem of sexual assault may have the highest odds of success for dealing with it (Foubert, Godin, and Tatum 2010). Moreover, developing a complex and nuanced understanding of consensual sexual experiences will lead to greater understanding of what is missing in non-consensual sexual experiences and is crucial for reducing high rates of sexual assault that continue to occur on virtually every college and university campus.

In addition to sample limitations, most sexual consent research is limited by its reliance on surveys, scales, standardized lists of behaviors, and hypothetical scenarios. In many such studies participants are presented with a scenario that involves two fictional characters in a sexual and/or dating situation (e.g., Brady et al. 2018; Coy et al. 2013; Humphreys 2007; Winslett and Gross 2008) , or a scenario that involves the participant and a hypothetical partner, where participants are asked to imagine themselves in the scenario (e.g., Burrow, Hannon, and Hall 1998; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999). Then, participants are often given a list of behaviors and instructed to indicate which behaviors show consent or are interpretable as consent or the degree to which they agree or disagree with how sexual consent was communicated or interpreted in the scenario (e.g., Humphreys 2007) . Many other studies do not include a (imagined) sexual situation and simply present participants with a list of sexual behaviors and ask them to choose which

ones they use to communicate and interpret consent and/or which behaviors are important for doing so (e.g., Byers 1980). Similarly, some studies attempt to assess attitudes towards consent and sexual consent behaviors through scales that ask participants the extent that they agree or disagree about statements related to sexual consent (e.g., "When initiating sexual activity, it is okay to assume consent and proceed sexually until the partner indicates *no*"; Humphreys and Herold 2007: 308; see also Humphreys and Brousseau 2010; Humphreys and Herold 2003; Jozkowski et al. 2014b) .

Research that employs these methods may not accurately account for real-life sexual behaviors and experiences, which are nuanced and more complicated than such methods allow for or suggest. Indeed, much quantitative sexual consent research typically does not investigate real-life sexual experiences, the contexts in which they occur, or other contextual factors that may shape sexual consent and subsequent sexual activities. It is important to consider participants' actual behaviors in real-life sexual experiences, because they occur in specific interpersonal, situational, and other social contexts (e.g., Armstrong et al. 2006; Bogle 2008; Boswell and Spade 1996) that are likely important for understanding how individuals conceptualize, communicate and interpret sexual consent (Beres 2007; Hirsch et al. 2019; Jozkowski et al. 2018; Muehlenhard et al. 2016; Willis and Jozkowski 2019).

Given the limitations of quantitative data collection methods, much existing research also does not account for the fact that individuals often engage in numerous behaviors simultaneously and/or sequentially and that different behaviors and/or sequences of behaviors could have different meanings in different contexts (Beres 2007;

Muehlenhard et al. 2016). The limitations of quantitative data collection methods also preclude accurately and sufficiently understanding the timing of sexual consent or when it occurs. While research increasingly suggests that sexual consent is a continual process of communication and interpretation that occurs throughout sexual activity, it has been debated whether consent happens in one moment or there is a process that leads to a moment of consent (Beres 2007; Muehlenhard et al. 2016). Still, if sexual consent is a process, the nuances and possibilities of the consent process remain unclear, undefined, and underexamined. It is also unclear how contextual factors might shape the timing, moment, and/or process of sexual consent. In sum, I argue that quantitative methods are poorly suited for examining real life sexual experiences and behaviors—and especially sexual consent—in the full context in which they occur.

To address the limitations of the extant data, this study uses multiple qualitative methods to examine how a sample of college men conceptualize, communicate, and interpret sexual consent within their actual sexual experiences and behaviors with female partners. Qualitative methods are ideal because they allow for a depth of understanding of which much sexual consent research lacks and is not possible using quantitative methods.

Drawing from grounded theory methods, this study also makes theoretical contributions towards explaining how consent is conceptualized, communicated, and interpreted in its fully contextualized environment. Towards this end, sensitizing concepts, which are researchers' "background assumptions and disciplinary perspectives," informed the execution of this study (Charmaz 2006: 16). Stemming from research demonstrating the theoretical complexities of sexual consent, as well as feminist

theory, the primary sensitizing concepts for this research included hegemonic masculinity and gendered sexual scripts (discussed above).

Given the close relationship between sexual assault and masculinity and the relationship between sexual assault and consent, I approached this research mindful of the influence of gendered pressures and norms that shape individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Using a constructivist approach, I assumed the existence of multiple social realities, recognized the potential that participants' conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent would be vague, paradoxical, and complex, and repeatedly reflected on how my positionality (described in chapter two) and experiences shaped the research process (Charmaz 2006; Charmaz 2009; Terry et al. 2017).

Drawing from research that has examined the contextual factors of campus sexual assault and the few studies that have demonstrated the contextual influences of consent conceptualization, communication, and interpretation (Armstrong et al. 2006; Beres 2010; Boswell and Spade 1996; Hirsch et al. 2019; Jozkowski et al. 2018; Martin 2016; Willis and Jozkowski 2019), this study examines contextual factors—particularly those related to the college/university setting—that may shape how and when sexual consent is communicated and interpreted in specific ways, as well as identify factors that affect students' thoughts and behaviors related to consent. Contextual factors may include alcohol and other substance use, sexual partners' relationship, gendered sexual expectations, the time and place of sexual activity, and other factors related to the college/university context, such as the confluence of hookups, partying, and alcohol use. This study also considers the presence and role of multiple sexual scripts and variations

of those scripts. Thus, a major goal of this study is examining how the broad social context shapes college men's conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent. Understanding the role of context, broadly considered, is critical for developing theory in this area.

The Current Study

Taken together, previous findings and methodological limitations of much existing sexual consent research demonstrate that a clearer picture of college men's conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent is sorely needed. Using multiple qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, sexual activity diaries, and diary debriefing interviews, this study examines how a sample of heterosexual college men conceptualizes, communicates, and interprets sexual consent in their actual sexual experiences. Using grounded theory techniques and thematic analysis, this study examines participants' sexual experiences, sexual consent negotiations, as well as their thoughts and behaviors related to sexual consent in the full context in which they occur. This study addresses numerous calls for qualitative sexual consent research and sexual consent research using daily diary data collection (Beres 2007; Jozkowski and Wiersma 2015; Muehlenhard et al. 2016).

Broader Implications

By addressing the limitations in most sexual consent research, this study produces knowledge that can be used to inform current and future sexual assault educational and prevention programs, sexual health educational programs, and sexual assault policies.

Despite the fact that many sexual assault prevention education programs, awareness campaigns, and policies have been implemented in universities across the United States throughout the last several decades, sexual assault rates have not declined in 50 years (Adams-Curtis and Forbes 2004; Carmody 2005; Sampson 2002). One reason that these programs, campaigns, and policies fail to reduce rates of sexual assault against women on college campuses is because they occur in a context that lacks empirical and theoretical understanding of sexual consent (Beres 2014). Indeed, many programs, campaigns, and policies that focus on or discuss sexual consent are premised on several assumptions that are empirically unsupported or based on inconclusive, narrow research (Beres 2014). Central assumptions include the idea that many instances of sexual assault are due to miscommunication, people do not know how to communicate during sex and must be taught how to do so (Beres 2014), and people have a shared understanding of the meaning of sexual consent. The present study will inform current and future programs, campaigns, and policies so that they do not continue to rest upon a foundation of unsupported assumptions by providing empirical evidence that will either support these assumptions or suggest that they should be discarded and replaced with empirical evidence.

Considering the high rates of sexual assaults that continue to occur on university campuses and Title IX mandates for universities that receive federal funds, universities are challenged to create policies and educational programming that encourages communication about sexual consent and prevents sexual assault, but are practical and flexible enough to enable consensual sex between willing individuals (Muehlenhard et al.

2016). This study can inform university educational and prevention initiatives by demonstrating how students actually communicate consent, as well as situations and contextual factors that must be considered, and factors that complicate consent. Educational programming that gives examples of what consent can look like in reality, and what university hearing boards consider acceptable as consent, could give students useful guidelines for communicating and negotiating sexual consent, as well as showing what sexual consent is and means (Muehlenhard et al. 2016). Therefore, sexual assault education and prevention initiatives that are informed by the findings from this study may be more likely to prevent sexual assaults and foster healthy sexual communication.

Dissertation Overview

Following chapter 2, in which I describe the research methodology of this study, chapters 3-5 describe the findings of this study and are organized as three distinct manuscripts intended for publication. In chapter 3, I describe the various ways that participants conceptualized of sexual consent. Participants' conceptualizations were seemingly informed and constrained by consent's legal connotations and the university's affirmative consent policy. Their conceptualizations also changed when discussing consent in the context of their relationships with sexual partners, where their constructions of consent were similarly narrow yet less consistent with legal definitions or the university's affirmative consent policy. The cultural moment (e.g., the #MeToo Movement) in which the data were collected, as well as the prevalence of sex while under the influence of alcohol also informed participants' understanding of consent, which was linked to anxiety and confusion. The findings suggest that sexual assault prevention and

educational initiatives have had some impact on participants' understanding of sexual consent, but also that participants' understanding of consent is relatively limited and often contradictory with their lived experiences.

In chapter 4, I describe the nuanced ways in which participants communicated their sexual consent. Most did so by nonverbally and verbally initiating sexual activity. Many participants also communicated their sexual consent by responding to their partners' sexual advances, mostly nonverbally. Some men's nonverbal responses to their partners' advances were associated with engaging in unwanted sexual activity, and many participants described their consent as constantly present, which reflected the influence of dominant masculine norms and associated sexual expectations on men's sexual experiences and consent communication.

In chapter 5, I described the numerous and nuanced ways that participants interpreted their partner's sexual consent. I found that the context in which participants' sexual experiences occurred was important for understanding their interpretation of their partners' consent, such as their relationship/sexual history with their partner. Additionally, participants often interpreted their partners' consent using multiple, simultaneous signals. While most participants made assumptions about their partners' consent, they also pointed to a variety of verbal and nonverbal signals of their partners' consent.

In the final chapter, I include a summary of the key and novel findings of this study, the overarching educational and policy implications, as well as the limitations of this study and directions for future research. Overall, the findings demonstrate the

importance of rooting empirical investigations of individuals' thoughts about and behaviors related to sexual consent in their actual sexual experiences using methods best suited for doing so. This study also demonstrated that considering the situational and cultural context in which sex occurs is vital for understanding individuals' nuanced conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent. Not doing so can lead to inaccurate and/or incomplete information, which could negatively affect the development of effective sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives.

Chapter 2: Research Design and Methods

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Design

This qualitative study involved semi-structured interviews, electronic daily sexual activity diaries, and diary debriefing interviews. Compared to quantitative methods, these methods were ideal for deeply and more fully understanding participants' actual experiences in the full context in which they occur. The interviews covered how men defined and understood the concept of sexual consent and communicated and interpreted sexual consent with current and/or previous sexual partners. To understand how participants conceptualized sexual consent, interviews collected information about the role sexual consent played in participants' lives, whether sexual consent was something they thought about, in what way and when they thought about it, and how they defined it. To understand how participants communicated and interpreted sexual consent, interviews collected information about how participants communicated their willingness to engage in sexual activity with partners and how they knew their partner was willing to engage in sexual activity with them, such as specific behaviors, words, phrases, sequences of words and behaviors, and if strategies were used to obtain sexual consent (see interview guide in Appendix 1).

Following the semi-structured interviews, a subsample of participants completed electronic sexual activity diaries (Appendix 2). The diaries may have helped mitigate participants' discomfort about speaking about their sexual experiences (Alaszewski 2006; Corti 1993). The subsample recorded their sexual activities for two weeks, writing in the

diary each day if there was sexual activity and detailing any discussion about the sexual activity or attempts at sex. The subsample also provided contextual information, such as where and when the sexual activity took place, the nature and status of the relationship, attempted/unfulfilled sexual activities, and their detailed experiences—explaining what they thought, felt, and did.

At the end of each week of diary entries, diary debriefing interviews were conducted with the subsample. Diary debriefing interviews gave me the opportunity to ask probing questions about diary entries and gave subsample participants opportunities to explain their entries in more detail, such as more in-depth contextual information, information for understanding decision-making processes, and information about relationships between participants and their sexual partner(s).

The semi-structured interviews, sexual activity diaries, and diary debriefing interviews allowed for a triangulation of the data to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of sexual consent and patterns of communication and negotiation surrounding sexual behavior. Data collection ended after achieving data saturation in relation to the primary research questions—that is, when no new information was gathered from the interviews and diaries and the data were sufficient for meeting the research aims (Saunders et al. 2018). The university's Institutional Review Board approved the study.

Setting

This study occurred at a large research university located in inland Southern California. As of Fall 2019 there were 25,548 students enrolled, of which 22,055 were

undergraduate students and 3,493 were graduate students. About 40 percent of students are Hispanic or Latino, about 30 percent are Asian, about 13 percent are White, about 3 percent are Black or African American, and nearly 6 percent are two or more races. Therefore, it is an ideal site to draw a heterogeneous sample. The university also has a diverse and active fraternity and sorority community consisting of twenty sororities and seventeen fraternities.

Sample and Recruitment

Interviews

To be eligible for this study, participants had to be current male undergraduate students who self-identified as heterosexual, expressed an interest in having sex with women in the future, and had engaged in sexual intercourse in the last six months prior to completing the eligibility survey. It was hypothesized that people with these characteristics likely had a better and more reliable memory recall of their sexual experiences and behaviors, greater personal understanding of how sexual consent negotiations actually occur, as well as the contexts in which they occur (Humphreys and Herold 2003).

Participants were recruited using two methods between winter quarter of 2018 and winter quarter of 2019. In winter quarter of 2018, participants were recruited from a sample of 401 college men who participated in a previous study that I conducted about sexual attitudes and gender ideologies and indicated they were willing to be contacted to participate in an interview. I sent a recruitment email to each of these men that reminded them of their participation in the previous study, described the present study, and invited

their participation in it. If they did not respond within three business days, they were sent the email again. They were directed to complete a brief online survey if they were interested in participating in the present study. A link to the survey was included in the email. The survey collected participants' name, contact information, gender, sexual orientation, and brief sexual history (Appendix 3). Responses were used to identify which participants were eligible to participate in the semi-structured interview and sexual activity diary. Forty-nine of the previous study participants completed the eligibility survey, of whom 28 were eligible to participate in the semi-structured interview and 15 completed the semi-structured interview.

After exhausting the above recruitment method, in fall quarter of 2018 and winter quarter of 2019 participants were recruited from university courses with large lectures across a variety of disciplines, including biology, chemistry, geology, engineering, business, psychology, and sociology. In most cases I made in-person announcements in which I described the present study and what participation entailed and directed students to their course website where I arranged with the instructor to post a recruitment flyer and the weblink to the online eligibility survey. A total of 135 men in these courses completed the eligibility survey, of whom 75 were eligible to participate in the semi-structured interview and 25 completed the semi-structured interview. Thus, a total of 40 participants completed semi-structured interviews.

All participants were between age 18 and 24. The racial/ethnic distribution of the sample was roughly consistent with the racial/ethnic demographics of the university from which participants were sampled, however non-Latino whites were underrepresented and

non-Latino Asians and Latinos were slightly overrepresented. Fifty percent (n = 20) of participants were Hispanic/Latino, 32.5 percent (n = 13) were non-Latino Asian, five percent (n = 2) were non-Latino white, 2.5 percent (n = 1) were non-Latino black, five percent (n = 2) were non-Latino multiracial, and five percent (n = 2) were non-Latino other. Most participants were juniors (n = 17) or seniors (n = 14), 17.5 percent (n = 7) were sophomores, and 5 percent (n = 2) were freshman. Most participants were in romantic relationships at the time of data collection. Over 40 percent of participants (n = 17) had been in their relationship for over one year. Ten percent of participants (n = 4) had been in their relationship between six months to less than one year. Twenty percent of participants (n = 8) had been in their relationship for less than six months. Fifteen percent of participants (n = 6) were single but had a casual sex partner, and 12.5 percent of participants (n =5) were single and did not have a sex partner. Most participants (n = 24) lived nearby campus (less than 15 minutes away). Twenty percent of participants (n = 8) lived in campus housing, while another twenty percent (n = 8) commuted more than 15 minutes to the university. Table 1 (Appendix 4) describes the demographics of the full sample.

Diaries

To be eligible for the subsample participants needed to have engaged in sexual activity with someone at least five times in the 30 days prior to the eligibility survey. It was hypothesized that these participants were more likely to engage in sexual activity during the two-week period of diary data collection than people who reported fewer sexual experiences with another person in the preceding 30 days. Subsample participants

were also selected purposively in order to achieve variation in the subsample similar to the full sample regarding types of sexual experiences, primary communication styles (e.g., primarily verbal or nonverbal, mixed communication, etc.) relationship status, race/ethnicity, and year in school.

Of the 40 participants, a subsample of 16 completed daily sexual activity diaries and diary debriefing interviews. Most subsample participants were Hispanic/Latino (n = 7) or non-Latino Asian (n = 4), followed by non-Latino white (n = 2), non-Latino other (n = 2), or non-Latino multiracial (n = 1) (see Table 2). Most subsample participants were seniors (n = 7) or sophomores (n = 5). Four subsample participants were juniors (n = 4). All subsample participants had sex partners at the time of their participation, and most were in committed romantic relationships. Six subsample participants had been in their relationship for over one year. Three subsample participants had been in their relationship for between six months to less than one year. Four subsample participants had been in their relationship for less than six months. Three participants were single but had a casual sex partner. Most subsample participants lived nearby campus (n = 10). Two subsample participants lived in campus housing. Four subsample participants commuted more than 15 minutes to the university. Table 2 (Appendix 4) describes the demographics of the subsample.

Data Collection and Procedures

Semi-structured interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews at a time of the participant’s preference in a private cubicle in the university’s Social Psychology Research Laboratory. This

location was chosen to protect participants' confidentiality. Participants provided consent to participate in this study and agreed to be interviewed, complete daily diaries, and participate in diary debriefing interviews.

Interviews began with questions to help build rapport, such as questions about participants' experience at the university and their hobbies. Then, participants were asked about their romantic relationships, sexual history, and their most recent, as well as a memorable sexual experience. Following these introductory questions, participants were asked how they interpreted their partners' willingness to engage in sexual activity with them (i.e., how they interpreted sexual consent) and how they communicated their willingness to engage in sexual activity with their partners (i.e., how they communicated sexual consent). During the last quarter of the interview, participants were asked questions about their conceptualization of sexual consent. Throughout the interview, participants were asked to discuss their actual sexual experiences. To gather the richest data, participant responses were probed for further explanation and detail. Interviews lasted between 45-90 minutes. At the end of each interview, participants were compensated $15.

Because of the intimate nature of the interview questions, it was important to establish rapport with the participants so that they felt comfortable responding openly and honestly (Warren and Karner 2015). Correspondence leading up to the interview, the interview setting, and the transmission of respect and warmth from the interviewer to the interviewee may have helped establish rapport (Warren and Karner 2015). Other strategies to establish rapport with participants included mirroring their language during

follow up questions, laughing with them, and smiling when they seemed unsure about the suitability of their responses (Bedera 2017). I also tried to generate rapport through humor, identifying mutual interests, and through civility and empathy (Bell, Fahmy, and Gordon 2016; Warren and Karner 2015). Participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary and confidential, their responses would remain anonymous, and they could cease the interview at any time without penalty.

Sexual Activity Daily Diaries

Data collection via the sexual activity diaries occurred after the participant's semi-structured interview was completed. The diaries were created and administered via Qualtrics survey software. Each participant had a personalized web link to their diary. The diaries consisted of a series of multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The subsample could complete the diaries via their smart-phones, tablets, or computers. Additionally, in keeping with best practices for this method (Bolger, Davis, and Rafaeli 2003; Hofmann and Patel 2015), for the duration of their diary participation the subsample received automated SMS text alerts via SurveySignal once a day at 9 A.M. reminding them to complete their daily diary for the previous day. Each subsample participant and their corresponding diary was assigned a unique identification number. In a separate password-protected database, stored on the principal investigator's password-protected computer, that identification number was matched to each participant's name.

Diary Debriefing Interviews

Diary debriefing interviews occurred at the end of each week of sexual activity diary participation and occurred in the Social Psychology Research Laboratory at a time

the participant preferred. Diary debriefing interview questions were based on the content of the sexual activity diaries and aimed to clarify and more fully understand the content of diary entries, such as more contextual information, information about decision-making, and participants' perceptions during their sexual experiences. Follow up questions based on the participant's semi-structured interview were also asked during diary debriefing interviews. The length of the debriefing interviews depended on the amount of participants' sexual activity during the week of diary data collection as well as the number of follow up questions generated from the semi-structured interview. Diary debriefing interviews lasted between 10 to 60 minutes. Subsample participants were compensated $20 after they completed the first diary debriefing interview, and $25 after they completed the second diary debriefing interview. Thus, participants who completed the semi-structured interview and both diary debriefing interviews were compensated a total of $60.

Research Team

Between Spring 2018 to Winter 2020 the research team included myself (the primary investigator) and between four to six undergraduate research assistants—one of whom was promoted to the position of lead research assistant and maintained that position for an academic year. Most research assistants were sociology majors, and all were in good academic standing. Research assistants primarily transcribed audio-recorded interviews, proofread transcriptions for accuracy, helped code data, and put together the descriptive statistics that described the sample. Most research assistants were at least juniors when they were recruited, and all had taken a research methods course and

completed the required training for conducting research with human participants. Thus, research assistants were familiar with the research process. I trained the research assistants on transcribing the audio-recorded interviews and coding the data. Almost all research assistants earned academic credit in exchange for their work.

Analysis and Analytical Framework

After interviews were transcribed and proofread, I used Atlas.ti to store and analyze the data. My analysis was guided by grounded theory techniques (i.e., simultaneous data collection and analysis and constant comparison) and thematic analysis (Charmaz 2004; Charmaz 2009; Terry et al. 2017). Grounded theory techniques were well-suited to investigate how men conceptualize, communicate, and interpret sexual consent, because they are designed to study processes, aspects of social life that individuals take for granted, and can account for context and structure (Charmaz 2004). They offered an approach to understanding phenomena and human experiences that are less accessible via quantitative or deductive methods (Charmaz 2004). Thematic analysis, as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006) and further explicated by Terry et al. (2017), was ideal for this study because it provided a detailed set of steps for ensuring rigorous and systematic analysis/coding of and engagement with the data. Thematic analysis has been widely used across the social and health sciences and is well suited for understanding human experiences, understandings, behaviors, and social processes (Terry et al. 2017).

Through simultaneous data collection and analysis, early data analysis shaped later data collection. For example, I made adjustments to the initial interview guide to

develop emerging theoretical categories by adding questions that more directly explored emerging themes and dropping questions that were less useful (Charmaz 2004). This process also allowed for the inquiry of issues that may have been otherwise missed. Thus, simultaneous data collection and analysis made my data collection increasingly focused.

Through constant comparison, I compared the data in multiple ways. I compared and made note of different participants' thoughts, actions, and experiences. For example, I compared what participants said in one part of their interview with something they said in another part of their interview and compared the interview data to the diary data. These comparisons allowed me to further define the properties of emerging themes and specify how they were related to other themes and the conditions under which they were linked (Charmaz 2004). Constant comparison also allowed for complex and contradictory ways of conceptualizing, communicating, and interpreting sexual consent.

Consistent with grounded theory techniques and thematic analysis, data analysis was an inductive process in which I used an iterative system of open and focused coding to examine the semantic and latent meanings of participants' responses (Charmaz 2004; Terry et al. 2017). The data were analyzed to identify patterns of common behaviors, experiences, ideas, and concepts discussed by participants and to develop analytic categories and higher order themes. New ideas were labeled and coded iteratively as they emerged. Throughout this process I collapsed and sorted codes into overarching themes and made connections between them (Charmaz 2004; Warren and Karner 2015). Additionally, I used memos to help document the developing analysis process, connect

different excerpts of data, and create a coherent, consistent, and ordered representation of the data and findings (Charmaz 2004; Morse et al. 2002; Warren and Karner 2015).

Data from the semi-structured interviews, diaries, and diary debriefing interviews were triangulated to yield a deep understanding of participants' conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent. The subsample's semi-structured interview data was analyzed to corroborate whether it aligned with their diary and debriefing interview data. The three sources of data corresponded to each other, which bolstered the assumption that the semi-structured interviews corresponded to participants' actual sexual experiences. As such, diary and debriefing interview data were used to verify the key themes found in the semi-structured interview data, which increased the reliability of the findings and mitigated the potential limitations of participants' memory recall.

Following the creation of the final thematic scheme, two teams of trained research assistants were assigned analytic codes with which to code each transcript. I met with the research assistants weekly to resolve discrepancies and provide clarification. Upon receiving each complete set of transcripts coded by research assistants, I reviewed each transcript and coded excerpt for accuracy and consistency. This process was done to finalize the number of participants represented in each code and related theme.

Positionality

My identity likely shaped the research process. I am a white, heterosexual, working class, first generation college student, feminist man, with an acute sensitivity towards violence against women. As such, I continually practiced reflexivity in each step

of this study (Owren 2019). For example, because I interviewed many racial and ethnic minority students, it was important to continually reflect upon and be sensitive to my own position of power as a white male researcher and how this could influence my findings and interpretation of the data (Creswell 2014). I took actions to reduce the hierarchy between myself and participants, such as engaging in mutual dialogue and disclosure, where participants and I were allowed to ask questions (Hesse-Biber 2007; Thwaites 2017). While I did not have racial congruity with many participants, I did share experiences of being a young, heterosexual college man. Though I was a few years older than many participants, my appearance did not suggest significant age differences. The shared experience as a young heterosexual college man, and my appearance as such, likely helped me communicate and build rapport with participants.

Human Subjects Issues

Participants in this study faced minimal risks. Risks included possible embarrassment due to the explicit nature of the subject matter, and potential recollection of painful, shameful, and/or embarrassing events. However, at the end of semi-structured interviews and/or the completion of study participation, most participants indicated that their participation was a rewarding experience and that it felt good to talk so in-depth about their sexual experiences because they had little to no prior opportunities to do so.

Per the university's Title IX Policy, as a university employee it was my responsibility to promptly notify the Title IX officer or designee of instances of Prohibited Conduct that were disclosed to me in the course of employment. Per the university's Title IX Policy, Prohibited Conduct includes the following: sexual assault,

including penetration and sexual touching; relationship violence, including dating violence and domestic violence; stalking; sexual harassment; invasions of sexual privacy; sexual intercourse with a person under the age of 18; exposing one's genitals in a public place for sexual gratification; and failing to comply with the terms of a no-contact order. Participants were made aware of this limit to their confidentiality in the informed consent form, which may have limited the data because they may not have felt comfortable divulging information that could have been considered Prohibited Conduct. No participants' statements met the criteria established by the university's Title IX policy, so no reports were made.

Chapter 3: Heterosexual College Men's Conceptualization of Sexual Consent

Note: A version of this chapter was published in the *American Journal of Sexuality Education.* The full citation is:

Marg, Logan Z. 2020. "College Men's Conceptualization of Sexual Consent at a Large, Racially/Ethnically Diverse Southern California University." *American Journal of Sexuality Education*, DOI: 10.1080/15546128.2020.1737291.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines how heterosexual college men conceptualize sexual consent. To date, such research is sparse. Understanding how college men define and understand the concept of sexual consent is important because the concept is inherent in legal, popular, and scholarly definitions of sexual assault (e.g., sexual assault is sex without consent), and it is increasingly a focus among policymakers, higher education administrators, and sexual education and sexual assault prevention initiatives. Because, college men are primarily responsible for perpetrating persistent high rates of sexual assault against college women (Beres 2014; Cantor et al. 2015), gaining greater understanding of how college men conceptualize sexual consent could lead to more effective policies and educational and prevention initiatives.

A spotlight on sex, communication, and abuse

In the last several years, aided by the rise of the #MeToo Movement, sexual assault has become a topic of national conversation. News coverage of alleged sexual misconduct, assault, and other abuses of power perpetrated by high profile men against women has catapulted these and related issues regarding gender, power, sex, and

communication into public consciousness (North et al. 2019). It is in this cultural milieu that public discourse on sexual consent has also exploded, as evidenced by the many recent pieces published by national media outlets as well as the rise of new proposed and recently implemented sexual consent policies in states and universities across the U.S. and worldwide (Baynes 2019; Burgen 2018; Fresh Air 2018; Kamenetz 2018; Orenstein 2019; Rose 2018; Schmidt 2018; Wiggins and Chason 2018). These publications and policies often grapple with the meaning of sexual consent, interrogate the line between consensual sex and assault, try to understand what sexual consent looks like in practice, and advocate for what it should look like to encourage better (more consensual) sexual experiences (1A 2017; Anderson and Craighill 2015; Baidawi 2018; Beitsch 2018; Bennett and Jones 2018; Carmon 2017; Damour 2018; Emba 2018). In all of this coverage it is clear that sexual consent is an important, complex concept but that no widely shared definition or understanding exists.

Scholars also continue to grapple with the meaning of sexual consent and offer various definitions. At its most basic conceptualization, sexual consent is the line between illegal (i.e., criminal) and legal sexual activity (Beres 2007). However, that conceptualization does little to answer important questions about the nature of consent, such as how and under what conditions it should be used to determine violence (Burkett and Hamilton 2012; Gavey 2005; MacKinnon 1989; West 2002). Researchers have also considered whether consent is performative, primarily behavioral or attitudinal, and continuous or discrete (Beres 2007; Halley 2016; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Muehlenhard 1995-1996; Muehlenhard et al. 2016). In their review of sexual consent

literature, Muehlenhard et al. (2016) identified three general conceptual understandings of consent: “consent as an internal state of willingness,” where consent is a feeling that is unobservable by other people; “consent as an act of explicitly agreeing to something,” where consent is verbally and unambiguously communicated to a person; and “consent as a behavior that someone else interprets,” where consent is inferred through behavioral cues (p. 462). Still, despite various definitions scholars have often failed to explicitly define sexual consent and rely instead upon an implicit, common sense understanding of the concept—though such an understanding remains inchoate and elusive (Beres 2007).

Understanding sexual consent to understand and prevent sexual assault

The lack of consensus on the meaning of sexual consent is problematic because of its inherent relationship to sexual assault and rape, both of which are broadly defined as non-consensual sexual activity or attempted sexual activity. To generalize, sexual assault is sexual contact made without consent. It is not limited to intercourse, and is often limited to physical contact with sexual body parts, such as breasts, buttocks, and genitalia (Halley 2016). Rape usually encompasses nonconsensual oral, anal, or vaginal penetration (National Institute of Justice 2017). However, varied understandings of sexual consent lead to diverse understandings of rape and sexual assault and make it difficult to delineate the boundaries of consensual sex and nonconsensual sex. Thus, any apparent consensus about what counts as rape and sexual assault may be specious (Muehlenhard et al. 2016). Additionally, the chronic ambiguity of sexual consent may contribute to persistent high rates of sexual assault against women despite the existence of many different prevention efforts, especially on college campuses (Beres 2007).

Affirmative consent policies

The prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses has also received increased public attention in recent years and has led many states and over 1,500 universities in the U.S. to institute policies that mandate an affirmative consent standard on college campuses (Baumgartner and McAdon 2017; Bennett 2016; Lowenstein 2014). In general, under an affirmative consent standard sex is considered consensual if consent is actively communicated by all parties involved in sexual activity (California Senate Bill SB-967 2014; Curtis and Burnett 2017). Affirmative consent standards often require that consent be communicated continuously throughout a sexual experience and that consent for prior sexual acts or during prior sexual experiences cannot be used to infer consent for other sexual acts or present/future sexual experiences (Gruber 2016). In many affirmative consent statutes, such as that of California, silence or lack of refusal cannot be considered consent and it is the responsibility of the person initiating sexual activity to seek consent rather than the other person's responsibility to withhold consent or communicate their lack of consent (California Senate Bill SB-967 2014; Gruber 2016). Affirmative consent also sometimes encompasses the idea of enthusiastic consent, which establishes that people engaged in sexual activity are excited to do so and therefore must communicate their agreement to engage in sexual activity positively and enthusiastically (Gruber 2016; Jozkowski et al. 2018). As such, affirmative consent standards that incorporate enthusiasm link consent to the pursuit and achievement of pleasure (Gruber 2016).

Sexual consent conceptualization research

In addition to various scholarly, popular, and policy definitions of sexual consent, researchers are beginning to understand how people (primarily college students and other young adults) conceptualize sexual consent. Studies have shown that college and non-college young adults generally understand sexual consent as a demonstrable, mutual agreement and willingness to engage in sexual activity and as essential for participating in legal and morally permissible sexual activity (Beres 2014; Brady et al. 2018; Humphreys and Herold 2007; Humphreys 2004; Jozkowski et al. 2014b). Several studies find that people perceive consent as less relevant and more implied in committed relationships than in casual relationships (Beres 2014; Brady et al. 2018; Humphreys and Herold 2007). However, Beres (2014) suggests that people seem to consider the concept of "consent" as less relevant in committed relationships as opposed to the process of negotiating consent and determining willingness to engage in sexual activity. Thus, peoples' understanding of consent seems to differ from their understanding of their own communication of willingness and their assessment of their partners' willingness to engage in sexual activity (Beres 2014). Overall, most studies show that young people are able to give a definition of consent when prompted to do so, which indicates they possess some understanding of the concept and often appear influenced by legal definitions and/or affirmative consent policies (Muehlenhard et al. 2016).

While this small body of research offers important insights, it is limited by its use of homogeneous (mostly white) samples and primarily quantitative survey methods. Most existing research on sexual consent does not address the nuances in thoughts about and

understandings of sexual consent or contextual factors that may influence those thoughts and understandings. Moreover, despite the recent increase in media coverage and focus given to sexual consent by policymakers, higher education administrators, and sexual education/assault prevention initiatives, there remains little understanding of how sexual consent is understood by the key targets of such endeavors. Specifically, how young men understand and think about sexual consent is largely unstudied.

This chapter seeks to answer the following research question using semi-structured interviews with heterosexual college men: how do heterosexual college men conceptualize sexual consent?

METHODS

Participants and procedures

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 heterosexual undergraduate men at a large, public university in Southern California. Participants were recruited winter, spring, and fall quarter of 2018 and winter quarter of 2019 from a sample 401 men who participated in a previous study that I conducted and large lecture courses in various subjects. Prospective participants were asked to participate in a study regarding the sexual attitudes and experiences of college students, and they completed a brief survey to assess their eligibility for this study. Inclusion criteria included identifying as male, heterosexual, 18 years of age or older, currently enrolled in university classes, and having had sexual intercourse in the last six months prior to completing the eligibility survey.

Most participants were either juniors (n = 17) or seniors (n = 14) and Latino (n = 20) or non-Latino Asian (n = 13). Additionally, most participants were currently in a relationship at the time of data collection (n = 29), though the duration of their relationships varied (see Table 1). Prior to the interview, participants provided informed consent to be interviewed and audio recorded. Interview topics included their romantic relationship and sexual history, how they understood their own and their partners' willingness to engage in sexual activity, and their thoughts about and understanding of sexual consent. Interviews were audio recorded and lasted between 45-90 minutes. Participants were compensated with a $15 Visa gift card. The university's Institutional Review Board approved the study.

Analysis

A team of undergraduate research assistants, trained by the investigator, transcribed the audio recorded interviews and proofread them alongside the audio recording for accuracy. Participants were assigned pseudonyms and identifying information was removed from transcripts or slightly modified to ensure confidentiality. This analysis focuses on portions of the interview where participants responded to questions regarding their understanding of sexual consent. The analysis was an inductive process that drew upon grounded theory techniques (e.g., simultaneous data collection and analysis and constant comparison) and thematic analysis (Charmaz 2004; Terry et al. 2017). After uploading interview transcripts into Atlas.ti, I employed an iterative, recursive system of open and focused coding—examining the semantic and latent meanings of participants' responses (Charmaz 2004; Terry et al. 2017). Through this

process I merged and compiled codes into overarching themes and subthemes and derived connections between them (Charmaz 2004; Warren and Karner 2015).

Following the development of the core themes and code book, two teams of trained undergraduate research assistants were given analytic codes with which to code each transcript. The researcher and research assistants met regularly to help reach consensus and provide clarity. The researcher inspected each transcript coded by research assistants for accuracy and consistency. Through this process, the number of participants represented within each code and related theme was finalized. Four themes emerged as the dominant conceptualizations of consent: 1) the communication of willingness or lack of willingness, 2) partially and minimally consistent with the university's affirmative consent policy, 3) provokes anxiety about perceived ramifications from a sexual assault accusation, and 4) complicated by alcohol consumption.

RESULTS

Consent is communicating willingness or lack of willingness

All participants in this study indicated that sexual consent meant some form of communicating willingness or lack of willingness to engage in sexual activity. Though the activity was often generalized and undefined, most participants articulated an understanding of consent based on sexual intercourse. Alan (junior, non-Latino Asian) exemplified this understanding when he said, "I feel like sexual consent is both partners sort of, like, communication that they're down, they're willing to have intercourse or any sexual activity." While some participants, including Alan, did not specify the type of communication necessary for communicating willingness, most participants' (n = 25)

understanding of consent primarily rested upon explicit verbal communication. For these participants, consent involved a verbal exchange that clearly and explicitly communicated willingness or lack of willingness to engage in sexual activity. The following quotes from Adam (senior, non-Latino Asian) and Carlos (senior, Latino) are representative of such statements:

> Adam: Sexual consent is where people give their willingness explicitly to have sex. Consent is something that is very explicit, should [be] very to the point, concise, 'yes,' 'no,' you know? Like 'not now,' or 'not today.'
>
> Carlos: Well, um, like I said, I think usually I'm pretty verbally open about, like, you know, 'do you want to have sex?' Or 'do you want to fuck?' Um, so [consent is] usually just, like, a flat-out question and a flat-out response.

Some of these participants (n = 8) also suggested that verbal consent could involve less defined communication (e.g., yes's and no's), so long as it contained a verbal affirmation of willingness. For example, Colin (junior, Latino) said that consent was "having, sort of knowledge, or, like, direct proof, so you could directly point [to] something verbal. I guess specifically verbal to know that it's okay to move forward." For participants like Colin, consent wasn't necessarily an explicit question and 'yes' or 'no' response, but it did involve a verbal affirmation from his partner that expressed willingness to engage in sexual activity and was indicative of permission to proceed.

Most participants' (n = 32) understanding of consent also encompassed nonverbal communication, which was often referred to as "body language." The most common types of nonverbal consent communication that participants cited were the lack of verbal

or physical refusal to and reciprocation of sexual advances. For example, when asked about whether there was a general moment in which he usually recognized consent, Isaac (sophomore, Latino) explained,

> I feel like consent happens once I'm making a move, like, if I were to kiss her and [take] off her pants, and she doesn't say anything, I kinda assume, like, 'okay, this is consent to have sex' and then kinda keep going. From there, I don't know, the ball kinda rolls from there.

In Isaac's telling, consent for sexual intercourse occurred if he removed his partner's pants and she did not say anything that suggested she did not want that to happen.

While Isaac suggested the lack of verbal/physical refusal was the main way he understood consent, Adam said that he understood consent as explicit and verbal, though later made a distinction between verbal and nonverbal consent when he said, "But of course, when it comes to experiences where it hasn't been verbal, the consent I see is not stopping because they're interested as well." These participants saw the lack of verbal or physical refusal as a product of mutual sexual interest and the absence of cues that indicated lack of consent as consent in and of itself. Additionally, by equating consent to a lack of refusal, participants often placed responsibility on their partners for communicating their unwillingness rather than on themselves for ensuring their partners' willingness. As David (junior, non-Latino Asian) said, "no sign's a good sign."

Participants also equated their partners' reciprocation of sexual behaviors with consent. When explaining how sexual consent can "be defined through body language," Alex (junior, non-Latino Asian) said, "if they're actively, like, reciprocating things, then

that is encouraging, and that is definitely [a] solid indicator of consent for me." Participants described reciprocation as "contributing to the path to sex" (Kyle, junior, Latino), "going forward as you're going forward" (Manuel, junior, Latino), and "responding back to what I'm doing" (Alan). Thus, participants understood sexual consent and reciprocation as their partners' participation in the progression of sexual activity—up to and including sexual intercourse.

Several participants indicated that they perceived sexual consent as his partner's willingness to touch his genitals. For example, Salil (senior, non-Latino Asian) said that he understood consent as "something that essentially means 'yes,' like, 'yeah, sure, I'm down'" and said that it did not have to be an explicit "yes." When probed whether there were behaviors that he thought meant someone was "down" and consenting to engage in sexual activity, he said "if they're, like, grabbing your dick."

Two of these participants described a strategy that they have used to determine their partners' consent to engage in a non-specific type of sexual activity that involved their genitals. Carlos explained this strategy when discussing his perception of sexual consent:

> If [I] see that the girl is letting me, I'll kind of…what I have done in the past is I've grabbed their hand and put it in my genital area and then, you know, if they kinda keep it there, and they see what I'm asking, then I take that as consent. I guess that's, like, me giving them the consent and then whether they decide to go forward with it.

Similar to many other participants, Carlos saw the absence of behaviors that suggested the lack of consent as consent. He also assumed that his partner knew what he was "asking" by placing her hand on his genitals, though this act could be interpreted in many different ways, including as a subtly coercive attempt to elicit the performance of a sexual act by his (prospective) partner. These participants also understood this act as the communication of their consent.

Conceptualizing consent in the context of committed romantic relationships

The perception of consent as nonverbal and primarily involving reciprocation and/or the lack of verbal or physical refusal most often emerged when participants discussed consent in their actual sexual experiences with their current sexual partners. In this way, there was often a distinction between participants' general understanding of consent (primarily explicit and verbal) and their understanding of consent in the context of committed romantic relationships or regular sexual partners. For example, when asked how he would define sexual consent, Chris (senior, non-Latino Asian) said, "Generally verbal consent. Yes, no. More often than maybe physical consent, with, like, responding well, or moaning. But definitely verbal." He recognized the existence of nonverbal consent cues (i.e., "physical consent," "responding well," and "moaning") but seemed less sure about whether they could be considered sexual consent compared to verbal consent (i.e., "yes, no"). When asked how he knew he had his girlfriend's consent, he said, "If she is responding well and she doesn't, you know, move my hand away and she will reciprocate back, then I know that it's okay to keep going." He went on to say that "responding well," meant reciprocation and "not resisting or anything." While his general

understanding of consent primarily rested upon explicit verbal communication, his understanding of consent in his relationship primarily rested upon the lack of signals that suggested his partner was unwilling as well as her reciprocation.

Forty percent of participants (n = 16) saw consent as something that changed with the duration of a committed relationship, and most said it typically involved less verbal communication later in the relationship compared to the beginning of the relationship. As Nico (senior, Latino) said regarding his perception of consent in his relationship, "In the beginning it had to be very careful, explicit, verbal. Now it can be more of a feeling." A few of these participants described this shift from an understanding of consent as verbal and explicit to nonverbal in terms of a sense of comfort that is associated with increased duration of the relationship and a higher number of sexual experiences with a partner. For example, when asked about the role sexual consent played in his life and sexual experiences, Sid (junior, non-Latino Asian) said,

> [Verbal consent] played a big part in the beginning and then more so physically towards the latter part of the relationship."
>
> Interviewer: Why do you think there was that difference?
>
> Sid: Probably just comfort.
>
> Interviewer: So, less comfortable in the beginning so there was more verbal…?
>
> Sid: Yeah, more awkwardness, cause it's a very intimate thing and it's like 'oh wow, we haven't done this before.' Like, what am I supposed to do? Like kinda figuring out what each is comfortable with and what each other likes."

Interviewer: And then later in your relationship you already were comfortable, you knew what they liked?

Sid: Exactly, yeah.

In his telling, Sid engaged in more verbal consent communication early in his relationship with his partner to mitigate awkwardness and increase understanding of what his partner found pleasurable and was willing to do. As he and his partner continued to engage in sexual activity and progressed in their relationship, he expressed confidence in his understanding of his partner's pleasure and willingness, the perceived awkwardness of sex subsided, and therefore verbal consent communication was deemed less necessary.

Some participants (n = 10) considered consent as no longer necessary in their relationships, because, paradoxically, sexual consent was seen as perpetually present and unimportant. For example, when asked about the role sexual consent played in his life and sexual experiences, Salil said, "I wouldn't say much, just cause it's always, like, we've given that blanket consent, like, with my partner." Likewise, James (junior, non-Latino Asian) said in response to the same question, "With my girlfriend, consent isn't really a thing anymore because we're together. I'm always down. She's always down. So, I guess there's no consent there." Each of these statements reflects Salil's and James' respective understandings of consent. Salil's understanding of consent (described earlier in the interview) included the lack of verbal or physical refusal to his sexual advances. Thus, he may have seen consent as the default position in his relationship unless his partner communicated her unwillingness. Additionally, he and his partner had an apparent agreement towards this end (i.e., "we've given that blanket consent"), and

earlier in the interview he described such a conversation between he and his partner. Similarly, though James said there was no consent between he and his partner, this likely reflected his understanding of consent as explicit and verbal (e.g., a "yes" or "no"—also described earlier in the interview), which did not occur in his relationship. Thus, for him, consent was nonexistent because there was no explicit verbal consent communication yet always present because of a presumption that they were both always willing to engage in sexual activity.

A handful of participants (n = 5) suggested that consent was present in their relationships unless otherwise stated, except for sexual activities that were not part of the couples' typical sexual repertoire, (e.g., first sexual intercourse experience, anal sex, and bondage and sadomasochism [BDSM]), for which they sought verbal affirmation from their partner. In one case, Peter (sophomore, Latino) discussed the role of consent in his relationship regarding BDSM:

> When it comes to things that are involved that aren't normal, such as more, like, I'd say BDSM kind of stuff…which isn't a big part of our relationship…typically I always ask for consent when it comes to that stuff. Because it's not, like, a normal path that we have in our relationship. So, I want to make sure that it's okay this time.

Similarly, Diego (senior, Latino) described the role of the sexual activity on his perception of whether he needed to seek consent from his partner:

> Like, if we're just doing vaginal sex, that's more lenient in terms of, like, she doesn't have to look at me or anything, she doesn't have to say anything, where I

> can just go for it and then she'll be in to it. But with anal it'd be way different because you put it there, and then there's immediate like shock reaction, like yes or no type thing. There's always a verbal type of cue. Or a look back and say 'yeah, that's okay' type of thing. So, that's what the consent is. [For vaginal intercourse] its more of like, yeah, it's gonna happen type thing. The consent is kind of just already there.

These participants were comfortable assuming the presence of consent for vaginal intercourse but were more conscious and deliberate about ensuring their partners' consent when attempting to engage in sexual activities in which they participated less frequently. In this way, sexual activities that were outside the realm of what they viewed as typical sexual interactions sometimes resembled sexual experiences that occurred early in couples' relationships, in which consent was often more explicit and verbal than sexual experiences that occurred later in their relationships. Thus, for many participants who described consent in the context of committed relationships, typical patterns and expectations of sexual interactions between them and their partners seemed to contribute to a certainty about the presence of sexual consent.

Consent is (partially and minimally) consistent with the university's affirmative consent policy

Most participants' understanding of consent at least partially reflected the university's affirmative consent policy, which states:

> Consent is affirmative, conscious, voluntary, and revocable. Consent to sexual activity requires of both persons an affirmative, conscious, and voluntary

> agreement to engage in sexual activity. It is the responsibility of each person to ensure they have the affirmative consent of the other to engage in the sexual activity. Lack of protest, lack of resistance, or silence do not alone constitute consent. Affirmative consent must be ongoing and can be revoked at any time during sexual activity. The existence of a dating relationship or past sexual relations between the persons involved should never by itself be assumed to be an indicator of consent (nor will subsequent sexual relations or a dating relationship alone suffice as evidence of consent to prior conduct).

Central components of the university's definition of consent include the idea that it is mutual, continuous (i.e., ongoing and revocable), freely given, and conscious. Most participants' (n = 32) understanding of consent included at least one of these components. Nearly half of participants mentioned at least two components.

Consent is mutual

Many participants (n =16) discussed the component of mutuality—the idea that consent involves both people in the sexual interaction. The mutuality of consent most often encompassed a general agreement to engage in sexual activities, establishing a shared understanding about what the sexual experience would entail, and sometimes the rules of the sexual experience. For example, Peter defined sexual consent as "a mutual agreement to engage in activities that are sexual." Along these lines, participants conveyed the importance of both people expressing their willingness to engage in sexual activity. For instance, Luis (junior, Latino) said that consent meant having "affirmation from both people that it's something you're both willing to do."

The idea that consent is mutual also encompassed ensuring mutual enthusiasm for the prospective sexual experience. Participants often said that it was important for both parties to be “one hundred percent in to” the sexual experience and that anything less than being “all in” was equivalent to a lack of consent. Miguel’s response regarding his understanding of consent with his girlfriend exemplified this point when he said, “If you’re gonna consent, then it has to be by both people. And you have to be, like, really in to what you’re about to do. You have to be, like, enthusiastic.” Likewise, Armaan (senior, non-Latino Other Race) said that consent meant that the other person was “a hundred percent on board with what’s going down…and they should be as interested and excited [for] what’s gonna happen as you are.” When asked what enthusiasm looks like, Miguel gave an example of his girlfriend and said that she would say that “she wants to with a smile and pull me in closer.”

Most of these participants (n =11) also described paying attention to whether their prospective sexual partner showed signs of hesitation when responding to verbal or nonverbal sexual advances. These participants interpreted signs of hesitation as a lack of complete willingness, and therefore a lack of consent. In a line of questioning about the importance of a partner being “one hundred percent in to” the sexual activity for sexual consent and what that looks like, Gabriel (junior, Latino) described an example of a sexual experience in which he sensed hesitation from his partner:

> And then we were about to start undressing, and I felt we were about to have sex, but I could feel that she felt a little maybe scared or nervous. So, I was like ‘are you alright?’ She’s like, ‘yeah, I’m just nervous because I had never done this.’ I

> was like, 'oh, that's right. I forgot about that.' So, I could just feel that she wasn't a hundred percent there. I was like, 'are you fine? Do you wanna move forward?' And she kind of said yes, but I could feel she was nervous. So, that was another time I knew like, okay, maybe we should slow down a little bit.

Despite that Gabriel and his partner were engaging in sexual activity, he sensed that his partner was not completely enthusiastic about proceeding to sexual intercourse, which prompted him to verbally check-in with her. Though he said that his partner communicated her willingness to proceed, he did not think that her response suggested she was "a hundred percent there", so he was not comfortable proceeding to sexual intercourse. Gabriel saw signs of hesitation as a lack of complete willingness, which suggested that her consent was not fully present. However, it is unclear what Gabriel meant when he indicated that his perception of his partners' hesitation prompted him to "slow down." For instance, he did not say that her hesitation prompted him to stop engaging in sexual activity altogether, so his perception of hesitation may have only made him uncomfortable with proceeding to sexual intercourse, but not other sexual activities. Nonetheless, for some participants, it was not enough for their partners to express their willingness. Instead, consent required that willingness was communicated without signs of reluctance.

Seven participants said that consent involved ensuring mutual pleasure. These participants saw ensuring that their partners equally wanted and were equally willing to engage in sexual activity as important for their own pleasure. In this way, some participants imagined nonconsensual sex as less pleasurable than consensual sex. As

Miguel said, “I feel like if there wasn’t consent, the experience wouldn’t be as great, or as good as it should be…When we both know it’s what we want, that makes the experience a lot better.” Michael (senior, non-Latino Asian) expressed a similar thought when describing sex between he and his partner if one person desired the experience more than the other: “When one person is not in the mood, it’s not as pleasurable if you were to have intercourse and the person’s not in it.” For these participants, sex was not an acceptable outcome in and of itself and it was not inherently pleasurable. Rather, sexual activity with another person involved a spectrum of pleasure, and maximizing pleasure involved ensuring that both participants were equally desirous of and willing to engage in sexual activity.

Consent is ongoing and revocable

Thirteen participants indicated that they understood consent as a continuous process throughout a sexual experience, which primarily involved the idea that consent was revocable. These participants saw consent as subject to change even after it had been given. For example, Chris said consent was a process and that he didn’t “think consent is static.” He continued, “It’s not set at the beginning and it’s okay all the way. There are times in the middle if she doesn’t want to engage in sex anymore, then she can say no, and we will stop.” Robert (sophomore, non-Latino Asian) gave a similar response when discussing his understanding of consent in his relationship: “Even if they said yes, that doesn’t necessarily mean they can’t switch it and tell you ‘no.’ So, if they’re uncomfortable at any time the ‘yes’ goes away, like it is completely on them. If they are not willing a hundred percent of the time after that ‘yes,’ then it’s a no.”

While these participants acknowledged that consent can be changed, most saw it as their partners' responsibility for communicating that change (e.g., "it is completely on them"). Few of these participants identified their role in ensuring/seeking the ongoing presence of consent other than paying attention to verbal or physical cues that suggested the lack of willingness or enthusiasm. Consistent with many participants conceptualization of consent as the lack of verbal or physical refusal to sexual advances, most of these participants saw consent as present unless otherwise stated after it was initially communicated.

Consent is freely given

Seventeen participants indicated that consent must be freely given and cannot be elicited through force or pressure. Some of these participants suggested that consent was invalidated if it occurred in the context of force or pressure. In expanding upon his perception of consent as "tricky," Michael, said:

> They might feel socially pressured to not say no. And it might be hard for someone to say no in that time period even if they are uncomfortable. Like, if someone experienced is trying to go for intercourse and the person feels ashamed if they say no or something, I mean, that wouldn't really be consent cause the person, like, doesn't want it.

Michael acknowledged the potential impact of a power differential on someone's ability to freely consent and considered the impact of social pressure. He also suggested that consent was negated any time it was given by a person who did not want to engage in sexual activity.

When asked about the role sexual consent plays in his life, Shawn (freshman, Latino) suggested a similar perspective when he said, “pretty big, so you know that it’s not forced, or they’re not hesitant or anything. Like, it’s something they want to do also, like, fully.” He suggested that he knew sexual activity was unforced and mutually desired if someone communicated their consent. Hence, Shawn equated consent with unforced, mutually desired sexual activity.

Lee (senior, non-Latino Asian) also suggested that consent is only valid without force or pressure but described a different understanding of pressure than Shawn and Michael:

> When a girl is not mentally strong, they’ll eventually fall. And that’s when some of the guys be like, ‘oh yeah, now she’s willing to because I persuaded her.’ No, you just pushed her to that mental state where she has nowhere to go. It’s not persuading, you’re forcing her with your own language, and that does not equate to sexual consent.

Lee suggested that some women are vulnerable to verbal sexual coercion due to a lack of mental fortitude. While the cause he attributed to some women’s vulnerability perpetuates the rape myth that women are to blame for their sexual assaults and the gender stereotype that women are feeble-minded, he did demonstrate an understanding of the subtle coercive strategies that some men employ to elicit sexual consent. Further, he understood consent that is given in this context as nullified. Thus, while some participants had a general understanding that consent must be freely given, the breadth and specificity of that understanding varied. Participants like Lee and Michael

demonstrated an understanding of force and pressure that went beyond physical force and verbal demands, while participants like Shawn presented a more ambiguous understanding.

Consent is conscious or sober

About half of participants (n = 19) indicated that consent was only possible if one or both people had the ability to consent. For some participants (n = 12) this meant only engaging in sexual activity if both people were sober, for others (n = 7) it meant not engaging in sexual activity with someone who was overly intoxicated or "too drunk." Miguel expressed the former perspective, when he said, "If they're intoxicated with alcohol or whatever, even if [they] say 'yes,' it's not consent." Likewise, when asked how he defined sexual consent, Adam said, "First of all, making sure you're sober." Participants like Miguel and Adam suggested that consent was impossible to give under the influence of substances like alcohol. On the other hand, some participants suggested that consent could occur in the context of alcohol consumption as long as each person had the ability to refuse or say "no." Towards this end, Salil said, "Obviously they have to have the power to say no, like, obviously not drunk out of their mind." Some of these participants described sexual experiences in which one or both parties were inebriated but expressed confidence in their perception that their partner was fully capable of giving consent and therefore not "too drunk."

All participants who were asked whether they could tell if someone was too drunk to consent were certain about their ability to do so and pointed to indicators like slurred speech, lack of lucidity, stumbling, and lack of consciousness. While most participants

said that they avoided sex with someone who they perceived as “too drunk,” several participants (n = 5) described situations in which they thought it was possible to obtain consent from someone who they perceived as very drunk. For example, Isaac described a situation that occurred after a party in which he was high and his partner was drunk. He said,

> We’re making out and she started getting really comfortable with me, and I started grabbing in between her legs and then I thought about it. I’m like, ‘she’s drunk, is this what she wants?’ And I asked her, but at the same time I was thinking she might be too drunk to even answer.

He went on to say that his partner said she was conscious of what she was doing and wanted to proceed. Though Isaac acknowledged that his partner may not have been able to communicate her desires, he rationalized that it was still possible to obtain her consent by verbally asking for it and that since she was able to affirmatively and verbally respond, he proceeded engaging in sexual activity with her.

These participants also rationalized that sex with someone they perceived as “too drunk” was acceptable if they also perceived themselves as similarly intoxicated. For example, earlier in our interview Calvin (senior, Latino) discussed his tendency of avoiding sex with people who he perceived as “too drunk.” However, I pointed to a scenario that he described previously in which he and a woman had sex after drinking a substantial amount of Jack Daniels whiskey together and asked him to reconcile that experience with his perceived tendency of avoiding those situations. In response, he said:

Calvin: We got sloshed together, though. If she was the only one sloshed, obviously that's something else, or I was the only one sloshed that's something else.

Interviewer: So, what does it mean to get hammered together? What's the significance of that?

Calvin: Okay, the thing is that we're both not there, that's the significance. So, anything that happens [when] we're both not aware, we'll both wake up wondering, like, what happened? 'I'm sorry, like, I didn't mean for anything you didn't want to happen to happen. Can I buy you lunch *(laughter)* or something?' Like, 'you wanna go talk?'

Calvin perceived a difference between sex that occurs when one person is sober (or less drunk) and the other is very drunk and sex that occurs when both people are very drunk. When both people are very drunk, he suggested that he is absolved of any responsibility, especially if they became inebriated together. He also suggested his absolution through a mock interaction between he and his partner upon waking in the morning where he offered reparations through an apology and the chance to discuss what occurred over lunch. Rather than a potentially harmful and dangerous situation for both parties, he constructed this occurrence as a simple mistake for which both parties bear responsibility.

Thus, while most participants said that consent required sobriety or at least avoiding sex with someone they perceived as "too drunk," some participants presented strategies for having sex with someone they perceived as very drunk, such as obtaining verbal consent or becoming very drunk themselves. Participants' ad hoc strategies for

dealing with consent in the context of alcohol consumption created situations in which the presence of consent may have ranged from entirely present to entirely absent.

Consent is complicated by alcohol consumption

One quarter of participants (n = 11) suggested that they found the concept of consent complicated by the context in which many sexual interactions occur on college campuses, which often involves high rates of alcohol consumption at parties. For example, while Diego initially said that he understood sexual consent as a "yes or no," he said that there were "a lot of discrepancies at parties" because of alcohol. He continued, "In college, it's always drinking, smoking…all these different things happening and then consent gets very blurred." While Diego understood consent as a "yes" or "no," he suggested that that understanding was at odds with his understanding of the context in which many sexual interactions occur, which is often suffuse with inebriating substances. He suggested that in these contexts, clear, verbal consent communication may not occur or may be unclear whether it occurred after the effects of alcohol wear off. Thus, he acknowledged that determining consent was more complicated than simply pointing to the presence or absence of a "yes" or "no" in such contexts. Moreover, by attributing the sometimes complicated nature of consent to the consumption of inebriating substances, Diego seemed to deflect responsibility away from the person who must determine the presence of consent. In this way, he suggested that the disinhibitive effects of such substances are to blame for the indefinite presence of sexual consent in such contexts, rather than the sexual actors who consumed the substances.

Several participants (n = 4) expressed confusion about the impact of alcohol on a person's ability to consent. These participants were unsure whether it was possible to give consent if alcohol was consumed. For example, Raj (junior, non-Latino Asian) described a situation in which a prospective sexual partner was intoxicated and said that she wanted to have sex with him, but he denied her because he was not certain whether to trust her communication of willingness due to her intoxication. He continued, "It's consensual in that she said she wanted to do it. But, how would you decide if the other person is just drunk? Because she'd feel differently when she was sober and that would be unconsensual." On the one hand, Raj suggested that the prospective sexual activity would have been consensual because she clearly communicated her willingness. On the other hand, he suggested that his prospective partner's consent may have been a product of her intoxication, which could lead her to feel regretful when sober and therefore invalidate her consent.

While many participants understood that a person must have the ability to consent and therefore could not be intoxicated to such a degree that their ability to consent was hindered (discussed above), several participants (n = 4) expressed confusion about how and whether consent could occur in the midst of a perception of different levels of intoxication. Salil said, "Drunk has so many meanings, like if you're blacked out and you don't remember, I don't know…the drunk factor really throws stuff off." For Salil, intoxication did not necessarily invalidate consent, rather it was important to consider a person's level of intoxication. However, he struggled to arrive at a definitive conclusion about the role of alcohol on consent other than that it is not acceptable to have sex with

someone who is blacked out. Similarly, Daniel (senior, non-Latino White) said, "At what point is someone too drunk to give their consent? That is a line which is kind of hard to ascertain." Like Salil, Daniel suggested that there is a level of intoxication in which consent can be communicated, but the exact point at which any communication of willingness becomes invalidated is unclear.

These participants seemed unaware that in the jurisdiction in which this study was conducted, sexual activity cannot be legally consensual if one party is intoxicated – even if they communicated their willingness and were neither unhappy afterwards nor blacked out. Policies such as these usually do not distinguish between different levels of intoxication. Additionally, most participants invariably discussed the consumption of alcohol in terms of doing so to become intoxicated. Thus, participants may have found it difficult to reconcile their experiences with policies that do not allow for consensual inebriated sexual activity, given the central role that alcohol (and intoxication) plays in many college students' sexual experiences.

Consent provokes anxiety about perceived ramifications from a sexual assault accusation

For 12 participants, questions about their perceptions of consent prompted them to discuss their fears about facing an accusation of sexual assault and perceived negative consequences associated with an accusation. For example, when discussing what consent means to him, Calvin said, "I move very precautiously. I don't want to make a mistake of touching someone and then, like, oh my god, having to deal with the police. That'd be the worst. It's like a nightmare." Thus, his understanding of sexual consent seemed tightly

linked to his perception of peril that would follow if he were ever accused of sexual assault. Most of these participants' fears centered on being falsely accused of sexual assault and women retroactively revoking consent, which they considered to be a common occurrence. No participants acknowledged that they might actually be capable of perpetrating sexual assault.

Phenomena outside the university context—media coverage, the proliferation of legal cases, and social movement activities—have started to shape participants' conceptualization of consent. Specifically, their fears were often heightened by and linked to the #MeToo Movement and recent headlines of sexual assault accusations against high profile figures and the severe consequences those men often faced (e.g., criminal charges; damaged reputations; employment termination, etc.). For example, when asked about the role sexual consent played in his life, André (junior, non-Latino Black) said,

> In this day and age, a lot of people are saying the Me Too phrase and a lot of people are coming out after they've been raped. Seeing all this happen, I'm like, I can't afford this to happen for me, cause I'm a black male. [If] someone says he say/she say, then I'm fucked. And it's crazy in this generation. People give consent to have sex and then a week after it's 'oh, he raped me.' So, it just makes me more wary. Like, sometimes you have to judge the character of someone.

For this participant, consent was important for avoiding the consequences of a rape accusation, of which his awareness and concern were amplified by the #MeToo Movement and his awareness of racism and discrimination, specifically against his race.

While he seemed to understand that the #MeToo Movement had empowered women to speak out about their sexual assaults, he attributed at least some proportion of sexual assault accusations to retroactive revocations of consent. Thus, he was focused on his vulnerability as a black man and on having sex only with people who he perceived as less likely of falsely accusing him of rape.

Participants said that their fear of being accused of rape in the midst of the #MeToo Movement and their perception of the negative consequences that follow an accusation shaped their behavior in other ways as well. For example, Calvin said that his awareness of the prevalence of sexual assault lead him to "just ask" more and to "be more direct." He continued, "…and only be indirect when I'm positively sure that they want sex, which nowadays is a rarity. I don't even know sometimes. Some girls just give off false messages." By suggesting that women purposefully give mixed messages, Calvin perpetuated the gender stereotype that women are manipulative, which he perceived as increasing his risk of an accusation of sexual assault and necessitated obtaining explicit verbal consent.

Similarly, Kyle said, "this whole atmosphere of having to get consent makes me feel a little more worried. Like, I don't want a case. I'm just trying to do my thing." He continued,

> The feminist movement really made me more reserved. I don't even feel like trying now. It's a stress I really don't feel like dealing with. I feel like if you were to even try too much, I'm afraid of a girl taking my intentions too far. Like, if I do

> try touching her, she immediately says, 'Oh, you're raping me. I'm gonna tell on you.'

Kyle said that his fear of a sexual assault accusation and its negative consequences ("a case") led him to cease making sexual advances altogether. Like André and Calvin, Kyle's fear is largely based on the idea that some women make false accusations of rape. Notably, each of these participants assumed that the fault lies with women and not themselves. For these men, women are either racist, manipulative, liars, overly sensitive, or some combination thereof. Nevertheless, at least for some, this cultural shift has impacted both their thoughts and behaviors regarding sexual consent.

Verbal consent decreases risk of a sexual assault accusation

Given participants' perceived risk of being accused of sexual assault and facing negative consequences, most men said that explicit verbal consent was ideal because they perceived it as clearer, provided less room for misinterpretation, and, therefore, provided protection against the negative consequences of a sexual assault accusation. Consequently, verbal consent made some men feel more comfortable in sexual interactions and that they could proceed with sexual activity without feeling anxious or unsure about their sexual partners' willingness to engage in sexual activity. For example, Alex said that verbal communication was the "most concrete form" of sexual consent. When asked to elaborate, he said, "There's a lot more gray area with body language, and that's why it doesn't really hold up in legal court when someone says, like, 'oh her body language was inviting.' It's a lot more ambiguous." Thus, Alex understood verbal sexual

consent as ideal because it was less likely to be misinterpreted compared to body language and, therefore, exposed him less to negative legal ramifications.

Joel (sophomore, Latino) also suggested that verbal consent decreased the risk of negative consequences when explaining his view that verbal consent was superior to nonverbal communication: “Some people can feel intimidated in the moment and be like, ‘I feel like I was forced to do this’ or something. Whereas I feel like if you have that verbal consent, then it’s okay.” For him, verbal consent was ideal because it eliminated the risk of coercive sexual experiences that are seemingly caused by misinterpreting nonverbal cues. However, it is also possible to elicit a verbal agreement to engage in sexual activity through coercive tactics.

When explaining why he recently became worried about sexual consent, Daniel also linked nonverbal consent communication to greater misinterpretation and negative consequences compared to verbal communication. He associated interpreting sexual partners’ body language with “guess work” and said that incorporating “questions of consent,” and “being upfront about it makes things easier for everyone.” He also said that verbal consent communication can be incorporated into “dirty talking,” which transformed the consent process into a “fun sexual act.” For him, explicit verbal communication could contribute to the pleasure of a sexual experience, simplified the experience, and mitigated his anxiety about obtaining his partners’ consent.

DISCUSSION

This chapter showed that participants conceptualized sexual consent in several ways. Participants primarily understood consent as the communication of willingness or

lack of willingness to engage in sexual activity. Additionally, most participants' understanding of sexual consent included at least some elements of the university's affirmative consent policy. Finally, many participants understood sexual consent as complicated by alcohol consumption, and as linked to broader cultural, legal, and social changes, which elicited anxiety and some behavioral change in response.

General conceptualizations of consent versus conceptualizing consent within committed romantic relationships

While participants generally understood consent as the communication of willingness and lack of willingness, their understanding primarily rested upon relatively narrow verbal communication (i.e., "yes" and "no") and potentially problematic nonverbal communication (i.e., lack of physical or verbal refusal to and/or reciprocation of sexual advances). These findings support previous research which shows that college students understand consent as the communication of permission, willingness, and agreement to engage in sexual activity, though a greater proportion of participants in this study said that consent was explicit and verbal than other studies (Humphreys 2004; Jozkowski et al. 2014b). Understanding consent as the lack of verbal or physical refusal to and/or reciprocation of sexual advances was particularly evident in the context of committed relationships, which often reflected a discrepancy between participants' general understanding of consent (primarily explicit and verbal) and their understanding of consent in their relationships. This finding is also aligns with other research which shows that college students perceive direct verbal expressions of willingness (e.g., "yes," "no") as very indicative of consent, but that such expressions may be atypical in

participants' actual sexual experiences (Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Jozkowski et al. 2014a; Jozkowski and Peterson 2013; Jozkowski and Wiersma 2015).

While studies have demonstrated that the relationship context of sexual interactions is tied to perceptions about sexual consent within those interactions (Beres 2014; Humphreys 2007; Humphreys and Herold 2007), this study showed the nuances of participants' conceptualizations of consent in the context of their relationships/regular sex partners. For example, this study found that many participants saw consent as something that changed with the duration of their relationship—moving from explicit verbal consent communication in the beginning of the relationship and early sexual experiences with their partner to more nonverbal indicators of consent later in the relationship. However, some participants considered verbal consent communication necessary for sexual activities outside the realm of their typical sexual experiences (e.g., anal sex and BDSM). These findings support research which suggests there is a hierarchy of sexual activities, where the higher the sexual activity is on the hierarchy (e.g., vaginal sex, anal sex), the more likely it is that participants consider it necessary to obtain verbal consent (Hall 1998; Humphreys 2004).

This study also extends that research and suggests that it is not just the hierarchical status of the sexual activity, but the pattern of sexual activity between sexual partners that affects whether verbal consent is considered necessary. This study suggests that the more participants engage in a sexual activity with a sexual partner, the less likely they will consider the need for verbal consent and/or consider consent necessary. However, many sexual consent policies, such as California's, state that prior sexual

history or the existence of a dating relationship cannot be used as an indicator or evidence of consent. Future research should investigate differences in understandings of consent and the perceived need for explicit verbal consent across participants in different types of relationships, such as comparing casual sexual relationships (e.g., one-time hookups and "friends with benefits"), to ongoing committed relationships, including new and long-term relationships.

Similar to past sexual consent research, this study found that some participants considered consent less relevant and suggested that consent is typically assumed unless otherwise stated in their relationships (Beres 2014; Humphreys 2007; Humphreys and Herold 2007). However, research suggests that this finding may be an outcome of the term "consent" and linked to participants' narrow understanding of the concept (Beres 2014). As such, participants who perceived consent as less relevant and/or assumed unless otherwise stated may reflect a constrained, narrow understanding of consent, rather than a disregard of sexual communication about and negotiation of their sexual partners' willingness to engage in sexual activity.

Partial alignment with affirmative consent policies

In general, most participants' understanding of consent was at least partially consistent with legal definitions of consent and the university's affirmative consent policy, which aligns with previous research. Other studies show that participants' understanding of consent usually encompasses the idea that consent is mutual, subject to change, and free from high amounts of drugs or alcohol (Beres 2014; Humphreys 2004; Muehlenhard et al. 2016). Unlike previous research, participants in this study also

highlighted the need for consent to be freely given without force or pressure and discussed the idea that consent requires enthusiasm and/or is important for ensuring mutual pleasure, which is a novel finding. Together, these findings suggest that participants' conceptualizations of consent were influenced by legal definitions, the university's affirmative consent policies, and/or the university environment, including sexual assault prevention education that is required for incoming students at the university.

However, no participant's understanding captured every element within the affirmative consent policy, and, therefore, may have been less likely to behave in ways consistent with the policy—potentially putting themselves at risk for perpetrating sexual assault and victimizing their sexual partners. Moreover, participants described experiences and discussed consent in ways that were inconsistent with affirmative consent policies. For example, affirmative consent policies often expressly state that silence and/or lack of refusal should not be construed as consent, but many participants stated that they considered consent as such. Several participants also described situations in which they engaged in sexual activity with someone they thought may had been too intoxicated to consent. The incongruence between participants' experiences and their general understanding of consent is also supported by previous research and reflects the difficulty successfully implementing and enforcing such policies that diverge from students' lived realities (Beres 2014; Hirsch et al. 2019; Jozkowski et al. 2014b).

Consent and alcohol

A significant portion of participants said that their understanding of consent was complicated by the college context in which sexual activity often occurs, where one or both parties are intoxicated. The confusion among these participants is understandable. Universities' affirmative consent policies and educational initiatives consistent with that policy have not been the panacea that some proponents hoped they would be, because numerous questions about such policies remain (Muehlenhard et al. 2016), and students see these policies as inconsistent with their lived experiences and their perceptions of "normal" sexual experiences in college (Curtis and Burnett 2017; Humphreys and Herold 2003). Research also shows that alcohol is used by college students for its facilitative and disinhibitive effects (Downing-Matibag and Geisinger 2009; LaBrie, Grant, and Hummer 2011; Lindgren et al. 2009a). For example, alcohol (often intoxication) helps students deal with awkwardness that sometimes comes from being naked with someone—especially someone with whom they are unfamiliar (Hirsch et al. 2019). Consuming alcohol in order to become intoxicated also enables students to quickly exchange their stressed, regimented, success-oriented selves for carefree, bold, and sexually assertive selves (Hirsch et al. 2019; LaBrie et al. 2011; Patrick and Maggs 2010). In the absence of clear policy and education, some participants explained ad hoc strategies for dealing with such ambiguities, such as various approaches for handling sex while one or both parties are drunk. Previous research has also demonstrated college students' strategies for managing sex while drunk and described them as "work arounds to the 'too strict' and

unreasonably abstract" guideline that drunkenness negates consent (Curtis and Burnett 2017; Hirsch et al. 2018: 6).

Consent and fear

Given the legal connotations of consent and its relationship to sexual assault, many participants expressed anxiety about being falsely accused of sexual assault. Similarly, previous research has found that college men were worried about false rape accusations and suggested that the worry emanated from the interaction between gendered sexual scripts and the context in which sexual activity often occurs on college campuses (Hirsch et al. 2019; Kalish 2013). In this way, men are typically taught that they are liable for obtaining consent, yet, policy often mandates that this cannot occur when individuals are drunk and that consent must be explicit and affirmative (Hirsch et al. 2019). Considering participants' perceptions about the grave consequences of rape accusations, which appeared influenced by the #MeToo Movement, as well as research that indicates that verbal consent communication is rare and that college students are often drunk during sex, these participants' fears are understandable (Hirsch et al. 2019; Muehlenhard et al. 2016). However, in explaining their fears, participants often cited the rape myth that women frequently lie about being raped and therefore relinquished responsibility for potentially perpetrating sexual assault (Edwards et al. 2011). Meanwhile, research shows that false allegations of rape are infrequent and that few experiences of sexual assaults ever result in formal complaints and deleterious consequences for perpetrators (Cantor et al. 2015; Zutter, Horselenberg, and Koppen 2017). Given that rape myths are a central pillar of rape culture on college campuses as

well as in the United States in general, participants' casual mention of this belief was concerning and may contribute to sexual assault victims' reluctance to report their sexual assaults (Edwards et al. 2011; Murnen, Wright, and Kaluzny 2002).

Consistent with previous research, participants also suggested that sexual assault was at least sometimes due to misinterpreting consent cues and indicated that verbal consent was ideal for avoiding such misinterpretations (Burkett and Hamilton 2012; Hansen et al. 2010; O'Byrne et al. 2008; O'Byrne et al. 2006). This idea may have also emanated from the university's affirmative consent policy and related education. Indeed, the idea that sexual assaults are due to misinterpretation is implicit in affirmative consent policies (Bogle 2014; Jozkowski 2016). However, by demonstrating that men can interpret subtle nonverbal and verbal cues that indicate willingness and unwillingness to engage in sexual activity, a growing body of research suggests that misinterpretation of sexual consent is not a widespread issue and therefore not a main cause of sexual assault (Beres 2010; Beres 2014; Byers 1980; Jozkowski 2016). Research also suggests that men cite the possibility of misinterpretation as a way to protect themselves against sexual assault allegations (Hansen et al. 2010; Kitzinger and Frith 1999; O'Byrne et al. 2008; O'Byrne et al. 2006). Thus, citing the possibility of misinterpretation may have also served to relinquish participants from responsibility for possibly perpetrating sexual assault.

Educational Implications

These findings have implications for university sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives. While participant' context free definitions of sexual consent were

often at least partially consistent with legal and affirmative consent standards, their understanding of consent in their actual experiences (i.e., with their regular sex partners), were often inconsistent with such standards. Hirsch et al. (2018) suggested that universities should move from a model of education that focuses on conveying information about the legal standard of consent to one where students are given the opportunity to consider their own practices. By promoting critical reflection, programs may be more likely to institute behavioral change, rather than merely teaching students the correct response to the question, "what is sexual consent?" Educational initiatives should also consider addressing men's anxiety about sexual consent, such as by dispelling the myth that many rape accusations are false and the gender stereotype that women are often manipulative, pointing to actual consent practices that are consistent with policy, and discussing discrepancies between the policy and students' understanding of consent and what constitutes consent. Towards this end, Hirsch et al. suggests that role-playing activities could be particularly helpful, especially in demonstrating sexual situations in which students may perceive that consent was implicitly signaled.

Given participants' relatively narrow understanding of consent, some men's confusion about consent, as well as the potential discrepancy between men's understanding of their partners' consent and their understanding of their partners' willingness, scholars suggest that educators should distinguish between the term "consent" and the concept beneath the term (Beres 2014; Muehlenhard et al. 2016). Doing so could expand students' conceptualization of consent and avoid hindering their understanding by the term's legal connotations. Educators could instead consider

discussing understanding and communicating “willingness” or “agreement” instead of “consent.”

Finally, in light of the prevalence of drunk sex and students’ confusion about and ad hoc strategies for navigating consent in those situations, educators should consider discussing drunk sex to encourage safer behaviors among students who engage in it and help keep others safe (Hirsch et al. 2019). Curtis and Burnett (2017) suggest that educational efforts could focus on expanding the list of behaviors that students perceive as inconsistent with consent while someone is drunk beyond being unconscious, such as slurred speech, stumbling, or having recently vomited.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that a sample of heterosexual college men conceptualized sexual consent in various ways, which reflected the contexts in which participants engaged in sexual activity. Participants’ conceptualizations were seemingly informed and constrained by consent’s legal connotations and the university’s affirmative consent policy. Their conceptualizations also changed when discussing consent in the context of their relationships with sexual partners, where their constructions of consent were similarly narrow yet less consistent with legal definitions or the university’s affirmative consent policy. The cultural moment (e.g., the #MeToo Movement) in which the data were collected, as well as the prevalence of sex while under the influence of alcohol also informed participants’ understanding of consent, which was linked to anxiety and confusion – aspects that have been seldom discussed in previous research. These findings suggest that sexual assault prevention and educational initiatives have had some

impact on participants' understanding of sexual consent. However, the findings also suggest that participants' understanding of consent is relatively limited and often contradictory with their lived experiences. Thus, much work remains in ensuring that sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives produce desired outcomes among their key targets.

Chapter 4: Heterosexual College Men's Communication of Sexual Consent

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines how heterosexual college men communicate their sexual consent to their sexual partners. Thus far, little research has investigated men's communication of sexual consent. However, given the high prevalence of sexual assault against women, especially on college campuses, understanding men's communication of consent is important because they are equally involved in the consent negotiation process and their consent communication helps construct the context in which both parties interpret and communicate consent. Additionally, due to gendered normative expectations, men's consent is often assumed and considered always present. However, men also experience sexual assault and other unwanted sexual experiences. Thus, understanding men's consent communication is important for developing more effective sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives.

The need for better understanding consent communication

Sexual assault against women—particularly on college campuses—remains a highly salient public health issue. A 2017 survey of 27 college campuses in the United States found that 26% of undergraduate women experience sexual assault (defined as nonconsensual sexual contact achieved through physical force or incapacitation) by their senior year, as do 6% of undergraduate men. These rates increase to 33% for women and nearly 9% for men when defining sexual assault as sexual contact without "active, ongoing affirmative agreement" (Cantor et al. 2015: 20). Following the #MeToo Movement and widespread acknowledgment of this enduring social problem, there is

increasing consensus that it is important to understand sexual consent and promote consensual sexual activity to address it (1A 2017; Anderson and Craighill 2015; Bennett and Jones 2018; Fresh Air 2018; Kamenetz 2018; North et al. 2019; Orenstein 2019; Rose 2018; Schmidt 2018). Indeed, the introduction and implementation of policies that attempt to clarify and/or mandate what sexual consent must look like in practice has dramatically risen in states and universities across the United States and worldwide (Baidawi 2018; Baynes 2019; Beitsch 2018; Burgen 2018; Wiggins and Chason 2018).

Consent communication research

Promoting consensual sexual activity, such as through sex education and sexual assault prevention initiatives, requires understanding how people communicate consent in order to create initiatives that are as efficacious as possible. A small body of research has begun shedding light on how sexual consent is communicated. Most studies have found that college students mainly communicate consent indirectly and nonverbally, including by reciprocating and/or not refusing their partners' sexual advances; communicating consent verbally is less common (Beres et al. 2004; Coy et al. 2013; Curtis and Burnett 2017; Fantasia 2011; Hall 1998; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Higgins et al. 2010; Hirsch et al. 2019; Humphreys 2004; Jozkowski et al. 2014a; Jozkowski 2013; Jozkowski and Wiersma 2015; Powell 2008) However, compared to other sexual activities, some studies suggest that communicating consent verbally occurs most often for penile-vaginal and anal intercourse (Hall 1998; Hirsch et al. 2019; Jozkowski et al. 2014b). The relative infrequency of verbal consent communication may be related to perceived social norms

against explicit sexual communication and a sense that verbal consent communication is awkward (Curtis and Burnett 2017).

Some studies have found gender differences between men's and women's consent communication (Beres et al. 2004; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Humphreys and Herold 2007; Jozkowski et al. 2014a; Jozkowski and Peterson 2014; Jozkowski et al. 2014b; Jozkowski and Wiersma 2015), where men are more likely than women to communicate consent nonverbally, and women are more likely than men to communicate consent verbally. For example, Hickman and Muehlenhard found that women used more indirect verbal cues than men, and men used more indirect nonverbal cues than women. Jozkowski et al. (2014a) found that men were more likely than women to use nonverbal cues to communicate consent, such as by using "body language," and women were more likely than men to use verbal cues to communicate consent, such as by explicitly telling their partner that they wanted to have sex, though whether cues were indirect or direct was not investigated.

Some studies have also found gender differences in consent communication consistent with the traditional sexual script, in which men are expected to be sexual initiators and women are expected to be sexual gatekeepers (Masters et al. 2013). These studies found that more men than women communicated their consent through initiating sexual activity, including seeking sexual reciprocation, verbally communicating sexual interest, and asking to engage in sexual activity, and more women than men communicated consent passively, such as through not refusing their partners' sexual advances (Jozkowski et al. 2014a; Jozkowski and Wiersma 2015). This research suggests

that the traditional sex script influences men's and women's consent communication practices (e.g., initiating vs. not refusing, respectively; Jozkowski, Marcantonio, and Hunt 2017).

While this growing body of sexual consent communication literature makes important strides in cultivating our understanding of sexual consent, it is lacking in important ways. First, most sexual consent communication research is quantitative – often using hypothetical scenarios, scales, and/or lists of behaviors. As such, the extant research may not accurately account for real-life sexual behaviors and experiences in the full context in which they occur, and, therefore, may not be able to capture the nuanced, often complicated nature of real-life sexual experiences. For example, much existing consent research does not account for behaviors that occur simultaneously and/or sequentially and that different behaviors and/or behavioral sequences could have different meanings in different contexts (Beres 2007; Muehlenhard et al. 2016). In contrast, qualitative research methods allow for open-ended inquiry and follow-up questions and are capable of capturing rich data, replete with complex, nuanced responses, as well as participants' thoughts, feelings, and actions within specific contexts (Charmaz 2004; Lindgren et al. 2009b). Consequently, qualitative research methods may be more appropriate for understanding contextualized sexual consent communication that occurs in real-life sexual experiences.

Second, most studies have focused on women's communication of consent or refusal of sexual activity. When men's communication of consent has been examined, it has often only been in relation to women's consent communication, such as by examining

gender differences, or focusing on men's understanding of women's consent communication. As a result, there is little in-depth understanding of men's consent communication within their sexual experiences.

The lack of attention paid to men's consent communication implicitly reflects and reifies the gender stereotype and hegemonic masculine norm that men are always ready and willing to have sex (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Doull et al. 2013; Murray 2019; Stern, Cooper, and Greenbaum 2014). In this way, their consent is often assumed and considered ever-present (Beres 2007; Hirsch et al. 2019). However, men's consent is not always present; they can and do experience sexual assault and other unwanted sexual experiences (Cantor et al. 2015; Hirsch et al. 2019; Peterson et al. 2011; Stemple and Meyer 2014; Stern et al. 2014). Thus, it is important to better and more fully understand how men communicate sexual consent, because they are equally involved in the consent negotiation process and their actions vitally contribute to the "relational context" in which women's actions occur (Gavey 2005: 155). Greater understanding of men's consent communication could lead to the development of more effective sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives, and therefore, healthier and more consensual sexual experiences among men and women. To address the limitations of the extant literature, this chapter uses multiple qualitative methods to understand how a sample of heterosexual college men communicate sexual consent.

METHODS

Participants and procedures

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 heterosexual undergraduate men at a public university in Southern California. Additionally, following the semi-structured interview, a subsample of 16 participants completed daily sexual activity diaries for two weeks in which they recorded information about their real-life sexual experiences. Following each week of the diary entries, the subsample participated in diary debriefing interviews, in which probing questions were asked about their diary entries.

Recruitment occurred through two methods between Winter quarter of 2018 and Winter quarter of 2019. Fifteen participants were recruited from a sample of 401 men who participated in a previous study conducted by the primary investigator, and 25 participants were recruited from courses with large lectures in various subjects. Potential participants were invited to participate in a study about the sexual attitudes and experiences of students of the university at which they attended and completed an eligibility survey. Inclusion criteria for the semi-structured interviews included identifying as heterosexual, a man, 18 years or older, presently enrolled in university classes, and having engaged in sexual intercourse in the six months prior to completing the survey. Subsample inclusion criteria included having engaged in sexual activity with another person at least five times in the 30 days prior to the eligibility survey in order to increase the likelihood that these participants would engage in sexual activity during diary data collection. Subsample participants were also selected purposively in order to

achieve variation in the subsample similar to the full sample regarding types of sexual experiences, primary communication styles (e.g., primarily verbal or nonverbal, mixed communication, etc.), relationship status, race/ethnicity, and year in school.

Semi-structured interview participants were primarily juniors (n = 17) or seniors (n = 20) and Latino (n = 20) or non-Latino Asian (n = 13), which is consistent with the racial/ethnic distribution of the university's student population. Most were in a relationship at the time of the interview (n = 29) and over 40 percent (n = 17) had been in their relationship for over one year (see Table 1). Subsample participants were primarily Latino (n = 7) or non-Latino Asian (n = 4). All had sex partners during data collection, and most were in committed romantic relationships (see Table 2). Participants provided informed consent prior to the semi-structured interview, in which they were asked about their romantic relationships and sexual history, their understanding of their own and their partners' willingness to engage in sexual activity, and their understanding of sexual consent. Semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded and lasted between 45-90 minutes. At the completion of the semi-structured interview, participants were given a $15 Visa gift card.

The sexual activity diaries were administered through Qualtrics survey software, where each participant had a personalized web link for their diary. Subsample participants were prompted to write in the diary each day, indicating whether they engaged in sexual activity with another person and recording the details of those experiences, including discussions about and attempts at sexual activity. Subsample participants also provided information about the context of the sexual activity, such as

where and when it occurred, with whom, and the nature and status of their relationship with their partner. In conjunction with best practices for this method (Bolger et al. 2003; Hofmann and Patel 2015), subsample participants received automated SMS text alerts once per day at 9 A.M. for the duration of their diary participation reminding them to complete their diary for the previous day.

Diary debriefing interview questions were based on the diaries' content. In general, subsample participants were asked to explain their entries in more detail, which often lead to more information about the context and decision-making processes of the sexual activity. Diary debriefing interviews lasted between 10 to 60 minutes, depending upon the amount of sexual activity recorded in the diaries. Subsample participants were compensated $20 after the completion of the first diary debriefing interview and $25 after the second diary debriefing interview. The university's Institutional Review Board approved the study.

Analysis

Undergraduate research assistants transcribed the audio recorded interviews and proofread them for accuracy while listening to the audio recording. Participants were given pseudonyms, and identifying information was removed from the transcripts. The inductive analysis drew upon grounded theory methods (e.g., constant comparison and simultaneous data collection and analysis) and thematic analysis (Charmaz 2004; Terry et al. 2017). While examining the semantic and latent meanings of participants' responses, a recursive system of open and focused coding was used to derive overarching themes and subthemes (Charmaz 2004; Warren and Karner 2015).

The data from the semi-structured interviews, diaries, and diary debriefing interviews were triangulated to yield a rich understanding of participants' sexual consent communication. Subsample participants' semi-structured interview data was analyzed to verify whether it aligned with their diary and debriefing interview data. The different sources of data overwhelmingly corresponded to each other, which fortified the premise that the semi-structured interviews matched participants' actual sexual experiences. As such, diary and debriefing interview data were used to corroborate the key themes found in the semi-structured interview data – increasing the overall reliability of the findings and mitigating the potential limitations of participants' memory recall. Diaries and debriefing interview data were also used to provide depth and rich, real-life examples of themes.

After the core themes were developed, two teams of trained undergraduate research assistants were assigned with analytic codes to code each transcript. The researcher met with the research assistants on a weekly basis to provide clarification and settle coding discrepancies. The researcher verified each transcript coded by research assistants was accurate and consistent with the properties of the theme and associated code with which research assistants were assigned. This process was undergone to finalize the number of participants within each code and related theme. Three themes emerged as the dominant ways in which participants communicated consent: 1) initiating sexual activity, 2) responding to partners' initiation of sexual activity, and 3) assuming consent is constantly present.

RESULTS

Communicating consent by initiating sexual activity

Most participants described communicating their consent either by nonverbally or verbally initiating sexual activity, though more men described initiating sexual activity nonverbally (n = 36) than verbally (n = 26).

Nonverbal initiation

Participants often described the process of nonverbally initiating sexual activity as "going for it," "making moves," and/or "making the first move." Nonverbally initiating sexual activity encompassed a variety of methods, but it typically involved a progression of activities—many of which occurred simultaneously—including increasing physical closeness, cuddling, sensual touching, kissing, genital touching, and undressing themselves and/or their partner. In a diary entry, Robert (sophomore, non-Latino Asian) described an experience initiating sexual activity this way: "The sexual activity was initiated when I began kissing my partner. I proceeded to the neck and breasts and removed her clothes as well as my own." Calvin (senior, Latino) described initiating sexual activity in a similar way when he said, "I'll just try kissing her for, like, a long time and then I'll just take it slow, put my hand under her shirt, or take off her shirt, take her off her pants, take off my own pants…."

In addition to signaling their consent, participants' nonverbal initiations served the purposes of arousing their partners and ascertaining their partners' willingness to engage in sexual activity. These additional purposes are evident in a description of nonverbal initiation of sexual activity from Kyle (junior, Latino):

> I first start touching her chest…[she] seemed like [she] might be in the mood, but I can't tell for sure, so I start moving down to her genital area. Not straight to it, but kinda around it. She knows where I'm going, but I'm not touching it. So, it's kinda just letting her know what I'm thinking about right now—that I'm down and wondering if [she] is. So, I try to get her, like, opened up more, then start kissing her more and moving all the way down.

Kyle described not being sure whether his partner was willing to engage in sexual activity. Through his initiation, he tried eliciting signals of her arousal and willingness to engage in sexual activity (i.e., trying to get her to "open up more"). In doing so, he also communicated his willingness (i.e., "letting her know what I'm thinking about"). Like Kyle, most participants' descriptions of their nonverbal communication of consent through initiating sexual activity involved paying attention to their partners' nonverbal responses (e.g., reciprocated arousal and sexual activity and/or lack of nonverbal or verbal refusal). For example, in explaining how he initiated sexual activity, Armaan (senior, non-Latino Other Race) said, "I'll just put my hand around her or I'll put my hand on her thigh and I'll just leave it there and see how they react." Similarly, Peter (sophomore, Latino) said he began the process of sexual activity through "light engagements, like small pecks, and then see if she returns a kiss or something." Thus, participants' communication of consent was intertwined with their understanding of their partners' consent to proceed with sexual activity.

Verbal initiation

There were two methods of verbally initiating sex: asking to engage in it and stating one's desire. The most common way of verbally initiating sexual activity involved participants asking their partners whether they wanted to engage in sexual activity (typically sexual intercourse). James (junior, non-Latino Asian) gave several examples of typical questions he would ask his partner to demonstrate his willingness to have sex, including, "Do you want to? Are you feeling it? You still awake?' Then, 'Do you still want to?" When describing how he initiated sexual activity and thus, signaled his willingness to engage in sexual activity, Greg (junior, Latino) said, "very verbal and direct. I pose those questions, like, 'do you wanna do it?'"

Participants often described situations in which sexual and other physically intimate activity co-occurred with asking their partners whether they wanted to engage in sexual intercourse, where cuddling and making out often preceded verbally asking. For example, Robert explained that "strictly making out for a good amount of time would eventually lead to the question, which will eventually lead to the sex…The making out is involved but that's usually the lead up into it, the touching and everything." Likewise, in explaining how he initiated sexual activity with his girlfriend, which included "kissing her neck" and "messing around with her bra and underwear," Miguel (freshman, Latino) said, "when you get to a certain point where we're ready, and, like, before we take our clothes off, there's that question." Thus, for these participants, verbally asking their partners whether they wanted to engage in sexual intercourse was as much about obtaining their partners' consent as it was about communicating their own consent and

doing so involved waiting for the "right moment" (e.g., prior to clothing removal). Additionally, participants' consent for physical/sexual activities that preceded intercourse was communicated nonverbally by initiating as well as reciprocating and/or not refusing them.

For some participants (n = 8), the "right moment" occurred just before the onset of sexual intercourse, often after clothing removal. These participants described asking to engage in sexual intercourse immediately prior to penile-vaginal penetration but often following engaging in other sexual activities. Thus, the nonverbal nature of these participants' consent for virtually everything preceding sexual intercourse was especially evident. Along these lines, Edward (junior, Latino) described a typical situation between he and his partner following engaging in other sexual activities, such as making out, undressing, genital stimulation, and oral sex, "I'll be like, 'are you cool with this? Me just going in?' Like, before I'm going to do her…penetrate." In a similar fashion, some participants also described situations in which obtaining and putting on condoms provided a way to demonstrate their own consent as well as seek their partners' consent to engage in intercourse. For example, Orlando (junior, Latino) said he communicated his willingness to engage in sexual activity by "just asking." He continued, "I usually ask the question when I'm going to put on the condom. That's kind of my go to. I'll get off of her and be like, 'are you sure you want to do this? Is it okay?'" For participants like Edward and Orlando, verbally communicating consent (through asking) was mainly necessary when they thought a sexual experience with a partner escalated to a point just prior to sexual intercourse. As such, while most participants demonstrated a highly phallocentric

approach to sex, some participants' view of sex and perception of when it is appropriate to verbally communicate and seek consent seemed especially narrow.

In contrast to asking, some men (n = 5) described initiating sexual activity by simply stating their desire to have sex. These participants described matter-of-factly telling their sexual partners what they wanted to do. For instance, when describing the evolution of he and his girlfriend's foray into anal sex, Carlos (senior, Latino) said, "I'll tell her, 'I want to have anal sex.'" Similarly, Colin (junior, Latino) said he communicated his consent to his girlfriend by saying, "Let's have sex," which also served the purpose of telling her what he wanted to do. Like participants who initiated sexual activity by asking, these participants' verbal consent communication and initiation also involved seeking their partners' consent (and waiting for their response), which was arguably more implicit than the consent-seeking of those who initiated sex by asking. However, the communication of consent by participants who primarily asked was arguably more implicit than that of participants who stated their desire.

Communicating by responding to partners' initiation of sexual activity

In addition to communicating consent by initiating sex, most participants described communicating consent by responding to their partners' sexual advances. Participants' responses to their partners were primarily nonverbal and predominantly consisted of reciprocating (n = 24) and/or not verbally or physically refusing their partners' sexual advances (n = 19).

Participants frequently cited reciprocation as a primary way in which they demonstrated their consent. Participants described reciprocation as responding to their

partners' behavior with the same behavior and equal "intensity," a behavior that they perceived to be on the same "level" as their partners', or a behavior that helped advance the sexual experience to sexual intercourse. Thus, reciprocation entailed "responding back" to their partners' physical advances, as well as participating in the "escalation" of the sexual experience. For example, when explaining how his partner knew she had his consent, Gabriel (junior, Latino) said, "she'll start kissing me and then taking off my clothes, and then I'm like 'okay,'…and then I'll reciprocate and start kissing back and taking off her clothes too." In this way, Gabriel described experiencing his partners' advances, internally registering them and agreeing to move forward (i.e., "I'm like 'okay'"), and behaviorally expressing his agreement to move forward by actively participating and mirroring his partners' behaviors. Perhaps the most central component of reciprocation is a behavioral back-and-forth. In a diary entry, Isaac (sophomore, Latino) described a sexual experience suffuse with the back-and-forth that characterizes reciprocation:

> We were in my partner's room, and she had just gotten home from school. We were talking about school-related stuff and she said she wanted to lay down with me. So we did, and I felt her back her butt on my dick, and I knew it was on purpose. I went to kiss her behind the ear, but she turned around to kiss me, so we started also kissing and making out. I felt up on her breasts, and she felt up on my dick. I took off my clothes, and she took off mine. She went down on me for like two minutes and I went down on her for the same amount of time….

In this experience, Isaac described paying attention to his partner's signals of sexual willingness, as well as many examples of responding to his partner's advances with the same behaviors, behaviors with a similar level of intensity, as well as escalating behaviors. In doing so, and as he explained in the diary, Isaac communicated his consent. Thus, through reciprocation, participants described paying attention to their partners' nonverbal cues of sexual interest and responding in kind with similar behaviors to demonstrate their sexual willingness.

Participants also said they communicated their consent by not verbally or physically refusing their partners' sexual advances. For example, when explaining how his partner knew he consented to sex, Adam (senior, non-Latino Asian) said, "I don't stop it." Similarly, Michael (senior, non-Latino Asian) succinctly described his communication of consent to his partner as, "The absence of a no…unless there's a no, then it's okay." Kyle described an example in a diary entry of his lack of refusal to his partner's sexual advances as consent:

> I was just laying on my back when my girlfriend started to lift up my shirt and touch me. I didn't think anything was going to happen until she moved her hand under my pants and then started to unbutton my pants. She started to give me oral…

Later in the diary, Kyle explained that his consent was evident because he "did not tell her no."

Often in tandem with not verbally or physically refusing their partners' advances, some participants (n = 9) said the presence of an erection, which was often stimulated by

their partner in some way, was an indication of their consent. Indeed, most of these participants said having an erection was the clearest way they communicated their consent. For example, when asked how he let his partner know he was willing to engage in sexual activity, Lee (senior, non-Latino Asian) said, “it’s always easy for a girl to tell…you know, the genitals show everything. That’s the main way she would know.” Similarly, Kyle said, “the easiest way for her to know is if I have a boner,” and Joel (sophomore, Latino) said, “if she can physically see that I’m in the mood, then that’s consent enough.” For all of these participants, consent was implicitly demonstrated and communicated through their (visible) physiological sexual response.

While participants explained that they nonverbally consented to sexual activity with their partners through reciprocation, not verbally or physically refusing, and erections, some (n = 10) described situations in which these methods were associated with unwanted sexual experiences. Most of these participants expressed feeling conflicted about these experiences and suggested that they were reluctant to communicate their discomfort during these experiences due to feeling pressure from their partners, a sense of obligation to satisfy their partners, and/or feeling pleasure from the sexual activity. For example, a few participants who said they communicated their consent through their erections also acknowledged that their erections did not always correlate with their willingness or desire to engage in sexual activity. For example, though Kyle said the easiest way for his girlfriend to know he was willing to have sex was whether he had an erection, he also said, “even though sometimes you just get that…like, you’re not really feeling it.” He also described some confusion that he had about the relationship

between his erections and desire and willingness for sex, "sometimes even I get tricked, like, am I? Do I want to have sex? Am I really thinking about it? Every once in a while, my body is telling her something that I don't really mean." While he was aware that his erections did not always correspond to his sexual desire or willingness, he said that he often continued with the sexual activity with his girlfriend.

Calvin also discussed engaging in unwanted sexual experiences. He described one such situation in which he was at a party and an unknown young woman led him to a bathroom and began performing oral sex on him:

> This girl grabbed me by hand and she just took me to the bathroom and she started giving me head. And I was like, oh, uh, okay. I mean I don't know you. I haven't even gotten to see your face, you know? Like who are you? And I felt like, what if I don't wanna hookup with you, you know? Well too late. You're already doing your thing, so might as well do what you gotta do.

Despite his apparent discomfort with receiving oral sex from a stranger, Calvin suggested that it was easier to allow her to continue than to communicate his discomfort to her.

In another example, Diego (senior, non-Latino Multiracial) explained that there were numerous situations in the beginning of he and his first girlfriend's relationship in which he was uncomfortable engaging in sexual activity, but eventually did so:

> I wasn't comfortable with it because I was very religious and wanted to wait 'til marriage. It'd be her trying everything to get me in the mood…and then eventually she'd be on top of me and I'm just there. I never thought it was scary, but I was like 'this is wrong, like, I don't want to be doing this, but it feels good.

Like, I really like this cause I'm horny all the time, but I don't wanna do it. I don't know.

While he did not want to engage in pre-marital sex due to its incompatibility with his religious beliefs, Diego described reluctantly doing so when faced with the pressure of his girlfriends' advances, as well as ensuing sexual pleasure.

Participants' experiences of unwanted sex may have also been influenced by dominant norms of masculinity and associated sexual expectations, such as the idea that men are always ready and willing for sex. The influence and participants' endorsement of these norms is particularly evident among those who described their consent as constantly present (described below). Thus, participants may have felt pressured to engage in unwanted sex to conform to and meet the expectations associated with dominant norms of masculinity.

In contrast to nonverbally responding to partners' advances, many participants (n = 18) also described situations in which their partner either directly or indirectly asked them whether they wanted to engage in sexual activity, and they consented by verbally and affirmatively responding. For example, Manuel (junior, Latino) described a situation between he and his casual sex partner this way: "she had asked me nicely if I was ready to try having sex...and I was like, 'I one hundred percent agree.'" Robert described a situation in which he and his partner had reunited after summer break: "we were super pent-up...I just set my stuff down and then she asked whether I wanted to do it right away or wait a little bit, and then I told her I wanted to do it, like, right away." Robert went on to explain that he and his partner engaged in sexual activity immediately following his

verbal and affirmative expression of willingness. For participants like Manuel and Robert, their partners' question and their responses were explicit and direct.

For other participants, their partners' questions were indirect, and their responses followed suit. Colin described an example in a diary entry of an indirect verbal exchange between him and his partner: "we were cuddled up in blankets watching the show when she randomly brought up that we haven't had sex in a while. I replied by stating, 'we could change that.'" Following this exchange, Colin and his partner began engaging in sexual activity. Later in the diary entry, Colin explained how he communicated his willingness to engage in sexual activity by saying, "when she brought up the fact that we had not had sex in a bit, I replied by saying 'we could change that,' implying that I was willing to have sex or do sexual activities." Thus, while there was variation in the directness and explicitness of participants' communication, all participants' verbal and affirmative consent responses were stimulated by their partners' verbal question.

Communicating consent by assuming it is constantly present

Many participants (n = 18) described their consent as constantly present, including several who described engaging in unwanted sexual experiences (n = 4). These participants considered their consent to be assumed. They explained that there was no need to communicate it because it was always present. For example, when asked how he let his partner know he was willing to engage in sexual activity, Chris (senior, non-Latino Asian) said, "I'm always ready to go...I don't do anything specific to let her know I'm ready. I'm just always willing." Likewise, Peter (sophomore, Latino) said while chuckling, "Because I'm a guy...She understands I'm willing regardless."

Most of these participants struggled to explain how they demonstrated their consent, insisting they did not do anything and that their partners knew they were willing due to their belief that men always desire sex or because of a conversation in which their constant consent was established, which suggests conformity to the traditional sex script and dominant cultural norms of masculinity where men are expected to always be ready and willing to engage in sexual activity (discussed more in the next section). For example, Daniel (senior, non-Latino White) said that his partners "don't really ask...I think with women sometimes they just go for it and start doing it...there's this idea that men are always willing to have sex...." Likewise, when describing how he gave consent to his girlfriend, Lee said, "I think girls always know there's consent. They're taught that. It's fairly new, consent about guys...They don't give consent, they just do it. [Consent is] always there." Thus, some participants expressed that their consent was not communicated because they believed that their partners assumed it was present, which seemingly eliminated the need for their consent communication. Other participants explained that they expressed their perpetual willingness to their partners, negating the need for their consent communication for future sexual experiences. For example, Salil (senior, non-Latino Asian) explained his consent communication (or lack thereof) to his girlfriend this way:

> I'm always willing. She knows that. Within the week of the first time of us having sex, we were having a conversation. It basically just went, like, 'hey, I'm always down to have sex...like, you don't have to get permission. Whenever you wanna have sex, I'm down.'

Despite these participants' assertion that there was no need for them to communicate their consent because they considered it always present and assumed, their narrative descriptions of their sexual experiences revealed that they communicated their willingness through all of the ways described previously and most commonly by reciprocating and/or not refusing their partners' sexual advances. Thus, these participants' underlying assumptions were contradicted by their narratives. Moreover, about half (n = 8) of these participants described situations in which they would communicate their lack of consent, primarily through explicit verbal communication. Therefore, these participants were seemingly unaware of their consent communication or did not consider their consent communication as such.

DISCUSSION

This chapter showed that participants communicated their sexual consent in a variety of ways. They primarily communicated consent by nonverbally initiating sexual activity, followed by verbally initiating sexual activity, both of which were linked to seeking and determining their partners' consent. Most participants also described communicating their consent by responding to their partners' advances primarily nonverbally, such as by reciprocating, not verbally or physically refusing their partners' sexual advances, and having an erection. For some participants, nonverbally consenting to their partners' sexual advances was associated with engaging in unwanted sexual experiences due to feeling pressure from their partners, a sense of obligation, and experiencing sexual pleasure. A minority of participants described verbally communicating their consent by verbally and affirmatively responding to their partners'

advances. Finally, many participants described their consent as constantly present. These participants often said there was no need to communicate their consent and they did not do anything to communicate it because they were perpetually willing to engage in sexual activity. Yet, these participants' descriptions of their sexual experiences revealed that they communicated their willingness through all of the methods described by other participants, and most commonly through reciprocating and/or not refusing their partners' sexual advances.

The predominance of nonverbal and indirect consent communication among participants in the present study is consistent with previous research (Muehlenhard et al. 2016). However, many participants also described communicating consent verbally, such as by asking for their partners' consent, stating their sexual desire, and verbally responding to their partners' initiation of sexual activity. The relative frequency of verbal consent communication compared to other studies could be related to the fact that most participants' descriptions of sexual experiences involved partners with whom they shared committed romantic relationships. Previous studies show inconsistent findings regarding the relation between type of relationship (e.g., committed, hookup) and consent communication. Some research suggests that verbal consent communication is less common in committed romantic relationships. However, such findings are primarily drawn from survey respondents' assessment of hypothetical scenarios and therefore, may not generalize to individuals' actual sexual experiences (Humphreys 2007; Humphreys and Herold 2007). On the other hand, some qualitative research that draws on individuals' and couples' sexual experiences suggests that verbal consent communication

is present within committed romantic relationships (Beres 2014). While other studies have found that verbal consent communication is seen as awkward and perceived as atypical in “normal” sexual encounters (Curtis and Burnett 2017), committed romantic relationships may yield a greater sense of comfort and safety compared to sexual experiences that occur in the context of other types of relationships (e.g., hookups) and may, therefore, mitigate the perception that verbal sexual communication is awkward and/or atypical. Future research should investigate the associations between the relationship context in which sexual activity occurs, consent communication, and the dynamics within committed romantic relationships that may yield more or less direct, verbal consent communication.

Participants’ use of verbal consent communication may also be related to the specific sexual activity in which they and/or their partners were attempting to engage and their relatively narrow, phallocentric understanding of “sex.” Similar to other research, participants overwhelmingly equated “sex” with penile-vaginal intercourse (PVI) (Horowitz and Bedford 2017; Horowitz and Spicer 2013; Peterson and Muehlenhard 2007b), and most participants predominately described experiences in which PVI was attempted and/or occurred. Research suggests that verbal consent communication is more common for PVI than other sexual activities (Hall 1998; Humphreys 2007; Jozkowski et al. 2014b), and may be related to a perceived hierarchy of sexual activities (Horowitz and Bedford 2017). Sexual activities perceived as higher in the hierarchy, such as PVI, may be more likely to be seen as necessitating verbal consent (Humphreys 2007; Humphreys 2004). Thus, participants may have used verbal consent communication to move from

other sexual activities/touching to "sex" (PVI) or in cases when there were no other sexual activities/touching, because they perceived PVI to be more significant than other sexual activities and therefore requiring verbal consent communication (Muehlenhard et al. 2016). Expanding individuals' understanding of sex to include all types of sexual touching, in which consent communication is equally important as it is for penile-vaginal intercourse, may be an important component for sexual health and sexual assault prevention educational initiatives.

Given that most participants communicated consent by initiating sexual activity, most participants' consent communication is congruent with the traditional sex script. Previous research has also suggested that men's sexual consent behaviors conform to and are influenced by the traditional sex script (Fagen and Anderson 2012; Jozkowski et al. 2014a; Jozkowski and Wiersma 2015; Jozkowski et al. 2017). However, many participants also described communicating consent by responding to their partners' initiation of sexual activity through reciprocation, not verbally or physically refusing, and verbally responding. Thus, many participants' consent communication was also incongruent with the traditional sex script and suggests that men's consent behaviors are more nuanced than other research suggests. Similar to the aforementioned findings, the incongruence between many participants' methods of consent communication and the traditional sex script may be related to most participants' sexual experiences having primarily occurred in the context of committed romantic relationships. Some research has found that committed romantic relationships may present opportunities for changing, innovating, and experimenting with ways of relating sexually beyond the traditional

script (Masters et al. 2013). These findings may also support research that suggests that young people are moving away from traditional sex scripts and adopting alternative approaches (Beres et al. 2019; Dworkin and O'Sullivan 2005; Epstein et al. 2009; Masters et al. 2013; Maxwell 2007; O'Sullivan and Byers 1993). Research also shows that men interact with women in ways that they perceive as increasing the likelihood of sex (Flood 2008). Thus, some men may avoid initiating sexual activity and allow their partners to advance the sexual activity when they think it will help them achieve sexual pleasure (Kalish 2013). The quantitative methods used in most previous research may have missed nuances within men's consent communication, such as behaviors that are inconsistent with the traditional sex script.

Some participants who described nonverbally consenting to their partners' sexual advances by reciprocating, not verbally or physically refusing their partners' advances, and/or obtaining an erection also described experiences in which they engaged in unwanted sexual activity. Participants explained their behavior as due to feeling pressured by their partners and a sense of obligation. Some participants' described situations consistent with sexual coercion. The pressure that influenced some participants to engage in unwanted sexual activity may also be linked to dominant (hegemonic) cultural norms of masculinity, in which men are expected to perpetually desire sex and be ready to engage in it (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Doull et al. 2013; Stern et al. 2014). Accordingly, participants may have engaged in unwanted sexual activity to fulfill such expectations (Beres et al. 2019; Muehlenhard 1988; Muehlenhard and Cook 1988). In coercive situations, participants may have reframed the experience as consensual in

order to maintain their sense of control and save face in light of the stereotype that men always desire sex and dominant masculine norm that men exert control (Beres et al. 2019; Casey et al. 2016; Terry 2012). Participants' descriptions of unwanted sexual experiences demonstrate the gap that exists between dominant norms of masculinity and men's actual sexual experiences (e.g., men do not always desire sex) (Murray 2019). Future research should explore the relations between men's use of potentially ambiguous nonverbal consent communication (e.g., lack of verbal/physical refusal), pressures associated with dominant norms of masculinity, and engaging in unwanted sex.

Participants' nonverbal consent to unwanted sexual activity is consistent with research that shows a distinction between consent and desire, such that consent and desire are not synonymous concepts and do not always correspond (Artime and Peterson 2015; Muehlenhard and Peterson 2005; O'Sullivan and Allgeier 1998; Peterson and Muehlenhard 2007a). To date, this distinction has mostly been theoretically and empirically examined among women, with very little empirical and theoretical examination among men (Fagen and Anderson 2012). Overall, little research has examined men's unwanted sexual experiences. More research is needed to understand men's participation in unwanted sexual activity, as well as the relationship between those experiences and their consent behaviors. Educational initiatives should explain and unpack gender norms, related sexual expectations, and their harms for men and women—including the harms associated with engaging in unwanted sex. For example, research shows that engaging in unwanted sexual activity is associated with decreased happiness, lower relationship quality, increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases, problematic

drinking, and problems with sexual functioning (Blythe et al. 2006; Cheng and Smyth 2015; Kern and Peterson 2019; Turchik 2012). Men should also be taught strategies for saying “no” to sex, as well as other strategies for consenting to sex beyond lack of refusal, reciprocation, and erections, which may decrease their risk of experiencing unwanted sex.

The influence of dominant cultural norms of masculinity and associated expectations was also evident in participants’ descriptions of their consent as constantly present. Many of these participants, including some who engaged in unwanted sexual activity, suggested that their partners assumed they were always willing because they were men, and these participants often endorsed this assumption. While these participants’ narrative descriptions of sexual experiences revealed how they indicated their willingness (primarily nonverbally), their reluctance/inability to articulate how they did so suggests that they lacked sufficient insight into their own behaviors and experiences to be able to discuss them. In tandem with their endorsement of dominant cultural norms of masculinity, participants’ lack of understanding of their own consent communication may increase their risk of experiencing unwanted sexual activity, including sexual assault.

Previous research has found that the pressure for men to always “say yes” to sex begins in adolescence and extends well into adulthood (Amin et al. 2018; Smiler 2008). Thus, participants’ assertion that they always implicitly consented to sex and did not do anything to communicate it may be linked to that pressure and associated cultural messages about masculinity. Relatedly, some participants may have been unfamiliar with

the idea of men's consent and therefore lacked the language to discuss and understand their own consent (Fagen and Anderson 2012; Smiler 2008). Participants may have also been unwilling to communicate their lack of consent for fear of harming their masculine status and performance of masculinity by engaging in behavior inconsistent with dominant masculine norms (e.g., turning down sexual advances) (Kalish 2013; Kimmel 2008; Pascoe 2005; Vannier and O'Sullivan 2010). To help address these issues, educational initiatives should avoid reifying gender stereotypes and traditional sex scripts where men are primarily portrayed as consent-seekers and women are primarily portrayed as consent-givers. Rather, in order to promote men's communication and consideration of their own consent and healthy, wanted sexual experiences, educational initiatives should treat men and women as equally and mutually involved in every component of the consent-giving, seeking, and negotiation process.

Conclusion

Little research has examined men's consent communication. This chapter described some of the nuanced ways in which heterosexual college men communicated their sexual consent. Most participants primarily communicated their consent by nonverbally and verbally initiating sexual activity. Many participants also did so by responding to their partners' sexual advances (mostly nonverbally). Some men's nonverbal responses to their partners' advances were associated with engaging in unwanted sexual activity. Additionally, many participants described their consent as constantly present. In order to promote healthier, more consensual sexual experiences for men and women, sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives should provide

men with more consent communication tools (e.g., beyond nonverbally initiating and responding), as well as untangle the relationship between dominant masculine norms, associated sexual expectations, and consent communication. Overall, further understanding men's consent communication is important for developing effective sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives.

Chapter 5: Heterosexual College Men's Interpretation of Sexual Consent

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines how heterosexual college men interpret their partner's sexual consent. Little research has examined men's interpretation of their partner's sexual consent. The small body of research that has addressed this topic is methodologically limited—namely by the predominant use of quantitative methods and the focus on women's experiences. There is limited in-depth understanding of how men interpret their partner's sexual consent in the context of their actual sexual experiences and behaviors. Understanding how college men interpret sexual consent is important given persistently high rates of sexual assault against women on college campuses, which are primarily perpetrated by men. Sexual consent is increasingly considered an important topic among sexual health educators and policy makers for promoting healthy sexual experiences and preventing sexual assault. Thus, better understanding men's interpretation of their partners' consent could lead to more effective sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives.

Renewed attention on sexual assault and consent

High rates of sexual assault against women persist as a major public health problem, especially on college campuses. Most research suggests that approximately one in five women will experience sexual assault while in college (Cantor et al. 2015; Fedina, Holmes, and Backes 2018; Krebs et al. 2007; Muehlenhard et al. 2017). Survivors of sexual assault often face a host of negative consequences, including effects on their mental and physical health, decreases in academic performance, and financial burdens

(Campbell et al. 2009; Carey et al. 2018; Jordan et al. 2014; Kaufman et al. 2019; Peterson et al. 2017). While high rates of sexual assault on college campuses and its myriad negative impacts have been documented since the late 1980s (Cantalupo 2012; Harrell et al. 2009; Koss 2005), the issue has recently received renewed public attention due in part to the #MeToo Movement, dozens of high profile cases of sexual assault perpetrated by prominent men, and the Department of Education's implementation of Title IX under the Obama administration and its subsequent enfeeblement by the Trump administration (Butler, Lee, and Fisher 2019; Kidder 2019; North et al. 2019).

In tandem with revitalized public awareness of sexual assault, the concept of sexual consent has also gained public attention. Scholars, journalists, policymakers, and university administrators have increasingly addressed the importance of understanding sexual consent and promoting consensual sexual activity to help prevent sexual assault (Anderson and Craighill 2015; Bennett and Jones 2018; Kamenetz 2018; Muehlenhard et al. 2016; Orenstein 2019; Schmidt 2018). Many universities and states across the United States, as well as other countries, have recently proposed or enacted policies attempting to elucidate and/or stipulate what does and does not constitute sexual consent (Baidawi 2018; Baynes 2019; Beitsch 2018; Burgen 2018; California Senate Bill SB-967 2014; Wiggins and Chason 2018; Yin 2018).

While much research has investigated the causes, consequences, and means of preventing sexual assault, solely focusing on understanding and preventing violence does little to advance the understanding of consent and how it is understood within consensual sexual relationships. Understanding consent is important for promoting consensual sexual

relationships and preventing sexual assault. Policies and educational interventions aimed at reducing high rates of sexual assault, in part, by clarifying and/or mandating what consent must look like in practice, will be more meaningful and impactful if they are grounded in people's embodied experiences of consent (Brady et al. 2018). Thus, developing and implementing effective policies and educational interventions for reducing sexual assault requires understanding how individuals interpret their sexual partners' sexual consent.

Sexual consent interpretation research

A small but growing body of research has begun to show how people (primarily college students) infer their (intended) sexual partner's consent. Research shows that people primarily interpret their partner's consent through nonverbal behaviors and contextual clues, which often occur concurrently, such as flirting, sensual touching, genital touching, moving to a secluded place, and actively participating in sexual activities (Beres 2010; Beres 2014; Burrow et al. 1998; Curtis and Burnett 2017; Hirsch et al. 2019; Jozkowski et al. 2018; Jozkowski et al. 2014b). In the presence of these behaviors and cues, verbal consent is often seen as unnecessary (Beres 2010; Jozkowski et al. 2018). When people point to verbal indicators of consent, they are often indirect and coded, such as a (prospective) sexual partner inviting someone to their home to watch a movie (e.g., "Netflix and chill"), agreeing to move to a secluded place (e.g., bedroom, apartment, etc.), or asking or agreeing to obtain a condom (Beres 2010; Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Jozkowski et al. 2018). Research also finds that a partner's lack of refusal to participate in sexual activities (e.g., not saying "no") is often interpreted as

consent (Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Hirsch et al. 2019). Relatedly, some studies suggest that having engaged in sexual activity with a partner previously and/or the presence of an ongoing committed relationship is also associated with people's interpretation of their partners' consent, whereby consent is assumed unless otherwise stated (Brady et al. 2018; Humphreys 2007; Humphreys and Herold 2007; Willis and Jozkowski 2019).

Some cues that people interpret as consent (e.g., lack of refusal, agreeing to transition to a secluded place) sit uncomfortably close to rape myths and fall short of ideals about what consent should look like in practice (e.g., affirmative consent) (Hirsch et al. 2019; Jozkowski et al. 2018; Muehlenhard et al. 2016). For example, interpreting a person's lack of refusal as consent is related to the rape myth that "If a girl doesn't physically resist sex—even if protesting verbally—it really can't be considered rape" (McMahon and Farmer 2011), which could lead to the perpetration and justification of sexual assault. Some scholars suggest that relying on such cues to interpret consent, as well as nonverbal cues in general, creates room for misinterpreting a partner's consent. The idea that sexual assaults are often due to miscommunicating and misinterpreting consent is implicit in affirmative consent policies, which have been implemented in states and universities across the U.S in an attempt to reduce high rates of sexual assault (Bennett 2016; Bogle 2014; Jozkowski 2016). Affirmative consent policies, to varying degrees, mandate that consent must be actively and affirmatively communicated throughout the sexual experience, and many state that neither silence, the lack of refusal,

nor the existence of a romantic or other sexual relationship can be interpreted as sexual consent (Curtis and Burnett 2017; Gruber 2016).

While concerns regarding the misinterpretation of consent and the link between certain behaviors interpreted as consent and rape myths may be warranted, they are most justified when looking at behaviors interpreted as consent in isolation from other such behaviors and the larger situational context. However, research suggests that behaviors interpreted as consent rarely occur in isolation from other such behaviors and are seldom the only behaviors that people point to when describing how they interpret consent. Rather, research suggests that people's interpretation of their partners' consent is part of an ongoing process that typically involves many interconnected, concurrent behaviors (Beres 2010; Beres 2014; Brady et al. 2018; Humphreys 2004; Jozkowski et al. 2018; Muehlenhard et al. 2016; Powell 2008). For example, studies suggest that when people interpret their partner's lack of refusal as consent, including in committed relationships, they do so alongside other aforementioned indicators (e.g., active participation, whether they seem to be enjoying themselves, are relaxed and comfortable, etc.) (Muehlenhard et al. 2016). Thus, pointing to seemingly problematic interpretations of consent in isolation from the fully contextualized process of sexual consent negotiation can itself be problematic and lead to ineffective interventions. Indeed, research on the communication and interpretation of sexual consent increasingly refutes the idea that many sexual assaults are due to miscommunication. Instead, it suggests that most men and women accurately understand when their partners consent (and do not consent) to sexual activity (Beres 2010; Beres et al. 2014; O'Byrne et al. 2008; O'Byrne et al. 2006).

Despite generating vital insights about how people interpret their partners' sexual consent, the sexual consent literature has data collection and sample limitations. First, most research is quantitative and uses surveys and/or hypothetical scenarios, and therefore, may not fully account for real-life sexual behaviors and experiences which are often nuanced and contextual. Such methods are also not ideal for capturing concurrent or sequential behaviors, the different meanings ascribed to behaviors or behavioral sequences in different contexts, or the overall process of sexual consent negotiation and interpretation (Muehlenhard et al. 2016). In contrast to the quantitative methods used in much of the extant literature, qualitative methods are better suited for capturing contextualized, rich data regarding participants' thoughts, feelings, and actions, because they allow for open-ended inquiry, follow-up questions, and nuanced responses. Thus, qualitative methods may be more suitable for understanding how people interpret their partners' sexual consent in their actual sexual experiences.

Second, men's interpretation of sexual consent has typically only been examined in relation to women's interpretation of consent. The literature lacks in-depth understanding of men's interpretation of consent within their sexual experiences. Since men are the primary perpetrators of sexual assault, better understanding the ways in which they interpret sexual consent could lead to the development of more effective sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives, and as a result, greater healthy and consensual sexual experiences among men and women. This chapter addresses the limitations of the extant literature through its use of multiple qualitative methods and a

sample of heterosexual college men and answers the following research question: how do heterosexual college men interpret sexual consent?

METHODS

Participants and procedures

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 40 heterosexual undergraduate men at a large public university in inland Southern California. Following the semi-structured interview, a subsample of participants (n = 16) completed sexual activity diaries each day for two weeks in which they chronicled their sexual experiences. After each week of completing their diaries, the subsample participated in diary debriefing interviews, in which probing questions were asked about the diary entries and participants explained their entries in more detail.

Participants were recruited through two methods between Winter quarter of 2018 and Winter quarter of 2019. Fifteen participants were recruited from a sample of 401 men who participated in a previous study conducted by the researcher. Twenty-five participants were recruited from large lecture courses in a variety of subjects. Prospective participants were asked to participate in a study regarding the sexual attitudes and experiences of college students and, if interested, were directed to complete a brief eligibility survey. People were eligible for the semi-structured interviews if they identified as a heterosexual man, were age 18 years or older, currently enrolled in university courses, and engaged in sexual intercourse in the six months prior to completing the eligibility survey. To increase the likelihood that people invited to complete sexual activity diaries and participate in diary debriefing interviews would

engage in sexual activity during diary data collection, subsample inclusion criteria included having engaged in sexual activity with another person at least five times in the 30 days prior to the eligibility survey. Subsample participants were also purposively selected to achieve variation in the subsample reflective of the full sample regarding types of sexual experiences, communication styles (e.g., primarily verbal or nonverbal, combination, etc.), relationship status, race/ethnicity, and class standing (e.g., freshman, sophomore, etc.).

Table 1 contains the full-sample participant demographics. Participants were primarily juniors (n = 17) or seniors (n = 20) in college and Latino (n = 20) or non-Latino Asian (n = 13), which is similar to the racial/ethnic distribution of the university's student population. Nearly all participants were in a committed romantic relationship at the time of the interview (n = 29), though the duration of their relationships varied. Table 2 contains the subsample participant demographics. Most subsample participants were Latino (n = 7) or non-Latino Asian (n = 4), and all had sex partners during data collection. Most subsample participants were in committed romantic relationships.

Prior to the semi-structured interview, participants gave informed consent. Semi-structured interview topics included participants' romantic relationship and sexual history, their communication of willingness to engage in sexual activity with their partners, how they understood that their partners were willing to engage in sexual activity with them (i.e., their interpretation of consent), and their thoughts about and understanding of the concept of sexual consent. Semi-structured interviews were audio

recorded and lasted between 45-90 minutes. Participants were compensated with a $15 Visa gift card after they completed the semi-structured interview.

Subsample participants completed sexual activities diaries via Qualtrics survey software, and each participant had a personalized web link corresponding to their diary. Subsample participants were directed to write in the diary each day, specifying whether they engaged in sexual activity with another person and describing the details of those experiences, including discussions about and attempts at sexual activity. The subsample was also prompted to provide information about the context of the sexual activity, such as the location and timing, actions, behaviors, and events that led to sexual activity, and the nature and status of their relationship to their sexual partner. For the duration of their diary participation, subsample participants received automatic SMS text alerts every day at 9 A.M. reminding them to complete their diary for the previous day, which is consistent with best practices for this method (Bolger et al. 2003).

Subsample participants were asked in the diary debriefing interviews to explain their entries in more detail, such as more information about the context and decision-making processes related to the sexual activity. Diary debriefing interviews also included follow-up questions about participants' responses in the semi-structured interviews. Depending on the amount of sexual activity recorded in the diaries, diary debriefing interviews lasted between 10 and 60 minutes. Subsample participants were compensated with a $20 Visa gift card after the first diary debriefing interview and $25 after the second diary debriefing interview. The university's Institutional Review Board approved the study.

Analysis

Undergraduate research assistants, trained by the investigator, transcribed audio recorded interviews and proofread them for accuracy alongside the audio recording. Participants were assigned pseudonyms, and identifying information was removed from the transcripts. The inductive analysis of the transcripts drew upon grounded theory techniques (e.g., simultaneous data collection and analysis and constant comparison) and thematic analysis (Charmaz 2004; Terry et al. 2017).

After uploading interview transcripts into Atlas.ti (qualitative data analysis software), the researcher employed an iterative system of open and focused coding to examine the semantic and latent meanings of participants' responses (Charmaz 2004; Terry et al. 2017). Starting with open coding, the data were analyzed to identify patterns of common ideas and concepts discussed by participants. The researcher coded each transcript line-by-line and new ideas were labeled and coded as they emerged. Focused coding was used to categorize the data within identified patterns. Atlas.ti, was used to highlight the data and corresponding themes and digitally create labels and notes about interpretations. Throughout this process the researcher combined and sorted codes into overarching themes and subthemes and made connections between them (Charmaz 2004; Warren and Karner 2015). Memos were used throughout this process to help the researcher document the analytic process as it developed and reflect on the data (Charmaz 2004; Morse et al. 2002).

Data from the semi-structured interviews, diaries, and diary debriefing interviews were triangulated to yield a deep understanding of participants' interpretation of their

sexual partners' consent communication. The subsample's semi-structured interview data was analyzed to verify whether it aligned with their diary and debriefing interview data. Each source of data corresponded to each other, which strengthened the presumption that the semi-structured interviews corresponded to participants' actual sexual experiences. Therefore, diary and debriefing interview data were used to verify the key themes found in the semi-structured interview data – increasing the reliability of the findings and mitigating the potential limitations of participants' memory recall. Data from the diaries and debriefing interviews also provided depth and rich, real-life examples of the themes.

Following the creation of the final thematic scheme and codebook, two teams of trained undergraduate research assistants were assigned analytic codes for which to code each transcript. The researcher and research assistants met weekly to resolve discrepancies and provide clarification. The researcher reviewed each transcript coded by research assistants for accuracy and consistency with the codebook. This process was done in order to finalize the number of participants represented in each code and related theme.

RESULTS

Three themes emerged as the main ways in which participants interpreted their partners' sexual consent: 1) assuming consent unless otherwise stated, 2) affirmative responses to sexual advances, and 3) initiating sexual activity. Nearly all participants (n = 38) fell into multiple themes, and only two participants fell into solely one theme. In this way, participants described interpreting various signals of their partners' consent in different situations and often multiple signals of consent simultaneously. Therefore, in

most cases, the data suggested that participants interpreted their partner's consent through a combination of these themes.

Assuming consent unless otherwise stated

Participants (n = 32) often described assuming that their partner consented to sexual activity unless they stated otherwise. However, they based their assumptions on more than the lack of their partner's verbal or physical refusal, though the lack of verbal or physical refusal was a core component of their interpretation. Two primary elements of participants' assumptions of their partner's consent included their partner's consent to previous sexual activity and conversations between them and their partners in which their partners established their sexual boundaries and preferences.

Consent to previous sexual activity

Half of participants (n = 21) assumed that their partners' consent was present because they had previously engaged in sexual activity with each other. Many of these participants saw their partner's consent to previous sexual activity as consent for the *same* sexual activity in the future. For example, when asked how he knew his partner was willing to engage in sexual activity without explicitly asking, Sid (junior, non-Latino Asian) said, "we'd do it mostly because we knew we'd done those kind of things before...If it was the same kinda thing that we had already done, we didn't really feel a need to ask each other." Likewise, Adam (senior, non-Latino Asian) explained,

> Let's say day one was kissing, next time you know kissing is okay, of course...and day twelve would be like third base. That's how you know day fifteen to twenty

it's okay to go to third base...after you have sex, [that's how you know] it's okay to have sex after the first time.

Many of these participants also saw their partner's consent to previous sexual activity as consent for a *different* sexual activity in the future. For example, Isaac (sophomore, Latino) said, "I feel like if a girl's willing to do anything sexual, like oral, then for the most part she'd be willing to go even further...In my experiences, it's always been, like, if you're down for oral, then you're down sex." Jonah (sophomore, Latino) expressed a similar interpretation of his partner's consent as Isaac when he explained, "if a person gives you oral sex, I'm sure they want sexual intercourse to happen as well." When asked if he felt the same way about a person's willingness to engage in genital touching, he responded, "Yeah. 'Cause for them to feel comfortable while you're touching them in those parts, I mean, it's just part of the first step they want you to take before initiating the rest." Thus, these participants interpreted their partner's willingness to engage in sexual activities in which they previously engaged prior to or within the same sexual encounter as their consent, especially for but not limited to sexual intercourse.

After engaging in sexual activity multiple times with their partner, most participants (n = 28) described basing their interpretation of their partner's consent on the pattern of sexual activity that typically occurred between them and their partners and/or the pattern of activity that typically led to sexual activity. For example, participants explained that because they and their partner regularly engaged in a particular sexual activity, they knew she implicitly consented to it in the future. Chris (senior, non-Latino

Asian) said, "the more we [had sexual intercourse], the more I knew she was okay with it." Raj (junior, non-Latino Asian) said, "it was more of a given after the second or third time, because after that, you know that the other person is willing to do it...I don't see how we don't want to do it." Jonah said, "[Consent is] pretty much implied if we've been [having sex] for a while. 'Cause obviously, I'm pretty sure if I keep asking every time, the girl's gonna feel annoyed." For these participants, engaging in sexual intercourse multiple times with a partner was enough information on which to infer their partner's willingness to engage in sexual intercourse moving forward. These participants often explicitly stated or implied that after having sex with a person multiple times, consent was obvious, such as in Raj's expressed lack of understanding of why he or his partner would not want to have sex after already engaging in it multiple times and Jonah's assertion that his partner would become annoyed if he verbally asked for consent during every sexual encounter.

When describing the pattern of activities that typically led to sexual activity, and from which they inferred their partner's consent, the influence of different living arrangements came up frequently, such as when one person lived with their parents and the other lived in their own apartment or dorm. In these cases, participants described only being able to engage in sexual activity in one location, such as the participants' apartment. Similarly, in the case of long-distance relationships, participants explained that they could only have sex when they saw each other in person. Participants described observing the pattern of where and when sex occurred and basing their interpretation of their partner's consent on this pattern. For example, Luis (junior, Latino), who was in a

long-distance relationship, explained how he knew his partner was willing to engage in sexual activity this way, “When we get to see each other, that’s an indication. We’ve been away from each other, so that makes it a little easier to know...to be honest, it’s pretty much implied.” Also in a long-distance relationship, Michael (senior, non-Latino Asian) said, “Whenever she comes to Riverside, it’s expected for both of us that we’re most likely gonna have sex, ‘cause we don’t see each other throughout the week.” In this way, participants often noted the context of typical sexual activity between them and their partners, such as its typical time, place, and behaviors that often occurred prior, and considered them as indicators of their partner’s consent.

Many participants who inferred their partner’s consent based on previous sexual activity in which they and their partners engaged also described paying attention to their partner’s sexual pleasure within the sexual activity in which they previously engaged. If participants saw that their partners enjoyed the sexual activity in the past, they assumed consent to the same sexual activity in the future. Raj said, “We’d know what felt good to the other person...she’d say, ‘oh my god, that felt really good.’ Then I’d keep that in mind for the next time we’d have sex because I’d be like, ‘okay, I know this feels good to her.’” When explaining how he knows what his partner is willing to do, Kyle (junior, Latino) said, “Usually I just find out what she really likes and stick to that...I try and see her reactions. Like, usually I can tell she’s coming. I can see how much she enjoys it.” Thus, participants often saw their partner’s consent as implied for activities in which they previously engaged, especially those in which they engaged multiple times and those which their partners seemed to enjoy.

Conversations establishing boundaries and preferences

For 29 participants, their consent interpretations were often informed by conversations between them and their partners in which their partners communicated their sexual boundaries and preferences. In these conversations, participants and their partners typically discussed their likes and dislikes, described sexual activities in which they wanted to participate in the future, and sometimes discussed rules-of-engagement for future sexual experiences. Participants described basing their interpretation of their partner's consent for future sexual activities on these conversations.

Some participants described coming to an agreement that their partners would stop them or say something if they did not want them to do something. Other participants described verbal agreements between them and their partners in which they agreed that one or both of them were always willing to engage in sexual activity if the other person was willing. Manuel (junior, Latino) described a conversation between him and a prospective sexual partner in which she communicated her desire for him to verbally obtain her consent prior to engaging in sexual activity, "I was like, 'what would you be okay with doing?' And then that's when she told me, like, 'I'm honestly open to a lot of things as long as you ask beforehand.'" This conversation between Manuel and his partner laid the ground rules for how to proceed in sexual encounters moving forward, in which he sought verbal consent prior to engaging in any sexual activity with her. In a similar way, Ethan (junior, Latino) described a night in which his partner said something along the lines of "I want [sex] all the time now," which he interpreted as consent to freely initiate and engage in any sexual activities he desired, unless she said otherwise.

He said that after she made that statement, “she’s never said no to something” and has been “open to trying every single thing."

Sometimes these conversations occurred immediately after engaging in sexual activity. In these instances, participants described conversations in which both partners evaluated the sexual experience. Often such post-sex conversations followed engaging in new sexual activities, which sometimes were, and other times were not, previously discussed. Whether their partner positively or negatively evaluated the experience determined whether participants would (try to) engage in a particular sexual activity or variation of a sexual activity in the future. Michael described trying new, previously undiscussed, sexual activities or variations thereof, and the impacts of conversations following the sexual experience on his perception of his partner’s consent for those activities in the future:

> I’ll introduce something new and add it on to stuff we usually do. If she doesn’t say anything about it, I assume that is okay.... Afterwards, we’re comfortable enough to talk about what we like and what we didn’t like.... A couple of times she said, “oh, that kinda felt uncomfortable. And then we just didn’t do it again. But most of them time she’ll tell me afterwards that she liked it. From there I know what I can be doing next time.

In this instance, Michael described assuming his partner’s consent for the first time he tried a new sexual activity (i.e., “if she doesn’t say anything about it, I assume that is okay”) and interpreting his partner’s statements of enjoyment following the experience as consent for the same sexual activity in the future. Likewise, he also interpreted his

partner's statements of discomfort following the experience as her lack of consent for that activity in the future.

Most commonly, such conversations occurred at some point prior, but not immediately prior, to engaging in sexual activity, such as earlier in the day or one or several days prior, and often over text message or another digital platform (e.g., Instagram, Twitter, etc.). For example, when asked how he knew what his partner was willing to do, Colin (junior, Latino) said, "I tend to make my own judgment on that. I assume what could lead into having sex. I assume what she wants to do." When probed what information informed his judgment, he said, "It's typically things she says in the past. Like, she'll tell me, 'I wish you'd perform oral on me,' stuff like that. So, I assume the next time I see her, it's something she'd like for me to do to her." These conversations were common prior to the first-time participants and their partners engaged in sexual activity, especially sexual intercourse, or before engaging in other sexual activities in which they had not previously engaged with each other. André (junior, non-Latino Black) described receiving a pornographic GIF from his partner accompanied by the message, "hey, I want to try this" and interpreting that as consent to perform that activity the next time he and his partner were together. Sometimes these conversations were less direct, such as in a scenario described by Isaac. Isaac described interpreting a prospective partner's engagement in and use of "dirty talk" as their consent to engage in sexual activity the next time they were together:

> Sometimes I'll talk to a girl and we'll get a little flirtatious, and it'll move on to a dirty sense.... I assume that if a girl's talking dirty, they're giving consent, 'cause

> they wouldn't talk dirty if they weren't comfortable having sex with you....I assume, like, 'hey, if I were to hang out with her another time when we're by ourselves, I take that as consent, like, if she's okay with it now, I'm pretty sure she'll be okay with it when we hang out. When we're hanging out, I'm less resistant to make a move. So, like, if I reach in under her pants, or take off my pants, I assume that she's okay with it if she doesn't stop me.

For Isaac, a (prospective) partner's willingness to engage in sexually explicit communication equated to her consent to physically engage in sexual activity with him and made him feel empowered to initiate sexual activity, which, if it was not refused, he interpreted as consensual.

Affirmative responses to sexual advances

While most participants described situations in which they assumed their partners were willing to engage in sexual activity based on previous conversations and previous sexual activity, most participants also described paying attention to cues throughout, or at least the onset of, a sexual encounter. In some cases, it seemed participants looked for cues to verify their assumption of their partner's consent. Nearly all participants (n = 36) described interpreting their partner's positive responses to participants' verbal and nonverbal sexual advances as consent. Most participants described making sexual advances when they saw signals from their partner that suggested they were willing to engage in sexual activity, such as increased physical closeness, sensual touching, wearing revealing clothing, being in a positive mood, and eye contact. Chris recounted a situation

in which he and a prospective sexual partner, whom he perceived as promiscuous, were hanging out together and he made a sexual advance this way:

> She was laying on me and wearing a skirt, and, I don't know if this was on purpose, but her ass was exposed. It was visible. You can pull it down right? I think it might have been on purpose. I interpreted it as a visual sign that she wanted more. I tested it by moving my hand around her butt and seeing how she would respond, so positive or negative.

For Chris, his partner's revealing clothing, which he perceived as intentional, suggested she might be willing to engage in sexual activity. He sought to verify his perception of her willingness through a nonverbal sexual advance to elicit a response, which he used as further evidence of her willingness. Later, Chris explained that his partner reacted positively by touching his genitals, and they began engaging in other sexual activity.

Like Chris, most participants described paying attention to their partners' nonverbal responses to their sexual advances, which often occurred simultaneously. The most common nonverbal responses that participants interpreted as consent included reciprocation, genital touching, enthusiastic participation, and the lack of verbal or physical sexual refusal. In a diary entry, Juan (sophomore, Latino) explained that he believed his partner consented to sexual activity because, "when I started kissing and touching her, she began to kiss me back and touch me as well. She did not say she did not want to have sex." In this situation, Juan pointed to both the presence of his partner's reciprocation and the absence of her refusal as signals of her consent. In other diary entries, participants pointed to indications of their partner's pleasure as their consent.

Manuel wrote, “Her gestures told me she was enjoying and okay with it all.” Isaac wrote, “she had the face of pure satisfaction.” Thus, nonverbal responses to participant’s actions were often interpreted as consent.

In addition to making nonverbal sexual advances and interpreting their partners’ nonverbal responses, most participants (n = 31) also described verbally asking whether their partner wanted to engage in sexual activity and receiving their partner’s verbal affirmation. In diary entries, participants wrote, “I blatantly asked her” (Armaan, senior, non-Latino Other Race), “I asked if she wanted to have sex and she said yes,” (Daniel, senior, non-Latino White), and “I asked her, ‘do you wanna do it?’ She said yes” (Edward, junior, Latino). Some participants (n = 10) primarily sought their partner’s verbal consent for new or atypical sexual activities, such as prior to the first time engaging in sexual intercourse, anal sex, and BDSM activities. For example, Sid said, “we would only ask if it was something different. If it was the same kinda thing we had already done, we didn’t feel a need to ask each other.” Similarly, Jonathan (sophomore, non-Latino Multiracial) explained how he knew what his partner was willing to do by saying, “She likes everything, but the two things that aren’t the traditional way, oral and anal sex, are the questionable things. So, when it comes to oral sex, I’ll be like, ‘can you suck my dick?’ Or with anal, I’ll be like, ‘do you wanna try it?’” For these participants, their partners’ consent was assumed for activities that were part of their typical sexual repertoire. Verbally asking for consent was reserved for atypical sexual activities.

Other participants were less direct when verbally ascertaining their partner’s consent. These participants (n = 12) interpreted their partner’s consent as their agreement

to go home with the participant or to his or her bedroom. Kyle described assessing his partner's consent to engage in sexual activity early in their relationship this way, "I'd say, like, 'you got free time, I got free time, like, do you wanna come over?' She knew what that meant. Everyone knows that that means...it's verbal, but you're not directly saying, 'do you wanna have sex?'" Salil (senior, non-Latino Asian) also described an invitation to someone's home or bedroom as universally understood to mean consent:

> Girls definitely think guys always want to have sex. So, girls are like, "all I have to do if I want to have sex is show them I want to have sex." By showing, it's like, flirting back, like, "if he asked me to go to his house, I would go to his house and then, like, if he asked me to come upstairs, I'll go upstairs." So that's how they show.

For Salil, the shared understanding of accepting an invitation to go to someone's home or bedroom rests on the idea that women subscribe to the traditional sex script that men are always ready and willing to have sex. As with Salil and Kyle, the meaning of an invitation home or to a bedroom was clear to these participants. Therefore, it was also clear that acceptance meant a reciprocation of sexual interest and consent to sexual activity.

Initiating sexual activity

Nearly all participants (n = 39) interpreted their partners' initiation of sexual activity as their consent. Participants described verbal and nonverbal ways in which their partners initiated sexual activity. The most common ways in which participants described their partners nonverbally initiating sexual activity involved kissing the participant,

touching participants' genitals, shifting their bodies on top of participants, removing participants' clothing, and removing their own clothing. These behaviors were often sequential or simultaneous. For example, in a diary entry, Juan said, "We were laying on her bed when she got closer to me and laid down on top of me. She then began kissing me...." Later, he said that he knew she was willing to engage in sexual activity "because of the way she was kissing me and getting closer. It's the usual way she signals she wants to have sex." Similarly, when explaining how he knew that his partner was willing to engage in sexual activity, Alan (junior, non-Latino Asian) said, "When we're just chilling, she undresses herself and then just throws herself at me, and I would know that she wants to have intercourse...She'll sort of cling on to me, start making out or kissing me." Like Juan and Alan, most participants were able to describe nonverbal ways in which their partners initiated sexual activity, which they interpreted as their partner's consent. Additionally, most of these participants recognized their partner's initiation of sexual activity as a pattern of behaviors that often led to sexual intercourse, which also influenced their interpretation of those behaviors as their partner's consent.

Many participants (n = 26) described knowing their partners were willing to engage in sexual activity because their partners stated their sexual desires. For example, when explaining how he knew that his partner was willing to have sex the first time, Salil said, "She literally verbally said it, like, 'I want to have sex with you when we get to my house." Similar to Salil's experience, participants described their partners saying, "I'm horny," "let's have sex," and "let's do it." Participants also described partners explicitly stating their desires while engaging in sexual activity, which served as cues for

transitioning between sexual activities. For example, in a diary entry, Isaac wrote, “A few minutes into the movie, she grabbed by dick and started running on it...She proceeded to take it out on her own. She sucked it and stopped after a few minutes. She told me she wanted to have sex....” Likewise, when Jonah explained how the transition occurred between his partner performing oral sex to engaging in vaginal intercourse, he said, “She said, ‘just fuck me.’” Thus, many participants described situations in which their partners were verbally forthright about their willingness and desire to engage in sexual activity, which participants understood as their consent.

Similar to participants’ partners explicitly stating their sexual desires, participants also described believing that their partners were willing to engage in sexual activity because their partner asked them if they wanted to engage in sexual activity. Daniel said he believed that partners were willing to engage in sexual activity when they asked, “‘can I...’ or ‘will you do this to me?’ ‘Will you go down on me?’” Some participants suggested that their partners would mostly ask to engage in sexual activity if it was a new activity or an activity in which they did not typically engage, such as prior to the first time they had sexual intercourse with each other. Michael said he knew his girlfriend was willing to have sexual intercourse for the first time with him this way, “We just started fooling around, and then she was like, ‘do you wanna have sex?’” Miguel (freshman, Latino) said his partner is “really direct” when she wants to engage in a sexual activity in which they have not previously engaged, “she’ll ask me if I wanna try it...she’ll be like, ‘can we try something else?’ And then she’ll show me what she wants.” Other participants explained that partners asking them whether they wanted to engage in sexual

activity was part of their typical sexual communication and not reserved for atypical sexual activities. For example, Colin said, “For the most part, she’s the one that engages it. So, most of the time she’ll ask me, like, ‘do you wanna have sex?’”

Related to participants’ partners directly asking them whether they wanted to engage in sexual activity, some participants (n = 13) interpreted their partner’s invitation to a secluded place as a signal of their consent. This was most common in the context of participants’ descriptions of hookups, (i.e, casual sexual encounters) rather than in committed romantic relationships. For example, André said when he is talking to someone in which he is sexually interested at a house party or dorm party, “If she asks you to go somewhere else, it’s most likely gonna be a hookup.” Likewise, referring to his hookup experiences, Salil said he knew someone was willing to engage in sexual activity when they said:

> ‘Hey, come up here with me,’ or, ‘hey, come to the bathroom with me’ at a party or something like that. I feel like the situations I’m in, the parties and stuff, it’s a universal thing. If the girl’s, like, ‘hey, come to the bathroom with me,’ it’s kind of a safe assumption. It’s not assuming intercourse, but you know you’re gonna hookup.

For participants like André and Salil, receiving an invitation from someone to a secluded place was akin to an invitation to participate in sexual activity, though which sexual activities was typically undefined until receiving/interpreting further verbal and nonverbal communication from their partner.

DISCUSSION

This chapter showed that participants interpreted their partners' sexual consent in a variety of ways, and most participants described multiple, not mutually exclusive ways through which they interpreted their partner's consent. Most participants described at least some level of assuming their partners' consent unless their partner stated otherwise. Assumptions of partners' consent were based on previous participation in sexual activity with them, such as the pattern of sexual activity that typically occurred between them and their partners', the pattern of activity that typically led to sexual activity, and/or perceptions of their partners' pleasure during sexual activity. Interpretations of consent were also based on conversations prior to or after engaging in sexual activity in which their partners communicated their sexual boundaries and preferences and the pair agreed upon rules for future sexual experiences. Finally, nearly all participants discussed interpreting their partners' consent through an array of affirmative responses to their sexual advances, as well as nonverbal and verbal ways their partners initiated sexual activity.

Assuming consent: context and process

The finding that sexual history with a partner informed participants' assumption of their partners' consent supports and extends previous research suggesting that interpretations of sexual consent vary by the context—namely, the history of a sexual relationship (Beres 2007; Beres 2010; Humphreys and Herold 2007; Muehlenhard et al. 2016). Sexual history with a partner is termed "sexual precedent." According to sexual precedent theory, once people engage in consensual penile-vaginal intercourse, penile-

vaginal intercourse becomes expected (Livingston et al. 2004; Shotland and Goodstein 1992). To date, scholars have made claims about the role of sexual precedent in consent communication and interpretation based on limited empirical research that primarily focused on participants' attitudes about hypothetical dating or sexual assault scenarios (Beres 2007; Humphreys and Brousseau 2010; Humphreys and Herold 2007; Humphreys 2004; Monson et al. 2000; Muehlenhard et al. 2016). While previous research suggested that people in committed romantic relationships based their interpretation of their partners' consent more on assumptions rather than communication cues, almost no research has examined the role of sexual precedent in consent interpretation within individuals' actual sexual experiences. The present study joins one recent study (Willis and Jozkowski 2019) in showing the influence of sexual precedent in individuals' interpretation of their partner's sexual consent. However, the present study goes beyond Willis and Jozkowski's (2019) study of a primarily female sample by expanding knowledge of sexual precedent among a sample of men.

The present study also adds nuance and depth to the current understanding of sexual precedent. Previous research suggested that a sexual precedent was set at a single point in time (primarily the first time a couple had penile-vaginal intercourse) and was in effect from that moment forward (Humphreys 2007; Livingston et al. 2004; Monson et al. 2000; Shotland and Goodstein 1992). Willis and Jozkowski (2019) suggested that sexual precedent was likely a process rather than a single event and extended to other sexual activities besides vaginal-penile intercourse. The present study adds evidence to support both claims (i.e., sexual precedent as an event and a process). Many participants

described the first time they engaged in a particular sexual activity with someone as an indication that that their partner consented to that activity in future sexual experiences. Many participants also explicitly stated or implied that consent became obvious (i.e., assumed) after engaging in penile-vaginal intercourse with someone multiple times. Thus, on the one hand, participants described a particular moment at which a sexual precedent was set for particular sexual activities leading up to and including penile-vaginal intercourse, while on the other hand, participants also described a process through which a sexual precedent was set (e.g., engaging in penile-vaginal intercourse multiple times). However, the present study also found that sexual precedent extended to activities in which participants and their partners did not yet engage (e.g., a partner's willingness to perform oral was inferred as their willingness to engage in penile-vaginal intercourse), which no other studies have yet demonstrated. Additionally, the findings showed that some participants inferred their partners' consent to sexual activities that they seemed to enjoy in previous sexual experiences. Thus, the role of sexual precedent in some participants' interpretation of their partner's consent also encompassed their perception of their partner's pleasure. Together, and consistent with Willis and Jozkowski (2019), these findings indicate that the influence of sexual precedent on individuals' interpretation of their partner's consent begins shortly after a sexual precedent is initially set (i.e., the first time a sexual activity is engaged in), but also sometimes extends to different sexual activities that were not yet engaged in, activities that participants' partners seemed to enjoy, as well as requiring some activities to be engaged in multiple times.

This study also highlights the crucial role of context in understanding individuals' interpretation of their partners' sexual consent. For example, many participants who assumed their partner's consent noted the context of typical sexual activity between them and their partner, such as its typical time, place, and foreplay behaviors, and considered those contextual factors as indicators of their partner's consent. This is similar to recent studies that also showed the use of time and place in individuals' communication and interpretation consent (Hirsch et al. 2019; Jozkowski et al. 2018). However, previous research has not shown individuals' recognition of patterns of behaviors that often lead to sexual activity between them and their partners as a way in which consent is interpreted. Another novel finding related to the context of sexual experiences and consent was that participants based their interpretation of consent on previous conversations in which their partner communicated their sexual boundaries and preferences. These novel findings about the context of participants' interpretation of consent are consistent with understanding consent as a process rather than a single event, which has been debated (Beres 2007; Muehlenhard et al. 2016). Research also increasingly suggests that consent is a process that can occur well before sexual activity occurs as well as throughout a sexual experience (Brady et al. 2018; Hirsch et al. 2019; Jozkowski et al. 2018; Muehlenhard et al. 2016; Willis and Jozkowski 2019). However, these findings suggest that the process of consent can occur far in advance of the onset of sexual activity (e.g., multiple days), depending on when such conversations between (prospective) sexual partners occur.

Much previous research has not fully accounted for the context of consent, let alone the context of consent in individuals' actual sexual experiences. This study's novel findings related to the process of consent and its context relate to the strengths of using multiple qualitative methods, which are well suited for understanding processes and context (Charmaz 2004; Charmaz 2009; Warren and Karner 2015). As such, more research is needed to investigate the process and context of consent interpretation in peoples' actual sexual experiences using these methods (e.g., multiple qualitative methods, diary methods, etc.). Such research stands to yield a more complete and robust understanding of sexual consent. Additionally, given that most participants were in long-term romantic relationships, research is needed to understand whether individuals in other kinds of relationships and individuals not in relationships similarly interpret partners' consent.

Sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives should address heterosexual college men's reliance on context-based assumptions for interpreting their partner's consent. While research suggests that relying on contextual cues rather than communication does not always result in nonconsensual sex, especially among those in established sexual relationships (Willis and Jozkowski 2019), educational initiatives should emphasize that partners' consent should not be assumed to be present when the pair shares a sexual history. Though regular sexual partners may naturally shift towards a standard of consent rather than nonconsent (Muehlenhard et al. 2016), educators should encourage men to explicitly discuss this shift before concluding that it exists. Educational initiatives should also convey the importance of continually focusing on partners' verbal

and nonverbal communication, despite contextual cues that might suggest the presence of consent.

Responding and initiating

In addition to interpreting consent through context-based assumptions, participants also described understanding their partner's consent through affirmative verbal and nonverbal responses, as well as their partners' initiation of sexual activity, which suggests that at any point in time, participants often used multiple, simultaneous cues to understand whether their partner is consenting. These findings are similar to what Beres (2010) found in her study about consent interpretation among couples, which she called "active participation," referring to a "constellation of behaviors" used to signal and interpret consent (p. 8).

Nonverbal behaviors

Similar to previous research, participants pointed to many nonverbal behaviors as indicators of their partner's consent (Burkett and Hamilton 2012; Burrow et al. 1998; Curtis and Burnett 2017; Hirsch et al. 2019; Jozkowski et al. 2018; Jozkowski et al. 2014b). However, in contrast with much previous research, the present study demonstrated the process through which affirmative responses to sexual advances were ascertained, such that participants typically made a sexual advance when they noticed signals from their partner that suggested they might be willing to engage in sexual activity (e.g., increased physical closeness, sensual touching, positive mood, etc.). In this way, participants' sexual advances that elicited affirmative responses were also contextual. After making a sexual advance, participants then looked for further evidence

of their partner's willingness. Additionally, participants seldom pointed to just one signal that suggested their partner might be willing to engage in sexual activity and pointed instead to multiple signals, which is consistent with previous research (Beres 2010; Beres 2014; Muehlenhard et al. 2016). These findings are also consistent with previous research showing that men are capable of accurately interpreting subtle behavioral cues of their partners' willingness to engage in sexual activity, which suggests that misinterpretation of sexual consent is not a major cause of sexual assault (Beres 2010; Beres et al. 2014; O'Byrne et al. 2008; O'Byrne et al. 2006).

Consistent with previous research (Hickman and Muehlenhard 1999; Jozkowski et al. 2014a; Jozkowski et al. 2014b), most participants indicated that they interpreted their partners' nonverbal initiation of sexual activity as their consent. This study extends previous research by showing that participants' interpretation of their partner's initiation of sexual activity was influenced by the perceived pattern of sexual activities that often led to sex, rather than any sole actions in and of themselves. This finding points to the influence of sexual precedent and the relationship context on participants' interpretation of their sexual consent (Humphreys and Herold 2007; Muehlenhard et al. 2016; Willis and Jozkowski 2019), which likely contributed to participants' recognition of patterns leading to sexual activity. Future research on the interpretation of sexual consent should continue to account for relationship context of sexual partners, rather than pointing to indicators of consent in isolation from the context in which they occur.

Verbal behaviors

In addition to interpreting their partner's consent nonverbally, most participants also described interpreting their partner's consent through verbally seeking their partner's verbal affirmative response or through their partner verbally initiating sexual activity by asking to engage in sexual activity or stating their desire to do so. Some participants described verbal communication as primarily occurring in the context of new or atypical sexual activities, which is consistent with other research suggesting that sexual partners rely more on explicit sexual communication as the pair expands its sexual repertoire (Willis and Jozkowski 2019). Overall, the data suggested that explicit verbal sexual communication between participants and their partners was common, which may be related to the fact that most participants described sexual experiences within committed romantic relationships. Yet, research shows mixed findings regarding the influence of the relationship context on the amount of verbal sexual communication that occurs between partners. Some research suggests that nonverbal consent interpretation is more common than verbal consent interpretation, especially in relationships (Beres 2010; Beres 2014; Jozkowski et al. 2018; Jozkowski et al. 2014b; Willis and Jozkowski 2019). Other research suggests that as sexual relationships progress, explicit verbal consent communication becomes more common (Willis and Jozkowski 2019). Likewise, previous research suggested that men were more comfortable engaging in verbal consent communication with girlfriends with whom they shared a sexual history, because they did not fear rejection or a change in their partners' positive feelings toward them if they asked to engage in sexual activity (Foubert, Garner, and Thaxter 2006). Future research is

needed to better understand the role of relationship context on partners' verbal consent communication.

The degree to which participants described their partners verbally initiating sexual activity is also inconsistent with the traditional sex script in which women are typically consent-givers and men are typically consent-seekers (Masters et al. 2013). However, these findings may be due to changing sexual scripts that offer alternative scripts in which the seeking, giving, and receiving of consent may be more fluid and interchangeable between men and women and across sexual interactions (Beres et al. 2019; Epstein et al. 2009; Masters et al. 2013).

Some participants also described less direct ways of verbally interpreting their partner's consent, including their (prospective) partner's agreement to go home with the participant or to his bedroom, as well as invitations from (prospective) partners to go to a secluded place. Participants most commonly described these consent cues in the context of casual relationships, rather than committed relationships, and described these cues as very clear ways of understanding their partners' willingness to engage in sexual activity. These findings are consistent with previous research (Beres et al. 2014), some of which showed subtle gender differences in the interpretation of consent based on an (accepted) invitation to a secluded place (Jozkowski et al. 2018). Jozkowski, Manning, and Hunt (2018) showed that men interpreted these signals as akin to consent, while women saw these signals as possible consent. Thus, for men, a partner's (accepted) invitation to a secluded place represented the moment at which sexual consent occurred, while women saw such signals as part of an ongoing process of consent communication (Jozkowski et

al. 2018). However, participants in the present study also described other, often simultaneous ways in which they interpreted their partners' consent following an (accepted) invitation to a secluded place, which suggests that they did not understand their partner's (accepted) invitation as primary or sufficient evidence of sexual consent and that they may have (implicitly) understood the communication of consent as a process, rather than a single moment. This divergent finding may be due to methodological differences between previous research and the present study.

Scholars have argued that quantitative methods that use hypothetical scenarios or ask participants to reflect on imagined sexual scenarios may not capture the nuances of participants' actual sexual experiences, such as co-occurring consent signals and the process of consent interpretation (Beres 2007; Muehlenhard et al. 2016). However, previous qualitative research has also seldom investigated participants' detailed, actual sexual experiences using methods best suited for doing so (e.g., diary methods). In contrast to much previous research, the present study asked participants to describe their actual sexual experiences in detail from beginning to end. As such, participants' narratives revealed and provided opportunities to probe deeply into how they understood their partners' consent throughout the sexual encounter. These methods revealed co-occurring cues through which participants interpreted their partners' consent (e.g., an invitation to a secluded place *and* a reciprocated sexual advance).

Future research should continue to investigate the interpretation of sexual consent in individuals' actual sexual experiences, attending to the nuances and details of those experiences to further understand the process of consent communication and

interpretation. Doing so may yield a more complete and accurate understanding of individual's interpretation of consent. Sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives should also provide opportunities for heterosexual men to consider their actual sexual experiences and how they understood their partners were willing to engage in sexual activity. In doing so, educational initiatives could point to discrepancies between individuals' methods of interpreting their partner's consent and the methods outlined in policy. Educational initiatives could also provide examples of consent signals occurring throughout sexual experiences consistent with policy, with specific examples from actual sexual experiences. Doing so could help educational initiatives better account for the nuances of consent and move beyond the idea that consent is simply a "yes" or "no."

Conclusion

This chapter described the various, nuanced ways that heterosexual college men interpreted their partner's sexual consent in their actual sexual experiences. The context in which participants' sexual experiences occurred was important for understanding their interpretation of their partners' consent, such as their relationship/sexual history with their partner. Participants often interpreted their partners' consent using multiple, simultaneous signals. While most participants made assumptions about their partners' consent, they also pointed to a variety of verbal and nonverbal signals of their partners' consent. To stimulate healthy, consensual sexual experiences, sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives should provide opportunities for men to critically evaluate their sexual experiences and their interpretations of their partners' consent, and, in doing so, encourage men to continually focus on their partners' verbal and nonverbal

communication, despite context-based assumptions or other perceived consent signals inconsistent with consent policies. Further understanding men's interpretation of sexual consent in their actual sexual experiences is important for developing effective sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The impetus for this study was a desire to understand the roots and causes of sexual violence against women, which I considered to be one of the most visceral forms of gendered oppression. My exploration of the (vast) sexual violence literature eventually led me to the topic of sexual consent, which I began to recognize as foundational to the understanding and prevention of sexual violence. I found that the presence or absence of sexual consent is the difference between consensual sex and sexual violence, and that understanding sexually violent situations requires understanding nonviolent situations. By following that thread, I found that the relatively nascent state of the sexual consent literature meant there were many opportunities to make important contributions. In short, I found that most sexual consent research is quantitative, does not investigate individuals' actual sexual experiences or the contexts in which they occur, and has largely been based on samples of women. For these reasons, previous research provides only a limited understanding of what individuals, especially men, think about consent and the behaviors they use to express and interpret consent. Thus, my goal was to investigate how college men conceptualized, communicated, and interpreted sexual consent. I endeavored to root my investigation in individuals' actual sexual experiences using research methods best suited for doing so (i.e., in-depth interviews and sexual activity diaries; see Appendix 5 for my reflections on the research process).

The present study was underpinned by seminal empirical and theoretical sociological research that demonstrates how interactions within explicitly gendered and seemingly gender-neutral interpersonal, situational, and institutional contexts shape

gendered behaviors and experiences (e.g., Armstrong, Hamilton, and Sweeney 2006; Bogle 2008; Boswell and Spade 1996; Martin and Hummer 1989), as well as extant sexual consent research—thus bridging these two bodies of literature. The lack of sociological attention paid to sexual consent is partially to blame for the dearth of sexual consent research and its methodological limitations, and the lack of theoretical understanding of sexual consent (Beres 2007; Martin 2016). Drawing from grounded theory methods, this study used hegemonic masculinity and gendered sexual scripts as sensitizing concepts. Given the close relationship between sexual assault and masculinity and the relationship between sexual assault and consent, I approached this research mindful of the influence of gendered pressures and norms that shape individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Taken together, this study sought to understand the role of context, broadly considered, which is critical for developing theory in this area.

As evidenced by chapters 3-5, I accomplished each of my goals. Much of this study's findings supported previous research, but also contributed much needed nuanced and contextualized findings to the sexual consent literature. For example, this study showed the nuances of participants' conceptualization of consent in the context of their relationships/regular sex partners. Many participants viewed consent as changing with the duration of their relationship—moving from explicit verbal consent communication in the beginning of their relationship to nonverbal signals of consent later in their relationship. Additionally, some participants specified the types of sexual activities for which they considered explicit verbal consent necessary (i.e., new or atypical sexual activities). Participants' conceptualizations of consent were seemingly influenced by the cultural

moment in which the data were collected (i.e., the #MeToo Movement). They were also shaped by the alcohol-fueled environment in which much sexual activity occurs on college campuses, as evidenced by the fear some men expressed about facing the consequences of a sexual assault accusation and their descriptions of the complicated nature of consent amidst alcohol consumption, respectively.

This study also demonstrated the nuances of participants' communication and interpretation of consent. For example, the data showed that many of the cues that participants used to communicate and interpret sexual consent were simultaneous and sequential. Participants also described frequently waiting for their partners' initiation of sexual activity or signals from their partner that suggested they might be willing to engage in sexual activity prior to making a sexual advance, both of which are inconsistent with the traditional sex script where men are portrayed as the primary pursuers and women are portrayed as the primary "gatekeepers." In this way, this study challenged the preponderance of the traditional sex script found in previous research (e.g., Jozkowski et al. 2014a; Jozkowski and Wiersma 2015; Jozkowski et al. 2017). My findings suggest instead that sexual consent communication is not fixed and is far more fluid than the traditional sex script allows and previous research suggests. Participants' descriptions of their nonverbal consent communication (i.e., not refusing their partner, reciprocating, erections) also elicited descriptions of unwanted sexual experiences, which reflected the cultural influence of dominant masculine norms, where men are expected to always desire and be willing to engage in sexual activity (Connell 1987; Doull et al. 2013; Kimmel 2008; Stern et al. 2014). Indeed, many participants described their consent as

assumed, including some who described unwanted sexual experiences. Thus, this study pointed to a relationship between men's nonverbal forms of consent communication, unwanted sexual experiences, and dominant masculine norms.

This study also added nuance and depth to the current understanding of the process of sexual consent and the role of shared sexual history (i.e., sexual precedent) on men's interpretation of sexual consent. For example, many participants interpreted their partners' sexual consent based on a conversation between them and their partner that sometimes occurred days in advance of the sexual experience, which suggests that the process of consent can begin many days before the onset of sexual activity. Participants also described understanding their partners' consent based on their partners' consent to previous sexual activity, the pattern of sexual activity or typical activities leading to sexual activity, as well as a perception of their partners' pleasure in previous sexual activities. Thus, participants indicated that sexual precedent influenced their interpretation of their partners' consent not only after the first time that they and their partner engaged in a particular sexual activity, but also after engaging in a particular sexual activity multiple times, as well as after engaging in a sexual activity that their partner seemed to enjoy. Therefore, this study suggests that the role of shared sexual history on men's interpretation of sexual consent is more nuanced and complicated than previous research suggests.

The present study's novel findings regarding the nuances and context of sexual consent are likely due to the strengths of its methodological approach, including the in-depth focus on men's sexual experiences. While this study demonstrated many of the

nuances and contextual influences of participants' conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent, there are undoubtedly many more that were not captured by my research strategy. However, the findings show that the methodology of this study can be effective in revealing the nuances and complexities of sexual consent. This study also demonstrated that considering the situational and cultural context in which sex occurs is vital for understanding individuals' conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent.

OVERARCHING EDUCATIONAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Considering the findings of this study as a whole, there are additional implications for sexual health and sexual assault prevention education and policy initiatives not mentioned in prior chapters. First, there is great need for more and higher quality sex education that incorporates sexual consent education, not only in college, but beginning much earlier in students' lives. By the time many young people enter college, most have already engaged in sexual activity (Haydon et al. 2012). If the aim of sex education is to prevent risky sexual behaviors, then sexual consent – including its nuances, communication, and respect – must be taught prior to students becoming sexually active. Towards this end, state departments of education should explicitly include sexual consent education in their health education standards. Such education should begin early in elementary school and continue intermittently throughout students' educational careers, becoming more advanced as students become older. Currently, much sex education focuses on the biology of sexual activity, such as sexual body parts, sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancy – often omitting education about sexual consent, as well as its

nuances and communication (Hall et al. 2016; Kalke et al. 2018; Muehlenhard et al. 2016; Willis, Jozkowski, and Read 2018). Many school districts also use an abstinence-only model of sex education (Carr and Packham 2017; Hall et al. 2016). Instead, sexual consent education should be embedded in sex education and begin early in students' educational careers. For example, in early elementary school, students could be taught about the foundational elements of consent (e.g., bodily autonomy, respect for others), without explicitly discussing the concept of sexual consent. Closer to the point at which many students start becoming sexually active, such as middle school or early high school, students could be introduced to the concept of sexual consent, its components, and how it relates to students' lived experiences.

Findings from the present study also have implications for affirmative consent policies and education that stems from such policies, which have been implemented by numerous states, as well as approximately 1500 institutions of higher education (Bennett 2016). The central premise of affirmative consent policies is that the rate of sexual assault will decrease if sexual partners engaged in more direct and explicit consent negotiations, implying that many young people do not know how to engage in sexual communication or do so in ways that become lost in translation. Therefore, the premise of affirmative consent policies is based on the idea that many sexual assaults are due to miscommunication, which research increasingly refutes (Beres 2010; Beres 2014; Jozkowski 2016). The present study contributes to a growing body of research that questions the idea that young people do not know how to communicate about sex or accurately understand their partners' sexual communication. Thus, the solution to the

sexual assault problem likely will not be solved by affirmative consent policies. Such policies are only superficial attempts at curbing sexual assault if they are not followed by robust, comprehensive, and rigorously evaluated educational programs (Willis and Jozkowski 2018).

Considering that most sexual health education programs seldom cover sexual consent and the political and cultural roadblocks to providing comprehensive sex education in primary and secondary schools (Hall et al. 2016; Santelli et al. 2018; Willis et al. 2018), universities have an opportunity to fill the void, at least for college students. As such, universities should provide comprehensive sex education programming beyond the one-time sessions typically offered to incoming students (Ortiz and Shafer 2018). Providing a robust system of sexual health education that covers the full scope of information necessary for promoting healthy sexual experiences (e.g., the intricacies of sexual consent, dismantling gender norms and the traditional sex script, alcohol and sex, bystander intervention, etc.) throughout students' time in college could be more likely to institute lasting positive behavioral and attitudinal changes (Hubach et al. 2019; Olmstead, Anders, and Conrad 2017; Ortiz and Shafer 2018; Pound et al. 2017). To help students have the sexual experiences they desire, this programming should center on sex-positive messages, including the additive value of sexual consent negotiations (e.g., ensuring mutual pleasure, clearly communicating desires and boundaries), rather than the importance of sexual consent for avoiding perpetrating or experiencing sexual assault. Framing consent initiatives around the positive aspects of consent could help decrease

men's anxiety related to consent and motivate men to think and behave in ways aligned with sexual health, consent, and assault prevention initiatives.

Such programming should build upon students' lived experiences communicating and interpreting sexual consent and avoid suggesting that students' do not know how to understand their partners' willingness to engage in sexual activity. In this way, individuals' "tacit knowledge" of interpreting and communicating consent should be acknowledged and made explicit. Building upon normative and tacit understandings of consent could yield more "buy in" from recipients of this education and avoid creating resistance (Beres 2010; Hubach et al. 2019). Consistent with building upon students' lived experiences of communicating and interpreting sexual consent, Muehlenhard et al. (2016) suggest teaching students to frame cues commonly used to interpret partners' consent as indicators of a likelihood of consent, rather than consent itself. Thus, educators should avoid discounting cues commonly used to interpret consent and instead, establish them as increasing the likelihood that a (prospective) sexual partner may consent—making a distinction between an increased likelihood of consent and consent (Muehlenhard et al. 2016). To build upon this programming and help ensure a culture of consent, universities could mandate that all organized student groups include consent education, led by professional staff or trained peers, if they wish to receive university funding or use university resources.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Limitations

The strengths and findings of this study should be considered alongside its limitations. While this study used a racially/ethnically diverse sample, the data were not analyzed for racial/ethnic differences, as investigating such differences was not a goal. There may be nuances in men's conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent that stem from and vary by race/ethnicity which were not found by looking at overall patterns in the data. Participants were recruited from one Southern California university. As such, some findings might reflect the characteristics of the university at which participants were recruited, such as participants' (implicit) awareness or endorsement of elements of the university's affirmative consent policy. Additionally, participants who volunteer for sexual research are typically more at ease with talking about sex than those who do not volunteer (Wiederman 1999). Thus, the sample may be biased towards men comfortable discussing their sexual experiences in-depth, and participants might differ from other college men. Relatedly, college men might be more exposed to issues of sexual consent and sexual assault, which could influence their perceptions and experiences. Moreover, since issues of sexual consent and sexual assault are likely amplified on college campuses, participants may have been more likely to give responses perceived as socially desirable. However, the consistency between participants' interviews and diary entries, as well as the candor with which most participants spoke in the interviews suggests the data were not significantly affected by social desirability bias. Because all participants were heterosexual and most were in a committed romantic

relationship, the findings may not generalize to non-heterosexual experiences, men of different sexualities, or men who are not in committed romantic relationships. Lastly, this research examined the experiences and perspectives of one member of a sexual dyad, which may have been different than the perspectives and experiences of participants' partners. I interpreted participants' experiences with their partners as consensual and their partners as willing, but it is possible that participants described experiences in which their partner was not willing.

Future directions

This study's limitations and key findings suggest the need for several lines of future sexual consent research. Given the dearth of sexual consent research using racially/ethnically diverse samples, a clear next step is for future research to build upon this study using similarly racially/ethnically diverse samples to conduct group comparisons and investigate how men's thoughts about and behaviors related to sexual consent might vary by race/ethnicity. For example, in further research, I plan to compare Latino participants' conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of consent in the present study to that of non-Latino Asian participants in the present study. Longitudinal research is needed to examine how individuals' conceptualization of consent might change over time. Given the influence of the college context, it would be worthwhile to investigate how consent is conceptualized prior to entering college, at different points in college, as well as after students leave college. Longitudinal research is also needed to examine consent communication and interpretation throughout committed romantic relationships. At what point(s) does consent communication and/or

interpretation become more implicit or explicit? Additionally, do sex scripts shift in relationships, and if so, how and why? More research is needed on the effects of sexual health/consent education as well. Does consent education translate to behavioral changes? If so, do such changes persist in the contexts of alcohol consumption, hookups, and committed romantic relationships? Relatedly, more research is needed that explicitly focuses on consent conceptualization, communication, and interpretation at the intersection of alcohol use, partying, and hookups. Research on individuals' actual sexual experiences in these contexts is lacking and is especially important for developing effective sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives that build on people's lived experiences. Future research is also needed to explore the relationships between men's nonverbal consent communication, unwanted sexual experiences, and dominant masculine ideals and associated sexual expectations. How do men understand their unwanted sexual experiences, and how does engaging in unwanted sex affect men? Finally, across all of this research, there is great need for research using both members of sexual dyads to gather the perspectives of both participants of shared sexual experiences. Where do perspectives align and diverge, and if there are points of divergence, why? By shedding light on people's experiences behind closed doors, all of this research would lend itself to practical guidance for improving sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of this research I discovered the complexities of the sexual consent process, as well as the complexities of sexual communication and sexual

experiences more broadly. I found that the process of sexual consent is far more complicated than a simple “yes” or “no,” filled with nuances, and tied to the interpersonal, situational, and cultural context in which it occurs, such as the nature of the relationship between sexual partners, the university context, in which sex often occurs under the influence of alcohol, the overarching cultural milieu (e.g., the #MeToo Movement), and larger social forces, such as social relations of domination and ideologies that reinforce those relations (e.g., hegemonic masculinity). As such, considering the influence of the broad social context is critical for developing a complete and nuanced understanding of individuals’ conceptualization, communication, and interpretation of sexual consent. While this study cannot answer questions of what sexual consent is or what should count as sexual consent, it showed the myriad ways in which a sample of heterosexual college men conceptualized, communicated, and interpreted sexual consent. This study’s findings should be used to root sexual health and sexual assault prevention initiatives in individuals’ nuanced and contextualized thoughts about and experiences with sexual consent.

REFERENCES

1A. 2017. "What's the Consensus on Consent?": *National Public Radio*. Retrieved March 15, 2019 (https://the1a.org/shows/2017-05-23/whats-the-consensus-on-consent).

Abbey, A., P. McAuslan, T. Zawacki, A. M. Clinton, and P. O. Buck. 2001. "Attitudinal, Experiential, and Situational Predictors of Sexual Assault Perpetration." *J Interpers Violence* 16(8): 784-807.

Abbey, Antonia, Lisa Thomson Ross, Donna McDuffie, and Pam McAuslan. 1996. "Alcohol and Dating Risk Factors for Sexual Assault among College Women." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 20(1): 147-169.

Adams-Curtis, L. E. and G. B. Forbes. 2004. "College Women's Experiences of Sexual Coercion: A Review of Cultural, Perpetrator, Victim, and Situational Variables." *Trauma Violence Abuse* 5(2): 91-122.

Alaszewski, Andy. 2006. *Using Diaries for Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Allen, Louisa. 2004. "Beyond the Birds and the Bees: Constituting a Discourse of Erotics in Sexuality Education." *Gender and Education* 16(2): 151-167.

Amin, A., A. Kagesten, E. Adebayo, and V. Chandra-Mouli. 2018. "Addressing Gender Socialization and Masculinity Norms among Adolescent Boys: Policy and Programmatic Implications." *J Adolesc Health* 62(3S): S3-S5.

Anderson, Nick and Peyton M. Craighill. 2015. "College Students Remain Deeply Divided over What Consent Actually Means." *The Washington Post*. Retrieved March 15, 2019 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/americas-students-are-deeply-divided-on-the-meaning-of-consent-during-sex/2015/06/11/bbd303e0-04ba-11e5-a428-c984eb077d4e_story.html?utm_term=.c4c717aca644).

Archard, David. 1998. *Sexual Consent*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Armstrong, Elizabeth A., Laura Hamilton, and Brian Sweeney. 2006. "Sexual Assault on Campus: A Multilevel, Integrative Approach to Party Rape." *Social Problems* 53(4): 483-499.

Artime, Tiffany M. and Zoe D. Peterson. 2015. "Feelings of Wantedness and Consent During Nonconsensual Sex: Implications for Posttraumatic Cognitions." *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* 7(6): 570-577.

Baidawi, Adam. 2018. "Sexual Consent Debated after Acquittal in Australia Rape Case." *The New York Times*. Retrieved March 15, 2019 (https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/08/world/australia/sexual-consent-law-debate.html).

Baumgartner, Frank R. and Sarah McAdon. 2017. "There's Been a Big Change in How the News Media Covers Sexual Assault." *The Washington Post*. Retrieved March 18, 2019 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/05/11/theres-been-a-big-change-in-how-the-news-media-cover-sexual-assault/?utm_term=.4bf4ceeb837b).

Baynes, Chris. 2019. "Finland to Change Law to Recognise Sex without Consent as Rape." *Independent*. Retrieved March 16, 2019 (https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/finland-rape-law-consent-child-sex-abuse-antti-hakkanen-a8733146.html).

Bedera, Nicole. 2017. "Moaning and Eye Contact: College Men's Negotiations of Sexual Consent in Theory and Practice." in *Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association*. Montreal, Canada

Beitsch, Rebecca. 2018. "#Metoo Movement Has Lawmakers Talking About Consent." *The Pew Charitable Trusts*. Retrieved March 15, 2019 (https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2018/01/23/metoo-movement-has-lawmakers-talking-about-consent).

Bell, K., E. Fahmy, and D. Gordon. 2016. "Quantitative Conversations: The Importance of Developing Rapport in Standardised Interviewing." *Qual Quant* 50: 193-212.

Bennett, Jessica. 2016. "Campus Sex…with a Syllabus." *The New York Times*. Retrieved March 18, 2019 (https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/10/fashion/sexual-consent-assault-college-campuses.html).

Bennett, Jessica and Daniel Jones. 2018. "45 Stories of Sex and Consent on Campus." *The New York Times*. Retrieved March 15, 2019 (https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/05/10/style/sexual-consent-college-campus.html).

Beres, M. A., E. Herold, and S. B. Maitland. 2004. "Sexual Consent Behaviors in Same-Sex Relationships." *Arch Sex Behav* 33(5): 475-486.

Beres, Melanie A. 2007. "'Spontaneous' Sexual Consent: An Analysis of Sexual Consent Literature." *Feminism & Psychology* 17(1): 93-108.

—. 2010. "Sexual Miscommunication? Untangling Assumptions About Sexual Communication between Casual Sex Partners." *Cult Health Sex* 12(1): 1-14.

Beres, Melanie A., Charlene Y. Senn, and Jodee McCaw. 2014. "Navigating Ambivalence: How Heterosexual Young Adults Make Sense of Desire Differences." *Journal of Sex Research* 51(7): 765-776.

Beres, Melanie A., Gareth Terry, Charlene Y. Senn, and Lily Kay Ross. 2019. "Accounting for Men's Refusal of Heterosex: A Story-Completion Study with Young Adults." *Journal of Sex Research* 56(1): 127-136.

Beres, Melanie Ann. 2014. "Rethinking the Concept of Consent for Anti-Sexual Violence Activism and Education." *Feminism & Psychology* 24(3): 373-389.

Black, Michele C., Kathleen C. Basile, Matthew J. Breiding, Sharon G. Smith, Mikel L. Walters, Melissa T. Merrick, Jieru Chen, and Mark R. Stevens. 2011. "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Summary Report." Atlanta, GA: *National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Blythe, M. J., J. D. Fortenberry, M. Temkit, W. Tu, and D. P. Orr. 2006. "Incidence and Correlates of Unwanted Sex in Relationships of Middle and Late Adolescent Women." *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 160(6): 591-595.

Bogle, Kathleen A. 2008. *Hooking Up: Sex, Dating, and Relationships on Campus*. New York: New York University Press.

—. 2014. "'Yes Means Yes' Isn't the Answer." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved September 25, 2018 (https://www.chronicle.com/article/Yes-Means-Yes-Isnt-the/149639).

Bolger, Niall, Angelina Davis, and Eshkol Rafaeli. 2003. "Diary Methods: Capturing Life as It Is Lived." *Annual Review of Psychology* 54: 579-616.

Boswell, A. Ayres and Joan Z. Spade. 1996. "Fraternities and Collegiate Rape Culture: Why Are Some Fraternities More Dangerous Places for Women?" *Gender & Society* 10(2): 133-147.

Brady, Geraldine, Pam Lowe, Geraldine Brown, Jane Osmond, and Michelle Newman. 2018. "'All in All It Is Just a Judgement Call': Issues Surrounding Sexual Consent in Young People's Heterosexual Encounters." *Journal of Youth Studies* 21(1): 35-50.

Braun, Virginia and Victoria Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2): 77-101.

Britton, Dana. 2011. *The Gender of Crime*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Brownmiller, Susan. 1975. *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Burgen, Stephen. 2018. "Spain to Introduce 'Yes Means Yes' Sexual Consent Law." *The Guardian*. Retrieved March 15, 2019 (https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/18/spain-to-introduce-yes-means-yes-sexual-consent-law).

Burkett, Melissa and Karine Hamilton. 2012. "Postfeminist Sexual Agency: Young Women's Negotiations of Sexual Consent." *Sexualities* 15(7): 815-833.

Burrow, Jason J., Roseann Hannon, and David Hall. 1998. "College Students' Perceptions of Women's Verbal and Nonverbal Consent for Sexual Intercourse." *Electronic Journal of Human Sexuality* 1 Retrieved January 8, 2020 (http://www.ejhs.org/volume1/burrow/burrow.htm).

Butler, Judith. 2012. "Sexual Consent: Some Thoughts on Psychoanalysis and Law." *Columbia journal of gender and law* 21(2): 3-27.

Butler, Leah C., Heejin Lee Lee, and Bonnie S. Fisher. 2019. "Less Safe in the Ivory Tower: Campus Sexual Assault Policy in the Trump Administration." *Victims & Offenders* 14(8): 979-996.

Byers, Sandra E. 1980. "Female Communication of Consent and Nonconsent to Sexual Intercourse." *Journal of New Brunswick Psychology* 5: 12-18.

—. 1996. "How Well Does the Traditional Sexual Script Explain Sexual Coercion? Review of a Program of Research." *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality* 8(1-2): 7-25.

California Senate Bill SB-967. 2014. "Student Safety: Sexual Asault." Retrieved March 18, 2019 (https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140SB967).

Campbell, R., E. Dworkin, and G. Cabral. 2009. "An Ecological Model of the Impact of Sexual Assault on Women's Mental Health." *Trauma Violence Abuse* 10(3): 225-246.

Campbell, Rebecca and Sharon M. Wasco. 2005. "Understanding Rape and Sexual Assault: 20 Years of Progress and Future Directions." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 20(1): 127-131.

Cantalupo, Nancy Chi. 2012. "'Decriminalizing' Campus Institutional Responses to Peer Sexual Violence." *Journal of College and University Law* 38(3): 481-524.

Cantor, David, Bonnie Fischer, Susan Chibnall, Reanne Townsend, Hyunshik Lee, Carole Bruce, and Gail Thomas. 2015. "Report on the Aau Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct." Washington, DC: *Association of American Universities*. Retrieved October 15, 2017 (https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/%40%20Files/Climate%20Survey/AAU_Campus_Climate_Survey_12_14_15.pdf).

Carey, K. B., A. L. Norris, S. E. Durney, R. L. Shepardson, and M. P. Carey. 2018. "Mental Health Consequences of Sexual Assault among First-Year College Women." *J Am Coll Health* 66(6): 480-486.

Carey, Kate B., Sarah E. Durney, Robyn L. Shepardson, and Michael P. Carey. 2015. "Incapacitated and Forcible Rape of College Women: Prevalence across the First Year." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 56(6): 678-680.

Carmody, Moira. 2005. "Ethical Erotics: Reconceptualizing Anti-Rape Education." *Sexualities* 8(4): 465-480.

Carmon, Irin. 2017. "Why Are So Many Men Confused About What Sexual Consent Means?": *The Washington Post*. Retrieved March 15, 2019 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/what-counts-as-improper-sexual-contact-its-becoming-harder-to-tell/2017/10/13/b15506c6-af8e-11e7-9e58-e6288544af98_story.html?utm_term=.1d9e3883723a).

Carr, J. B. and A. Packham. 2017. "The Effects of State-Mandated Abstinence-Based Sex Education on Teen Health Outcomes." *Health Econ* 26(4): 403-420.

Casey, E. A., N. T. Masters, B. Beadnell, E. A. Wells, D. M. Morrison, and M. J. Hoppe. 2016. "A Latent Class Analysis of Heterosexual Young Men's Masculinities." *Arch Sex Behav* 45(5): 1039-1050.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2004. "Grounded Theory." Pp. 496-521 in *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice*, edited by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy. New York: Oxford University Press

—. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. London, UK: Sage.

—. 2009. "Shifting the Grounds: Constructivist Grounded Theory." Pp. 127-154 in *Developing Grounded Theory: The Second Generaion*, edited by Janice M. Morse. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press

Cheng, Zhiming and Russell Smyth. 2015. "Sex and Happiness." *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 112: 26-32.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2004. "Booty Call: Sex, Violence and Images of Black Masculinity." in *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender and the New Racism*, edited by Patricia Hill Collins. New York: Routledge

Connell, R.W. 1987. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Connell, Raewyn W. 2000. *The Men and the Boys*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

—. 2005. *Masculinities*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Connell, Raewyn W. and James W. Messerschmidt. 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & Society* 19(6): 829-859.

Corti, Louise. 1993. "Using Diaries in Social Research." *Social Research Update* (2) Retrieved November 27, 2017 (http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU2.html).

Coy, Maddie, Liz Kelly, Fiona Elvines, Maria Garner, and Ava Kanyeredzi. 2013. "How Young People in England Understand Sexual Consent." London: *Office of the Children's Commissioner*

Cranney, Stephen. 2015. "The Relationship between Sexual Victimization and Year in School in U.S. Colleges: Investigating the Parameters of the 'Red Zone'." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 30(17): 3133-3145.

Creswell, John W. 2014. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Curtis, Jena Nicols and Susan Burnett. 2017. "Affirmative Consent: What Do College Student Leaders Think About "Yes Means Yes" as the Standard for Sexual Behavior?" *American Journal of Sexuality Education* 12(3): 201-214.

Daigle, Leah E., Bonnie S. Fisher, and Francis T. Cullen. 2008. "The Violent and Sexual Victimization of College Women: Is Repeat Victimization a Problem?" *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 23(9): 1296-1313.

Damour, Lisa. 2018. "Getting 'Consent' for Sex Is Too Low a Bar." *The New York Times*. Retrieved March 15, 2018 (https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/18/well/getting-consent-for-sex-is-too-low-a-bar.html).

Decker, John F. and Peter G. Baroni. 2011. "“No” Still Means “Yes”: The Failure of the “Non-Consent” Reform Movement in American Rape and Sexual Assault Law." *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 101(4): 1081-1169.

Demetriou, Demetrakis Z. 2001. "Connell’s Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique." *Theory and Society* 30(3): 337-361.

Doull, Marion, John Oliffe, Rod Knight, and Jean A. Shoveller. 2013. "Sex and Straight Young Men: Challenging and Endorsing Hegemonic Masculinities and Gender Regimes." *Men and Masculinities* 16(3): 329-346.

Downing-Matibag, T. M. and B. Geisinger. 2009. "Hooking up and Sexual Risk Taking among College Students: A Health Belief Model Perspective." *Qual Health Res* 19(9): 1196-1209.

Dworkin, Shari L. and Lucia F. O’Sullivan. 2005. "Actual Versus Desired Initiation Patterns among a Sample of College Men: Tapping Disjunctures within Traditional Male Sexual Scripts." *Journal of Sex Research* 42(2): 150-158.

Edwards, Katie M., Jessica A. Turchik, Chistina M. Dardis, Nicole Reynolds, and Christine A. Gidycz. 2011. "Rape Myths: History, Individual and Institutional-Level Presence, and Implications for Change." *Sex Roles* 65: 761-773.

Ehrhardt, Anke A. 1997. "Gender." Pp. 361-362 in *Research Sexual Behavior: Methodological Issues*, edited by John Bancroft. Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Emba, Christine. 2018. "Yes, Get Consent. But Be Human, Too.”: *The Washington Post*. Retrieved March 15, 2019 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/yes-get-consent-but-be-human-too/2018/09/13/fa4c02a8-b6c7-11e8-a2c5-3187f427e253_story.html?utm_term=.691bf5b61125).

Epstein, Marina, Jerel P. Calzo, Andrew P. Smiler, and L. Monique Ward. 2009. "“Anything from Making out to Having Sex”: Men’s Negotiations of Hooking up and Friends with Benefits Scripts." *Journal of Sex Research* 46(5): 414-424.

Fagen, Jennifer Lara and Peter B. Anderson. 2012. "Constructing Masculinity in Response to Women’s Sexual Advances." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 41(1): 261-270.

Fantasia, H. C., M. A. Sutherland, H. Fontenot, and J. A. Ierardi. 2014. "Knowledge, Attitudes and Beliefs About Contraceptive and Sexual Consent Negotiation among College Women." *J Forensic Nurs* 10(4): 199-207.

Fantasia, Heidi Collins. 2011. "Really Not Even a Decision Any More: Late Adolescent Narratives of Implied Sexual Consent." *Journal of Forensic Nursing* 7(3): 120-129.

Fedina, L., J. L. Holmes, and B. L. Backes. 2018. "Campus Sexual Assault: A Systematic Review of Prevalence Research from 2000 to 2015." *Trauma Violence Abuse* 19(1): 76-93.

Fisher, Bonnie S., Francis T. Cullen, and Michael G. Turner. 2000. "The Sexual Victimization of College Women." Washington, DC: *U.S. Department of Justice*

Flack, W. F., Jr., K. A. Daubman, M. L. Caron, J. A. Asadorian, N. R. D'Aureli, S. N. Gigliotti, A. T. Hall, S. Kiser, and E. R. Stine. 2007. "Risk Factors and Consequences of Unwanted Sex among University Students: Hooking up, Alcohol, and Stress Response." *J Interpers Violence* 22(2): 139-157.

Flood, Michael. 2008. "Men, Sex, and Homosociality: How Bonds between Men Shape Their Sexual Relations with Women." *Men and Masculinities* 10(3): 339-359.

Foubert, J. D., E. E. Godin, and J. L. Tatum. 2010. "In Their Own Words: Sophomore College Men Describe Attitude and Behavior Changes Resulting from a Rape Prevention Program 2 Years after Their Participation." *J Interpers Violence* 25(12): 2237-2257.

Foubert, John D., Dallas N. Garner, and Peter J. Thaxter. 2006. "An Exploration of Fraternity Culture: Implications for Programs to Address Alcohol-Related Sexual Assault." *College Student Journal* 40(2): 361-373.

Fresh Air. 2018. "How Notions of Sex, Power and Consent Are Changing on College Campuses." *National Public Radio*. Retrieved March 15, 2019 (https://www.npr.org/2018/10/11/656509317/how-notions-of-sex-power-and-consent-are-changing-on-college-campuses).

Frith, Hannah. 2009. "Sexual Scripts, Sexual Refusals and Rape." Pp. 99-122 in *Rape: Challenging Contemporary Thinking*, edited by Miranda A. H. Horvath and Jennifer M. Brown. Portland, Oregon: WIllan Publishing

Frith, Hannah and Celia Kitzinger. 1997. "Talk About Sexual Miscommunication." *Women's Studies International Forum* 20(4): 517-528.

Gagnon, John H. and William Simon. 1973. *Sexual Conduct: The Social Sources of Human Sexuality*. Chicago: Aldine.

Gavey, Nicola. 2005. *The Cultural Scaffolding of Rape*. New York: Routledge.

Glenn, Norval and Elizabeth Marquardt. 2001. "Hooking up, Hanging out and Hoping for Mr. Right: College Women on Dating and Mating Today." New York: *Institute for American Values*

Gotell, Lise. 2007. "The Discursive Disappearance of Sexualized Violence: Feminist Law Reform, Judicial Resistance and Neo-Liberal Sexual Citizenship." Pp. 127-163 in *Feminism, Law, and Social Change*, edited by D.E. Chun and L. Hester. Vancouver: University of British Columbia

Gruber, Aya. 2016. "Consent Confusion." *Cardozo Law Review* 38: 415-458.

Hall, David S. 1998. "Consent for Sexual Behavior in a College Student Population." *Electronic Journal of Human Sexuality* 1 Retrieved October 15, 2017 (http://www.ejhs.org/volume1/consent1.htm).

Hall, K. S., J. McDermott Sales, K. A. Komro, and J. Santelli. 2016. "The State of Sex Education in the United States." *J Adolesc Health* 58(6): 595-597.

Halley, Janet. 2016. "The Move to Affirmative Consent." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture* 42(1): 257-279.

Hansen, Susan, Rachael O'Byrne, and Mark Rapley. 2010. "Young Heterosexual Men's Use of the Miscommunication Model in Explaining Acquaintance Rape." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 7(1): 45-49.

Harrell, Margaret C., Laura Werber Castaneda, Marisa Adelson, Sarah Gaillot, Charlotte Lynch, and Amanda Pomeroy. 2009. "A Compendium of Sexual Assault Research." Santa Monica, CA: *RAND Corporation*

Haydon, A. A., A. H. Herring, M. J. Prinstein, and C. T. Halpern. 2012. "Beyond Age at First Sex: Patterns of Emerging Sexual Behavior in Adolescence and Young Adulthood." *J Adolesc Health* 50(5): 456-463.https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22525108).

Hearn, Jeff. 1998. *The Violences of Men: How Men Talk About and How Agencies Respond to Men's Violence to Women*. London: Sage.

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy. 2007. "The Practice of Feminist in-Depth Interviewing." Pp. 110-148 in *Feminist Research Practice*, edited by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia L. Leavy. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Hickman, Susan E. and Charlene L. Muehlenhard. 1999. ""By the Semi-Mystical Appearance of a Condom": How Young Women and Men Communicate Sexual Consent in Heterosexual Situations." *Journal of Sex Research* 36(3): 258-272.

Higgins, J. A., J. Trussell, N. B. Moore, and J. K. Davidson. 2010. "Young Adult Sexual Health: Current and Prior Sexual Behaviours among Non-Hispanic White Us College Students." *Sex Health* 7(1): 35-43.

Hirsch, Jennifer S., Shamus R. Khan, Alexander Wamboldt, and Claude A. Mellins. 2019. "Social Dimensions of Sexual Consent among Cisgender Heterosexual College Students: Insights from Ethnographic Research." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 64(1): 26-35.

Hofmann, Wilhelm and Paresh V. Patel. 2015. "Survey Signal: A Convenient Solution for Experience Sampling Research Using Participants' Own Smartphones." *Social Science Computer Review* 33(2): 235-253.

Horowitz, A. D. and E. Bedford. 2017. "Graded Structure in Sexual Definitions: Categorizations of Having "Had Sex" and Virginity Loss among Homosexual and Heterosexual Men and Women." *Arch Sex Behav* 46(6): 1653-1665.

Horowitz, A. D. and Louise Spicer. 2013. "“Having Sex” as a Graded and Hierarchical Construct: A Comparison of Sexual Definitions among Heterosexual and Lesbian Emerging Adults in the U.K." *Journal of Sex Research* 50(2): 139-150.

Hubach, R. D., C. R. Story, J. M. Currin, A. Woods, A. Jayne, and C. Jayne. 2019. ""What Should Sex Look Like?" Students' Desires for Expanding University Sexual Assault Prevention Programs to Include Comprehensive Sex Education." *Qual Health Res* 29(13): 1967-1977.

Humphreys, T. P. and M. M. Brousseau. 2010. "The Sexual Consent Scale-Revised: Development, Reliability, and Preliminary Validity." *J Sex Res* 47(5): 420-428.

Humphreys, Terry. 2007. "Perceptions of Sexual Consent: The Impact of Relationship History and Gender." *J Sex Res* 44(4): 307-315.

Humphreys, Terry and Ed Herold. 2003. "Should Universities and Colleges Mandate Sexual Behavior?" *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality* 15(1): 35-51.

—. 2007. "Sexual Consent in Heterosexual Relationships: Development of a New Measure." *Sex Roles* 57(3-4): 305-315.

Humphreys, Terry P. 2004. "Understanding Sexual Consent: An Empirical Investigation of the Normative Script for Young Heterosexual Adults." Pp. 207-225 in *Making Sense of Sexual Consent*, edited by Mark Cowling and Paul Reynolds. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing

Hust, Stacey J., Emily Garrigues Marret, Ming Lei, Chunbo Ren, and Weina Ran. 2015. "Law and Order, Csi, and Ncsi: The Association between Exposure to Crime

Drama Franchises, Rape Myth Acceptance, and Sexual Consent Negotiation among College Students." *Journal of Health Communciation* 20(12): 1369-1381.

Jones, Helen. 2002. "Rape, Consent and Communication: Re-Setting the Boundaries?" *Contemporary Issues in Law* 6(1): 23-26.

Jordan, C. E., J. L. Combs, and G. T. Smith. 2014. "An Exploration of Sexual Victimization and Academic Performance among College Women." *Trauma Violence Abuse* 15(3): 191-200.

Jozkowski, K. N. and S. A. Sanders. 2012. "Health and Sexual Outcomes of Women Who Have Experienced Forced or Coercive Sex." *Women Health* 52(2): 101-118.

Jozkowski, K. N., S. Sanders, Z. D. Peterson, B. Dennis, and M. Reece. 2014a. "Consenting to Sexual Activity: The Development and Psychometric Assessment of Dual Measures of Consent." *Arch Sex Behav* 43(3): 437-450.

Jozkowski, Kristen N. 2013. "The Influence of Consent on College Students’ Perceptions of the Quality of Sexual Intercourse at Last Event." *International Journal of Sexual Health* 25(4): 260-272.

—. 2016. "Barriers to Affirmative Consent Policies and the Need for Affirmative Sexuality." *University of the Pacific Law Review* 47: 741-772.

Jozkowski, Kristen N., Jimmie Manning, and Mary Hunt. 2018. "Sexual Consent in and out of the Bedroom: Disjunctive Views of Heterosexual College Students." *Women's Studies in Communication* 41(2): 117-139.

Jozkowski, Kristen N. and Zoe D. Peterson. 2013. "College Students and Sexual Consent: Unique Insights." *Journal of Sex Research* 50(6): 517-523.

—. 2014. "Assessing the Validity and Reliability of the Perceptions of the Consent to Sex Scale." *Journal of Sex Research* 51(6): 632-645.

Jozkowski, Kristen N., Zoe D. Peterson, Stephanie A. Sanders, Barbara Dennis, and Michael Reece. 2014b. "Gender Differences in Heterosexual College Students' Conceptualizations and Indicators of Sexual Consent: Implications for Contemporary Sexual Assault Prevention Education." *Journal of Sex Research* 51(8): 904-916.

Jozkowski, Kristen N. and Jacquelyn D. Wiersma. 2015. "Does Drinking Alcohol Prior to Sexual Activity Influence College Students’ Consent?" *International Journal of Sexual Health* 27(2): 156-174.

Jozkowski, Kristen. N., Tiffany L. Marcantonio, and Mary E. Hunt. 2017. "College Students' Sexual Consent Communication and Perceptions of Sexual Double Standards: A Qualitative Investigation." *Perspect Sex Reprod Health* 49(4): 237-244.

Kalish, Rachel. 2013. "Masculinities and Hooking Up: Sexual Decision-Making at College." *Culture, Society, & Masculinities* 5(2): 147-165.

Kalke, K. M., T. Ginossar, S. F. A. Shah, and A. J. West. 2018. "Sex Ed to Go: A Content Analysis of Comprehensive Sexual Education Apps." *Health Educ Behav* 45(4): 581-590.

Kamenetz, Anya. 2018. "Should We Teach About Consent in K-12? Brett Kavanaugh's Home State Says Yes." *National Public Radio*. Retrieved March 15, 2019 (https://www.npr.org/2018/09/28/652203139/should-we-teach-about-consent-in-k-12-brett-kavanaughs-home-state-says-yes).

Kaufman, M. R., S. W. Tsang, B. Sabri, C. Budhathoki, and J. Campbell. 2019. "Health and Academic Consequences of Sexual Victimization Experiences among Students in a University Setting." *Psychol Sex* 10(1): 56-68.

Kern, Sara G. and Zoe D. Peterson. 2019. "From Freewill to Force: Examining Types of Coercion and Psychological Outcomes in Unwanted Sex." *Journal of Sex Research* [Epub ahead of print]

Kidder, William. 2019. "(En)Forcing a Fooling Consistency?: A Critique and Comparative Analysis of the Trump Administration's Proposed Standard of Evidence Regulation for Campus Title Ix Proceedings." *Journal of College and University Law* 45(Forthcoming)

Kimmel, Michael. 2008. *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. New York, NY: Harper.

Kimmel, Michael S. and Matthew Mahler. 2003. "Adolescent Masculinity, Homophobia, and Violence." *American Behavioral Scientist* 46(10): 1439-1458.

Kitzinger, Celia and Hannah Frith. 1999. "Just Say No? The Use of Conversation Analysis in Developing a Feminist Perspective on Sexual Refusal." *Discourse & Society* 10(3): 293-316.

Koss, M. P. 2005. "Empirically Enhanced Reflections on 20 Years of Rape Research." *J Interpers Violence* 20(1): 100-107.

Koss, Mary P., Antonia Abbey, Rebecca Campbell, Sarah Cook, Jeanette Norris, Maria Testa, Sarah Ullman, Carolyn West, and Jacquelyn White. 2007. "Revising the

Ses: A Collaborative Process to Improve Assessment of Sexual Aggression and Victimization." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 31(4): 357-370.

Krebs, Christopher P., Christine H. Lindquist, Tara D. Warner, Bonnie S. Fisher, and Sandra L. Martin. 2007. "The Campus Sexual Assault (Csa) Study." Washington, DC: *The National Institute of Justice*

LaBrie, Joseph W., Sean Grant, and Justin F. Hummer. 2011. "“This Would Be Better Drunk”: Alcohol Expectancies Becomes More Positive While Drinking in the College Social Environment." *Addictive Behaviors* 36(8): 890-893.

LaBrie, Joseph W., Justin F. Hummer, Tehniat M. Ghaidarov, Andrew Lac, and Shannon R. Kenney. 2014. "Hooking up in the College Context: The Event-Level Effects of Alochol Use and Partner Familiarity on Hookup Behaviors and Contentment." *Journal of Sex Research* 51(1): 62-73.

Lafrance, Dawn E., Meika Loe, and Scott C. Brown. 2012. "“Yes Means Yes:” a New Approach to Sexual Assault Prevention and Positive Sexuality Promotion." *American Journal of Sexuality Education* 7(4): 445-460.

Lindgren, K. P., D. W. Pantalone, M. A. Lewis, and W. H. George. 2009a. "College Students' Perceptions About Alcohol and Consensual Sexual Behavior: Alcohol Leads to Sex." *J Drug Educ* 39(1): 1-21.

Lindgren, K. P., R. L. Schacht, D. W. Pantalone, and J. A. Blayney. 2009b. "Sexual Communication, Sexual Goals, and Students' Transition to College: Implications for Sexual Assault, Decision-Making, and Risky Behaviors." *J Coll Stud Dev* 50(5): 491-503.

Livingston, Jennifer A., Amy M. Buddie, Maria Testa, and Carol VanZile-Tamsen. 2004. "The Role of Sexual Precedence in Verbal Sexual Coercion." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 28(4): 287-297.

Lowenstein, Fiona. 2014. "Mainstream Coverage of Sexual Assault on College Campuses Grew Only after Powerful Men Entered the Conversation." *Columbia Journalism Review*. Retrieved March 18, 2019 (https://archives.cjr.org/minority_reports/coverage_of_college_sexual_assault.php).

Lyon, Eleanor. 2002. "*Welfare and Domestic Violence against Women: Lessons from Research*." Harrisburg, PA: *National Research Center on Domestic Violence*

MacKinnon, Catharine A. 1989. *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*. Cambrige, MA: Harvard University Press.

Marg, Logan. 2016. "The Relationship between Adherence to Dominant Masculine Ideologies and Rape Myth Acceptance among College Men." Master's thesis, Department of Sociology, University of California, Riverside.

—. 2020. "College Men's Conceptualization of Sexual Consent at a Large, Racially/Ethnically Diverse Southern California University." *American Journal of Sexuality Education.* In press.

Martin, Particia Yancey. 2016. "The Rape Prone Culture of Academic Contexts: Fraternities and Athletics." *Gender & Society* 30(1): 30-43.

Martin, Particia Yancey and Robert A. Hummer. 1989. "Fraternities and Rape on Campus." *Gender & Society* 3(4): 457-473.

Masters, N. T., E. Casey, E. A. Wells, and D. M. Morrison. 2013. "Sexual Scripts among Young Heterosexually Active Men and Women: Continuity and Change." *J Sex Res* 50(5): 409-420.

Maxwell, Claire. 2007. "“Alternative” Narratives of Young People's Heterosexual Experiences in the Uk." *Sexualities* 10(5): 539-558.

McFarlane, Judith, Ann Malecha, Kathleen B. Watson, and Sheila Smith. 2005. "Intimate Partner Sexual Assault against Women: Frequency, Health Consequences, and Treatment Outcomes." *Obstetrics and Gynecology* 105(1): 99-108.

McGregor, Joan. 1996. "Why When She Says No She Doesn't Mean Maybe and Doesn't Mean Yes: A Critical Reconstruction of Consent, Sex, and the Law." *Legal Theory* 2(3): 175-208.

McMahon, Sarah and Lawrence Farmer. 2011. "An Updated Measure for Assessing Subtle Rape Myths." *Social Work Research* 35(2): 71-81.

Messerschmidt, James W. 1999. "Making Bodies Matter: Adolescent Masculinities, the Body, and Varieties of Violence." *Theoretical Criminology* 3(2): 197-220.

Mirandé, Alfredo. 1979. "Interpretation of Male Dominance in the Chicano Family." *The Family Coordinator* 28(4): 473-479.

—. 1986. "Que Gacho Es Ser Macho [It's a Drag to Be a Macho Man]." *Aztlan* 17(63-69)

Monson, Candice M., Jennifer Langhinrchsen-Rohling, and Tisha Binderup. 2000. "Does ‘No’ Really Mean ‘No’ after You Say ‘Yes’?: Attirubtions About Date and Marital Rape." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 15(11): 1156-1174.

Morse, Janice M., Michael Barret, Maria Mayan, Karin Olson, and Jude Spiers. 2002. "Verification Strategies for Establishing Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1(2): 13-22.

Muehlenhard, Charlene L. 1988. "“Nice Women” Don’t Say Yes and “Real Men” Don’t Say No: How Miscommunication and the Double Standard Can Cause Sexual Problems." *Women & Therapy* 7(2-3): 95-108.

—. 1995-1996. "The Complexities of Sexual Consent." *SIECUS Report* 24(2): 4-7.

Muehlenhard, Charlene L. and Stephen W. Cook. 1988. "Men’s Self-Reports of Unwanted Sexual Activity." *Journal of Sex Research* 24(1): 58-72.

Muehlenhard, Charlene L., Terry P. Humphreys, Kristen N. Jozkowski, and Zoe D. Peterson. 2016. "The Complexities of Sexual Consent among College Students: A Conceptual and Empirical Review." *Journal of Sex Research* 53(4-5): 457-487.

Muehlenhard, Charlene L. and Zoe D. Peterson. 2005. "Wanting and Not Wanting Sex: The Missing Discourse of Ambivalence." *Feminism & Psychology* 15(1): 15-20.

Muehlenhard, Charlene L., Zoe D. Peterson, Terry P. Humphreys, and Kristen N. Jozkowski. 2017. "Evaluating the One-in-Five Statistic: Women’s Risk of Sexual Assault While in College." *Journal of Sex Research* 54(4-5): 549-576.

Muehlenhard, Charlene L., Irene G. Powch, Joi L. Phelps, and Laura M. Guisti. 1992. "Definitions of Rape: Scientific and Political Implications." *Journal of Social Issues* 48(1): 23-44.

Murnen, Sarah K., Carrie Wright, and Gretchen Kaluzny. 2002. "If ‘Boys Will Be Boys,’ Then Girls Will Be Victims? A Meta-Analytic Review of Research That Relates Masculine Ideology to Sexual Agression." *Sex Roles* 46(11-12): 359-375.

Murray, Sarah H. 2019. *Not Always in the Mood: The New Science of Men, Sex, and Relationships*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

National Institute of Justice. 2017. "Rape and Sexual Violence.” Washington, DC: *National Institute of Justice*. Retrieved April 25, 2019 (https://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/rape-sexual-violence/pages/welcome.aspx).

North, Anna, Constance Grady, Laura McGann, and Aja Romano. 2019. "263 Celebrities, Politicians, Ceos, and Others Who Have Been Accused of Sexual Misconduct since April 2017.” *Vox*. Retrieved March 18, 2019 (https://www.vox.com/a/sexual-harassment-assault-allegations-list/steven-wilder-striegel).

O'Byrne, Rachael, Susan Hansen, and Mark Rapley. 2008. "'If a Girl Doesn't Say 'No'…': Young Men, Rape and Claims of 'Insufficient Knowledge'." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 18(3): 168-193.

O'Byrne, Rachael, Mark Rapley, and Susan Hansen. 2006. "'You Couldn't Say 'No', Could You?': Young Men's Understandings of Sexual Refusal." *Feminism & Psychology* 16(2): 133-154.

O'Sullivan, Lucia F. and Elizabeth Rice Allgeier. 1998. "Feigning Sexual Desire: Consenting to Unwanted Sexual Activity in Heterosexual Dating Relationships." *Journal of Sex Research* 35(3): 234-243.

O'Sullivan, Lucia F. and Sandra E. Byers. 1992. "College Students' Incorporation of Initiator and Restrictor Roles in Sexual Dating Interactions." *Journal of Sex Research* 29(3): 435-446.

—. 1993. "Eroding Stereotypes: College Women's Attempts to Influence Reluctant Male Sexual Partners." *Journal of Sex Research* 30(3): 270-282.

Olmstead, S. B., K. M. Anders, and K. A. Conrad. 2017. "Meanings for Sex and Commitment among First Semester College Men and Women: A Mixed-Methods Analysis." *Arch Sex Behav* 46(6): 1831-1842.

Orenstein, Peggy. 2019. "It's Not That Men Don't Know What Consent Is." *The New York Times*. Retrieved March 15, 2018 (https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/23/opinion/sunday/sexual-consent-college.html).

—. 2020. *Boys & Sex: Young Men on Hookups, Love, Porn, Consent, and Navigating the New Masculinity*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Ortiz, R. R. and A. Shafer. 2018. "Unblurring the Lines of Sexual Consent with a College Student-Driven Sexual Consent Education Campaign." *J Am Coll Health* 66(6): 450-456.

Owren, Thomas. 2019. "Nine Rules of Engagement: Reflections on Reflexivity." *The Qualitative Report* 24(2): 228-241.

Pascoe, C.J. 2005. "'Dude, You're a Fag': Adolescent Masculinity and the Fag Discourse." *Sexualities* 8(3): 329-346.

—. 2007. *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Patrick, M. E. and J. L. Maggs. 2010. "Profiles of Motivations for Alcohol Use and Sexual Behavior among First-Year University Students." *J Adolesc* 33(5): 755-765.

Paul, Elizabeth L. and Kristen A. Hayes. 2002. "The Casualties of 'Casual' Sex: A Qualitative Exploration of the Phenomenology of College Students' Hookups." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 19(5): 639-661.

Paul, Elizabeth L., Brian McManus, and Allison Hayes. 2000. "Hookups: Characteristics and Correlates of College Students' Spontaneous and Anonymous Sexual Experiences." *Journal of Sex Research* 37(1): 76-88.

Peterson, C., S. DeGue, C. Florence, and C. N. Lokey. 2017. "Lifetime Economic Burden of Rape among U.S. Adults." *Am J Prev Med* 52(6): 691-701.

Peterson, Zoe D. and Charlene L. Muehlenhard. 2007a. "Conceptualizing the "Wantedness" of Women's Consensual and Nonconsensual Sexual Experiences: Implications for How Women Label Their Experiences with Rape." *Journal of Sex Research* 44(1): 72-88.

—. 2007b. "What Is Sex and Why Does It Matter? A Motivational Approach to Exploring Individuals' Definitions of Sex." *Journal of Sex Research* 44(3): 256-268.

Peterson, Zoe D., Emily K. Voller, Melissa A. Polusny, and Maureen Murdoch. 2011. "Prevalence and Consequences of Adult Sexual Assault of Men: Review of Empirical Findings and State of the Literature." *Clinical Psychology Review* 31(1): 1-24.

Post, Lori A., Nancy J. Mezey, Christopher Maxwell, and Wilma Novales Wibert. 2002. "The Rape Tax: Tangible and Intangible Costs of Sexual Violence." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 17(7): 773-782.

Pound, P., S. Denford, J. Shucksmith, C. Tanton, A. M. Johnson, J. Owen, R. Hutten, L. Mohan, C. Bonell, C. Abraham, and R. Campbell. 2017. "What Is Best Practice in Sex and Relationship Education? A Synthesis of Evidence, Including Stakeholders' Views." *BMJ Open* 7(5): e014791.

Powell, Anastasia. 2008. "Amor Fati?" *Journal of Sociology* 44(2): 167-184.

Pyke, Karen. 1996. "Class-Based Masculinities: The Interdependence of Gender, Class, and Interpersonal Power." *Gender & Society* 10(5): 527-549.

Rose, Lisa. 2018. "Sexual Consent Is a Worldwide Conversation." *Cable News Network*. Retrieved March 15, 2019 (https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/04/world/consent-christiane-amanpour-sex-love-around-world/index.html).

Sampson, Rana. 2002. "Acquaintance Rape of College Students. Problem-Oriented Guides for Police-Specific Guides Series. Report No. 17." Washington, D.C.: *U.S. Department of Justice*

Sanday, Peggy Reeves. 1990. *Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood, and Privilege on Campus*. New York: New York University Press.

—. 2007. *Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood, and Privilege on Campus*. New York: New York University Press.

Santelli, J. S., S. A. Grilo, T. H. Choo, G. Diaz, K. Walsh, M. Wall, J. S. Hirsch, P. A. Wilson, L. Gilbert, S. Khan, and C. A. Mellins. 2018. "Does Sex Education before College Protect Students from Sexual Assault in College?" *PLoS One* 13(11): e0205951.

Saunders, B., J. Sim, T. Kingstone, S. Baker, J. Waterfield, B. Bartlam, H. Burroughs, and C. Jinks. 2018. "Saturation in Qualitative Research: Exploring Its Conceptualization and Operationalization." *Qual Quant* 52(4): 1893-1907.

Schmidt, Samantha. 2018. "Beyond 'No Means No': What Most Parents Aren't Teaching Their Sons About Sexual Consent." *The Washington Post*. Retrieved March 15, 2019 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/beyond-no-means-no-how-to-talk-to-teenage-boys-about-sexual-consent/2018/10/03/a9f67b88-c687-11e8-b1ed-1d2d65b86d0c_story.html?utm_term=.c444077fff8e).

Schrock, Douglas and Michael Schwalbe. 2009. "Men, Masculinity, and Manhood Acts." *Annual Review of Sociology* 35: 277-295.

Shotland, Lance R. and Lynne Goodstein. 1992. "Sexual Precedence Reduces the Perceived Legitimacy of Sexual Refusal: An Examination of Attributions Concerning Date Rape and Consensual Sex." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 18(6): 756-764.

Smiler, A. P. 2008. ""I Wanted to Get to Know Her Better": Adolescent Boys' Dating Motives, Masculinity Ideology, and Sexual Behavior." *J Adolesc* 31(1): 17-32.

Stemple, L. and I. H. Meyer. 2014. "The Sexual Victimization of Men in America: New Data Challenge Old Assumptions." *Am J Public Health* 104(6): e19-26.

Stern, Erin, Diane Cooper, and Bryant Greenbaum. 2014. "The Relationship between Hegemonic Norms of Masculinity and Men's Conceptualization of Sexually

Coercive Acts by Women in South Africa." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 30(5): 796-817.

Stombler, Mindy and Particia Yancey Martin. 1994. "Bringing Women in, Keeping Women Down: Fraternity 'Little Sister' Organizations." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 23(2): 150-184.

Terry, Gareth. 2012. ""I'm Putting a Lid on That Desire": Celibacy, Choice and Control." *Sexualities* 15(7): 871-889.

Terry, Gareth, Nikki Hayfield, Victoria Clarke, and Virginia Braun. 2017. "Thematic Analysis." Pp. 17-36 in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*, edited by Carla Willig and Wendy Stainton Rogers. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. Retrieved January 10, 2019 (https://methods.sagepub.com/base/download/BookChapter/the-sage-handbook-of-qualitative-research-in-psychology-second-edition/i425.xml).

The White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault. 2014. "Not Alone: The First Report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault." Washington, DC: *The White House*. Retrieved March 1, 2017 (https://www.justice.gov/archives/ovw/page/file/905942/download).

Thwaites, Rachel. 2017. "Re(Ex)Amining the Feminist Interview: Rapport, Gender, 'Matching,' and Emotional Labor." *Frontiers in Sociology* 2(18): 1-9.

Turchik, Jessica A. 2012. "Sexual Victimization among Male College Students: Assault Severity, Sexual Functioning, and Health Risk Behaviors." *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 13(3): 243-255.

Vannier, Sarah A. and Lucia F. O'Sullivan. 2010. "Sex without Desire: Characteristics of Occassions of Sexual Compliance in Young Adults' Committed Relationships." *Journal of Sex Research* 47(5): 429-439.

Volokh, Eugene. 2015. "Statutory Rape Laws and Ages of Consent in the U.S.": *The Washington Post*. Retrieved October 30, 2017 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2015/05/01/statutory-rape-laws-in-the-u-s/?utm_term=.4f04bfb934fa).

Warren, Carol A.B. and Tracy Xavia Karner. 2015. *Discovering Qualitative Methods: Ethnography, Interviews, Documents, and Images*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Warren, Peter, Suzanne Swan, and Christopher T. Allen. 2015. "Comprehension of Sexual Consent as a Key Factor in the Perpetration of Sexual Aggression among College Men." *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 24(8): 897-913.

Wertheimer, Alan. 2003. *Consent to Sexual Relations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

West, Robin. 1996. "A Comment on Consent, Sex, and Rape." *Legal Theory* 2(3): 233-251.

—. 2002. "The Harms of Consensual Sex." Pp. 317-322 in *The Philosophy of Sex: Contemporary Readings*, edited by Alan Soble. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Retrieved October 20, 2017 (https://philpapers.org/archive/SOBTPO-6).

Wiederman, Michael W. 1999. "Volunteer Bias in Sexuality Research Using College Students." *Journal of Sex Research* 36(1): 59-66.

Wiggins, Ovetta and Rachel Chason. 2018. "Maryland Lawmakers Advance Bill That Requires Schools to Teach Sexual Consent." *The Washington Post*. Retrieved March 15, 2019 (https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/maryland-lawmakers-advance-bill-that-requires-schools-to-teach-sexual-consent/2018/03/30/3aa2f666-3448-11e8-8abc-22a366b72f2d_story.html?utm_term=.8def66d14466).

Willan, V.J. and Paul Pollard. 2003. "Likelihood of Acquaintance Rape as a Function of Males' Sexual Expectations, Disappointment, and Adherence to Rape-Conducive Attitudes." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 20(5): 637-661.

Willis, M. and K. N. Jozkowski. 2019. "Sexual Precedent's Effect on Sexual Consent Communication." *Arch Sex Behav* 48(6): 1723-1734.

Willis, Malachi and Kristen N. Jozkowski. 2018. "Barriers to the Success of Affirmative Consent Initiatives: An Application of the Social Ecological Model." *American Journal of Sexuality Education* 13(3): 324-336.

Willis, Malachi, Kristen N. Jozkowski, and Julia Read. 2018. "Sexual Consent in K–12 Sex Education: An Analysis of Current Health Education Standards in the United States." *Sex Education* 19(2): 226-236.

Winslett, Andrea H. and Alan M. Gross. 2008. "Sexual Boundaries: An Examination of the Importance of Talking before Touching." *Violence Against Women* 14(5): 542-562.

Yin, Alice. 2018. "Should Michigan Sex Ed Require 'Yes Means Yes' Curriculum?". New York: *Associated Press*. Retrieved January 7, 2020 (https://apnews.com/f2026ed5ee67407fb8836832a76edd87/Should-Michigan-sex-ed-require-%27yes-means-yes%27-curriculum?).

Zutter, André De, Robert Horselenberg, and Peter J. van Koppen. 2017. "The Prevalence of False Allegations of Rape in the United States from 2006-2010." *Journal of Forensic Psychology* 2(2): 1-5.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview guide

Opening: During this interview, I'm going to ask you questions about your sexual experiences and thoughts and feelings related to your sexual experiences. Just know that by asking these questions I'm not trying to figure out if you're a "certain kind of person" or a person who does "certain kinds of things." I'm really just trying to understand your sexual experiences and your perceptions of those experiences, so you should feel comfortable speaking openly and honestly. Also, the more details you can provide about your thoughts and experiences, the better. You should feel safe to talk about alcohol use, other substance use, and things like that that are relevant to your experiences. You should not tell me about whether you are harming someone or have plans to harm yourself or someone else.

There may be times where you feel like you're repeating yourself, but that's ok. I have to ask certain questions, so just go with it.

Additionally, please remember that you can choose not to answer any of the questions I ask during the interview. And know that everything you say will be confidential and your name or any other identifying information (like the names of your partners) won't be used in conjunction with your responses. So you won't be able to be identified through your responses here.

1) General questions about life at UCR. How has your experience at UCR been so far?

1a) Do you live on campus? In Riverside? Do you commute?

1b) What is the social scene like at UCR?

2) Can you tell me about your experiences with sexual relationships?

2a) Have you had a steady girlfriend?

2b) Friends-with-benefits?

2c) Casual hookups?

2d) Current relationship status?

3) How do you choose your sexual partner(s)? What is it about them?

4) Can you describe your last sexual experience?

5) Can you describe another memorable sexual experience?

Interpretation:

6) How do you know someone [your partner] is willing to engage in sexual activity with you?

6a) What does your partner do to let you know that she is willing to engage in sexual activity with you?

6b) How do you know what your partner is willing to do?

6c) Can you provide specific examples from your own sexual experiences?

- Probe about examples: time and place of sexual experience, relationship to sexual partner (context of examples).

7) Can you describe any strategies that you use to determine someone's willingness to engage in sexual activity with you?

7a) Can you describe any strategies that you use to sway or entice someone to engage in sexual activity with you?

7b) Specific examples from sexual experiences? (Probe about examples, context of examples).

8) Does someone's willingness to engage in one sexual activity affect your perception of their willingness to engage in other sexual activities with you?

Clarification: For instance, if you're making out with someone, do you think she might be willing or more willing to do other sexual things with you, like genital touching, oral sex, or intercourse? Or, if someone is giving your oral or if you're giving someone oral, do you think she might be willing or more willing to engage in other sexual activities with you?

8a) Specific examples from sexual experiences? (Probe about examples, context of examples).

9) Does someone's willingness to engage in sexual activity at one point in time affect your perception of their willingness to engage in sexual activity at another point in time?

Clarification: For instance, if someone engaged in sexual activity with you at one point in time, do you think she'd be more or less likely to engage in sexual activity or other sexual activities at another point in time?

9a) Specific examples from sexual experiences? (Probe about examples, context of examples).

*For people in relationships:

- Is how you know your partner is willing to engage in sexual activity different compared to when you first started dating/having sex?

<u>Communication:</u>

10) How do you think your partner knows you're willing to engage in sexual activity?

10a) What do you do to let your partner know you are willing to engage in sexual activity?

10b) How do you think your partner knows what you are willing to do?

10c) Specific examples from sexual experiences? (Probe about examples, context of examples).

11) Can you describe any strategies that your partner uses to determine your willingness to engage in sexual activity?

11a) Can you describe any strategies that your partner uses to persuade you to engage in sexual activity?

11b) Specific examples from sexual experiences? (Probe about examples, context of examples).

12) Does what you do to show your willingness to engage in sexual activity change depending on the sexual activity? If so, how?

Clarification: For instance, do you show your willingness to make-out differently than how you'd show your willingness to give or receive oral, or to have intercourse?

12a) Specific examples from sexual experiences? (Probe about examples, context of examples).

*For people in relationships:

- Is how you show your willingness to engage in sexual activity different compared to when you first started dating/having sex?

Conceptualization:

13) Many people that I've interviewed so far have talked about this idea of noticing that they pushed too hard for sex in various instances.

- For example, some people have talked about trying to engage in some type of sexual activity, a partner resisting nonverbally or verbally a little bit, and then sort of pushing again to see if maybe the partner doesn't resist again. Is this something you can relate to or identify with or speak to at all?

14) How would you define sexual consent?

15) What role do you think sexual consent plays in your life and sexual experiences?

16) Do you remember when you first learned about sexual consent?

17) How do you know whether there's consent to engage in sexual activity with someone?

17a) Does how you know change depending on the sexual activity? For instance, does you partner (do your partners) do different things to show their consent for specific sexual activities (i.e., someone only wants to make-out, or someone is willing to give you oral, or if she is willing to have intercourse?)

*For people in relationships:

- Is how you know there's consent to engage in sexual activity different now compared to when you first starting dating/having sex?

18) How do you think your partner knows there's consent to engage in sexual activity with you?

18a) Do you think you do different things to show your consent depending on the sexual activity?

*For people in relationships:

- Is how your partner knows there's consent to engage in sexual activity with you different now compared to when you first started dating/having sex?

19) When some people talk about consent they talk about willingness. Do you think there's a difference between understanding how someone communicates their willingness to engage in sexual activity and understanding their consent?

20) Do you have any questions for me?

21) If eligible for diary: do you prefer text or email communication moving forward?

That concludes our interview. If you indicated that you are interested in participating in the sexual activity diary portion of this study, I will be in touch in the near future to confirm your participation and schedule the follow-up interviews.

Appendix 2: Electronic sexual activity diary

Instructions

Each day, please use this diary to record your sexual activity (or lack thereof). Record details for every time you have sex with someone, attempt to have sex with someone, or someone attempts to have sex with you. On a day when there was no actual or attempted sexual activity between you and another person, record that in your diary.

Part 1 consists of multiple-choice questions about whether you engaged in sexual activity with someone and, if so, what kind of sexual activity. Part 2 consists of open-ended questions about the details of the actual or attempted sexual activity. Please provide as much detail as possible.

Please use only the first names of your partners in your diary entries. Since you will be writing about very personal experiences, I recommend that you only write in the diary when you are alone.

If at some point you realize that you are not sure about what to record, call, text, or email me (phone: redacted; email: lmarg002@ucr.edu) and I can give you guidance. Keep recording for one whole week (7 days), then, at the appointment date, time, and location we decide on, we will review what you have written in the diary. I will ask you questions to clarify or complete any unclear or incomplete diary entries.

Please remember that the information you provide is *confidential*. Neither your name, your partner's name, nor any other identifying information will be used in conjunction with the information you provide.

1. What is today's date? (If you are completing the diary for a previous day, please enter the date for which you are recording your sexual activity or lack thereof)
2. Did you and a partner talk about sex or a related topic today (e.g., plans for sexual activity, fantasies, sexual history, turn ons, etc.)?
    a. Yes
    b. No

If yes to Q2:

3. Please describe what you and a partner talked about. Who said what? Who initiated the conversation?
4. Did you attempt to engage in sexual activity with someone?
    a. Yes
    b. No
5. Did someone attempt to engage in sexual activity with you?
    a. Yes
    b. No
6. Did you and someone engage in sexual activity?
    a. Yes
    b. No

If yes to Q6:

7. What type of sexual activity did you and the person engage in? (check all that apply)
    a. Sexting
    b. Kissing
    c. Talking dirty
    d. Dry humping
    e. Tickling
    f. Breast touching/stimulation
    g. Genital touching or other sexual touching (e.g., “hand job, “fingering,” stroking, etc.)
    h. Oral sex (e.g., fellatio, cunnilingus, analingus, etc.)
    i. Vaginal intercourse
    j. Anal intercourse
    k. Choking
    l. Slapping and/or hitting
    m. Bondage/restraints/rope-play
    n. Something else (please describe)

If yes to Q4, Q5, or Q6:

8. Please consider providing the following details about the sexual activity that you engaged in or attempted to engage in with another person:

    (this also applies if someone attempted to engage in sexual activity with you)

Feel free to use words/language that is most comfortable and/or natural to you.

- Who did you participate in sexual activity with/attempt to participate in sexual activity with?
- Where were you when you participated in sexual activity or attempted to participate in sexual activity? (For example: at your house or someone else's house?)
- Were any other people present? (For example: Did other people participate? Were other people in the room or otherwise nearby?)
- What was going on at the time? (For example: Were you watching TV? Playing video games? Doing something special?)

If yes to Q4, Q5, or Q6:

9. Please consider providing the following details about the sexual activity that you engaged in or attempted to engage in with another person. (this also applies if someone attempted to engage in sexual activity with you)

Feel free to use words/language that is most comfortable and/or natural to you.

- What did you want to happen?
- What did you think your partner wanted to happen?
- Did you talk with your partner about whether or not you wanted to have sex? What did you say? What did your partner say? Who initiated the conversation?

If yes to Q4, Q5, or Q6:

10. Please describe the sexual activity that you engaged in or attempted to engage in with another person ***in as much detail as possible***. For instance, please consider the following details.

    Feel free to use words/language that is most comfortable and/or natural to you.

    If you participated in or attempted to participate in sexual activity (or if someone attempted to participate in sexual activity with you):

    - What happened? For example:
    - How was the sexual activity and/or attempt at sexual activity initiated?
    - What kind of sexual activity did you participate in (vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, oral sex, kissing, genital stimulation, or something else?)
    - What thoughts, feelings, and behaviors lead up to the sexual activity?
    - Did you orgasm?
    - Did your partner orgasm?

    If you didn't participate in or attempt to participate in sexual activity:

    - Why not? For example:
    - What happened?
    - How did you feel about what happened?
    - How do you think the person you were with felt about what happened?

If yes to Q4, Q5, or Q6:

11. How did you know the person you were with was willing and/or wanted to engage in sexual activity?

    And/or, how did you know the person you were with was unwilling or did not want to engage in sexual activity?

If yes to Q4, Q5, or Q6:

12. How do you think the person you were with knew you were willing and/or wanted to engage in sexual activity?

    And/or, how do you think the person you were with knew you were unwilling or did not want to engage in sexual activity?

End of survey

Appendix 3: Eligibility survey

The Sexual Attitudes and Experiences Project

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. Participation involves completing this brief survey, potentially being contacted for and participating in an interview, and potentially being asked to complete a daily diary about your sexual experiences over the course of two weeks. If you are asked to participate in the two-week daily diary, you will also be asked to participate in an interview after each week of daily diary participation.

You will be compensated $15 after the initial interview, $20 after the first diary interview, and $25 after the second diary interview. Thus, if you participate in all three interviews, you will receive $60.

If you choose to proceed, this survey will ask you to provide your name and contact information (i.e., phone number and email address) to be contacted if you are selected to participate in the interview and/or daily diary. If you are selected to participate in the interview and/or the daily diary, you will be contacted via email, a follow-up phone call, and another phone call with a voicemail if there is no answer. You can choose to accept or refuse the interview and/or daily diary invitation at that time. Your name and contact information will only be accessible to the primary investigator (Logan Marg).

Your responses and study participation will remain completely confidential. Neither your name nor contact information will be reported in conjunction with your responses.

I consent to be considered for participation in this study.

Note: If you select "No," you will be ineligible to participate any further.

a) Yes

b) No

Instructions: Please answer all the questions to the best of your ability. If you are unsure of the answer to a question, please give your best guess.

There are no right or wrong answers, and no "trick" questions. Please answer candidly and honestly. Your responses will be kept completely confidential. Thank you for your participation!

1. Please enter your first name at last name in the form below.

- First name
- Last name

2. What is your gender?

a) Man

b) Woman

c) Transgender

d) Gender fluid

e) Gender queer

f) Non-binary

g) Another gender not listed here (please specify)

3. What is your year of birth?

4. Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino or none of these? Select all that apply.

a) Spanish

b) Hispanic

c) Latino

d) None of these

5. Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be:

a) American Indian or Alaska Native

b) Asian

c) Black or African American

d) Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

e) White

f) Other (specify)

6. What is the best email address to reach you at?

7. What is the best phone number to reach you at?

8. What is your sexual orientation?

a) Homosexual

b) Heterosexual

c) Bisexual

d) Asexual

e) Pansexual

f) Another sexual orientation not listed here (please specify)

9. How many times have you engaged in sexual activity with someone other than yourself in the last 30 days?

10. How many people, other than yourself, have you engaged in sexual activity with in the last year?

11. How many people, other than yourself, have you engaged in sexual intercourse with in the last year?

12. When is the last time you had sexual intercourse?

a) I've never had sexual intercourse

b) Within the last three days

c) About one week ago

d) Within the last thirty days

e) Over thirty days ago

13. Have you had sexual intercourse in the last six months?

a) Yes

b) No

14. What is the gender of the last person you engaged in sexual activity with?

a) Man

b) Woman

c) Transgender

d) Gender fluid

e) Gender queer

f) Non-binary

g) Another gender not listed here (please specify):

15. Please select all that apply to you.

a) I am interested in having sex with men in the future.

b) I am interested in having sex with women in the future.

c) I am interested in having sex with transgender men in the future

d) I am interested in having sex with transgender women in the future

e) I am interested in having sex with people whose gender is not listed here

f) I am not interested in having sex in the future.

16. Are you currently a student at UCR?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Other (please explain)

17. Are you an undergraduate or graduate student?

a) Undergraduate

b) Graduate

18. What quarter and year do you anticipate you will graduate?

Appendix 4: Tables

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of full sample (N = 40)

Demographic Characteristic	N	(%)
Race/ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	20	(50.0)
Non-Latino Asian	13	(32.5)
Non-Latino White	2	(5.0)
Non-Latino Black	1	(2.5)
Non-Latino Multiracial	2	(5.0)
Non-Latino Other Race	2	(5.0)
Class standing		
Freshman	2	(5.0)
Sophomore	7	(17.5)
Junior	17	(42.5)
Senior	14	(35.0)
Relationship status		
Single without sex partner	5	(12.5)
Single with sex partner	6	(15.0)
< 6-month relationship	8	(20.0)
6-month to < 1-year relationship	4	(10.0)
≥ 1-year relationship	17	(42.5)
Living status		
Commuter	8	(20.0)
Nearby campus	24	(60.0)
Campus housing	8	(20.0)

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of subsample (N = 16)

Demographic Characteristic	N	(%)
Race/ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	7	(43.8)
Non-Latino Asian	4	(25)
Non-Latino White	2	(12.5)
Non-Latino Black	0	(0)
Non-Latino Multiracial	1	(6.3)
Non-Latino Other Race	2	(12.5)
Class standing		
Freshman	0	(0)
Sophomore	5	(31.3)
Junior	4	(25)
Senior	7	(43.8)
Relationship status		
Single without sex partner	0	(0)
Single with sex partner	3	(18.8)
< 6-month relationship	4	(25)
6-month to < 1-year relationship	3	(18.8)
≥ 1-year relationship	6	(37.5)
Living status		
Commuter	4	(25.0)
Nearby campus	10	(62.5)
Campus housing	2	(12.5)

Appendix 5: Reflections on the research process

REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Eliciting candid responses

Going into this research, I was nervous that it would be difficult to elicit young men's candid discussions and thoughtful reflections about their sexual experiences. Indeed, I suspect that one reason behind the lack of research in this area, specifically focused on men, is due to the perceived difficultly and awkwardness of sitting down with men, one-on-one, and trying to get them to discuss their sex lives beyond narratives of sexual bravado and conquest. Also, given the line of questioning, the university context, and the #MeToo Movement, which was at its height during much of data collection, I was nervous that participants would feel defensive and provide socially desirable responses. However, to my relief, the large majority of participants were very candid and engaged in deep, thoughtful discussions about their sexual experiences, which suggests a high degree of comfort, openness, and perhaps even a hunger for such discussions.

I employed numerous approaches to encourage feelings of comfort and safety among participants. First, I took great care in trying to create a safe and comfortable setting at which the interviews occurred. All interviews were conducted in a social psychology research lab, and I was aware that lab settings can often feel sterile, institutional, and impersonal. To combat the "lab" feeling, I took creative steps to make the setting feel more personal, comfortable, and safe. For example, I dimmed the lighting, put a table between myself and participants, used a small, intimate space to match the intimate nature of the interview questions, and ensured there was no risk of anyone

overhearing the interview. Additionally, I covered up a camera that was on the ceiling of the interview room and ensured it was always behind the participant to avoid the risk of participants feeling observed by others.

During the first few interviews I noticed that participants often fidgeted, so much so that a couple of participants broke the pen that was set in front of them. To direct what I interpreted as nervous energy, I brought in small toys with which participants could play during the interviews, such as “fidget-spinners,” a stress ball, and “fidget-magnets” and told participants about them at the onset of the interviews. I also made sure participants had a place where they could place their belongings, had bottled water sitting at participants’ spot, and had a Kleenex box on the table.

I also used many strategies to generate rapport between myself and participants, such as by smiling often, laughing when participants laughed, and mirroring their body language. I tried to make the interview feel casual, yet professional, by mirroring participants’ language when appropriate, and stating at the onset of the interview that there was no hidden motive behind this research and asking them to speak openly, honestly, with much detail about their thoughts and experiences. I started and ended each interview with small talk and tried to instill a sense of warmth and respect in all correspondence leading to and throughout the interview. At the end of each interview, as well as a different points of the subsample’s diary data collection, I expressed my sincere gratitude. My shared gender identity also may have helped increase participants’ comfort level and willingness to speak openly and honestly.

It is also possible that the above strategies played a minor role in encouraging openness from participants and eliciting their candid responses. In her interviews with boys and young men about sex, Peggy Orenstein (2020) described a similar level of candor and openness from her participants. Orenstein suggested that because boys and men are typically discouraged from and not given the opportunity to discuss the interior of their emotional and sexual lives, her participants engaged in frank and honest discussions about their sexual experiences because they were given a safe space to do so. Thus, in the present study, simply providing a safe, protected space for participants to freely discuss their sexual experiences may have gone a long way to elicit candor and openness. Indeed, at the end of each interview, as well as after subsample participants' final diary debriefing interview, I asked participants to speak about their experience as a participant. When reflecting on their experience, all expressed positive feelings. Most said they entered the interview feeling a little nervous and awkward, but that they quickly overcame any unease because of my apparent comfort and ease with which I conducted the interviews and talked about sex. Nearly all participants said they had never had such a frank discussion about their sexual experiences before, and as a result, had told me things they had never shared with anyone else. Some participants said it felt good to freely discuss and reflect upon their sexual experiences. One participant said he felt "relieved" to have been able to share so much about his sexual experiences. Some subsample participants described becoming much more aware of their sexual behaviors and attitudes following their participation in this study. Thus, it was clear that participants seldom had opportunities to discuss their sexual experiences with someone. Those who had discussed

their sexual experiences had typically only done so briefly as a way to report a sexual conquest to a male friend. These preliminary findings regarding men's positive experience participating in this study, as well as their openness, suggests that encouraging men's critical reflection and/or discussion about their sexual experiences could be a valuable component in sexual health and sexual assault prevention programs.

Cognitive and emotional burden

Talking to dozens of men about their in-depth sexual experiences was also, at times, psychologically taxing. Some participants described emotionally painful sexual experiences that they said they had never told anyone. Some participants described experiences in which I had concern for their partner. At the end of a long day of interviews, participants' narratives were often swirling in my head. I needed to engage in deliberate psychological strategies to unwind and disentangle participants' narratives from my mind. I was also concerned participants would describe perpetrating sexual assault, and if they did, the resulting ethical dilemma I would face. On the one hand I felt deeply grateful for participants' candor and willingness to participate and did not want them to experience harm due to participating in this study. On the other hand, I felt an ethical obligation to file a report to the appropriate authority if necessary. In the end, no participants' responses required me to file such a report, though I was continually aware of the ethical dilemma that doing so would pose. Overall, I was unprepared for the cognitive and emotional burden that conducting this research would entail.

The logistics of research

In executing this study I quickly realized the high workload associated with the logistics of research, particularly, but not limited to, the logistics of recruiting and scheduling participants, tracking their participation, and actually collecting the data. In my experience, this work is seldom explicitly discussed in much detail. As such, I describe some of my experience carrying out the logistics of this study below.

Recruiting

Most of the logistical work came from recruiting participants. For instance, to execute my initial recruitment strategy, I sent emails to each of the 401 participants who participated in a previous study that I conducted. Additionally, I sent up to 3 emails to each person who did not reply, which required tracking each person's replies, lack of replies, and the number of emails I sent. In all, this strategy required sending approximately 1,000 emails. After I exhausted that strategy, I contacted dozens of professors to ask if I could recruit from their courses, sent them recruitment flyers to post on their course websites, reminded them to post the flyers, and went all around campus making announcements in many courses.

Scheduling

After recruiting participants, I had to schedule them for interviews, which required a great deal of time. I engaged in much trial-and-error to reduce that workload and the rate at which participants did not show up for their interviews. First, I used email, but that required a lot of back-and-forth which took time. Sometimes, people did not respond for days, and I could only schedule participants one by one which slowed down

the data collection process. Given these limits, I tried using Doodle polls (doodle.com) which had similar issues as using emails. Doodle polls also required a lot of time constructing each poll, and it was difficult to prevent overlapping appointments.

After Doodle polling, I tried using Google Calendar, but it was messy, clunky, and not very intuitive for scheduling many appointments. After Google Calendar, I discovered Calendly (calendly.com), which dramatically decreased the logistical workload of scheduling participants. Calendly allowed me to set up multiple months of time in which participants could schedule their interviews at a time most convenient for them. It allowed me to create an automatic interval between interviews, the maximum number of interviews per day, and create buffers between interviews. After choosing all of my desired settings in Calendly, it produced a weblink, which I shared with my participants – allowing them to schedule their own interviews. Calendly also prevented overlapping interviews and synced to my personal calendar. Therefore, if I had another appointment in my calendar, those days/times were automatically unavailable in Calendly. Likewise, when a participant scheduled their interview, it automatically populated in my calendar.

Tracking

Another important part of logistical work that went into data collection was tracking participants. I tracked every participant's scheduled interview dates, whether they showed up to the interview, whether they dropped out of the study, and at which point in the study they were. I also tracked any correspondence I had with participants and notes I had about them from our interview(s). All of this information was alongside

their eligibility survey data, so that I had a sense of who participants were when they came to the interview.

Data collection

There were also important logistical components behind actually collecting the data, which primarily involved preparation and planning for the interviews. For example, two days before the interviews with subsample participants, I read the transcript from their first interview as well as their diary entries to develop follow-up questions. One day before every interview I sent participants confirmation emails and text messages and printed and gathered materials, such as interview guides and consent forms. The day of the interview required setting up the interview room, reviewing the interview questions, and practicing the questions to ensure the interview felt natural to participants and to increase participants' sense of comfort and trust. Following every interview, I wrote down reflection notes, transferred the audio-recording from my phone to my computer, deleted it from my phone, and encrypted it on my computer. Then, I updated the tracking sheet and sent the audio file to a research assistant to be transcribed. This process often took at least 30 minutes after the interview.

Lessons learned

In executing the logistics of this study, I learned several important lessons that I incorporated into my work on other research projects and will take with me to future projects. First, conducting quality research requires a balance between constraints and rigor. Most research is conducted in the context of a variety of constraints, typically time and money, which were the core constraints on my research as well. Both of those

constraints informed the design of this project and resulting decisions. While constraints require compromise, it is important to choose compromises carefully so that they do not negatively impact on the findings, strengths, and rigor of the study. Second, I learned that conducting high-quality research while meeting goals and obligations and creating high quality outputs requires excellent organizational skills and a tremendous amount of planning and time management. Third, I learned that research requires flexibility and openness. Despite well-thought-out plans, events will unfold in unanticipated ways. Flexibility and openness to alternate ways of doing things enabled me to achieve my desired outcomes. Finally, my experience with this study taught me that research requires perseverance and discipline. This research process was a long and bumpy road; perseverance and discipline were needed to ensure that I continued to follow the road, despite unanticipated detours, completed the project in a timely manner, and produced something I was proud of and that can potentially make an impact.