

“Title IX Concepts Don’t Apply To Us, We’re Dudes”: An Analysis of How Colorado College Male
Identifying Athletes Create an Understanding of Male Sex Roles

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On my honor
I have neither given nor received
unauthorized aid on this thesis.

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ABSTRACT

This study used in-depth interviews with 8 male identifying athletes at Colorado College to explore the social processes that influenced their understanding of their masculine role within their gendered sexual script. Research revealed that the participants early exposure to pornography as their main source of education on sex, and their experiences navigating the highly aggressive social culture of their athletic teams, led the participants to create an understanding of sexual interaction that did not include asking for or conveying direct affirmative consent from their partners. The development of the participants' understanding of their sex roles persists through macro ideologies including doing gender, social scripting theory and hegemonic masculinity. Despite Colorado College's institutionalized commitment to educating the student body in the intricate manners in which consent must operate, this study illustrates how there remains a lack of understanding of consent among the male identifying athletic community; this paper concludes with curriculum recommendations for Title IX's collaboration with the Colorado College Athletic Department.

Key Words: Consent, hegemonic, aggression, masculine, sex roles

INTRODUCTION

According to the National Sexual Assault Information Center (2020), 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men will be raped in their life time, and in 8 out of 10 of these cases the victim knows the perpetrator. Women ages 18-24 are at an elevated risk of sexual violence. Within the context of college campuses which are notoriously known for many students operating in the same social space, with alcohol being used at high rates and sexual exploration being promoted within the existing hookup culture, it is apparent that understanding the intricacies of consent is crucial for the wellbeing of all students (RAINN 2020). With recent developments in the popularity of the #MeToo movement, started by Tarana Burke in order to raise awareness about the pervasiveness of sexual violence in society, and in the overall expansion in the awareness of sexual assault and harassment, society is increasing momentum around the dialogue and efforts to increase knowledge of consent, healthy sexuality and healthy relationships. In a study published in *Violence and Gender* (2015) 32 percent of male identifying college student participants shared that they would intentionally rape someone if they knew that no one would find out; this statistic decreased to 13.6 percent when the men were educated on consent and the full definition of rape and its impact on victims during and after the incident. These findings not only illustrate the pervasiveness of nonconsensual sexual activity especially on college campuses, they also highlight the importance of prioritizing educating the male identifying population on the importance of consent in all sexual activity.

In a survey comparing the United States, the United Kingdom and Mexico, the male identifying participants from the U.S. expressed that they felt immense pressure to adhere to the stereotypical portrayal of masculinity in which they were eager to have sex with as many women as possible. The participants also felt that it was normalized to initiate a controlling status in relationships and sexual initiations with female partners (Orenstein p. 98). With the intense presence of societal norms surrounding the pressure of males to adhere to normalized versions of masculinity that include assertive and aggressive behavior, it is clear that males and females are adopting specific understandings of how to interact sexually at a young age and that these understandings often lack information about consent, especially for males. Within society, certain groups of male identifying persons are often exposed to a culture of toxic masculinity at high rates; male athletes in particular express that their time as athletes influences their need to act hyper masculine inside and outside of the athletic arena (Boeringer 1996). Dr. Mary P. Koss (1990), a leading researcher from the National Institute of Mental Health, studied cases of sexual assault on college campuses and found that athletes were involved approximately one third of the time. In order to gain more

insight into male identifying college athletes' understanding of consent and to study the plausible connection between their experiences with their sexuality and the development of their identity as athletes, I conducted a qualitative study in which I interviewed 8 male athletes from Colorado College. The purpose of my research was to understand the macro and micro level social processes that led to the participants' understanding of how their sexual role as males should operate and the impact on their understanding of sexual consent. I studied the participants evolving understanding of sex in order to see what factors such as family, teammates, media and sports culture influence occurrences of sexual assault, sexual harassment and overall unhealthy perceptions of males' roles in sexual activity. In conducting this research my hopes were to address the factors that lead to experiences with nonconsensual sexual behavior and use the collected information to improve Colorado College's Title IX prevention and education efforts within the athletic department.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Trigger Warning: This literature review discusses and/or indirectly refers to acts of sexual violence (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, and intimate partner violence). Please promote your own wellbeing while reading this literature review and participate in whatever steps you need in order to take care of yourself.

Defining Consent

Sexual consent is currently defined as the ability to fully engage in freely expressing feelings of willingness to participate in sexual activity (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999). This concept has been historically understudied within the academic world until recently when researchers began to explore how people navigate sexual intimacy within different cultures, institutions and social experiences. While studying sexual consent, researchers have illustrated the different categories that exist within the concept because it exists as both a mental act as well as a verbal and behavioral act that can be expressed and perceived in a multitude of ways (Jozkowski 2013). Humphreys and Herold (2007) clarify that consent operates within multiple definitions including direct consent which is expressed verbally, and indirect consent which can manifest through active, nonverbal signals. In seeking to understand how sexual violence operates within societal power dynamics and what factors cultivate a culture of abuse, social scientists have examined specific groups of people and how they physically and emotionally engage in and interpret sexual interactions. This literature review discusses the history of studying sexual assault among college students, more specifically male identifying college student athletes because this group is known

throughout American society as a subculture that often contains many individuals who have a lacking understanding of consent on an individual and group level which was found in McGovern and Murray's (2016) study that presented survey data showing that male athletes were more likely to misperceive consent than non-athletes were.

A History of Consent Among Male Identifying Collegiate Athletes

In the late 1990's and early 2000's Hall, Hickman & Muehlenhard and Humphreys conducted studies examining college students' understanding of sexual consent with special emphasis on the different categories that appeared among college students' experiences with conveying and interpreting signs of consent. Hall's (1995) findings emphasized that not only was consent primarily communicated through nonverbal cues, participants also showed differing views of the importance in conveying consent through the progression of sexual acts leading up to full penile and vaginal penetration. In Hickman & Muehlenhard's (1999) study of college aged students' understanding of verbal and nonverbal signs of consent, they found that there are a large scale of behaviors that can be interpreted as agreeing to engage in sexual activity and this wide variation leaves room for misinterpretations of sexual interest between partners. Humphreys' (2007) also found that college students' interpretation of the importance of actively communicating consent through verbal and nonverbal signals declined in situations when those involved in the sexual activity had previously engaged in such activity with each other multiple times and especially when they were in a defined intimate relationship. These studies set a strong base for future research that has added to illustrating that consent is communicated and understood on college campuses to differing extents and that the lack of uniformity in understanding how consent is expressed can operate in ways that strongly influence individuals' experiences (Jozkowski 2013). From these studies it is evident that the definition of consent as well as college students' interpersonal relationships with conveying and perceiving consent through language and behavior do not exist on a homogeneous level, thus leaving room for sexual activity to lead to problematic instances of unwanted interaction.

As studies surrounding the general population of college students and their experiences with consent began to emerge, social scientists started to focus on certain subgroups of college students and male athletes became a pertinent group that appeared to gain attention over time. Melnick (1992) played a large role in paving the way for understanding the culture of aggression in sports and how it transferred into male identifying athletes' navigation of sexual intimacy. Melnick examined the role of peer influence, masculinity and aggression, and the social identity referred to as "big man on campus syndrome" that

pervades the social experiences of male intercollegiate athletes and influences them to feel a sense of social superiority and entitlement (McCray 2014). Following Melnick's initial groundwork on male athletes' attitudes and behaviors surrounding sexual violence against women, Boeringer (1996) surveyed 477 male college students, 16.2% of whom were on athletics teams, and found that male athletes responded as being more inclined to be involved in instances of sexual activity that contained acts of force and coercion, especially with the use of drugs and alcohol as tools of coercion. In 1999 Boeringer used the same population of participants to study acceptance of rape myths among male college students and found that student athletes were more likely than other male students to not contradict or question a list of 14 rape support myths in which consent was clearly not expressed. Past literature has analyzed male student athletes' behavior on the field and the learned cultural aspects of existing in a physically dominant, entitled, aggressive and hypermasculine sphere and how these conditions connect to their behavior off the field with special regard to sexual activity (Jackson & Davis 2000). It is important to note, that within the existing studies of male athletes, overgeneralizations surrounding this population do exist and are problematic in attempting to correctly understand an individual's behaviors and attitudes. Therefore it is crucial to not limit male athletes to one homologous group.

Role of Alcohol

In studying male college athletes' experiences with consent, the role of alcohol appeared as both an intentional and unintentional tool for sexual coercion. College campuses are notorious across the United States for being environments with heavy alcohol consumption: "approximately two in five college students engage in binge drinking" and these high rates of intoxication often carry over into sexual interactions between students (Huang, Jacobs, Derevensky p.707). A study published by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (2014) found that 80 percent of collegiate athletes participate in the consumption of alcoholic beverages. In understanding alcohol's impactful role during sexual intimacy, it is necessary to understand that in order to fully consent to sex, a person cannot be substantially impaired by use of alcohol and/or drugs. In no case does the consumption of drugs and/or alcohol warrant sexual misconduct, however it often exists as a tool for perpetrators to gain power in sexual interactions. Huang, Jacobs & Derevensky (2020) surveyed a national sample of majority male, college athletes and found a strong connection between male athletes participating in heavy alcohol use known as "binge" drinking and their likeness to involve themselves in other high risk behaviors such as not using condoms during sex and seeking a high number of sexual partners. Applying this intersection between alcohol and sexual risk taking

behaviors, Orchowksi, Barnett, Berkowitz, Borsari, Oesterle & Zlotnick (2018) studied college men's experiences with alcohol consumption as an aspect imbedded within sexual violence; they emphasize the idea that alcohol's relationship with sexual assault perpetration exists in numerous forms including: increased likelihood for miscommunication and misinterpretation of sexual cues, an increase in male sexual aggression, and patterns of males targeting partners who appear more vulnerable or "easy" to initiate sexual activity with due to their intoxication.

Consent at Colorado College

Colorado College (CC) operates with a definition of active consent which states that consent is given: "When each person involved in sexual activity or contact expressly agrees to the sexual activity or contact freely, willingly, and knowingly. Active consent is an affirmative process" (CC Title IX). This definition of consent may appear to create a clear structure for what is mandatory in showing and asking for sexual consent, yet CC continues to receive an increased number of Title IX reports each year. In the most recent CC climate survey (2017) analyzing reported incidences of sexual misconduct, 21.6 percent of students reported experiencing sexual touching without their consent, 9.2 percent reported experiencing sexual penetration attempt without their consent and 6.1 percent reported experiencing sexual penetration without their consent. Because underreporting sexual assault on college campuses is very common, these statistics most likely do not represent the actual amount of nonconsensual sexual activity that is taking place.

While past studies have been conducted surrounding male identifying collegiate athletes' likelihood to initiate sexual activity that lacks consensual behavior, there appears to be gaps in the literature fully addressing the in-depth details of this groups' experiences leading to such behavior. My qualitative research analyzes the social processes that contribute to the literature's information on this population's highly aggressive sexual nature by tracing the common social interactions and institutional influences that lead to the appearance of such behavior. At Colorado College, this group of athletes has often been overlooked on campus when it comes to creating a collaborative dialogue surrounding perceptions of what consent means and how it appears. By building off past literature that was mainly rooted in quantitative research, I used a qualitative approach to create an intimate narrative detailing the individual experiences that influence how male identifying student athletes make meaning of their sexual identity. In seeking to understand how perceptions of consent manifest among this specific population of CC students, it is

important to place their experiences within sociological ideologies that provide insight into the adaptation of their masculine sexual scripts.

Doing Gender

Sociologists typically endorse West and Zimmerman's (1987) concept of doing gender which asserts that gender is "an achieved property of situated conduct" thus meaning that gender exists beyond biological characteristics (p. 126). In doing gender, gender is something that is socially constructed by social actors who strive to accomplish societal norms that illustrate that a man is to act masculine and a woman is to act feminine. This concept further contends that the terms "man" and "woman" are associated with learned behaviors and attitudes that create implicit understandings of what it means to identify as masculine or feminine and individuals as well as institutions create apparent definitions of these performed gender norms that operate across society. Placing this concept of gender in the context of learned sexual behaviors, Humphreys' (2007) presents the idea that men have adopted learned behaviors that are instituted within the societal framework that men hold a position of power due to the positionality of their historical dominance as a group. He argues that societal attitudes that have historically exemplified women as existing within a narrative of gender oppression have emerged within normalizing sexual behaviors portraying men as initiators of sex and women as limit setters. Existing gender roles have strongly influenced sexual power dynamics throughout history. With the rise of the importance of understanding how consent operates among different social groups and individuals, social scientists have begun to study how the framing of gender influences meaning making for individuals during sex. Jozkowski, Marcantonio & Hunt (2017) conducted interviews with female and male college students to examine the role of gender norms on creating a perceived sexual double standard during interactions with consent in sexual acts. The interviews created a common narrative in which multiple themes surrounding gender and consent became apparent: (1) sex was perceived as an exchange in which women felt they owed men engagement in sexual activity as an award for the men's effort to woo them or as a way to protect the male ego; (2) men thought of sex as a competition in which engaging in sexual activity with women was viewed as a successful conquest, and; (3) men suggested that it is the female's responsibility to clearly consent to sex and even upon distinct noncompliance, it was normal to try to convince the girl to change her mind. These findings illustrate how experiences with understanding consent operate within a larger social context of navigating learned behaviors associated with men being "socialized to dominate (sometimes aggressively) women to attain what they desire" (Humphreys 2007). The sociological framework of doing gender presents the

interwoven complexities of freely and willingly consenting to sexual activity in a culture that is embedded with traditions of gender domination and subjection.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Within the theory of socially constructed gender roles, hegemonic masculinity is a critical framework for further exploring the cultural implications of sex as an aspect for men to conform to certain norms that legitimize their position of power. Hegemonic masculinity is a societal practice that exists as a validation of male domination through social structures and ideologies. This concept operates as a system that influences society's structural beliefs, values, and norms which uphold social institutions that continue to perpetuate the power of men with a dominant social status, often those who identify as white, heterosexual males. This practice places women and marginalized groups of men into positions of subordination (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Connell's gender order theory acknowledges that masculinity operates differently across cultures and individuals; placing this concept within the Marxist Theorist Antonio Gramsci's (1999) theory of cultural hegemony it appears that males who operate within their socialized positions of power will continue to maintain their dominating hierarchical status as they continue to perpetuate their learned characteristics of masculinity.

Analyzing the cultural norms that appear within the traditional realms of male identifying, heterosexual student athletes' social experiences, Jackson and Davis (2000) explain that sports culture perpetuates ideals surrounding the importance of aggression and domination which are two characteristics that have become imbedded within society's perception of male success. In Warren, Swab & Allen's (2015) study in which 217 heterosexual male college students were surveyed, they found that a strong predictor of sexual assault was the endorsement of rigid attitudes surrounding masculinity. Placing this finding within the context of male athletes who are surrounded by social actors and sports ideologies that constantly contribute to the perpetuation of hypermasculinity, it is highly possible that the narratives of aggression and domination that are accepted on the field transfer to behaviors that may disregard sexual boundaries and comprehension of sex as existing outside of conquest.

Social Scripting Theory

Placing the concept of doing gender and how such learned gendered behaviors can be influenced by a culture of hegemonic masculinity, it is important to understand that these learned behaviors are often products of individuals' environments and interactions. Social Scripting theory asserts that men and women exist within society as social actors whose attitudes and behaviors are dictated by internalized scripts. These

scripts are formed through social patterns at an individual and institutional level that have created traditional roles for men and women to assume. Examining social scripting within the frame of social interactionism, a sociological perspective in which individual interactions create meanings that drive social processes, Hust, Rodgers & Bayly (2017) explored the internalization of gendered interactions by surveying 447 primarily heterosexual college students about experiences and concepts they align with asking for consent. This study was orchestrated from the perspective that social scripting of gender roles has created “a complementary relationship between masculinity and femininity [that] is socially constructed in favor of dominant, sexually aggressive men and subordinate, sexually pleasing women.” The findings of the study illustrated that the adoption of these social scripts has had a strong influence on consent negotiation between heterosexual partners (Hust, Rodgers & Bayly p.198).

Humphreys’ (2007) indicates that individuals do not only follow gendered scripts, but they also follow sexual scripts that deem certain behaviors and attitudes to be appropriate, such as the sentiment that men follow a script that naturalizes them to be initiators of sex while women stand as gatekeepers of their sexuality. Applying scripting theory as well as a framework of feminist interactionism, Humphrey and Harold (2007) conducted focus group interviews with two female groups and one male group. This study upheld the hypothesis that cultural messages are interpreted into individual meaning during sexual encounters, placing women in a position where they felt the need to approach consent more cautious than men who felt the expectancy to initiate the sexual activity. My study focuses on the specific cultural messages and micro level interactions that the male identifying athletes at Colorado College engage in that influence their understanding of their male sex roles.

METHODOLOGY

Interviews

In order to examine the social processes behind the participants’ development of their gendered identity and how it manifests itself within sexual encounters, I conducted a qualitative study at Colorado College, a liberal arts institution located in Colorado Springs. The data was collected through 60-90 minute interviews with 8 male identifying student athletes in private locations of their choosing. In order to be eligible for participating in the study, the male identifying students had to be at least 18 years of age and belong to one of CC’s athletic teams. Although there was no specific eligibility requirement regarding sexual orientation, the 8 participants all identified as heterosexual. After being granted exemption from the CC IRB process, I recruited participants by sending a recruitment script via email that detailed the purpose

and process of the study explaining that I was looking to conduct an in-depth interview to learn more about their experiences as athletes and their experiences learning about and participating in sexual activity. I used convenience sampling in order to reach the available population of male identifying student athletes. As a CC student who navigates multiple social circles, I was already acquainted with multiple male identifying collegiate athletes with whom I conducted the first 5 interviews. For the remaining 3 interviews I used their referrals to other athletes in order to get my full sample of participants. No deceit was used during this study and all the participants willingly signed a consent form that explained what the interview process would entail. All 8 interviews were voice recorded and later transcribed.

As a qualitative study based on the principles of grounded theory (a type of methodology that utilizes the acquisition of rich data to construct social theories), I used in-depth interviews in order to gain rich data that illustrated participants' thoughts, emotions, behaviors and intentions (Charmaz 2010). In order to contextualize the attitudes and perceptions of the participants, I constructed a 3 section interview guide with questions that followed the interviewees direct experiences with sexual intimacy and their experiences learning about sexual intimacy before and during their time at CC. Goodwin and Horowitz (2002) assert the importance of qualitative methodology as it allows for researchers to not only examine the norms in social patterns but also provides opportunities to focus on anomalies that bring new information into light. I selected the 60-90 minute interview process in order to gain in-depth insight to the individual experiences of CC male student athletes without generalizing them to a homologous group that disregards each participant's unique backgrounds and outlooks.

Confidentiality

Due to the sensitivity of the concepts that were discussed during the study I dedicate my full attention to ensuring that the participants' identities remained confidential and their personal information private. All of the participants in the study signed a confidentiality form that explained that their identities would remain anonymous throughout the entire study. Any information that could possibly be traced back to the participants was de-identified through changing names and athletic team memberships. The interview transcriptions were kept on a personal computer that was password protected and the recordings were destroyed after transcription.

Coding

After the 8 interviews were transcribed, I printed out the transcriptions and used highlighters and tabs to hand code. I created a list of themes that I coded for across the 8 interviews. I created 3 main

themes: exposure to pornography, discussion of virginity, and identity as an athlete. I then created subthemes associated with the main three findings which included but were not limited to peer influence, family influence, communication during sexual activity, no communication during sexual activity, locker room talk, alcohol use, and aggressive behavior/attitudes. When a quotation from a participant's interview connected to the list of themes and buzz words I had created, I highlighted the section and tracked the appearance of such themes throughout all the interviews.

Limitations

Due to the time limits of this thesis project, I was confined to using a small sample size. I conducted interviews with only 1 or 2 members of the represented athletic teams because it allowed for an in-depth portrayal of the individual participant's experiences and recounting of the attitudes and behaviors of his team as a whole. Given more time it would have been useful to interview a larger group of participants to further analyze the common themes that appeared throughout the interviews. Goodwin and Horowitz (2002) emphasize the critical perspective that exists surrounding qualitative researcher's challenges with dealing with the "small-N problem," which means the collection and analysis of data may not incorporate a sufficient number of cases. Due to the size of the population, it is possible that the themes that appeared may have contained slight overgeneralizations or may have dismissed other important aspects that existed within the population's individual narratives that would be important to continue to study in further research. With intensive interviewing as a form of data collection, there is also the possibility that the meanings that the participants create throughout their responses may not be an entirely accurate representation of their experiences in reality (Goodwin & Horowitz 2002). I kept this in mind when trying to create an interview guide and environment that cultivated openness and honesty but it is important to recognize that participants may have used intentional rhetoric or explanations that did not represent the full picture of some of their experiences.

Positionality

As a white, heterosexual female identifying student at CC, I was highly aware of my positionality when recruiting and conducting interviews with the participants. While my inclusion in multiple of the athletic teams' expanded social circles enabled me to create comfortable interviewing relationships with the majority of the participants, I understand that the gender dynamic may have caused the participants to be less willing to open up than if they had been speaking with a male interviewer. I also must acknowledge that the participants who were aware of my position on campus as the Title IX Student Liaison and a

member of the Student Title IX Assistance and Resource may have been hyper aware of their stories and language choice during the interviews since they may have been nervous that my involvement in Title IX would create certain biases. However, the majority of the participants were quick to open up and seemed to speak freely and openly about their sexual experiences and their time on an athletic team. While my difference in gender, and the fact that some of the interviewees may have been aware of my involvement in Title IX, may have prompted the participants to feel less comfortable sharing the full details of their own sexual experiences, and thus could result in more discussions about their teammates aggressive sexual behavior instead of the actual participant's own experiences, thoughts and emotions, the majority of the participants shared highly personal, in-depth details about their own sexual encounters.

FINDINGS

Below I draw on common patterns exhibited throughout the 8 in-depth interviews. The questions ask the participants to share their experience with sex education, sexual activity and experiences as being a student athlete. The themes across the interviews exhibit that male identifying student athletes at Colorado College do not fully understand the importance of directly and/or indirectly conveying consent in a sexual situation where it is neither their or their partner's first time having sex. The participants developed a fundamental understanding of their perceived sex role as a male as needing to be assertive; the participants' understandings arose through viewing pornography or sex scenes in movies at a young age. The participants appeared to also build an understanding of female's sexual desires through exposure to female pornographic actresses' positive attitudes and behaviors towards the male pornographic actors' aggressive sexual behavior. It became clear that family had little presence in influencing the development of the participants' gendered sexual scripts except in regard to their understanding of how they should communicate and act in a situation where the person they are about to have sex with is a virgin. In the interviews it became apparent that aggression was a key behavior that appeared in the participants understanding of their mission as athletes and the idealization of embodying this behavior quickly became evident in their social behavior with drinking alcohol, having sexually demeaning conversations about women and developing their perceived role as having a superior social status that represents their view of masculinity in their sexual script.

The Birds and the Bees: Pornography is a More Popular Teacher than Formal Sex Education

A common pattern that appeared throughout the interviews was the large impact that exposure to pornography had on the participants' early understanding of sexual activity. The majority of the participants

expressed that their first experience learning about sex came from viewing pornographic content on the internet or in x rated movies, and they described this content as portraying aggression and control in the male actor's behavior. When asked his first memory learning about sex Brandon, a senior football player, explained that his first time ever learning about sex occurred right before sixth grade when his close friend showed him internet photos of female's porn stars:

I was shocked by the availability of such inappropriate material. We specifically looked at pictures of this one porn star with giant boobs and a fat ass and I was mind blown because in twenty seconds I went from only knowing what kissing looked like, to seeing a basically naked girl on her knees with a guy standing above her and pushing her head down onto his dick. I guess it made me go into middle school and high school believing that girls were supposed to look and act like that even though I was surrounded by a ton of eleven-year-old girls who were still nervous about having their first kiss.

The participants shared that before ever having conversations about sex with family members, teachers, or other adult figures they created an understanding of sexual activity through watching or discussing pornography with their friends. The majority of the participants explained that they came to associate sex with aggression since the pornography they were exposed to showed many forceful sex acts initiated by the male. The participants internalized this behavior as being exemplary for how they should act. The participants seemed to not only create their sexual script from the pornographic images, but they expressed creating an understanding of female roles in sex in which they viewed their female peers as acting similarly to female porn stars who were sexually aroused by the assertive behavior. Brandon's commentary on his learned perceptions of female sex roles and how they seemed out of place in the reality of his interactions with girls his own age illustrates the gap that viewing pornography created for the participants since their own sexual expectations became based off the viewing of acting instead of actual experiences or having conversations about sexual interests with females. Harry, a senior basketball player, expressed that he discovered pornography in 5th grade after his older brother had advised him to start watching in order to understand what to do when hooking up with girls:

There is a ton of crazy shit in porn, I remember seeing the bondage stuff like handcuffs and whips and being so surprised by how aggressive sex is so my first-time watching porn made me realize that people get turned on by really aggressive shit. I didn't have other people telling me about sex so that was how I figured it out and at that age I thought watching guys get girls to give them blow jobs and things like that was so cool.

All of the participants expressed that they did not have in-depth conversations about sex while growing up and therefore their curiosity for understanding what sexual acts looked like drove them to use the internet, movies, and magazines to explore the function of sex: "I was nervous I would get a girlfriend and not know what to do since no one ever sat me down and explained sex so I turned to the internet just

like my friends did". 6 of the participants explained that their fathers had conversations about sex but in every case these conversations were described as being short, awkward and centered around using protection during sexual activity. Jake, a senior member of the swim team, shared that he only had one conversation with his father about sex in which he was told "to be careful about wearing protection since it would be bad to get a girl pregnant or to get and STD." All of the participants explained that their fathers were in charge of speaking to them about sex but the conversations only centered around the importance of condoms so they turned to pornography because they wanted to be prepared for their first sexual encounters. Alex, a senior basketball player, expressed that he tried learning about sex from his older step brother who advised him to go look at his collection of Playboy magazines:

In some ways it confused me more since I couldn't picture my middle school girlfriend in any of those demeaning poses but Playboy is supposed to be an expert on sex so I was like shit ok, I got to step up my game. Having sex was nothing like what I saw in the magazines so looking back I think it's funny that my first exposure to sex was from hiding under the bed and flipping through the pictures.

The participants first development of their sexual scripts through pornographic content socialized them to believe that in order to be an ideal man who sexually pleases his female partner he must mirror the behavior of male porn stars who one participant described as "[being] able to do whatever they want in the scene because they're a smooth ladies man who the porn girl is all about it." The majority of the participants expressed that in looking back on learning about sex from porn, they noticed how the interactions were not realistic in reference to their personal experiences with sex, however they still showed that porn quickly became a cultural influence that determined their view of men as dominant sexual figures and women as being comfortable in their submissiveness. This concept of developing their masculine sex role appeared in their descriptions of their experiences as sexual imitators in which they expressed assuming that their female partner was ok with letting them control the advancement of sexual activity even though this was not directly communicated by the female before or during the sexual interaction. Only one participant, Evan a sophomore football player, did not mention the role of pornography in learning about sex but he did express that he felt he did not learn enough about sex from his father's lecture on using condoms so he relied on his older friends to teach him about intimacy with girls: "I learned from listening to their stories about their fights with their girlfriends or their favorite sex stories. It wasn't great since a lot of their relationships were pretty unhealthy, so I got a messed-up view of things."

The majority of the participants did not receive any type of formal sex education during middle school or high school and if they did, they only remembered learning about using protection and the only references to sex were in scientific terms that depicted the biological process of reproduction. When asked to describe one of his sex education classes in high school, Evan argued that the lack of discussion surrounding the importance of verbal communication and respecting boundaries during sex did not seem like an issue at the time, but looking back he realizes that it was detrimental to not talk about consent and healthy relationships:

Sex education was legit not a thing in my high school. In middle school we had a health class that discussed STDs and reproductive anatomy but we never talked about communicating or how to be respectful during sex so when I got to CC I realized I had such a limited understanding of consent because I had no idea there were so many grey areas in casual hookups and relationships.

Brandon was the only other participant who remembered having a sex education class but he experienced confusion during the class because they split the girls and boys up and gave them different presentations:

It made me more comfortable at first since I was too awkward to learn about sex with girls around but then I started to question what the girls were learning since we both are involved in sex so I feel like we should have been learning the same concepts but I'm pretty sure the girls talked about periods and emotional stuff while all we talked about was condoms and wet dreams.

The only time that the participants mentioned learning about consent, such as healthy communication and respecting boundaries, was during their conversations with their mothers. However these conversations were not described as being in reference to sexual intimacy but rather were more generalized to everyday interactions with women. Half of the participants recounted that while they learned about using protection from their fathers and they learned what sex actually looked like from pornography, their understanding of how to respect women was shaped by their relationship with their mother. Brody, a senior baseball player, mentioned that his mother always gave him advice on how to treat women:

She told me that a real man always respects women and so all of the presentations that we got about consent at CC just felt like common sense because growing up with a mom who always asked me to treat other women the way I wanted men to treat her made understanding how to handle relationships pretty straight forward.

Out of the other 4 participants who did not mention discussing relationships with their mothers, 2 of them did express that their female siblings received much more in-depth talks about intimacy from their mothers than they had received when talking about sex with their fathers. Brandon remarked, "it would have been nice to talk to a parent more about sex. I think my mom talked to my sisters about the emotional part of sex and how to have healthy relationships but I guess since my brother and I were guys she and my dad didn't think it was necessary so we only got a lecture on not getting girls pregnant." Family plays a large role in

socializing individuals to adapt certain gender norms that dictate what is deemed as appropriate behavior based on ones identified gender. The male participants all expressed receiving a strong familial message about having safe sex (not contracting sexually transmitted infections and taking precautions to avoid impregnating someone) and many expressed learning to treat women respectfully but they were never directly advised on how to involve respectful treatment in their sexual behavior. The majority of the participants showed intentions of wanting their sexual partner to enjoy the interaction, however their lack of understanding of how to discuss and respect sexual boundaries was apparent in their descriptions of their sexual endeavors at CC such as when one participant said: “obviously I wanted her to enjoy it and feel comfortable but she didn’t seem that into it. I guess I could have asked what she wanted to do but she never said no to anything so I figured I should keep going.”

All of the participants felt that they had never received a typical the birds and the bees conversation from their parents which left many gaps in understanding the physical, emotional and psychological aspects of sex. Pornography and talking to older siblings, cousins and friends became their main resources for discovering more about sex since their curiosity and understanding of sexual knowledge was not fulfilled by sex education in the institutions of family and education. Through their pornographic exposure, the participants created a seemingly uniform concept of the male sex role as involving aggression, dominance, and an unfulfilled understanding of healthy sexual communication. These traits tied to the idealized masculine sexual script appeared to coexist with the development of their athletic identity as being competition oriented, physically assertive, keen to risk taking behaviors such as binge drinking and openly discussing their interest and experience with having many sexual partners.

The Quick Decline in Expressing and Receiving Active Consent After Losing One’s Virginity

Throughout the interviews the participants illustrated having developed seemingly similar sexual scripts that included initiating the sexual activity, having little to no communication with their sexual partner, believing that girls find pleasure in aggressive sexual behavior and that they need not discuss these concepts with their sexual partners since it is the girls responsibility to speak up if she feels otherwise. The only time that this theme appeared differently was in reference to the taking of someone’s virginity which one participant defined as “the first time you actually have sex, full penetration.” While pornography was clearly the strongest impact on how the participants scripted their sexual behavior in the majority of their sexual encounters, family appeared to play the largest role in influencing how the participants behaved

when taking their partners' virginity. Every participant except one expressed that the process of taking someone's virginity was very meaningful to them and warranted a great deal of communication before and after the sexual encounter. The participants explained that having sex for the first time was a monumental moment in their lives and even though half of the participants expressed that losing their virginity felt important because it gave them bragging rights, it also was secretly significant because they wanted it to feel special not only for themselves but also for their partner. The participants communicated that when they were having sex with a girl who was a virgin, they wanted to ensure that she was comfortable at all times and that she felt cared about and respected so they actively paid attention to body language and verbal cues to make sure that the girl was consenting. Harry recounted his and his girlfriend's experience losing their virginites with each other as a special moment that warranted special attention to affirmative consent:

We had talked about wanting to have sex for a long time and I tried to be very conscious of waiting until she felt ready. When she finally said she was ready I found a private place for us and let her initiate all of our progression through the bases because then I could tell she was comfortable and wanted to progress to sex. I tried to take it really slow and I would stop and ask her how she was doing and if she was ok. After a little while she said the sex was starting to hurt so I stopped immediately and held her in my arms so that she felt safe.

This demonstration of healthy communication, respecting boundaries, and paying attention to body language was a common theme among all participants who shared that they paid more attention to the girl's feelings of comfort and interest when taking their virginites than they did during any other sexual encounter. Earlier in the interview when asked about discussing sex with his family, Harry mentioned that even though he and his mother never directly discussed how he should behave during sex, he remembered her sometimes making general comments about how losing one's virginity is a vulnerable moment for the female. It appeared that Harry internalized this understanding of the female's emotions during sex thus creating a new understanding of how to interact with his girlfriend during sex in a manner that was separate from his sexual script created from viewing pornography.

All of the participants expressed that after losing their virginity it felt a lot less important to discuss having sex before or during the sex or to let the girl initiate the sexual activity unless it was her first time. Alex described how he rarely spoke before or during sex and almost always initiated the physical touch except for when he took his girlfriend's virginity:

I waited for a long time with her and we had so many open conversations about waiting until she was ready which I had never done with other girls. One day she texted me saying she was ready so I made a giant heart out of rose petals on the bed and spelt out our initials in flowers. I also bought chocolates and lit candles. The whole time I was just focusing on making sure she was

comfortable and ok because I wanted to make sure her experience meant something to her since mine hadn't and I didn't want her to feel the way I had. I kept pausing to ask if she was doing ok and if things felt ok and I would keep reminding her that we could stop at any point but she kept saying she was good.

Alex explained that virginity felt more important to him since it was a term people talked a great deal about and he felt his family and other social influences such as movies always referred to virginity in a more special way than any other reference to sexual intimacy other than consummating one's marriage. These societal norms perpetuating the importance of losing or taking one's virginity in a "special manner" most likely socialized the participants to view the interaction as being centered around their partners' directly apparent comfort which differed from the participants typical understanding of how they should interact during sex which they had acquired through watching pornography and learning from their friend's locker room hook up stories.

These attitudes toward actively seeking confirmed consent only appeared one other time during the interviews when the participants were asked what advice they would give to their daughter about sex if she was about to attend college. The participants were first asked to explain the advice they would give to their son about sex when he left for college and their responses all surrounded the importance of using protection, having fun, experimenting and did not address the significance of participating in consensual sexual activity. Jake's response "I would tell him to have fun exploring and trying things out. I would tell him that college is fun and that he should wear condoms so that he doesn't get STDs since it's fun to play the field" touched on all of the main points that were introduced by the majority of the participants. These responses appeared to be very similar to the conversations that the participants had experienced with their own fathers and reflected the understanding of the idealized male gender role as being someone who can have many sexual partners as often viewed in their favorite movies such as James Bond.

All of the participants responded very differently to proposing advice for daughters; the key points they promoted in reference to their imaginary daughters being sexually active in college directly represented the importance of consent that they valued while describing their experience taking a girl's virginity: clear verbal communication, attention to body language, allowing for equal initiation of physical contact, and creating a safe space for the girl to share her boundaries and feel that they are respected. Harry explained that he knew how boys often acted during sexual encounters and that they often were too aggressive or took advantage of girls in vulnerable situations so he would advise his daughter to:

Never get too drunk and to feel confident in being honest with guys about whether or not she wanted to do something sexually. I would tell her to assume that boys aren't smart, which is why it

is important to explicitly communicate what you do and don't want. I would tell her to share her boundaries and if she felt they weren't respected she should leave.

The participants conversations about sexual activity beyond virginity and advising potential daughters on sex were very limited in their inclusion of actively seeking confirmation of consent from their sexual partner. When the participants described their sexual encounters throughout high school and college only one participant said that he would make sure he gained verbal or clear body language cues expressing that the girl was fully comfortable and excited in engaging in sexual activity. This participant was the only one who did not express that he learned about sex from pornography. His different learning experience about sex may have influenced his sexual script to develop differently from the rest of the participants because he did not gain his first understanding of sex from pornographic content while the other participants described their pornographic learning as not having direct verbal communication about the actors' boundaries and interests. The rest of the participants shared that after their first-time having sex or their experiences being someone's first sexual partner, they "enjoyed letting sex progress naturally without stopping to talk about what they were doing or going to do." One participant described one of his first sexual encounters at CC as being awkward because it was so silent:

We came back to my room and I couldn't really tell if she was into it because she just sat there. After a while I kissed her and then it naturally progressed to sex. She would kiss me back but she didn't seem enthusiastic when I fingered her which is why I was surprised that we ended up having sex. I guess I never really stopped and asked what she wanted but she didn't stop me so I figured it was fine.

When asked if they would engage in any verbal communication about the intent to have sex ,or if they paid attention to the other person's body language ,the participants all explained similarly that it "is often really awkward to talk about sex leading into a hookup so it's easier to just initiate it and see what happens." This view point seemed to align with the participants' early understanding of sex since they were introduced to male pornography actors who would initiate sexual activity without communication; the participants also referred to the discomfort their fathers and other family members felt in discussing safe sex with them which may have led them to feel less open to talking about sex. The majority of the participants shared that they were often too drunk or not focused enough to recount the woman's body language leading up to and during any type of sexual activity and the few times that participants could describe the participants body language it was described in general terms such as, "I think she must have put her hand on my shoulder or like grazed my arm with hers." All of the participants showed a noticeable decrease in how important they felt it was to communicate about their or their sexual partner's boundaries,

interests and comfort outside of the topic of virginity. They all discussed participating in more casual sexual encounters as they grew older and they did not consider communication as an aspect of casual hook ups. It became clear that while the participants made meaning of how to act when taking someone's virginity, as learned through their familial influence and exposure to movies portraying virginity as something more special than other sexual encounters, they immediately returned to following the sexual norms that they had learned from pornography during all of their other sexual encounters.

Identity as an Athlete: Navigating Masculinity Through Entitlement, Peer Pressure, Alcohol Consumption and Locker Room Talk

While the participants all illustrated that their understanding of how their gendered behavior should appear during sex was very susceptible to social influences including family and media, it also became apparent that the culture of their athletic team further developed their understanding that they should adhere to a strict definition of hegemonic masculinity that was intertwined with the progression of their male sexual script. All of the participants expressed that their involvement on a sports team had a large influence in shaping their social identity and continued their understanding of the gender role they developed through pornography as seeking to be "very masculine" or the "macho man". The participants all mentioned that their main group of friends are their teammates and that through their association with their teams they felt they held high social statuses, especially in high school. Harry stated "[Being an athlete] meant I was popular so even as an underclassman I was invited to parties and got to hook up with older girls. That popularity status carried over to college too but was different because people aren't quite as obsessed with athletes here." Many other participants shared that they had similar experiences with feeling popular and their social confidence carried over to their sexual activity since they found girls in high school always wanted to engage in sexual activity with them. The majority of the participants expressed that their ability to have sex when they wanted due to their identity as jocks in high school created a sense of entitlement for themselves and their teammates that developed into discomfort when they arrived at college and were rejected by girls who they were romantically interested in. The participants' socialization to view pornographic male actors who were described as "being able to do whatever they wanted with women" as role models may have created a mutual belief among the participants that over confidence was a positive sexual trait and this was upheld by their experience receiving positive reinforcement from high school peers that being a jock gave them a status of social power. Evan explained that their social status as athletes

translated into a sense of entitlement with the discomfort or inability to respect a girl saying “no” to engaging in sexual activity:

So many of the guys on my team don't understand consent because they are entitled and so they never hear the word 'no' their whole lives. They grow up thinking they're so cool because of the sport they play and they get to be popular and rule the social world because they are jocks and so then when someone goes to say no to something in the bedroom they are not used to hearing that word and so instead of listening they feel the need to convince the girl to say yes and if she still doesn't then they rip apart her reputation and call her a bitch or a prude to their friends.

This explanation was directly exhibited through another participant's description of his first sexual experience at CC: “She told me it was a bad idea and that we shouldn't hook up but we did it anyways since in a sense, I think knowing she was nervous about hooking up made me want to even more.” The sense of entitlement from that the participants linked to their social popularity associated with their sport led participants to describe their teams as feeling above the rules. Since the participants received positive reinforcement from their high school peers for acting hyper masculine it seems this socialized the participants to be proud of their lawless behavior and they expressed little interest in reassessing their social role when entering the new college environment. When explaining how his teammates had enough money to play on traveling sports teams that elevated their social status, Jake stated the following in reference to the attitudes of his high school teammates:

My conversations with my teammates were pretty unhealthy because they were rich and entitled and they were used to getting everything they wanted and being treated like kings because their money made them feel untouchable. There would be a lot of times where guys would tell stories about hooking up with girls who were way too drunk, like stumbling and throwing up, and instead of recognizing how that was fucked up they made jokes about it since they knew nothing bad would come of it for them. I still see that with athletes here at CC who feel untouchable because of [their social status].

All of the participants shared that being on a sports team played a crucial role in shaping their understanding of the behaviors and attitudes that they should exhibit in order to “be a man”. The participants explained that being a part of a sports team meant that they were operating in a highly masculine sphere in which aggression, ability to consume alcohol, participation in degrading sexual conversations and initiation of sexual activity were necessary to prove their identity as a “macho man” on and off the field. Harry explained that a strong culture of aggression existed amongst his high school and college teams because the coaches and players emphasized the need to be competitive and do whatever it takes to accomplish their final goal which led players to act out in angry bursts on the field when they were not accomplishing what they wanted:

You'll see fights on the field at practice and in games where players will get aggressive and size each other up, sometimes it even gets physical because they have to big man each other. The other day one of our players was so aggressive and shouting and pumping his chest up at the ref because he hated the ref's call and it was uncomfortable since that's a common thing so you see us out there acting like little kids throwing a tantrum.

Just as Harry expressed that his team had angry reactions to not getting their way on the field, the interviewees showed that they also had difficulty with respectfully accepting not getting their way with a sexual partner. Since the participants and their teammates did not appear to have any noticeable repercussions for behaving aggressively and pushing against the rules in the athletic arena, it is highly plausible that their feelings of being above getting in trouble led them to have a strong confidence that their social behaviors were also safe from consequences. This feeling of being exempt from common rules and policies was directly shown in the comments of one participant who kept reiterating that he did not understand why his athletic team had to waste their time with Title IX trainings because he believed "Title IX concepts do not apply to us". The majority of the participants felt that their understanding of being a man was shaped through interactions with other team members, especially upperclassmen who pressured them to adhere to aggressive behaviors during athletic play time and in social gatherings in order to prove their team's presence as "top dogs".

Pressure from teammates to express group identity as "real men" operated in two popular forms outside of their aggressive behavior in the athletic arena: (1) Ability to binge drink and initiate sexual activity while under the influence, and (2) Engagement in locker room talk.

The majority of the participants expressed that they felt constant pressure from their teammates to engage in alcohol consumption at high rates. Brandon stated that he was never interested in binge drinking but his teammates would yell at him and throw alcohol at him until he began participating in drinking high quantities and then as he got drunker, he was approached by teammates who pressured him to ask girls to go home with him since they believed that the drunker he was and the drunker the girl was, the more likely he would be to receive sexual action:

It made me nervous to drink that much but I felt so much pressure and I didn't want to let the older guys down since I didn't want to be ostracized as that weird kid who doesn't drink. I started playing beer pong and afterward there were some drunk girls dancing so they pushed me to go dance with them and take one of them home but I was so drunk I could barely walk so I let the guys down by not getting with one of the girls.

All of the participants shared that alcohol consumption was a large part of their team's collective identity and they felt that the pressure to impress their teammates by drinking, which typically occurred in party settings where they were interacting with female identifying students who were also consuming high rates

of alcohol. All of the participants recalled moments when they were intoxicated during hookups, and many of them referred to being present for conversations where teammates expressed the idea that engaging in sexual activity when both participants were heavily intoxicated was normal. Evan declared that his teammates often referred to their drunk sexual encounters as not counting as having happened:

I am around a lot when guys get way too drunk and hookup with girls who are also just as drunk or maybe even drunker. They will both wake up remembering absolutely nothing that happened that night. It's funny because the guys don't seem to care at all since, they are under the misconception that if you're both blackout it does not count. I'm not sure [if the girls they hookup with] feel the same way since the guys never mention it but from what I hear from my female friends I don't think they are operating under the same misconception.

The pressure to adhere to the culture of binge drinking that presents itself as a large factor on all of the participants' teams often led to them engaging in intoxicated sexual encounters where they described "needing to initiate the hookup because that is the man's job." All of the participants shared similar feelings that consuming alcohol not only made them look good in the eyes of their older teammates but it also gave them the confidence to ask girls to have sex with them: "I would go hangout with the older guys and they would force feed me alcohol which was brutal but there was no saying no and it did help me feel more confidence in approaching girls and asking them to leave with me." The participants also described being at parties with their teammates where the pressure to drink large quantities of alcohol led them to destructive behavior and influenced them to engage in loud and sometimes physically aggressive altercations. When recounting a time when he had to pull his friend aside so that he did not attempt to take a woman home when she was clearly too intoxicated he stated: "It was good I dealt with it alone since when we were in big groups and were all drinking a ton the guys are quick to lash out and start fights with each other to prove they're the bigger man." The participants' experiences with alcohol illustrate that they were socialized by their older teammates to associate binge drinking with their ability to act as an ideal man and these high levels of intoxication led to grey areas in regard to sexual consent.

Every participant expressed that a crucial part of being a member of their sports team was participating in locker room talk which Brandon defined as "just us guys talking about sex in a really raunchy way." All of the participants shared that there was a strong group mentality that associated how much of a man someone was with how willing they were to share the details of their sexual encounters. Brandon explained that there were traditions in his high school that led him to feel comfortable talking about sex which carried over to his eager willingness to participate in conversations about sex with teammates:

Our team had rituals where we would wear black socks to practice on days that we had sex and at the end of every week a senior would stand up on a bench and scream “smash of the week” and then we would talk about a player who either hooked up with someone really hot or did something super kinky. So when I got to college I wasn’t surprised that all the guys pretty quickly opened up about their hookups.

The participants shared that their high school locker room talk was usually lawless, and even when a coach or adult figure may have overheard inappropriate comments, they received little to no guidance on how that type of demeaning conversation was harmful to women. This early adaption to the typical idea that “boys will be boys” led the participants to either see no issue with objectifying locker room talk or to hide their feelings of discomfort in order to appear masculine. Over half of the participants felt that no matter how uncomfortable they felt when other players referred to women in vivid and demeaning terms, it was part of the team’s climate to laugh along and not speak up against it. When asked about the thoughts and feelings that he experienced when his teammates were recounting their hookups, Evan explained that when he arrived at CC it became clear early on that it was easiest to not disrupt the status quo which meant nodding along even when he was bothered by his teammates comments:

Within the first month of school I heard them saying things like ‘yeah I fucked this bitch so hard’ or ‘I fucked Kathrine and she had the fattest ass, I kept grabbing fistfuls of that chub.’ I felt weird hearing them be so graphic but I knew to just put my head down and not say anything or else I would be called a pussy or a fag. But it definitely felt like they were out competing with each other to have the most fucked up story or the most hookups.

Evan’s experience illustrates the intense pressure that he and other participants felt to stay within the confines of the culture of hegemonic masculinity that dominated interactions between the teammates. Not only did he feel that his teammates would lash out or ostracize him for conveying his feelings, his masculinity and sexuality would have been in question had he openly disagreed with such aggressive comments which exemplifies the distinct social norms the team upholds about what it means to be a man. Alex also shared that he felt locker room talk was an essential part of team bonding but that it felt like a competition to prove who was most manly by sleeping with the most girls and describing it in objectifying terms, “I think guys felt that in order to be cool they needed to share their own crazy sex stories so that was unconscious pressure to go out and find girls to hook up with.” Locker room talk appeared to continue defining the participants’ understanding of ideal masculinity and the importance of conforming to those traits while simultaneously deepening their acceptance of a sexual script surrounding aggression and demeaning treatment of women.

The participants all referred to their identities as being heavily tied to the culture of their sports team and as stated by Brody:

My sport is highly masculine in the sense that I have to be strong, competitive, aggressive and real macho man in all aspects of my life. Being a jock doesn't end when I step off the field, it's who I am, which means I'm always doing things with my team and conforming to the image that our team portrays as a group.

Throughout the interviews the participants all discussed how their understanding of their masculinity was shaped through the social culture of their teams. Even when they did not originally align with the values being promoted by the team leaders, the power hierarchy and concern with fitting in influenced them to adapt to their team mentality of being aggressive on and off the field and bonding through binge drinking and speaking of their sexual promiscuity. DISCUSSION

The interviews exemplified the common theme that from an early age the participants created the majority of their understanding of sexual activity through exposure to pornography and movies depicting sexual intimacy in which the content was described as “kinky and aggressive” with images of “whips, chains, spanking, forceful blowjobs, women in demeaning poses, and men initiating all physical contact.” There was no discussion of seeing any verbal communication in which consent was clearly expressed by any of the actors. The aggressive sexual behavior that the participants were socialized to aspire to was also reinforced by the participants’ time operating within their team’s social norms which shaped the social scripting of their perception of how they should behave as men to a model exhibiting aggression, entitlement, and hegemonic masculinity. Humphrey’s (2007) theory of social scripting is seen in the participants’ socialization to adapt to an aggressive sexual script from the behavior they witnessed in pornography.

When the participants mentioned watching pornography and sex scenes, they connected the images they saw with their development of understanding what their identity as a man included in regard to sexual behavior since they were being socialized by images of males exhibiting power and force during sex. The majority of the participants appeared to be directly or indirectly influenced by these images to act as initiators of sexual activity and they felt that the male actors were role models for the ideal portrayal of masculinity because they were able to engage in sexual activity with whomever they desired without putting in a lot of effort. The majority of the participants not only described themselves as initiators of sexual activity, but they also felt that it was normal to avoid communication about intentions, desires and boundaries during sexual activity. Since the participants first perception of sex included men as the initiators and lacked exposure to verbal communication portraying consent, it is highly possible that they created their sexual script based on the gender norms and popular aggressive behavior exhibited in the images they learned from.

As the participants became more involved in their sport, they expressed that their identity as an athlete was formed through the rigid attitudes surrounding masculinity promoted through the association of aggressive and competitive behavior within their sport. All of the participants expressed that their coaches and older teammates in high school and college socialized them to associate success with domination: “winning means everything, if you’re not getting what you want then you have to reassess and try new angles until you’re the big man out there.” While the aggressive behavior promoted in the athletic arena was a large factor in shaping the participants’ behavior, they all exemplified that the social culture on their team surrounding binge drinking, locker room talk and entitlement played the largest role in manifesting Melnick’s (1992) concept of the “big man on campus syndrome.” The participants expressed feelings of social superiority due to their title as athletes and their teammates’ pressure to adhere to the characteristics associated with their social status and were thus normalized to accept aggressive sexual behavior which was particularly seen in objectifying conversations about women, the use of alcohol as an unintentional tool for coercion, and the inability to respect when someone is withholding consent. While all of the participants appeared to show consensual intentions when engaging in sexual activity, these findings illustrate the grey areas around consent that the participants developed through their exposure to pornography and the pressure to adhere to the masculine nature of their team identity. By tracing the origins of the participants’ attitudes and behaviors regarding sex, it is clear that there are educational gaps that have impeded their understanding of active consent. By continuing to create environments where there are little or no education at an early age for males regarding the intricacies of consent, especially male identifying athletes who operate in a highly masculine sphere, society will experience the continued development of aggressive sexual scripts based on the normalization of such gender norms.

The participants’ experiences as athletes influenced them to feel that they must attempt to belong on their team through embodying the idealized characteristics of being a “macho man.” Their behaviors represent the socially constructed concept of doing gender that West and Zimmerman (1987) coined to explain the understanding of gendered norms through learned behaviors. Societal attitudes surrounding males as competitors seeking to succeed through initiating sexual activity were heightened within the participants’ experiences in athletic communities and played a large roll in scripting their understanding of the dominating positionality they are to manifest. Applying social scripting theory to the participants’ early exposure to pornography and their constant presence in the hyper masculine culture of athletics, it is clear

that the participants' understanding of their social and sexual behavior was formed through their exposure to media and interactions with teammates.

Using in-depth interviewing was beneficial for collecting detailed emotional responses that give contextual explanations to the data collected by the CC Climate survey analyzing instances of nonconsensual sexual activity. The size of the sample was small and the homogeneity in the identities of the participants, all of them identifying as white, heterosexual males, does leave room for future studies that could use a larger sample with more diverse demographics in order to: (1) create a more comprehensive understanding of the patterns that create common understandings of sexual scripts among male identifying athletes, and (2) to assess how sexual experiences and understandings of consent differ among different demographics of male identifying athletes in order to create a stronger understanding of what social and cultural norms socialize certain populations to experience particular narratives with intimacy and consent. It would also prove beneficial to use participant observation to gain a clearer understanding of participants' social interactions since there is the chance that they withheld or fabricated information in order to present themselves in a particular manner. During one interview the participant's teammates interrupted and purposely spoke to the recorder in a manner that was sexually demeaning towards women; upon the presence of his teammates the participant's behavior quickly changed to match the energy and join the comments of the others.

My findings illustrate that there is not a uniform understanding of consent among male identifying athletes at Colorado College, however there seems to be commonality in the perception that men are sexual initiators, aggressive sexual behavior is considered desirable, and communicating consent verbally and physically is not typically recognized as being an important part of sexual activity. While the college, along with many other institutions, dedicates a great deal of time and resources to creating a safe environment that promotes the wellbeing of all students, sexual assault is still prevalent and affects the lives of many students. The number of Title IX reports at CC that have been made at the end of the first semester of 2019 already equal the number of reports that were made during the entire 2018-2019 school year. While it is possible that this increase in reporting is a result of students being more aware and accepting of the Title IX reporting opportunities, the increased number of reports is highly concerning and illustrates that in order to prevent the existence of these statistics new education tactics must be implemented within multiple social institutions including the family, media and school systems.

CONCLUSION

By recognizing that the participants all gained the majority of their understanding of sex through pornography that did not directly portray the concepts vital to showing consent, it is clear that the lacking or nonexistent role of family members, teachers and other mentors in educating their male identifying children on healthy sexuality, healthy relationships and consent influenced the participants to create a sexual script based on their own pornographic research. Since the participants sexual scripts developed simultaneously with their development of understanding and portraying ideal gender norms surrounding hyper masculinity, their attitudes and behaviors became associated with assertiveness and domination.

My study aimed to identify the influences of, and provide insight to decrease, male identifying athletes' perceived pressure to adapt to an identity that includes many grey areas surrounding consensual sexual behavior. My findings illustrate that other institutions such as middle schools, high schools, families and the media should address how these themes may operate on a larger scale that is not limited to Colorado College. The continuation of this research on other campuses could target systemic change within institutions that will operate to educate males on the intricacies of consent at an early age. The participants all showed good intentions in wanting to treat their sexual partners with consent but their ignorance on the subject and their socialization to appear hyper masculine often created grey areas. Engaging male identifying athletes, especially since they are known to be strong social forces on high school and college campuses, in the dialogue surrounding consensual sex will empower the next generations to reshape their understanding of ideal masculinity into a form that is not sexually oppressive towards others.

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Appendix A: Policy Writeups.

My thesis culminated in meetings with The Title IX Extended Team, The Title IX Prevention/ Education/ Advocacy/ Resource Team, The Student Title IX Assistance and Resource Team (START) , The Senior Staff of the Athletics Department, and the Student Athlete Advisory Counsel in which I proposed a new curriculum surrounding educating the athletics department on consent. I created a comprehensive writeup of my mission for the presentation that I then used to create a collaborative dialogue with student athletes surrounding definitions of consent, how to directly communicate about consent, and the many grey areas and issues that exist on campus that deny the proper existence of consent in sexual activity among students. After this proposal was approved in all of my meetings, I created the general presentation and made slight changes to it for each athletic team based on the findings from the participants of each team that I interviewed. The proposal for the presentation as well as the presentation itself are below, along with an outline of the dialogue that one other member of the START team and I use during the presentation. We have been undergoing presentations to each individual athletic team and plan to have the college continue to implement our curriculum in future years.

Presentation Proposal:



START with Athletics

Goals:

- Include student-athletes in the conversations around Title IX issues
- Ensure there is a uniform understanding of the Title IX related definitions and policies that are in place at CC and create room for collaborative growth on understanding these Title IX aspects
- Provide tangible resources and ways to react to such instances for student-athletes

Proposed Presentation outline:

Length: ~25 minutes

Content:

- * Introduce ourselves and roles on START
- * Gender based violence explain
 - Consent (coercion, manipulation, alcohol), Harassment, Stalking, intimate partner violence, sexual violence/ assault (go into scope of these concepts and how they operate on different levels)
 - Masculinity: (power dynamics for both male and female teams), hosting parties/ social influence
- * Activity (13) / Discussion
 - Breakdown an example and what is wrong with it and where the actions fall into different GBV categories
 - Example of a discussion prompt:

"Anne and Nate were assigned as partners for a project. The project was due at 8am on Tuesday. Because of their busy schedules, Anne and Nate could not meet until later on Monday evening. The pair agreed to meet at Nate's apartment which was a 15-minute drive off campus from Anne's dorm. Anne does not drive so her roommate drove her to Nate's with the assumption that Nate could bring her home. Nate agreed. Anne and Nate completed the project around midnight. Anne packed up her things and asked Nate if he could drive her home. Nate responded that he'd noticed chemistry between them and thought she should spend the night. Anne declined but Nate was persistent and said he didn't want to take her home then. Anne refused, but as time went out, she got increasingly worried about not being sure how to get home. Thus, Anne had sex with Nate."

Consent is informed, freely and actively given, mutually understandable words or actions which indicate willingness to participate in mutually agreed upon sexual activity. Consent is not effectively given when coercion is present. Coercion exists with the initiator engages in

sexually pressuring and/or oppressive behavior and manipulation. Here the sexual activity engaged in was unwanted by Anne. Even though they ended up having sex, she did not actively give consent due to Nate's coercive behavior.

- Ways to respond and resources
 - Personal safety comes first
 - In the moment: 3 D's: Direct, distract, delegate
 - Afterwards: Meet with a campus resource
- What START does and the other campus resources **note: these are not only resources for victims but are whole campus resources
 - SOSS
 - SARC
 - Wellness Resource Center
 - Counseling Center
 - Chaplain's Office
 - Campus Safety
 - Title IX Coordinator: [Heather Kissack](#)
 - The Butler Center

Collaboration with SAAC:

- Express to athletics team coaches the importance of involving teams in discussion about Title IX related issues and resources
- Provide START with names of captains so that START can contact captains of each athletics team to discuss specific details of presenting to each team
- Express questions, concerns and suggestions throughout the process

Presentation:



About us

- **Ellie Pfeiffer**
 - Junior, START → Advertising and Outreach
- **Stephanie Dewald**
 - Senior, START → Title IX Liaison
- **Why we do this?**

Does anyone know:

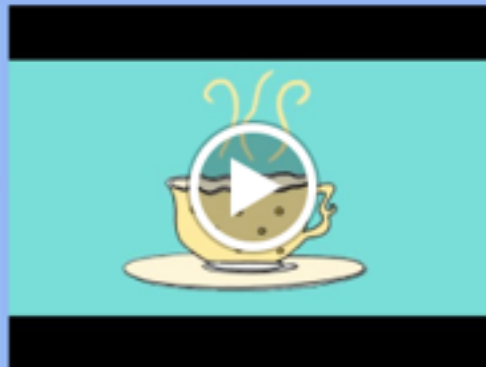
- 1- What is Title IX?
- 2- What is START?
- 3- What CC's consent policy is?

What is Consent

Active consent

When each person involved in sexual activity or contact expressly agrees to the sexual activity or contact freely, willingly, and knowingly. Active consent is an affirmative process.

What would be examples where someone is unable to freely, willingly, and knowingly consent to sexual activity?



Relationships

- Intimate Partner Violence
 - Violence that exists in an intimate relationship against one's spouse or partner

What is an example of IPV?

Reminder: Violence can, and does, persist even in relationships



Alcohol and Drugs

- Alcohol / Drugs
 - Substantial impairment:
 - A person cannot make a reasonable or rational decision about an important matter
 - You are responsible for assessing whether the other person is freely, willingly, and knowingly agreeing to such contact



What are signs of this sort of impairment?

Reminder: Alcohol does not cause sexual assault but it is a facilitator

Manipulation / Coercion / Exploitation

- Manipulation:
 - To change by artful or unfair means so as to serve one's purpose
 - Gaslighting
 - **What is an example of this?**
- Coercion:
 - The practice of persuading someone to do something by using force or threats
 - **What is an example of this?**
- Exploitation:
 - A person takes sexual advantage of another person without active consent for any purpose
 - **What is an examples of this?**

Reminders:

1- Just because someone doesn't say no, that does **NOT** mean yes

2- No does **not** mean convince me

Example:

Jake was recruited by the college to be on its basketball team. Jake used to be close to his other teammates but recently Kyle, the assistant coach, has noticed tension among the team and Jake. Jake has been isolating himself at practice and the other players have been taking cheap shots on him. After one practice, there was pushing and shoving among the teammates so Kyle asked Jake to stay late to talk. Kyle asks Jake what is going on but Jake refuses to share. Kyle tells Jake that he is looking at being cut from the starting lineup if he doesn't tell him what is going on. Jake then shares that he is in a disagreement with some of his teammates because of something that happened at a recent party in which Jake felt his teammates were not being respectful of women. Kyle presses Jake to share more and it is revealed that there was a lot of alcohol at the party and the teammates had their fun with the same girl.

Ways to prevent: before the moment

- 1- Sober hosts
- 2- Minimize physical risks → amount of people, lighting etcetera
- 3- Create clear standards for parties
- 4- Attend trainings

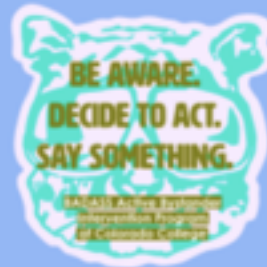
Ways to respond: in the moment

Be an **active bystander**: 3 steps

- 1- Be Aware → watch out for problematic behaviors
- 2- Decide to act → make sure situation is safe, trust gut
- 3- Say something → 3 Ds: Direct, Distract, Delegate

*BADASS Social Host Training

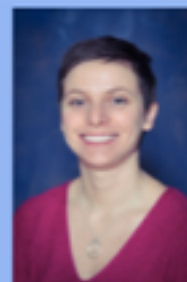
Personal safety is always the first priority



Ways to respond: after the fact

Meet with campus resources:

- 1- START: START@coloradocollege.edu (confidential)
- 3- SARC: (719) 227-8101; (719) 602-0960 (confidential)
- 4- Wellness Resource Center: (719) 389-6211
- 5- Counseling Center: (719) 389-6093 (confidential)
- 6- Chaplains' Office: (719) 389-6638 (confidential)
- 7- Campus Safety: (719) 389-6911 [Emergency]
8. Title IX Coordinator: Heather Kissack (719) 389-6202
9. The Butler Center: (719) 389-6338



Anna Thompson, SARC
sarc@coloradocollege.edu

73% of LGBTQ college students experience sexual harassment or abuse

91.9% of female victims of rape who reported knew their rapist

Thank you!

48% of LGBTQ students of color reported being verbally harassed in school

25% of college women and 15% of college men are victims of forced sex during their time in college

One in three women and one in six men experience sexual violence in their lifetime

Dialogue with Presentation

- Introduce presenters and roles as START members
- Explain why Title IX work is important to presenters by sharing that unfortunately we do not exist in a world, and on a campus, that is free of sexual violence
 - Discredit the misconception that sexual violence is perpetrated by scary strangers and explain that 8 out of 10 times sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone known to the victim
 - Share introduction to both of the presenters' personal stories as being victims of sexual assault
- Ask student if they know:
 - What Title IX is
 - What START is
 - What CC's consent policy is
 - Encourage student participation and build off their answers to create a detailed understanding of the definitions of all 3
- Play video clip "Tea Consent" for engaging and easy to understand explanation of the intricacies of consent
- Touch on grey areas surrounding consent
 - Explain the role of alcohol and drugs in impairing a person's ability to consent to sexual activity
 - Relate to students through peer to peer conversation about the drunk hookup scene on campus and discuss what signs show that it is clear that a person is too intoxicated to participate in sexual activity
 - Discuss the proper ways to react when someone is too intoxicated for sexual activity
 - Share presenters' personal experiences with sexual assault in which alcohol was a facilitator for the sexual abuse
 - Discuss definitions of manipulation, coercion, and exploitation
 - Create a dialogue about different ways that these concepts manifest themselves within the student body and collectively brainstorm ways to decrease their presence
 - Discuss how consent operates within defined intimate relationships
 - Explain the wheel of power and control
 - Explain the many ways that relationships can be unhealthy including, physical, emotional and psychological abuse
 - Share personal experience with sexual abuse within an intimate relationship
 - Activity: post a hypothetical situation on the board and give student athletes time to read and discuss the issues and ways to respond in small groups and then have a full group dialogue about what they talked about in their small groups
 - Discuss the athletic team's role in social settings as it is often the nature of our campus that athletic teams host a large amount of parties that include the use of alcohol and drugs
 - Review ways to create a safe environment in order to prevent any feelings of discomfort by any and all students
 - Sober host
 - Minimize physical risk
 - Create clear standards for parties
 - Attend trainings

- Discuss ways to respond when witnessing something that may be potentially harmful to a fellow student
 - Be aware
 - Decide to act
 - Direct, Distract, Delegate
- Introduce all of the confidential and non-confidential resources that exist on campus and explain the main ways that they can be of use to students seeking help for themselves or guidance on how to support someone they care about who experienced a Title IX related issue
- End with statistics discussing the prevalence of sexual abuse in different communities
- Answer questions and provide handouts, stickers and posters with resources and slogans about consent
 - 1.

*It is important to note that while the START member and I share our own stories with sexual assault during this presentation this is in no way a necessary part of the presentation and should only be included in future years if presenters have personal stories that they are fully willing to share. It is not and should never be a requirement that the presenters have personal experience with sexual assault.

Reasons Behind This Presentation Dialogue:

While some of the following may appear in my findings section above beginning on page..... The dialogue in the presentation was constructed from the section of the in-depth interviews that focused on the participants experiences with and attitudes towards Title IX Trainings as CC. All 8 participants expressed that the most impactful aspects of trainings included personal stories, poems, videos, or artistic depictions of sexual violence:

2. Hearing people read poems and share their stories [about sexual assault] was incredibly moving. That moment has stayed with me for the rest of my time here. I think we all feel that way since a lot of times we skip trainings, or sit through them and roll our eyes at how boring they are and afterward everyone makes bad jokes about the content, but when you have someone presenting on things in an engaging way like using activities or personal antidotes, it leaves a lasting impression.
3. The participants also shared that being included in discussing Title IX related issues instead of being lectured at increased their likelihood to remember the content of the training: "It's awful to sit there and be told definitions and made to feel like we're doing something wrong even if we aren't, that is why it's nice when were asked to join the conversation.