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Why Don't They Just Ask?: Barriers to Directly Requesting Affirmative Sexual Consent by Gender and Sexual Orientation

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by

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abstract

Most young adults report a discomfort with verbally and explicitly asking for sexual consent from a partner. Social scientists have theorized this discomfort is driven by conformity to rigid gender roles, sexual scripts, and peer norms, although little research has directly examined the relationship between these barriers and consent behaviors. Most consent research has focused on heterosexual individuals, and even fewer studies have compared the sexual consent attitudes and behaviors of heterosexual and sexual minority individuals. Through a series of three studies, I examined the reasons heterosexual and sexual minority young adults hesitate to ask a new partner for sexual consent. In Study 1, heterosexual men and women, gay men, and lesbian women responded to an exhaustive list of reasons for discomfort with asking for sexual consent. Results suggested a multitude of reasons that young adults are reluctant to ask for sexual consent, including beliefs that doing so ruins the flow of sex, concerns about peer and partner perceptions, and – for heterosexual and gay men – violations of masculine gender roles and sexual scripts. In Study 2, heterosexual and gay/lesbian young adults predicted their peers and prospective partners hold more negative attitudes about consent than they hold themselves. In Study 3, heterosexual men's and women's endorsement of the traditional heterosexual initiator/gatekeeper sexual script negatively predicted likelihood of asking for consent. For men, but not women, this relationship was mediated by the belief that asking for consent made them appear feminine. Additionally, results further corroborated the finding that both men and women misperceive how their partners would view them if they asked for consent. Together, this research suggests that gender roles,

sexual scripts, and particularly misperceptions of peer norms play a considerable role in obstructing sexual consent behavior among young adults. Implications, limitations and future directions are discussed.

Introduction

Affirmative Consent Background

Sexual assault is widespread among young adults and throughout college campuses. Although reports vary by methodology and definitions of sexual assault, roughly 20% of college women in the United States and Canada experience some form of sexual assault during their college tenure (Muehlenhard et al., 2016), as do approximately 3% of men (Cantor et al., 2015). Eighty percent of sexual assault victims are under 30 years old and two thirds of sexual assault victims know the perpetrator (New Orleans Sexual Assault Response Team, n.d.).

Sexual consent – its understanding and its practice – is central to preventing sexual violence (Beres, 2007). However, consent is often ambiguous and rarely practiced in a clear and explicit way (Curtis & Burnett, 2017; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999). Although most college students report preferring to rely on indirect, implicit, and nonverbal methods of communicating about consent (Curtis & Burnett, 2017; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Humphreys, 2000; Jozkowski, 2016; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2014) and believe these methods are efficacious in accurately communicating consent (Humphreys & Brosseau, 2010), they frequently evaluate ambiguous consent as consensual, acceptable, and clear (Humphreys, 2007). Furthermore, men, who are more likely to rely on nonverbal (versus verbal) methods of consent (Humphreys, 2000; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2014) and are more frequently than woman expected to be the initiators of sex (O'Sullivan & Byers, 1992; Masters et al., 2013), are also more likely to perceive ambiguous consent as consensual (Humphreys, 2007). Thus, reliance on nonverbal indicators of

consent may contribute to misunderstandings, increasing rates of nonconsensual encounters (Jozkowski et al., 2014).

College and university sexual assault prevention programs frequently cite miscommunication regarding consent as a contributor to rape and sexual assault (Bondaunt, 2000). In response, many campuses have instituted programs and policies that emphasize clear consent communication, a move that has been supported and even legislated by various government bodies (Beres, 2014; Hills & Crofts, 2021; Muehlenhard et al., 2016). The most often cited of these programs is Antioch College Sexual Offense policy (reviewed in detail in Humphreys, 2000). The Antioch policy, drafted in response to alarming rates of sexual assault on the Colorado Springs campus, attacked campus sexual assault by requiring all campus members to obtain consent from a would-be sexual partner prior to any sexual activity, and for each subsequent sexual act. The policy required direct verbal language that specified which act was being consented to, rather than merely referring to a nebulous act of "sex" or, even less clear, "it". In this policy, consent was defined as "the act of willingly and verbally agreeing to engage in specific sexual behavior" (Humphreys, 2000, p. 138).

Off campus and beyond the legal eye, social media platforms also picked up the mantel of sexual consent. The now famous #MeToo movement swept the stage with social media posts from celebrities, politicians, and laypeople alike sharing their experiences with sexual assault. #MeToo aided in raising awareness of sexual assault in the public consciousness, and with it, the need for better sexual consent communication. Many of these stories described legally ambiguous situations that did not meet the requirements for pursuing legal action, or at least fell short of what was necessary to provide any likelihood of legal justice. Many of the accused responded with defensiveness, blaming victims for not explicitly – and forcefully – making their

non-consent known. However, for others the movement highlighted the responsibility for those interested in sex of establishing clear consent prior to making sexual advances.

Affirmative consent, referring to clear, verbal, and ongoing communication of assent to sexual activity (Muehlenhard et al., 2016) has become a widely used standard for institutions and individuals alike for determining consensual sexual activity. However, as previously noted, young adults are especially unlikely to conform to pressure to practice affirmative consent, describing explicitly asking for consent as awkward and unrealistic (Curtis & Burnett, 2017).

In this manuscript I describe the current literature on young adults' sexual consent behaviors and their attitudes about consent, including why they may be resistant to taking an affirmative consent approach to sex. I continue with an exploration of how behaviors and attitudes may differ by gender and sexual orientation, and conclude by reporting three studies designed to address young adults' affirmative consent barriers. These three studies elucidate some of the reasons why young adults are reluctant to ask for affirmative consent and explore gender and sexual orientation differences in affirmative consent barriers. Study 1 explores endorsement of an exhaustive list of barriers – including peer norms, sexual scripts, and gender roles – young adults may face in asking for sexual consent and examines which barriers pose the greatest obstacle for heterosexual and sexual minority men and women in asking for sexual consent. Study 2 narrows its focus to peer norms, by examining if young heterosexual and sexual minority young adults misperceive their peers' and potential partners' sexual consent behaviors, attitudes, and interests. Lastly, Study 3 focuses on the role of the traditional initiator/gatekeeper sexual script in predicting heterosexual men and women's sexual consent behavior and how this relationship is mediated by concerns of violating gender roles by asking for sexual consent. Together, these three studies highlight how peer norms, sexual scripts, and gender roles inhibit

young adults from practicing affirmative consent and provide insight into why affirmative consent programs and movements often fail to meet their objectives.

What Is Sexual Consent and How Is It Defined?

Although there are similarities across operationalizations, researchers do not all define sexual consent in the same terms, nor do they always provide clear definitions in their studies (Muehlenhard et al., 1992; Beres, 2007). Beres (2007) notes that many researchers refer to sexual consent – and even explicitly study it – without providing a clear definition, to either the reader or the participant. Beres describes the definition of consent, including her own early conceptualization, as something that is mutually understood, even when it cannot be clearly operationalized.

When researchers do define consent, the term can refer to a discrete event or, conversely, an ongoing process in which individuals continuously return to and renegotiate their mutual interest (or disinterest) in sexual activities (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). Walker (1997) conceptualized consent as a noun, referring to the *shared understanding* of sexual wantedness. Meanwhile Hickman and Muehlenhard (1999) conceptualized consent as a verb, referring to the *communication of the feeling* of sexual wantedness. Bridging both operationalizations, Muehlenhard and colleagues (2016) similarly summarize consent as referring to either a mental behavior (e.g. deciding to engage or wanting to engage in the activity) or a physical act (e.g. expressing willingness to engage in the activity). They further conceptualize sexual consent along three axes: an internal state of willingness, an act of explicitly agreeing to a sexual behavior, and a behavior that is interpreted by someone else. Shumlich and Fisher (2018) similarly refer to consent as something that is interpreted by another, defining consent as "the clear ascertainment of willingness to engage in a sexual interaction" (p. 248). Hickman and

Muehlenhard's definition (used by Humphreys and Brosseau [2010] and Humphres and Herold [2003]) further defines consent as something that must be freely given. This reflects a definitional requirement that most contemporary researchers include, in which sexual consent must be conferred without coercion or force (Humphreys & Brosseau, 2010; Humphres & Herold, 2003).

In sum, consent may be operationalized as something that is both given and received (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 2016; Shumlich & Fisher, 2018), as long as it is produced without duress (Hickman & Muelenhard, 1999), and provides a mutual understanding between partners (Beres, 2007; Walker, 1997). Laypeople's definitions of consent appear to be similarly organized. Reflecting the noun definition, in interviews with college-aged men and women, Jozkowski and colleagues found college students described consent as "an agreement to have sex" or "two people willing to have sex with each other (Jozkowski et al., 2014). Reflecting the verb definition, in interviews with a racially diverse cohort of college men, Marg (2020) found most college men conceptualized consent as a communication of willingness or non-willingness to participate in sexual activity. In contrast to the mutuality of wantedness expressed in the above studies, Curtis and Burnett (2017) found that consent was frequently defined as something men have to get from women. Reflecting the process definition of consent, Shumlich and Fisher (2020) found most undergraduate students indicated consent should be something verbal, clear, and ongoing.

Recent social movements have called for restricting the definition of consent to *affirmative consent*, which prioritizes the clear communication of sexual consent between both parties (Shumlich & Fisher, 2020). In contrast to the anti-rape slogan "no means no", affirmative consent campaigns have famously shifted the consent programming to a "yes means yes"

requirement, placing the onus on both parties to ensure they have received a clear, verbal, assent to sexual activity. “Yes means yes” was picked up by several organizations, and legislated as a requirement of consent in several territories, including California, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia (Beres, 2014; Hills & Crofts, 2021; Muehlenhard et al., 2016). Lady Gaga and former New York governor Andrew Cuomo coauthored an essay supporting a New York state bill that required all colleges and universities in the state to adopt affirmative consent policies (Gaga & Cuomo, 2015). This model of consent appears to have taken hold on college campuses. Shumlich and Fisher (2020) found most college students in their study understood the concept of affirmative consent; however, the authors noted that few participants were familiar with the term.

Sexual Consent Behaviors and Attitudes

Common Consent Behaviors and Concerns

Sexual consent can be asked for and indicated verbally or nonverbally, explicitly/directly or implicitly/indirectly (Willis et al., 2019; Hickman & Meulenhard, 1999). According to Willis and colleagues (2019), explicit methods directly address sex or sexual organs (e.g. talking about sex, touching sexual organs such as breasts or the penis), while implicit methods address the context or body parts adjacent to sex, or use euphemisms (e.g. motioning toward a bedroom or asking about contraception). For example, an explicit verbal consent request can be a straightforward, “Do you want to have sex tonight?” while an implicit, yet still verbal, consent request may be, “do you want to move into the bedroom?” In both cases the question is verbalized, yet only one makes the intent of having sex completely clear. Conversely, nonverbal methods can also be applied, both explicitly and implicitly. An example of explicit nonverbal consent communication could be applying a condom, while implicit nonverbal consent communication might be sitting on a bed and motioning for a partner to join.

Notably, in all nonverbal consent communication there is never a way of clearly *asking* if a partner is interested in sex or a given sexual activity. The closest approximation of a nonverbal consent request is using facial expressions that suggest a question, such as a raised eyebrow, or by pausing to allow time for the partner to refuse. Neither of these situations can be guaranteed to be clearly understood as inviting a partner to provide their consent or non-consent. A similar issue arises with implicit verbal consent requests.

Returning to the above example, going to the bedroom is not synonymous with having sex, even when the inviter treats it as such. Indeed, people interpret transitioning from a public to a private setting as an indicator of sexual consent, although it not always is (Jozkowski & Willis, 2020). When consent to one behavior is used as a proxy for consent to another behavior, several issues arise. First, opportunity to deny consent to the other behavior (in this case, some sort of sexual activity) is disallowed. If you never explicitly ask your partner if they want to engage in a sexual activity, you cannot be certain they felt they had the opportunity to object. If the receiver of the sexual initiation is not interested in the particular sexual behavior, not asking for consent puts them into a position where they have to choose between either finding the opportunity and strength to voice their objection or going along with unwanted sexual activity. If they choose the latter, this is problematic for both partners. For the receiver, going along with unwanted sexual activity can be traumatic. For the initiator, if they ever learn their partner did not want to engage in that sexual activity, at best they learn the encounter was not mutually enthusiastic, and at worst they may face an accusation of sexual assault. On college campuses and in states that use an affirmative legal definition of consent, not having clearly verified consent prior to the activity can be especially detrimental. Additionally, when partners rely on unclear consent communication, a pattern of unclear general sexual communication may be established, which

may undermine other forms of sexual communication beneficial to sexual pleasure (Mallory, Stanton, & Handy, 2020). In fact, some research links consent to better overall quality of the sexual interaction (Jozkowski, 2013).

Thus, it can be in the best interests of both partners to avoid miscommunications of interest and consent by utilizing direct (i.e. explicit) verbal methods of consent communication. The benefit of avoiding misunderstanding is recognized by young adults, evidenced by endorsement of survey items like, "I believe that asking for sexual consent is in my best interests because it reduces any misinterpretations that might arise" (Humphreys & Brosseau, 2010). College men even explicitly understand that obtaining verbal consent decreases the risk of sexual assault accusations (Marg, 2020). However, direct verbal consent communication is still underutilized and seldom preferred. Qualitative analysis of (primarily heterosexual) college students' sexual experiences indicated that direct conversations of sexual consent were rare and instead the majority of sexual interactions described relied on "indirect, veiled, and coded" (Shumlich & Fisher, 2018, p. 248) behaviors that only obliquely addressed sexual consent and thus required an inference of intention and interest.

Other research among heterosexual adolescents and young adults reveals similar patterns. In response to the question "Check only those verbal and nonverbal behaviors you used to specifically ask for your partner's consent" Humphreys (2000, p. 156) found college students were more likely to report using nonverbal (compared to verbal behaviors), such as kissing, undressing, or touching a partner, or pulling out a condom. For example, 62% of students indicated they touched their partner sexually as a means of asking for consent, while only 33% of students indicated they asked their partner, "Do you want to have sex." Of course, none of these nonverbal behaviors (e.g. kissing, undressing, touching) actually involve a question, leaving the

asking of consent perhaps implied, but certainly not clearly stated. However, these nonverbal behaviors appear to be interpreted by students as clear indications of consent. In interviews with college students, one man offered, “Here's an easy one, you're going to kiss someone and they don’t move their head back, that's pretty much consent for me. If you are moving your hand in some certain place and they aren't pulling away, then that's consent for me” (Humphreys, 2000, p. 71).

Indeed, ascertaining consent by waiting for an objection is a common approach. Indirect approaches to sexual consent are so widespread that in the development of the Sexual Consent Survey (Humphreys & Brosseau, 2010), a measure of consent attitudes, endorsement of indirect methods emerged as a unique factor. Example items of the factor, *Indirect behavior approach to consent*, include “Typically, I ask for consent by making a sexual advance and waiting for a reaction, so I know whether or not to continue” and “It is easy to accurately read my current (or more recent) partner’s nonverbal signals and body language”. These sentiments reveal that college students not only frequently prefer nonverbal consent communication methods, but also believe nonverbal methods can accurately determine a partner’s consent. However, evidence speaks to the contrary. When presented with ambiguous consent scenarios, college students are still likely to interpret the scenarios as clear indications of consent (Humphreys, 2007). This pattern is stronger for men than women, which is problematic given that men are more frequently expected to initiate sex (O’Sullivan & Byers, 1992; Jozkowski, 2016, and are thus more likely to be in the position of having to interpret a partner’s consent.

Another concern with using nonverbal consent methods of ascertaining a partner’s sexual consent is that nonverbal invitations invite nonverbal responses. Women report being more likely to rely on nonverbal methods of indicating their consent or non-consent to sexual activity when

responding to nonverbal sexual requests (Jozkowski et al., 2014; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2011). This is problematic because, even though young adults – and especially young men – report preferring nonverbal methods of ascertaining *consent*, they still rely on verbal assertions of *non-consent* (Righi et al., 2019). In interviews with high schoolers, adolescent boys indicated they would continue in pursuit of sex until their (typically female) partner verbalized their own refusal without prompting (Righi et al., 2019). Additionally, both men and women believe that women's non-consent is usually communicated verbally (Burrow et al., 1998) and women's refusals of consent must be explicit and clear, or else misunderstandings are likely (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; O'Byrne et al., 2006; O'Byrne et al., 2008; Starfelt et al., 2015). Because of this, women may prefer to be given an opportunity to refuse sexual activity (Jozkowski et al., 2014).

Taking a consent approach of moving forward until receiving an objection is also concerning because nonverbal tactics of initiating sex may range in how benign or aggressive they are, and socially allowing benign approaches may create the impression that aggressive approaches are also acceptable. Unfortunately, some heterosexual college men utilize aggression in initiating sex, with the expectation that if a partner really objects, they will protest with a velocity that equals that of the initiation (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013). The social and physical challenges of stopping a sexual partner who is barreling forward in their sexual activity without stopping to ask for consent can be overwhelming. This works to the advantage of the initiator. Asking for consent puts the asker in the position of being rejected, which few people are apt to invite. Furthermore, not asking for consent in a clear manner allows the asker to save face if they are rejected, by creating space for plausible deniability of intent (Humphreys & Brosseau, 2010).

Lastly, not asking for affirmative consent from a partner puts the onus on the receiving partner to clearly – and perhaps forcefully – communicate their non-consent, rather than on the

interested partner to ensure they are certain of their partner's consent. This contributes to victim-blaming of survivors of sexual assault by suggesting they failed in their responsibility to verbally indicate non-consent, or suggesting they sent mixed signals by behaviorally indicating consent (Jozkowski, 2011).

In sum, although many prefer to communicate about consent in indirect, implicit, and nonverbal methods, using any methods besides directly, explicitly, and verbally asking for consent may be problematic for the following reasons:

- They do not actually ask the question that matches the desired response and thus may elicit a response to a different question
- They do not provide a sexual partner a clear opportunity to object to the sexual activity
- They set a tone for other unclear sexual communication that undermines sexual satisfaction
- They invite nonverbal responses of consent and non-consent, which are less likely to be considered indicators of non-consent
- They may provide the impression that aggressive nonverbal initiations of sex are acceptable
- They place the responsibility of stopping an unwanted sexual encounter fully on the receiver of the sexual initiation, rather than equally on both partners, which perpetuates victim-blaming

Notably, contemporary researchers consider miscommunications about sexual consent unlikely (Beres et al., 2014). Miscommunications can be difficult to quantify, as this research requires an honest account from both parties after the fact. However, people report communicating sexual refusals via methods that are consistent with other universally

acknowledged forms of refusals in non-sexual situations (Beres et al., 2014; Kitzinger & Frith, 1999; O'Byrne et al., 2008; O'Byrne et al., 2006). Furthermore, men (the more frequent sexual initiators) report understanding and acknowledging nonverbal sexual refusals, although interviews with young men indicate some may rely on the miscommunication model to excuse bad behavior. Thus, rather than undercutting the relevance of clear communication of consent, these findings emphasize the importance of establishing affirmative consent norms that remove "misunderstanding" excuses for sexual assault. Additionally, while miscommunications about consent may be uncommon, the consequences of miscommunication when it does occur nevertheless provide a justification for promoting affirmative consent as a normative practice.

Of course, not everyone is opposed to clearly asking for consent, at least in theory. As one male interviewee notes, "… I mean you get so far and then you are told 'no' you're pretty frustrated and that can turn into a bad thing. That wouldn't happen if you always knew ahead of time where you were, instead of 'surprise, that's it'… it would also prevent the girl from feeling bad that she has to make you stop because it's going too far" (Humphreys, 2000, p. 69). This belief is reflected in an item from the Sexual Consent Survey (Humphreys & Brosseau, 2010) factor *Positive attitude toward establishing consent*, with example items like "I believe that asking for sexual consent is in my best interests because it reduces any misinterpretations that might arise." Additional items from this subscale reflect other positive attitudes toward consent, such as "I believe that consent should always be obtained before the start of any sexual activity" and "Most people that I care about feel that asking for consent is something I should do."

Gender Differences in Consent

Some notable gender similarities and differences arise in the consent literature. Although men and women agree that obtaining sexual consent before sexual activity was important, they

are also equally likely to endorse the belief that asking for consent is awkward (Humphreys, 2000). Regarding gender differences in consent, women tend to have more positive attitudes toward sexual consent overall, and endorse the need for sexual consent more strongly and in more contexts (Humphreys, 2000). In Humphreys' (2000) survey of college students, women were more likely to agree that sexual consent should be openly discussed between partners, that consent should be obtained regardless of how long the couple had been together or whether they had had sex previously, and that consent should be obtained for any kind of sexual behavior (including necking or petting). Women also preferred to be asked verbally for consent prior to any sexual advances, compared to men. Meanwhile, men tended to endorse more reluctance surrounding consent, more strongly endorsing beliefs that consent is only required once at the beginning of the sexual encounter, that sexual consent for intercourse covered consent for other sexual activities (e.g. petting or fondling), and that sexual intercourse is the only behavior that requires explicit verbal consent. Furthermore, men were more likely than women to report that verbally asking for sexual consent ruins the mood and reduces pleasure.

Humphreys (2000) also asked men and women to rate their approval of the Antioch College Sexual Offense policy, that required affirmative consent prior to any sexual activity. Overall, women responded more positively to the policy, viewing it as endorsing an efficacious means of sexual communication. However, men and women were equally likely to view the policy as unrealistic and difficult to implement in practice.

Women and men also tend to differ in their consent behaviors. As previously noted, compared to women, men perceive ambiguous sexual consent situations as more consensual, acceptable, and clear (Humphreys, 2007). Men, compared to women, are also more likely to rely on nonverbal indicators of a partner's consent and non-consent (Jozkowski et al., 2014). Women

and men also assume different roles in consent negotiations, with women taking on a role of receiving sexual initiations and men taking on a role of being the initiators. I return to this concept in a later section.

Sexual Orientation in Consent Attitudes and Behaviors

Unfortunately, most of the extant literature on sexual behaviors is confined to heterosexual[1] couples (Johnson & Hoover, 2015). The scope of sexual consent behaviors is even more limited, although research on other sexual behavior may imply hypotheses specific to sexual consent. For example, gay men and lesbian women do not differ in their sexual communication in general, from each other or from their heterosexual counterparts (Holmberg & Blair, 2009), which may extend to sexual consent.

Of the limited studies exploring the role of sexual orientation[2] in sexual consent, findings suggest that people who have sex with others of the same sex are more likely to initiate sex using nonverbal than verbal methods(Beres et al., 2004). Additionally, there is some evidence that men who have sex with men and men who have sex with women are more likely than women in general to rely on nonverbal indicators of their own sexual consent (Beres et al., 2004; Jozkowski et al., 2014). This finding is similar to other sexual consent research that did not take sexual orientation into account, in which results indicate men are more likely than women to rely

[1] Notably, intersectional research exploring sexual behaviors in non-heterosexual couples may choose to organize their participants by sexual orientation (e.g. "heterosexual," "gay," "bisexual," etc.) or by partner gender (e.g. "men in relationships with men," "women in same sex relationships," etc.) In this review I will repeat the terminology used in the original source. Although not explored in this paper, future research may wish to address group differences between sexual identity and sexual behavior, which may not always align. For example, pansexual (referring to individuals attracted to people of all genders) women who exclusively have sex with women may behave differently than self-identified lesbian women who exclusively have sex with women (or self-identified lesbian women who sometimes have sex with men).

[2] For the purposes of this paper I will use the term "sexual orientation" to refer both to sexual identity (i.e. self-label of sexual orientation) and sexual behavior (i.e. partner gender), as the two are rarely distinguished in the literature.

on nonverbal consent cues (Jozkowksi et al., 2014). Further, men who have sex with men and women who have sex with women may be equally likely to utilize nonverbal behaviors to initiate sex, compared to verbal behaviors (Beres et al,. 2004). Similarly, Hallal (2004) found that gay men and lesbian women did not differ in their sexual consent attitudes. Hallal also found that gay men and lesbian women did not differ in their responses to measures of general discussions of consent (e.g. "I have discussed sexual consent issues with a friend") and timing of consent negotiation (e.g. "I always ask for consent verbally before I initiate a sexual encounter.") However, they did differ on a forced-choice response between "In making sexual advances, it is okay to continue until a partner indicates otherwise (i.e. assume 'yes' until you hear a 'no') and "BEFORE making sexual advances, one should always ask for and obtain a verbal 'yes' to engage in sexual activities (i.e. assume a 'no' until you get a 'yes')." This analysis revealed a weak statistically significant difference between lesbian women and gay men, in which lesbian women were more likely to endorse moving forward with sexual advances until hearing a 'no' and gay men were more likely to endorse waiting to move forward with sexual advances until hearing a 'yes.' This latter result is in contrast with findings from Humphreys and Herold (2007) which found that heterosexual women, compared to heterosexual men, were more likely to prefer obtaining consent prior to sexual activity.

This finding highlights the heterocentricity of the conclusions drawn from most sexual consent literature, by suggesting sexual orientation may be a stronger (or at least equally strong) point of demographic comparison than gender identity. I am not aware of any literature thus far comparing sexual consent attitudes or behaviors between heterosexual and sexual minority groups. While traditional sexual scripts drive heterosexual encounters between men and women

(see below), less is known about the role these heterosexual scripts play within non-heterosexual couples.

Reasons for Consent Reluctance

Discrepancies Between Attitudes and Behaviors

The wide endorsement of positive attitudes toward affirmative consent, juxtaposed with the lack of affirmative consent behaviors, paint a picture of ambivalence among young adults. This is not uncommon in sexual spheres. Extant literature has established discrepancies between the good sexual behavior people endorsed in theory and the actual behavior they engage in (Greer & Buss, 1994; Sawyer et al., 1993), and this discrepancy appears to extend to sexual consent. Humphreys (2000) found college students agree with the importance of verbally establishing sexual consent yet being less likely to do so in their own relationships. Even when participants had positive attitudes towards consent, they still acknowledged asking for consent beforehand can be difficult or "not realistic" (p. 69). Jozkowski and colleagues (2014) observed that participants were able to freely define what affirmative consent looks like, and yet how they reported interacting with their sexual partners did not meet this criterion. Similarly, Righi and colleagues (2019) found in interviews with high school students that adolescents indicated a definition of consent that included a verbal "yes" to sexual activity, yet still endorsed nonverbal strategies of obtaining consent and indicating their own consent. Marg (2020) found that college men recognize that obtaining verbal consent decreases the risk of sexual assault accusations, and yet many men (and women) still rely on nonverbal or implicit verbal indicators of consent, rather than explicit verbal ones. Shumlich & Fisher (2020) also observed that explicitly asking for consent was positively regarded by young adults, but interviewees still expressed more comfort

with nonverbal and indirect means of ascertaining a partner's consent. Lastly, Curtis & Burnett (2017) found that many viewed asking for consent as important, but unrealistic.

Reflecting these discrepancies, Beres (2014) proffers that the requirements of sexual consent prioritized by researchers and policy-makers are divorced from how young adults actually understand and enact sexual communication. Indeed, although affirmative consent is encouraged by educators and healthcare professionals, asking for affirmative consent seems to be viewed by young adults as unrealistic (Curtis & Burnett, 2017; Jozkowski et al., 2011). The solution for many researchers is to delineate how young adults actually communicate their sexual consent questions and responses, and then attempt to incorporate more authentic consent behaviors within sexual assault prevention programs. However, very little research has explored in detail *why* asking for affirmative consent is considered so unrealistic or attempted to redress those barriers.

Of the limited research discussing why young adults are resistant to affirmative consent, sexual scripts, gender norms, and peer norms are broadly hypothesized to influence sexual consent behaviors and attitudes (Johnson & Hoover, 2015; Willis & Jozkowski, 2018). Below I describe in detail these three potential barriers, and how each may play a role in inhibiting affirmative consent.

Sexual Scripts

The first identified barrier to affirmative consent is the sexual scripts that guide sexual interactions. Sexual scripts refer to the behaviors individuals are expected to enact during sexual encounters (Simon & Gagnon, 1986; Simon & Gagnon, 2003). Sexual Script Theory (Simon & Gagnon, 1986) posits that – in heterosexual interactions – individuals tend to follow these socially expected behaviors through predetermined scripts that outline roles and behaviors for

how men and women should engage in sexual interactions. The traditional sexual script assigns men as the initiators and women as the receivers of sexual advances, with men asking for sex and women gatekeeping access to it.

This sexual script is reflective of sexual exchange theory (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004) which suggests that sex is a commodity that women hold access to, and men seek to gain access to. According to sexual exchange theory, the sexuality of – and intercourse with – women is a highly valued resource, while men's sexuality is less so, and thus heterosexual sexual encounters occur in the context of men "earning" sex from women. In this way, both partners give something and both partners gain something, creating the social exchange. Because, according to the theory, women's sexuality is a highly valued resource, it is more likely that men will be more keen to gain access to sex than women, which positions them as the initiators of sexual encounters. And because sex is a resource that women ostensibly hold the key to, women are thus positioned as the sexual gatekeepers, deciding if and when sex occurs. Thus, the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script is born.

Initiator/Gatekeeper Sexual Script. A 2011 review of research published in Sex Roles since its inception found that heterosexual dating scripts still conform to the traditional initiator/gatekeeper gender roles (Eaton & Rose, 2011). Furthermore, the traditional dating script is perpetuated by the media, depicting men as the initiators, and women as the gatekeepers, reinforcing the perception that this script is normative (Hust, Rodgers, & Bayly, 2017). And young men and women frequently – and explicitly – endorse this script (Rose & Frieze, 1993; Byers, 1996; Humphreys, 2000; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013; Masters et al., 2013; O'Sullivan & Byers, 1992).

In qualitative surveys of men's and women's sexual consent attitudes, both men and women endorsed the traditional initiator/gatekeeper sexual script (Humphreys, 2000; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013). Discussing men's role of initiating sex, one man surveyed said, "I would just initiate foreplay; it's expected since I'm the guy" (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013, p. 519). They also describe the social expectation that they initiate: "there is the whole 'let the man make the first move'" (Humphreys, 2000, p.72). Reflecting these scripts, men do indeed initiate sex more frequently than women (Sanchez et al., 2012). Men even go so far as to positively endorse the use of aggressive methods to initiate sex, such as taking off a woman's pants without asking or pushing her head down toward his groin: ''I would tell her—let's have sex! Before she could say anything, I would just take off her pants;" ''I would just push her down, use my strength to get her head down there. Then she would have no choice but to do it.'' (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013, p. 520).

Meanwhile, women explicitly state it was not their place to initiate sex. As one woman put it, "I wouldn't indicate my willingness without being asked. I am a female and I believe the male should always chase the female. After he asks me, then I would say yes" (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013, p. 519). Women also describe their role as deciding how far the encounter progressed, "in general it just seems that it's the woman's place to have to decide what happens next" (Humphreys, 2000, p. 73).

Sexual Scripts in Sexual Consent. Clearly, the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script carries implications for sexual consent. Some college women and men even define consent according to their role in the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script. As one woman described it, "[Consent is] how much you allow another person to do sexually" (Humphreys, 2000, p. 61). The initiator/gatekeeper sexual script delineates specific behaviors for men and women, none of

which include a script for affirmative sexual consent. Thus, even when people endorse affirmative consent in theory, they may struggle to do so in practice. Indeed, in Shumlich and Fisher's (2020) interview of young adults, many participants indicated that their understood definition of sexual consent (clear, verbal, and ongoing) did not align with their sexual scripts. In fact, clearly and verbally asking for sexual consent may be in direct violation of sexual scripts and gender roles for men and women. Violating these scripts may be challenging for a variety of reasons.

Violating Sexual Scripts. Social scripts provide a mental schema for how individuals ought to behave in any social situation. Having a set of rules for behavior already set forth alleviates the anxiety of uncertainty – there is no need to wonder what your role in the interaction may be (Eaton & Rose, 2011). Schemas thus provide comfort and free up mental space for other decisions.

For example, on the first day of a college class, students know they are expected to enter the classroom, sit down at a desk facing the front of the class, and wait for an instructor to begin with introductions. Knowing these expectations already ameliorates some amount of first-day jitters, and allows the student to focus on looking for friends, selecting a seat, and setting up their materials. Social scripts in romantic and sexual scenarios provide the same benefits (Eaton & Rose, 2011). Men know they are expected to court women, initiate sexual interaction, and advance the interaction to the point of intercourse; women know they are expected to receive these interactions and respond accordingly (Emmers-Sommer et al., 2010). By the same token, men know they are not expected to wait for a woman to initiate sex, just as women know they are not expected to initiate.

In sexual situations which are already so deeply personal and varied by individual likes and dislikes, the comfort of following a social script may be especially appealing. Indeed, when you are focused on analyzing a partner's cues of interest and pleasure, deviating from the predetermined sexual script may feel emotionally and cognitively daunting, or even exhausting, by introducing too many decisions and demands for attenuating to a partner's cues.

Additionally, because sexual scripts are assumed to be understood by both partners, one partner choosing to deviate from the script risks disorienting the other partner and prematurely ending the encounter. Indeed, when gender norms of first-date scripts are violated, individuals report less interest in continuing the relationship (Rose & Frieze, 1993), suggesting a similar outcome for violations of sexual scripts. Disrupting the sexual script also removes the other partner's opportunity to follow the script, which diminishes their own sense of security in the interaction. Thus, what was once a smoothly written script that both partners knew how to follow has now become a blank page, with no clear indications for what to do next. This may produce a feeling of "awkwardness," both in feelings about the self and in perceptions of the other (Eaton & Rose, 2011). This concern is captured within the *(Lack of) perceived behavioral control* subscale items of the Sexual Consent Survey (Humphreys & Brosseau, 2010), "I am worried that my partner might think I'm weird or strange if I asked for sexual consent before starting any sexual activity" and "I have difficulty asking for consent because it would spoil the mood." Furthermore, following a social script demonstrates the ability to follow other social scripts, which is often a desirable skill in a partner (Eaton & Rose, 2011).

Notably, because asking for sexual consent is not included in the traditional heterosexual sexual script, there is no scripted language for how to ask for consent (Beres, 2007; Curtis & Burnett, 2017; Hunphreys & Herold, 2003), nor is there a predetermined context for when to do

so or how to initiate the conversation. While both parties know a kiss on a first date comes at the end of the evening (traditionally on the woman's front door, or perhaps on someone's couch following a nightcap), there is no mutual understanding of when or how someone brings up consent during sex. Thus, even if one party does feel comfortable enough to deviate from their scripted role by asking for consent, they may still be deterred by not knowing how to do so.

The pressure of sexual scripts is also evidenced by the scenarios in which individuals feel more comfortable asking for consent. Verbal sexual consent is more common for sexual behaviors that are unscripted (i.e. sexual behaviors that are uncommon, not normative, or taboo) (Muehlenhard et al., 2016). For example, consent is more frequently utilized when a party is interested in anal sex, which is not part of most people's sexual routine and has no sexual script (Roye, Tolman, & Snowden, 2013). Similarly, affirmative consent is more frequently practiced in the BDSM (Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadomasochism and Masochism) community (Beckmann, 2003; Pitagora, 2013). Because these sexual behaviors are non-traditional and less common they exist outside of the traditional sexual script. When scripting is not available for the interaction, room is created for consent conversations.

Gender Norms

The second identified barrier to affirmative consent is gender norms. The initiator/gatekeeper sexual script described above is predicated upon gender roles men and women are expected to occupy, and the socially prescribed traits inherent to those roles (Willis & Jozkowski, 2018). In societies around the world, men and women are socially divided into different roles, and successfully occupying those roles requires certain traits (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Thus, when men and women are thrust in different roles in society, they tend to take on those traits. Furthermore, when others witness men and women demonstrating role-related traits,

they develop assumptions that the people in those roles naturally embody those traits *and* that the people associated with those roles ought to embody those traits. From these assumptions, social expectations arise that men and women will conform to the traits associated with their social roles, expectations which people may hold for others as well as themselves.

In Western, individualistic societies, men are appointed leadership roles, both in society and as the decision makers for the nuclear family (Cuddy et al., 2015; Eagly & Wood, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 2008). Leadership requires agency, assertiveness, dominance, status, and success. Thus, men are socially expected to embody these traits (Eagly & Wood, 1999; Ellemers, 2018; Hentschel et al., 2019; Levant et al., 1992; Mahalik et al., 2003; Rudman & Glick, 2008; Thompson & Pleck, 1986; Williams & Best, 1990). Conversely, women are appointed as caregivers, who support the needs of their family and partner (Cuddy et al., 2015; Eagly & Wood, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 2008). Caregiving requires selfless nurturing and submissiveness to others' needs (Eagly & Wood, 1999). While men are expected to be agentic, pursing their desires, women are expected to be communal, prioritizing others (Ellemers, 2018; Hentschel et al., 2019; Williams & Best, 1990).

These traits men and women are expected to embody are gender prescriptions (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Additionally, there are traits men and women are discouraged from embodying, referred to as gender proscriptions. Gender prescriptions for men include leadership, willingness to take risks, intensity, forcefulness, aggressiveness, assertiveness, and decisiveness, while men's proscriptions include approval seeking, shyness, and weakness. Gender prescriptions for women include cooperativeness, politeness, and patience, while women's proscriptions include arrogance and promiscuity.

Men's and women's gender roles, and the corresponding traits, extend into romantic relationships and the bedroom. Men are assigned the leaders in sexual and romantic relationships, and women the recipients of men's affections (Rudman & Glick, 2008). Thus, men are expected to make decisions in the relationship, while women are expected to wait for and then defer to men's decisions.

Returning to sexual exchange theory, if sex is a social currency that men earn from women, then men's success (something men are expected to pursue) can be demonstrated through attaining sex and sexual partners. Thus, it is not only socially acceptable, but even encouraged, for men to utilize their gender normative traits of assertiveness and dominance to "win" sex. Men are also expected to always want and pursue sex (Mahalik et al., 2003; Levant et al., 1992). Women, on the other hand, can enact their roles as submissive caregivers by allowing men to demonstrate their masculinity via patiently waiting for men's advances, while simultaneously avoiding promiscuity proscriptions (Rudman & Glick, 2008; Sanchez et al., 2012). Thus, these gender norms provide clear expectations for heterosexual sexual encounters. However, it is less clear how gender norms play a role among sexual minorities. I return to this issue in a later section.

Gender Norms in Sexual Consent. Stepping out of any social script carries risks, as discussed above. However, violating sexual scripts may be especially challenging because doing so undermines the demonstrations of masculinity or femininity associated with one's scripted gender role. The initiator/gatekeeper sexual script highlights gender roles for men and women. Thus, asking for consent, in addition to violating the script in general, may also violate its associated gender roles (both general and sexual) and those roles' associated prescriptions and proscriptions, which diminishes the appearance of the role-breaker's masculinity or femininity.

Violating Gender Norms.

Men. Asking for consent, if anyone is to ask at all, typically falls to the man, because men are expected to pursue sex more than women (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004; Jozkowski, 2016). However, even for men, asking for consent can be a tenuous business. Men are scripted as taking action to advance sexual intercourse, not stop it (O'Sullivan & Byers, 1992). If a man decides to ask for consent, he provides an opportunity for the sexual encounter to stop. The traditional sexual script dictates that it is up to women, and not men, to stop sex from occurring. Thus, asking for consent may feel as though the man is performing the woman's role and thus risks making him appear (or feel as though he appears) unmasculine.

Additionally, men are socially prescribed assertiveness, decisiveness, and willingness to take risks (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Asking for anything, rather than taking or assuming entitlement to, violates assertiveness and dominance prescriptions, which may also serve to depict a man as less masculine. Furthermore, asking for sex, rather than simply going for it, may undermine risk-taking prescriptions or signal timidity, making the man seem as though he is not willing to fight for what he wants. Indeed, offering a willingness to stop if a partner desires so violates prescriptions of forcefulness, while continuing without asking for consent demonstrates masculine prescriptions of aggression.

Asking for consent indicates the individual is uncertain if their partner is also interested. This is a healthy mindset – it is safer not to assume anything when trying to avoid miscommunication (especially when miscommunication could lead to accusations of sexual assault). However, indications of uncertainty may undermine masculine prescriptions of confidence. Similarly, men are proscribed from approval-seeking, which asking for consent may indirectly demonstrate.

Furthermore, men are expected to be sexually experienced and competent (Caron & Hunman, 2013; Murray, 2018), and any indication of uncertainty may suggest that the man is not confident enough in his sexual ability to assume what he has to offer his partner will be deemed satisfactory. Thus, men may be hesitant to ask for consent because they are concerned doing so will undermine perceptions of their masculinity.

Women. Similarly, asking for consent may violate gender roles and prescriptions for women. First, as previously discussed, women are expected to be gatekeepers of sex, by either allowing or not allowing the man's advances to continue. Asking for consent is an invitation to engage in that sexual behavior. Thus, for women, asking for consent may make them appear (or feel as though they appear) less feminine. This not only violates the woman's role of waiting for the invitation, it also may usurp the man's role of being the initiator. Recall women's gender role includes supporting men (Eagly & Wood, 1999; Rudman & Glick, 2008). Thus, women may also be motivated to support men in demonstrating their masculinity (Jordan et al., 2021).

Additionally, women are socially proscribed dominance (Rudman et al., 2012). While for men, asking for consent is a step down in dominance from where they are expected to be, for women, asking for consent may be a step up in dominance, by going from passive receivers of sex to active seekers. Although women's role in the traditional (hetero)sexual script is ostensibly one of decision-making, it is also one of submission (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Sanchez et al., 2012). In their discourse analysis of how sexual intimacy is negotiated in heterosexual dating, Walker, Gilbert, and Goss (1996) found support for unconscious traditional assumptions about powerful male sexuality and female acquiescence and their influence on sexual negotiations. Thus, asking for consent may violate submissiveness prescriptions.

As demonstrations of their non-leadership role, women are socially prescribed modesty (Mahalik et al., 2005). Modesty discourages sexual initiation, because initiating sex may indicate that women are overly confident in their sexual prowess. Furthermore, women are expected to be sexually modest and not promiscuous (Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Rudman & Glick, 2008). Asking for consent runs the risk of implying an over-eagerness for sex.

Furthermore, women may not ask for consent due to stereotypes that men are always interested in sex (Humphreys, 2000; Krahe et al., 2000; Muehlenhard & Hollabaugh, 1988). Instead, they may assume – potentially inaccurately – that their partner must want sex due to their gender, and thus feel asking for consent is at best unnecessary and at worst offensive, by suggesting their partner may be so unmasculine as to not want sex. Indeed, this belief was reported in interviews with college students, in which women expressed the belief that men didn't need to give their consent because they were always the ones initiating (Jozkowsk, et al., 2014). Some women may endorse the stereotype that men always want sex so strongly that they even refuse to respect or accept a man's sexual refusal (Meenagh, 2020).

Why Are People Motivated to Avoid Gender Role Violations? Of course, appearing deficient in masculinity and femininity wouldn't matter if there weren't social repercussions for doing so. Indeed, both women and men face social punishment for violating gender roles (Moss-Racusin et al., 2009; Rudman et al., 2012). People are motivated to maintain and justify the roles that organize their social world (Host, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). According to the status incongruity hypothesis (Rudman et al., 2012), when women violate their gender role by behaving in a way reserved for men (such as displaying assertiveness or leadership) they challenge the status quo of gender roles, and thus are socially punished in such a way that they retreat into their appointed roles and behaviors. Similarly, when men violate their gender roles by not displaying

stereotypically masculine traits they also challenge the status quo and are socially punished. Punishment for either men or women can include social rejection, barring access to resources, or even harassment and violence (Rudman et al., 2012).

Violating gender roles may be especially challenging for men. According to precarious manhood theory, manhood, more than womanhood, is socially tenuous (Vandello & Bosson, 2013). While womanhood is conferred by biological markers (e.g. menarche, development of secondary sex characteristics, pregnancy), manhood is a status that is conferred by others, and thus must be earned through action. Because manhood is a social status, rather than a biological one, it must be continuously earned and maintained for the approval of others.

Returning to sexual exchange theory (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004), loss of masculinity in a sexual context may feel particularly costly. Men can earn sex from women in a variety of ways, all of which amount to demonstrating themselves as a worthy partner that is deserving of the woman. Typically, sexual exchange theory operationalizes men's earning of sex as courtship behaviors (e.g. gift giving, buying dinner, offering financial security, professing commitment). However, men can also exhibit their worthiness through demonstrations of masculinity. In patriarchal societies, manhood is a resource that confers power (Wood & Eagly, 2002). In the status hierarchy, men are positioned at the top with the most access to resources. And because manhood is associated with having resources, demonstrations of masculinity suggest access to more of those resources (Winegard et al., 2014). Thus, aside from direct demonstrations of the resources a man can provide, merely exhibiting oneself as a masculine person also suggests further resource-access. In this way, following sexual exchange theory, because men are socially prescribed assertiveness and dominance (Prentice & Carranza, 2002), being sexually assertive

may be its own means of earning sex from women, and if a man's appearance of masculinity is undermined, he may feel he is not demonstrating sufficient masculinity to be "deserving" of sex.

Do People Actually Alter Their Sexual Behavior Due to Sexual Scripts and Gender Roles? The above analysis suggests men and women may be motivated to alter their sexual behavior to conform to their respective gender roles and scripts. However, with sex being so personal and individualistic to personal preference, one may question if gender norm conformity extends into the bedroom. Evidence suggests it does. Demonstrations of gender roles are equally strong in actual dates as hypothetical ones, suggesting scripts guide actual behavior (Rose & Frieze, 1993). In fact, sex and gender roles are so strongly interconnected that men and women subconsciously associate sex with their gender roles, and priming sex increases men's and women's gender role conformity (Sanchez et al., 2012).

Furthermore, endorsement of traditional gender roles predicts sexual behavior. Individuals who endorse the sexual double standard that men should want and enjoy sex while women should not talk less about sexual issues and disclose less sexual information (Greene & Faulkner, 2005). Additionally, women who endorse the sexual double standard report less comfort with talking about sex, initiating sex and refusing sex. Similarly, women are less likely to accept offers of casual sex, partially mediated by anticipation of negative judgements for counter-stereotypical behaviors (Conley et al., 2013). Women who believe that men have higher, more difficult to control sex drives are more likely to comply with unwanted sexual behavior (Impett & Peplau, 2003) and women are less likely to expect to receive pleasure during sex due to endorsement of traditional sexual scripts that prioritize men's pleasure over women's (Rubin et al., 2019). Men, on the other hand, sometimes fake their desire for sex in order to appear more

masculine (Murray, 2018) and men higher in masculine ideology are less likely to use condoms (Noar & Morokoff, 2002).

Sexual Orientation Within Sexual Scripts and Gender Norms. As discussed, there is significant theoretical support for the hypothesis that gender roles influence sexual consent attitudes and behaviors for heterosexual individuals. However, the role of gender in sexual consent for non-heterosexual individuals is less clear.

Recall that non-traditional sexual behavior is more likely to spur sexual communication, due to lack of sexual scripts surrounding the activity (Beckmann, 2003; Pitagora, 2013). Having sex with a person of the same gender may fall into this category, and thus people who have sex with others of the same gender may engage in clearer consent communication. Beres and colleagues (2004) theorized that individuals who have sex with those of the same gender may be more conscientious of gender norms and intentionally work to reject them through counter-stereotypic behavior for their gender, thus providing leeway for sexual consent which is traditionally excluded within traditional gender roles and sexual scripts. The authors further theorized that people in same-sex relationships may behave more similarly to each other than they do to heterosexual same-sex peers.

Conversely, gay men and lesbian women are still socialized within a gendered context (Klinkenberg & Rose, 1994) and many do conform to traditional gender norms (Budge & Katz-Wise, 2017). Therefore, masculinity and femininity likely continue to play a role in sexual scenarios for individuals in same-sex relationships, even as (and perhaps because) they subvert the traditional sexual script by having sex with a same-sex partner. For example, Sternin and colleagues (2021) found sexual scripts for men who have sex with men suggest faster sexual consent negotiations than scripts for men who have sex with women, and theorize this may be

the case because men who have sex with men feel pressure to demonstrate their masculinity in other ways (i.e. through hypersexualization) to compensate for the potential of lost masculinity in having sex with men. Hallal (2004) echoes this view, hypothesizing sexual minority men – and women – may effortfully emulate traditional gender roles in an attempt to deflect from their nonconforming gender behaviors of having sex with people of the same gender. However, it should be noted that not all men who have sex with men align themselves with masculinity (nor do all men who have sex with women).

In a similar vein, expressions of masculinity and femininity may be more diverse within gay men and lesbian women relationships, and thus, masculine and feminine self-descriptions may play a role in sexual consent behaviors, beyond gender identity. Furthermore, Sternin and colleagues (2021) found that some men continued to impose an initiator/gatekeeper sexual script on same-sex sexual interactions, perhaps aligned with taking on "top" and "bottom" roles. This finding supports the hypothesis that alignment with a specific gender role (e.g. "top" equals masculine and "bottom" equals feminine") may be a significant predictor of sexual behavior, regardless of – or in conjunction with – gender identity.

(Mis)Perceptions of Peer Norms

The third identified barrier to affirmative consent is peer norms. Just as individuals perceive a sexual script and gender roles and are influenced by them, they believe their peers perceive and are influenced by them as well. Peer norms have been well-established as agents that influence individual attitudes, and moreso behaviors (Michael & Spiro, 2015). However, individuals are often incorrect in their assumptions of their peers attitudes and behaviors (Miller & McFarland, 1987). Thus, (mis)perceptions of what peers believe and how peers behave may

provide pressure to follow sexual scripts and gender roles that they do not endorse for themselves.

The incorrect perception that one's personal beliefs or attitudes differ from the beliefs or attitudes held by others is referred to as pluralistic ignorance (Miller & McFarland, 1991). Research demonstrates rampant pluralistic ignorance surrounding sexual behaviors amongst college students. College women and men believe that they are less comfortable with sexual behaviors than their peers and overperceive peers' levels of sexual activity (Chia & Lee, 2008; Hines, et al., 2006; Lambert et al., 2003; Martens et al., 2004; Scholly et al., 2005). Further, students overestimate their peers' risky sexual behaviors (Lynch et al., 2004). Both men and women also believe that same-sex peers are more accepting of abusive behaviors towards partners (Bartholomew et al., 2013).

Notably, misperceptions of norms can extend both to peers and potential romantic partners, creating leeway for not only misunderstanding of what peers would do, but also what partners want. College students believe that they are more sexually inhibited than potential partners (Vorauer & Ratner, 1996). Women overestimate men's comfort levels with hooking up (Reivber & Garcia, 2010). Thus, when considering sexual interactions, it is imperative to consider not only perceived norms of how one should behave, but also perceived norms of what a potential partner may prefer.

Peer Norms in Sexual Consent. Humphreys and Brosseau (2010) identified a lack of peer norms endorsing affirmative sexual consent. Although young adults express cognizance of attitudes about consent, many do not have conversations about consent with their peers (Humphries & Brousseau, 2010), nor with sexual partners (Humphreys, 2004). However, young adults and college students are faced with depictions of sexual behavior in the media, which

influence perceptions of peer norms (Chia & Lee, 2008). A content analysis of consent in mainstream films revealed consent communication was typically nonverbal and indirect (Jozkowski et al., 2019). Thus, although college students and young adults believe sexual consent is important (Curtis & Burnett, 2017), they may be misled into believing their peers feel differently, by virtue of media influence and the lack of peer conversations to correct media portrayals of normative behavior.

Do People Actually Alter Their Sexual Behavior Due to Perceived Peer Norms?

Numerous studies demonstrate that individuals' sexual attitudes and behaviors are predicted by their perceptions of what their peers think and do (Boone & Lefkowitz, 2004; Buunk et al., 2002; Martens et al., 2004; Winslow, Franzini, & Hwang, 1992). Men report having casual sex to gain peer approval (Blayney et al., 2018). Men and women who believe peers have vaginal, anal, and oral sex more frequently also engage in these sexual behaviors at higher rates (Martens et al., 2004). People who believe their peers use condoms are more likely to do so themselves (Boon & Lefkowitz, 2008) and increased perception of the prevalence of condom use predicts greater intentions to use condoms (Buunk et al., 2002). In a study of heterosexual college students, knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases did not predict safe sex behavior yet perceptions of peer safe sex practices did (Winslow et al., 1992). Peer norms have also been investigated in predicting sexual assault, mostly among men. Men who perceive their same-sex peers as high in rape-myth acceptance are more likely to sexually assault a partner (Bohner et al., 2006). Further, men higher in pluralistic ignorance report higher levels of sexual aggression than their lower pluralistic ignorance peers (Flezzani et al., 2003). Lastly, young adults may be influenced in their consent-related behavior by the media (Baldwin-White & Gower, 2021; L'Engle et al., 2006; Hust et al., 2014), which predicts their perceptions of what their peers endorse (Chia & Lee,

2008). Although this research is correlational, the findings speak to the close relationship between perceptions of peer attitudes and personal behaviors.

Gender and Sexual Orientation in Peer Norms About Consent. Of the limited research exploring gender differences in peer norms surrounding consent, findings suggest that heterosexual women and men do not differ in their awareness or discussions of consent with friends or partners (Humphreys & Herold, 2007). It is thus possible that men and women also do not differ in their misperceptions of their peers or potential partner's consent attitudes or behaviors.

Exploration of peer norms about sexual consent has rarely been extended to non-heterosexual individuals. However, some research suggests that gay men struggle with talking about sex with their same-orientation peers (McDavitt & Mutchler, 2014), suggesting gay men and lesbian women similarly struggle with accurately assessing peer norms. Additionally, while heterosexual individuals likely compare themselves to other heterosexual peers, it is possible sexual minorities compare themselves to both non-heterosexual peers and heterosexual peers. They may even intentionally display sexual behavior they perceive as common among heterosexual people as a means of obfuscating their own gender nonconforming behavior. These competing hypotheses demand a closer look at the comparative perceptions of peer norms for non-heterosexual individuals.

Awkwardness

A litany of research has suggested young adults are highly likely to view affirmative consent as "awkward" (Curtis & Burnett, 2017; Eaton & Rose, 2011; Humphreys, 2000; Humphreys & Brosseau, 2010; Shumlich & Fisher, 2020). Young adults believe that verbal consent ruins the mood (Fouber, Garner, & Thaxter, 2006; Shumlich & Fisher, 2020). The

uncomfortable feeling of awkwardness may be a facet of violating sexual scripts, gender roles, and peer norms. Indeed, individuals perceive communication about sex prior to sexual activity as an interruption of the interaction (Haffer, 1995/1996; Waidby et al., 1993). Additionally, individuals experience discomfort when they engage in norm violations (Schneider, 2002). Thus, although awkwardness is most frequently identified in the literature as an explicit barrier to consent, it is possible that those feelings of awkwardness arise from disrupting the traditional initiator/gatekeeper sexual script, violating gender roles, and behaving differently from perceptions of peer normative behavior.

Relationship Timing

Notably, consent norms differ between new and established relationships (Humphreys, 2000; Humphreys, 2007; Humphreys & Brosseau, 2010). It is likely that individuals rely more on external norms in the early days of relationships, before they have sufficient interactions with their partner to determine their partner's tolerance for role violations. Masters and colleagues (2013) found that young adults endorsed traditional scripts and roles at the cultural level, yet while some completely conformed, others found exceptions to the rules within their established relationships or even constructed their own set of rules. For this reason, the present studies focused on new relationships.

Masculinity and Femininity

People differ in the extent to which they identify with their gender; that is the extent to which men identify as masculine and women identify as feminine. People who strongly identify with the traits associated with their gender may be more likely to conform to gendered norms and scripts. Thus, it is possible that young adults differ in their consent attitudes and behaviors not only by gender and sexual orientation, but also by their degree of self-perceived masculinity and

femininity. A common way to operationalize and measure masculinity and femininity is the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1981). This measure (originally 64 items) assesses the degree to which individuals describe themselves as traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine across two non-orthogonal subscales. The BSRI allows evaluation of both masculinity and femininity, regardless of gender, thereby accounting for men who are low in masculinity and/or high in femininity, and vice versa for women. The BSRI thus differentiates between gender-schematic and gender-aschematic individuals (Schmitt & Millard, 1988).

Summary

Sexual assault remains a substantial issue among young adults (Meuhlenhard et al., 2017). Affirmative consent (clear, ongoing, verbal communication) is proposed as a method of lowering the rates of sexual assault (Johnson & Hoover, 2015). Numerous policies, laws, and programs have been developed in an effort to increase affirmative consent, which young adults endorse but remain resistant to in practice (Beres, 2014; Hills & Crofts, 2021; Humphreys, 2000; Muehlenhard et al., 2016). Researchers hypothesize the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script, traditional gender roles and traits, and (mis)perceptions of peer attitudes and behaviors are barriers to affirmative consent (Johnson & Hoover, 2015; Jozkowski & Willis, 2020). While there are several theoretical publications discussing barriers to asking for consent, very little research has attempted to quantitatively capture them or statistically examine their value in predicting actual consent behavior. Furthermore, while some research has explored gender differences in asking for consent among heterosexual women and men, very little has explored differences in sexual minority individuals. Of that limited research, I am not aware of any that systematically compares heterosexual and sexual minority individuals.

Overview of Studies

This series of studies examined the barriers to affirmative consent that young adults face, and how these barriers differ by gender and sexual orientation. In Study 1, I addressed the gap between theoretical discussion/qualitative analyses and quantitative analyses of consent behavior and attitudes, by measuring endorsement of a range of potential barriers to affirmative consent, while also providing much needed insight into the consent behaviors and attitudes of gay men and lesbian women. Heterosexual and gay women and men were asked to review an exhaustive list of attitudes about consent and select the extent to which they agree each reason was a barrier for them in verbally asking a new partner for sexual consent prior to sexual activity. Group differences were examined by gender and sexual orientation. Study 1 additionally assessed for a moderating role of self-reported masculinity and femininity. In Study 2, I continued this quantitative exploration of theorized reasons for consent reluctance and expanded the research of pluralistic ignorance within young adults' sexual behaviors. Heterosexual and gay women and men were asked about their own consent behaviors and attitudes, and their perceptions of their peers' and potential partners' consent behaviors and attitudes. I again tested for group differences by gender and sexual orientation. Lastly, In Study 3, I translated the oft-discussed yet currently unmeasured initiator/gatekeeper sexual script into a brief scale, which I then used to measure the theorized relationship between this script and sexual consent behaviors. In this study I additionally examined if potential partners do indeed believe being asked for consent by an other-sex partner makes that partner less masculine or feminine or if this concern reflects a

misperception of peer attitudes. Heterosexual women and men were given the newly developed measure of endorsement of the traditional heterosexual initiator/gatekeeper script, which was used to predict affirmative consent behaviors, mediated by perceptions that violating the initiator/gatekeeper script makes men appear less masculine and women appear less feminine. Additionally, a separate sample of respondents were asked about their perceptions of partners who ask for consent, to address a potential mismatch of perceived partner perceptions and actual partner perceptions.

Study 1

Study 1 explored young adults' endorsement of a range of barriers to asking for sexual consent, and if endorsement of various barriers differs by gender and sexual orientation. Participants indicated the extent to which various reasons might be responsible for making them hesitant to directly ask for consent before initiating sexual activity. The provided reasons explicitly and implicitly reflect gender roles, sexual scripts, and peer norms. These reasons were derived from themes identified within extant quantitative and qualitative literature examining young adults' perceptions of and attitudes toward sexual consent. Currently, there is a need in the literature for documenting how common these themes are and how they can predict consent behaviors.

Additionally, given that most of the consent literature includes either heterosexual or (less commonly) gay and lesbian ("GL") individuals, but rarely includes both, there is a need for an intergroup comparison of sexual consent attitudes and behaviors. People who are not heterosexual may still be persuaded by pervasive heterosexual gender roles thrust upon them in greater society (Klinkenberg & Rose, 1994) and thus may still endorse consent barriers related to gender and the traditional sexual script. It is also possible the degree to which any young adult, regardless of sexual orientation, endorses gendered barriers to consent is influenced by how much that individual identifies with their gender and associated gender roles.

In sum, Study 1 has four overarching goals:

1. Quantitatively expand upon findings from qualitative research describing barriers to affirmative consent by capturing descriptive statistics for reasons why young adults may be reluctant to ask for sexual consent.
2. Extend research that has previously been conducted exclusively on heterosexual participants to gay men and lesbian women.
3. Provide base rates of consent behaviors and the correlation between consent barriers and consent behaviors among a diverse sample of young adults.
4. Compare consent barriers and behaviors by gender and sexual orientation.

In addition to addressing the above goals, Study 1 will specifically explore the following hypotheses and exploratory questions:

- Hypothesis 1: Among heterosexuals, men will be more likely to endorse consent barriers related to masculine gender norms and masculine scripts and women will be more likely to endorse barriers related to feminine gender norms and feminine scripts.
- Hypotheses 2: Heterosexual men and heterosexual women will not differ in their endorsement of non-gendered hesitancy reasons (e.g. perceptions of peer behavior).
- Exploratory Question 1: Will GL men and women endorse gendered consent barriers at rates similar to their heterosexual counterparts?
- Exploratory Question 2: Will GL men and women be less likely than heterosexual men and women to endorse non-gendered consent barriers?
- Exploratory Question 3: Will certain barriers be stronger predictors of consent behavior than others?
- Exploratory Question 4: Does participant masculinity/femininity predict endorsement of gendered barriers to consent?

Methods

Participants

Participants included cisgender heterosexual women and men, and gay and lesbian (GL) men and women between the ages of 18 and 25, United States citizens, living in the United States. Because participants were asked to reflect on hypothetical partners, participation was not restricted by relationship status, nor sexual activity.

A power analysis using G*Power for a 2 (man or woman) x 2 (heterosexual or GL) analysis of variance (ANOVA) with main effects and interactions with an alpha of .05 and power of .80, looking for a small to medium effect size (f = .18), suggested a total sample 341 participants, or 86 people per group. To account for attrition, I oversampled by five people per group, resulting in a total sample of 364 participants.

Participants were recruited using the online crowdsourcing platform Prolific (www.prolific.co). Prolific offers the benefit of guaranteeing a nationally representative sample and has been lauded for providing superior screening methods and significantly reducing the number of "bots" (i.e., nonhuman computer algorithms that are set up to take surveys for money) compared to other online research platforms (Palan & Schitter, 2017; Peer et al., 2017). Participants were paid $1.09 for this study, and took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to collect data for all gay participants, despite increasing the pay to $1.45. The final sample included only 26 gay men (9.4%). The remainder of the sample included 84 heterosexual men (30.3%), 89 heterosexual women (32.1%), and 78 lesbian women (28.2%). Mean age was 21.82 (SD = 1.97). The sample was primarily White (75%) and non-Hispanic (83%). See Table 1 for full Study 1 participant demographics.

Table 1

Study 1 Participant Demographics

Variable	*n* (%)
Identity	
Heterosexual Man	84 (30.3%)
Heterosexual Woman	89 (32.1%)
Gay Man	26 (9.4%)
Lesbian Woman	78 (28.2%)
Age	*M* = 21.82 (*SD* = 1.97)
Race/Ethnicity (select all that apply)	
American Indian or Native Alaskan	8 (2.9%)
Asian	42 (15.2%)
Black or African American	28 (10.1%)
Middle Eastern or North African	5 (1.8%)
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1 (.4%)
White or Caucasian	205 (74%)
Other	6 (2.2%)
Prefer not to say	4 (1.4%)
Are you Latino/Latiné/Hispanic?	
Yes	47 (17%)
No	230 (83%)
Religion	
Judaism	7 (2.5%)
Christianity	89 (32.1%)
Islam	4 (1.4%)
Buddhism	4 (1.4%)
Hinduism	3 (1.1%)
Chinese Folk	0 (0%)
Atheism	46 (16.6%)
Agnosticism	53 (19.1%)
None	60 (21.7%)
Other	11 (4.0%)
How religious would you describe yourself?	
Not at all religious	153 (55%)
Slightly religious	72 (26%)
Moderately religious	39 (14.1%)
Very religious	10 (3.6%)
Extremely religious	3 (1.1%)
Number of Sexual Partners	*M* = 3.76 (*SD* = 6.24)
Years of Sexual Activity	*M* = 2.39 (*SD* = 2.77)
Sexual Experience	
Not at all experienced	44 (15.9%)
Barely experienced	64 (23.1%)
Somewhat experienced	62 (22.4%)

Table 1 (Continued)

Moderately experienced	77 (27.8%)
Very experienced	30 (10.8%)

Materials and Procedure

Participants were selected using a pre-screening process provided by Prolific. Prescreening questions selected only for cisgender men and women and only heterosexual, gay, or lesbian sexual identities. They were then linked to the survey on the online platform Qualtrics. Upon opening the survey they read an informed consent statement. Next, they completed Barriers to Affirmative Consent and the BSRI, which were counterbalanced. Following, they completed a measure of affirmative consent behavior, then demographics. Three attention checks were distributed throughout the survey.

Barriers. I created a 54-item exhaustive list of potential reasons to feel hesitant to verbally ask for consent from a partner prior to sexual activity. Items were generated from interview responses within other publications and theorized reasons by consent researchers. Additionally, eight items originate from the Sexual Consent Survey (Humphreys & Brosseau, 2010); some items were slightly reworded from "asking for consent" to "verbally asking for consent" to maintain consistency with other generated items. The barriers provided fall into 11 categories:

- *Masculine Gender Roles* (e.g. I would not feel like I was assertive enough if I stopped to verbally ask for consent)
- *Feminine Gender Roles* (e.g. I would feel too assertive if I stopped to verbally ask for consent)
- *Masculine Sexual Scripts* (e.g. It is up to me to get sex started)
- *Feminine Sexual Scripts* (e.g. It is up to my partner, and not me, to get sex started)

- *Sexual Script – Ruining the Flow* (e.g. I would have difficulty verbally asking for consent because it would spoil the mood)
- *Lack of Script* (e.g. I don't know how to ask for consent)
- *Partner Perceptions* (e.g. I am worried that my partner might think I'm weird or strange if I asked for sexual consent before starting any sexual activity)
- *Peer Perceptions* (e.g. My friends don't stop to ask for consent)
- *Unnecessary* (e.g. I don't need to stop to verbally ask for consent because my partner will clearly object to anything they don't want to do)
- *Lack of Concern for Consent* (e.g. Asking for consent is not my problem)
- *Other* (describes items that do not fall into any other category) (e.g. Verbally asking for consent puts me in the position to be rejected)

Items were presented in a random order. Participants indicated the extent to which they agree or disagree that each reason might make them hesitant to verbally ask for consent from a new partner prior to sexual activity. Responses were given using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). See Appendix A.

Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Masculinity and femininity were assessed using the 20-item Bem Sex Role Inventory short form (BSRI; Bem, 1981). The BSRI short form includes two ten-item subscales, measuring masculine identification and feminine identification. Responses were given using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all like me*) to 7 (*Extremely like me*). Masculine items were averaged to create a composite score (BSRI-M; α = .85), as were Feminine items (BSRI-F; α = .87). See Appendix B.

Affirmative Consent. Affirmative consent behavior was measured using a three-item measure developed for this study. Participants were asked the likelihood of verbally asking for

permission to kiss, sexually touch, and have sex, when with a new partner. Responses were given using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Extremely Unlikely*) to 7 (*Extremely Likely*). Responses were averaged, with higher scores indicating higher likelihood of asking for consent (α = .88). See Appendix C.

Demographics. Participants were asked to indicate their gender, the gender they most frequently date, age, race, ethnicity, sexual experience, and degree of traditionality within gender roles. See Appendix D.

Sexual Orientation. Using demographic data, sexual orientation was calculated by matching participant gender with the gender they indicate they more frequently date. Those who indicate they date people of the other gender were coded as Heterosexual and those who indicate they date people of the same gender were as GL. Those who indicate they date people who are nonbinary, both men and women, or date men, women, and nonbinary people were excluded from all analyses.

Attention Checks. For quality control, three attention checks were distributed throughout the survey. The first two asked participants to respond to the item by selecting "strongly agree" or "strongly disagree." The third, suggested by Prolific, instructed participants, "The color test is simple. When asked for your favorite color, write in 'olive,'" Then, on the next line, participants were asked, "Based on the text you read above, what color have you been asked to enter?"

Results

Preliminary Data Cleaning and Screening

Data from participants who did not pass all three attention checks (n = 19) or meet gender/sexual orientation inclusion criteria were removed from all analyses (n = 8). Additionally, I excluded data from three participants who indicated confusion or doubted their ability to

answer the questions faithfully. Missing data was handled using listwise deletion across all analyses. All variables were checked for normality (skewness within ± 1 and kurtosis within ± 3) and all but two fell within the normal limits: Lack of Concern for Consent1 ("asking for consent is not my problem"; Skew = 2.08, Kurtosis = 4.30) and Other1 ("I would not want to verbally ask a partner for consent because it would remind me that I'm sexually active"; Skew = 2.38; Kurtosis = 7.22). Notably, Other1 is an item from Humphreys and Brosseau (2010) Sexual Consent Survey. Due to the number of planned analyses I used a corrected alpha level, using the Holm-Bonferroni method (Holm, 1979), to reduce family-wise error rates. This method rank orders p-values on all analyses from smallest to largest, then divides each by (n – rank + 1), to produce a modified p-value which is compared against the original p-value. If the modified p-value is less than the original p-value then the test is deemed significant.

Bivariate correlations between all continuous variables are available in Table 2 and descriptive statistics are in Table 3. Sexual experience, number of sexual partners, and years of sexual activity were correlated with some dependent variables. Additionally, sexual experience and number of sexual partners did not differ by gender or sexual orientation and were thus included as covariates. However, years of sexual experience did differ by sexual orientation and so this variable was not included as a covariate.

Table 2

Bivarate Correlations of all Study 1 Variables

	BSRI_M	BSRI_F	AffC	MGR	FGR	MSS	FSS	SS_RtF	LoS	PartP	PeerP	Un	LCC1	LCC2	LCC3	O1	O2	O3	Sex Exp	Sex Act	Sex Part
BSRI_M	1	.03	-.04	.08	.05	.07	-.26**	.001	-.17**	-.04	.004	.11	.09	.02	.01	.05	-.42**	-.14*	.25**	.11	.01
BSRI_F	.03	1	.12*	-.12	.02	-.11	.07	-.15*	-.12*	-.12	-.09	-.09	-.12*	.02	-.20**	-.10	-.06	-.06	.25**	.07	-.06
AffC	-.04	.12*	1	-.55**	-.40**	-.55**	-.14*	-.70**	-.45**	-.62**	-.61**	-.55**	-.38**	-.18**	-.47**	-.09	-.19**	-.27**	-.03	-.12*	.07
MGR	.08	-.12	-.54**	1	.56**	.62**	.17**	.68**	.44**	.66**	.55**	.60**	.43**	.28**	.52**	.28**	.23**	.42**	-.05	-.02	.12*
FGR	.05	.02	-.40**	.56**	1	.49**	.35**	.55**	.46**	.54**	.45**	.44**	.30**	.27**	.28**	.34**	.23**	.37**	.01	.05	.08
MSS	.07	-.11	-.55**	.62**	.49**	1	.24**	.77**	.47**	.70**	.60**	.58**	.40**	.28**	.54**	.20**	.25**	.42**	.03	-.01	.08
FSS	-.26**	.07	-.14*	.17**	.35**	.24**	1	.27**	.34**	.26**	.26**	.19**	.10	.10	.01	.145*	.31**	.32**	-.20**	-.17**	.10
SS_RtF	.001	-.15*	-.70**	.68**	.55**	.77**	.27**	1	.59**	.81**	.71**	.64**	.39**	.31**	.60**	.20**	.34**	.51**	-.01	.04	.05
LoS	-.17**	-.12*	-.45**	.44**	.46**	.47**	.34**	.59**	1	.55**	.50**	.33**	.19**	.10	.33**	.21**	.51**	.45**	-.22**	-.07	.08
PartP	-.04	-.12	-.62**	.66**	.54**	.70**	.26**	.81**	.55**	1	.70**	.65**	.35**	.27**	.57**	.17**	.27**	.41**	-.04	.02	.10
PeerP	.04	-.09	-.61**	.545**	.45**	.60**	.26**	.71**	.50**	.70**	1	.54**	.33**	.29**	.50**	.08	.24**	.40**	-.01	.04	.07
Un	.11	-.09	-.55**	.60**	.44**	.58**	.19**	.64**	.33**	.65**	.54**	1	.49**	.36**	.56**	.25**	.15*	.30**	.05	.06	.06
LCC1	.09	-.12*	-.38**	.43**	.30**	.40**	.10	.39**	.19**	.35**	.33**	.49**	1	.45**	.44**	.16**	.02	.24**	.02	-.04	.06
LCC2	.02	.02	-.18**	.28**	.27**	.28**	.10	.31**	.10	.27**	.29**	.36**	.45**	1	.31**	.14*	.06	.22**	0.11	.08	.12*
LCC3	.01	-.20**	-.47**	.52**	.28**	.54**	.01	.60**	.33**	.57**	.50**	.56**	.44**	.31**	1	.20**	.23**	.33**	-.05	-.01	.06
O1	.05	-.10	-.09	.278**	.34**	.20**	.15*	.20**	.21**	.17**	.08	.25**	.16**	.14*	.19**	1	.16**	.15*	-.15*	-.14*	.13*
O2	-.42**	-.06	-.19**	.23**	.23**	.25**	.31**	.34**	.51**	.27**	.234**	.15*	.02	.06	.21**	.16**	1	.45**	-.29**	-.17**	-.02
O3	-.14*	-.06	-.27**	.42**	.37**	.42**	.32**	.51**	.45**	.41**	.40**	.30**	.24**	.22**	.33**	.15*	.45**	1	-.16**	-.06	.06
SexExp	.25**	.25**	-.03	-.05	.01	.03	-.20**	-.01	-.22**	-.04	-.01	.05	.02	.11	-.05	-.15*	-.29**	-.16**	1	.63**	.11
SexAct	.11	.07	-.12*	-.02	.05	-.01	-.17**	.04	-.07	.02	.04	.06	-.04	.08	-.01	-.14*	-.17**	-.06	.63**	1	-.03
SexPart	.01	-.06	.07	.14*	.08	.08	.10	.05	.08	.10	.07	.06	.06	.12*	.06	.13*	-.02	.06	.11	-.03	1

BSRI_M = Bem Sex Role Inventory Masculinity; BSRI_F = Bem Sex Role Inventory Femininity; AffC = Affirmative Consent; MGR = Masculine Gender Roles; FGR = Feminine Gender Roles; SS_RtF = Sexual Scripts – Ruining the Flow; LoS = Lack of Script; PartP = Partner Perceptions; PeerP = Peer Perceptions; Un = Unnecessary; LCC1 = Lack of Concern For Consent item 1 (“Asking for consent is not my problem”); LCC2 = Lack of Concern for Consent item 2 (“I’m not worried about my partner consenting to sex”); LCC3 = Lack of Concern for Consent item 3 (“asking for consent is tedious”); O1 = Other item 1 (“I would not want to verbally ask a partner for consent because it would remind me that I’m sexually active”); O2 = Other item 2 (“I would have a hard time asking verbally for consent because I’m shy”); O3 = Other item 3 (“Verbally asking for sexual consent puts me in the position to be rejected”); SexExp = sexual experience; SexAct = years of sexual activity; SexPart = number of sexual partners. * p < .05; ** p < .01; ** p < .001

Table 3

Study 1 Barrier Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
MGR	2.43	2.29	1.21	1.00	7.00
FGR	2.25	2.00	1.04	1.00	6.00
MSS	2.79	2.75	1.26	1.00	6.50
FSS	3.21	3.00	1.27	1.00	7.00
SS_RtF	3.03	3.00	1.46	1.00	6.71
LoS	3.01	2.80	1.54	1.00	7.00
PartP	3.47	3.60	1.61	1.00	7.00
PeerP	3.16	3.20	1.37	1.00	7.00
Unnecessary	2.70	2.50	1.30	1.00	7.00
LCC_1	1.82	1.00	1.30	1.00	7.00
LCC_2	2.50	2.00	1.73	1.00	7.00
LCC_3	2.29	2.00	1.58	1.00	7.00
O_1	1.71	1.00	1.07	1.00	7.00
O_2	3.52	3.00	1.94	1.00	7.00
O_3	3.29	3.00	1.88	1.00	7.00
BSRI_M	4.05	4.10	0.99	1.40	6.70
BSRI_F	5.22	5.30	0.96	2.00	7.00
AffC	5.09	5.33	1.60	1.00	7.00

MGR = Masculine Gender Roles; FGR = Feminine Gender Roles; SS_RtF = Sexual Scripts – Ruining the Flow; LoS = Lack of Script; PartP = Partner Perceptions; PeerP = Peer Perceptions; Un = Unnecessary; LCC1 = Lack of Concern For Consent item 1 (“Asking for consent is not my problem”); LCC2 = Lack of Concern for Consent item 2 (“I’m not worried about my partner consenting to sex”); LCC3 = Lack of Concern for Consent item 3 (“asking for consent is tedious”); O1 = Other item 1 (“I would not want to verbally ask a partner for consent because it would remind me that I’m sexually active”); O2 = Other item 2 (“I would have a hard time asking verbally for consent because I’m shy”); O3 = Other item 3 (“Verbally asking for sexual consent puts me in the position to be rejected”)

Primary Analyses

As an exploratory analysis, I first tested for group differences in self-reported affirmative consent by conducting a 2 (gender) x 2 (sexual orientation) Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) for Affirmative Consent, controlling for sexual experience and number of sexual partners (see

Table 4). There was not a significant main effect of gender. However, there was a significant main effect of sexual orientation, with heterosexual participants asking for consent less than gay/lesbian participants. There was also a significant interaction between gender and sexual orientation. Simple effects revealed heterosexual and lesbian women significantly differed in Affirmative Consent, with lesbian women being more likely to ask for consent than heterosexual women. Gay and heterosexual men did not differ in Affirmative Consent. Within sexual orientation, men and women differed from another on Affirmative Consent, with heterosexual men being more likely to ask for consent than heterosexual women, but gay men being slightly less likely to ask for consent than lesbian women.

Table 4

Affirmative Consent by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	4.97	1.62	4.46	1.56	2.26	.13	.01
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	4.71	1.65	5.71	1.29	12.65	< .001*	.05
Gender * SO					15.29	< .001*	.05
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	4.98	1.71	4.46	1.56	.49	.032	.02
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	4.88	1.33	5.99	1.16	-1.10	.001*	.04
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	4.98	1.71	4.88	1.33	.07	.829	.00
Woman	4.46	1.56	5.99	1.16	-1.52	< .001*	.14

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Next, I submitted the Barriers within the same category to an analysis of internal consistency. The following Barriers had a Cronbach's alpha greater than $\alpha = 0.7$ and were thus averaged to create a composite score for that Barrier: *Masculine Gender Roles*

(α = .90); *Feminine Gender Roles* (α = .87); *Masculine Sexual Scripts* (α = .76); *Sexual Script – Ruining the Flow* (α = .92); *Lack of Script* (e.g. I don't know how to ask for consent) (α = .90); *Partner Perceptions* (α = .92); *Peer Perceptions* (α = .86); and *Unnecessary* (α = .84). *Feminine Sexual Scripts* had a low internal consistency (α = .67); however, the item "asking for consent would feel like initiating sex" appeared to be repressing the overall consistency of the scale and so I deleted it, leaving α = .72. *Lack of Concern for Consent* also had a low internal consistency (α = .65), which was not repressed by any item. For the remainder of the analyses, I treat the three *Lack of Concern for Consent* items as individual items. I did not submit remaining items which were originally grouped in the *Other* category to an examination of internal consistency because they were not intended to be thematically similar. These three items were also treated as individual items.

I next submitted each Barrier aggregate to a 2 (gender) by 2 (sexual orientation) ANCOVA. See Tables 5 - 19 for analyses for each variable. Providing partial support for Hypothesis 1, there were significant gender differences within heterosexual men and women for masculine gender roles and feminine sexual scripts. Heterosexual men endorsed barriers related to masculine gender roles at higher rates than women. Similarly, heterosexual women endorsed barriers related to feminine sexual scripts at rates higher than men. However, surprisingly, there were no significant gender differences on the remaining gendered barriers: feminine gender roles and masculine sexual scripts. I return to this in the discussion. Next, providing support for Hypothesis 2, there were also no gender differences on non-gendered barriers.

Next, I responded to Exploratory Questions 1 and 2 by examining differences by sexual orientation (return to Tables 5 – 19). There were main effects of sexual orientation on masculine gender roles, masculine sexual scripts, sexual scripts – ruining the flow, partner perceptions, and

unnecessary. For all variables in which there was an effect of sexual orientation, heterosexual participants endorsed the barrier at higher rates than gay/lesbian participants. Gay/lesbian participants did not tend to endorse gendered barriers at rates similarly to heterosexual participants, with the exception of feminine sexual scripts. However, they did endorse eight out of 11 non-gendered barriers at rates similar to heterosexual participants.

Table 5
Masculine Gender Roles by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	2.92	1.40	2.11	0.94	20.42	< .001*	.07
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	2.69	1.29	2.01	0.93	11.32	< .001*	.04
Gender * SO					.08	.781	.00
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	3.04	1.50	2.35	0.93	.65	< .001*	.05
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	2.54	0.88	1.83	0.88	.73	. 004*	.03
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	3.04	1.50	2.54	0.88	.47	.061	.01
Woman	2.35	0.93	1.83	0.88	.56	.002*	.04

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 6
Feminine Gender Roles by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	2.41	0.96	2.14	1.08	.34	.558	.00
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	2.48	1.05	1.85	0.90	1.01	.315	.004
Gender * SO					15.50	< .001*	.05
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	2.42	1.01	2.54	1.09	2.48	< .001*	.06
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	2.35	0.79	1.69	0.88	1.85	.044	.02
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	2.42	1.01	2.35	0.79	-.48	.075	.01
Woman	2.54	1.09	1.69	0.88	.81	< .001*	.01

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 7
Masculine Sexual Scripts by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	3.25	1.32	2.49	1.12	22.29	< .001*	.08
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	3.07	1.29	2.32	1.04	8.98	.003*	.03
Gender * SO					4.79	.029	.02
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	3.29	1.38	2.87	1.18	.40	.025	.02
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	3.14	1.09	2.05	0.87	1.1	< .001*	.06
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	3.29	1.38	3.14	1.09	.13	.624	.00
Woman	2.87	1.18	2.05	0.87	.83	< .001*	.07

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 8
Feminine Sexual Scripts by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	3.10	1.16	3.29	1.34	.34	.558	.00
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	3.33	1.23	3.03	1.32	1.01	.315	.004
Gender * SO					15.50	< .001*	.05
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	2.99	1.12	3.64	1.25	-.74	< .001*	.06
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	3.44	1.22	2.89	1.34	.55	.044	.02
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	2.99	1.12	3.44	1.22	-.48	.075	.01
Woman	3.64	1.25	2.89	1.34	.81	< .001*	.01

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 9
Sexual Scripts – Ruining the Flow by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)					12.25	< .001*	.04
	3.39	1.44	2.78	1.42			
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	3.34	1.50	2.51	1.24	7.60	.006*	.03
Gender * SO					10.02	.002*	.04
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	3.38	1.51	3.30	1.49	.06	.77	.00
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	3.45	1.21	2.20	1.09	1.26	< .001*	.06
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	3.38	1.51	3.45	1.21	-.08	.802	.00
Woman	3.30	1.49	2.20	1.09	1.12	< .001*	.09

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 10
Lack of Script by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	3.09	1.54	2.95	1.55	.98	.32	.00
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	3.23	1.53	2.64	1.50	3.93	.048	.01
Gender * SO					11.87	< .001*	.04
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	3.03	1.52	3.41	1.52	-.49	.029	.02
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	3.28	1.61	2.42	1.41	.88	.008*	.03
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	3.03	1.52	3.28	1.61	-.29	.37	.00
Woman	3.41	1.52	2.42	1.41	1.08	< .001*	.08

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 11
Partner Perceptions by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	3.83	1.61	3.24	1.57	8.91	.003*	.03
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	3.80	1.60	2.93	1.47	7.11	.008*	.03
Gender * SO					9.77	.002*	.04
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	3.81	1.66	3.79	1.55	-.03	.90	.00
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	3.88	1.45	2.61	1.34	1.27	< .001*	.05
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	3.81	1.66	3.88	1.45	-.10	.78	.00
Woman	3.79	1.55	2.61	1.34	1.20	< .001*	.09

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 12
Peer Perceptions by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	3.41	1.35	2.99	1.36	6.72	.01*	.02
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	3.42	1.38	2.73	1.25	5.66	.018	.02
Gender * SO					9.27	.003*	.03
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	3.39	1.40	3.44	1.36	-.08	.69	.00
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	3.49	1.17	2.47	1.18	1.01	< .001*	.04
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	3.39	1.40	3.49	1.17	-.12	.685	.00
Woman	3.44	1.36	2.47	1.18	.97	< .001*	.08

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 13
Unnecessary by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	2.88	1.36	2.59	1.25	2.38	.124	.01
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	2.99	1.37	2.23	1.00	12.05	< .001*	.04
Gender * SO					5.0`	.026	.02
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	2.93	1.46	3.04	1.29	-.12	.534	.00
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	2.71	0.96	2.07	0.97	.64	.023	.02
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	2.93	1.46	2.71	0.96	.21	.454	.00
Woman	3.04	1.29	2.07	0.97	.97	< .001*	.09

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 14
"Asking for sexual consent is not my problem" by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	2.10	1.53	1.63	1.10	6.42	.012	.02
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	2.04	1.44	1.44	0.92	5.87	.016	.02
Gender * SO					2.05	.15	.01
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	2.14	1.57	1.94	1.32	.19	.325	.00
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	1.96	1.40	1.27	0.62	.69	.017	.02
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	2.14	1.57	1.96	1.40	.17	.547	.00
Woman	1.94	1.32	1.27	0.62	.67	< .001*	.04

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 15
"I'm not worried about my partner consenting to sex" by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	2.67	1.79	2.39	1.68	2.96	.086	.01
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	2.65	1.76	2.25	1.66	.46	.499	.00
Gender * SO					4.99	.026	.02
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	2.60	1.72	2.71	1.80	-.12	.647	.00
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	2.92	2.04	2.03	1.46	.92	.018	.02
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	2.60	1.72	2.92	2.04	-.36	.34	.00
Woman	2.71	1.80	2.03	1.46	.68	.011	.02

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 16
"Asking for consent is tedious" by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	2.73	1.80	2.01	1.35	9.22	.003*	.03
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	2.57	1.64	1.84	1.37	6.39	.012	.02
Gender * SO					.87	.351	.00
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	2.81	1.81	2.34	1.43	.44	.062	.01
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	2.46	1.77	1.63	1.14	.83	.017	.02
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	2.81	1.81	2.46	1.77	.33	.33	.00
Woman	2.34	1.43	1.63	1.14	.72	.003*	.03

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 17

"I would not want to ask a partner for consent because it would remind me that I'm sexually active" by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	1.86	1.05	1.61	1.08	2.58	.109	.01
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	1.72	0.97	1.70	1.21	.07	.793	.00
Gender * SO					.02	.891	.00
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	1.86	1.04	1.58	0.89	.21	.190	.01
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	1.88	1.07	1.64	1.26	.25	.294	.00
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	1.86	1.04	1.88	1.07	-.06	.808	.00
Woman	1.58	0.89	1.64	1.26	-.02	.912	.00

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 18

"I would have a hard time verbally asking for consent because I am too shy" by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	3.52	1.91	3.52	1.96	1.16	.283	.00
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	3.42	1.91	3.69	1.98	3.40	.066	.01
Gender * SO					8.53	.004*	.03
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	3.24	1.90	3.58	1.92	-.47	.100	.01
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	4.42	1.70	3.45	2.01	1.01	.017	.02
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	3.24	1.90	4.42	1.70	-1.20	.004*	.03
Woman	3.58	1.92	3.45	2.01	.27	.345	.00

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 19

"Asking for sexual consent puts me in the position of being rejected" by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

	M_I	SD_I	M_J	SD_J	$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
Gender (Man, Woman)	3.44	1.90	3.20	1.86	2.77	.097	.01
SO (Heterosexual, G/L)	3.48	1.88	2.98	1.84	.75	.388	.00
Gender * SO					12.72	< .001*	.05
					Mean Difference		
Pairwise Comparisons within SO	**Man**		**Woman**		**(I – J)**		
Heterosexual (Het)	3.29	1.98	3.66	1.78	-.47	.090	.01
Gay/Lesbian (G/L)	3.92	1.57	2.67	1.82	1.29	.002*	.04
Pairwise Comparisons within Gender	**Het**		**G/L**				
Man	3.29	1.98	3.92	1.57	-.67	.101	.01
Woman	3.66	1.78	2.67	1.82	1.10	< .001*	.05

* Denotes significance after the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

In response to Exploratory Question 3, I examined the relative predictive power of each barrier type on Affirmative Consent. I regressed all barriers, including single items, onto Affirmative Consent. I controlled for sexual experience and number of sexual partners by entering them at the first step and barriers at the second step. Because I did not have a priori hypotheses concerning which barriers would be the strongest I entered all barriers simultaneously. In Table 20, the predictors are listed in order of greatest to weakest correlates, although the significance of differences between each predictor was not analyzed. The predictor with the greatest correlation with Affirmative Consent was the belief that asking for consent ruins the "flow" of sex, followed by concern for partner's perceptions. Further, only four of the barriers were not significant predictors of Affirmative Consent. Feminine Sexual Script was not

significant, nor were, “I would have a hard time verbally asking for consent because I am shy,” “I’m not worried about my partner consenting to sex,” and “I would not want to ask a partner for consent because it would remind me that I am sexually active.”

Table 20

Barriers Predicting Affirmative Consent, Ordered from Strongest to Weakest, controlling for sexual experience and number of sexual partners

Barrier	***r***	***p***
Entered at Step 1:		
How sexually experienced would you say you are?	0.00	0.49
How many sexual partners have you had?	0.10	0.09
Entered at Step 2:		
Sexual Script – Ruining the Flow	-0.72	< .001*
Partner Perceptions	-0.66	< .001*
Peer Perceptions	-0.62	< .001*
Asking for consent is tedious	-0.52	< .001*
Masculine Sexual Scripts	-0.52	< .001*
Masculine Gender Roles	-0.51	< .001*
Unnecessary	-0.50	< .001*
Lack of Script	-0.46	< .001*
Asking for sexual consent is not my problem	-0.34	< .001*
Feminine Gender Roles	-0.33	< .001*
Asking for sexual consent puts me in the position of being rejected.	-0.29	< .001*
I would have a hard time verbally asking for consent because I am too shy.	-0.20	0.01
I’m not worried about my partner consenting to sex.	-0.16	0.02
Feminine Sexual Script	-0.05	0.26
I would not want to ask a partner for consent because it would remind me that I’m sexually active.	-0.04	0.29

* Denotes significance using Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Lastly, as a final exploratory analysis, I explored if Masculine and Feminine identification predict endorsement of gendered barriers to consent. To answer this question, I used Hayes’ (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 1) with 10,000 bootstrapped samples, and enter gender as the predictor variable, and BSRI-M, and BSRI-F as moderator variables, and Barriers type as the outcome variable. Due to low power, I restricted this analysis to heterosexual

participants. As seen in Table 21, gender did not interact with masculinity or femininity on any of the barriers, suggesting degree of self-endorsement of masculinity and femininity may not play a significant role in reasons why young adults do not ask for sexual consent.

Table 21

Interaction of Masculinity and Femininity with Gender on Barriers, Limited to Heterosexual Participants and Controlling for Sexual Experience and Number of Sexual Partners

	BSRI_M			BSRI_F		
	b	se	p	*b*	se	p
Masculine Gender Roles	.23	1.22	.85	.22	.93	.81
Feminine Gender Roles	.02	1.06	.99	-.05	.81	.95
Masculine Sexual Scripts	-.79	1.26	.62	-.33	.96	.73
Feminine Sexual Scripts	.63	1.12	.57	.93	.85	.27
Sexual Scripts – Ruining the Flow	-1.06	1.49	.48	-.64	1.13	.57
Lack of Script	1.33	1.48	.37	.94	1.13	.41
Partner Perceptions	-1.35	1.58	.39	-.57	1.20	.64
Peer Perceptions	-.09	1.38	.95	.09	1.05	.93
Unnecessary	.39	1.34	.77	-.09	.37	.81
Asking for sexual consent is not my problem	.42	1.43	.77	-.16	1.09	.88
I'm not worried about my partner consenting to sex	1.89	1.76	.38	1.16	1.34	.39
Asking for consent is tedious	-1.56	1.59	.49	-1.11	1.21	.36
I would not want to ask a partner for consent because it would remind me that I'm sexually active	.62	.94	.51	.03	.71	.96
I would have a hard time verbally asking for consent because I am too shy	1.18	1.76	.50	.50	1.34	.71
Asking for sexual consent puts me in the position of being rejected	3.33	1.87	.08	2.33	1.42	.10

Discussion

Eleven of the 15 barriers significantly negatively predicted Affirmative Consent. This suggests that a multitude of barriers exist for young adults in asking for consent, and that many may be at play simultaneously. Beliefs about gender played a role in predicting Affirmative Consent. Heterosexual men reported discomfort with asking for consent due to beliefs that they

would be perceived as less masculine. However, they did not report concerns over violating masculine sexual scripts by slowing sex down. Additionally, women did not strongly endorse feminine gender roles or feminine sexual scripts as reasons for discomfort with asking for consent. This gender difference may be unsurprising, considering how womanhood and femininity are less vulnerable to threats (Vandello et al., 2008). Due to the precarious nature of manhood, the possibility of appearing less masculine may be more salient for men than appearing less feminine is for women. Furthermore, women may be less concerned with failing to demonstrate femininity, as doing so may not have same strength of social consequences as gender role violations for men.

In partial support of my hypotheses, there were no gender differences on non-gendered barriers, suggesting the ubiquity of certain attitudes about sexual consent. Indeed, gay and lesbian participants endorsed non-gendered barriers at rates similar to their heterosexual counterparts.

Additionally, heterosexual young adults reported a lower likelihood of asking for affirmative consent, compared to their gay/lesbian counterparts. Following from this finding, it is unsurprising that of the seven barriers that demonstrated group differences by sexual orientation, all of them were endorsed more strongly by heterosexual participants. These findings, coupled with the higher likelihood of asking for affirmative consent, suggest that sexual minority individuals may be less impacted by the gender roles and sexual scripts that project barriers to consent. This could perhaps be due to existing sexual scripts being primarily heterosexual in nature (i.e. the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script). If gay and lesbian individuals are excluded from sexual scripts dictating sexual behavior, they may be freed to incorporate affirmative consent with less hindrance of peer/partner expectations. Although, notably, gay/lesbian young

adults did endorse reasons related to concerns of peer's perceptions at rates similar to heterosexual participants, but not partner perceptions. This may be because gay and lesbian young adults are talking about consent more frequently with their partner, and so partner responses are not a concern. However, they still may not discuss consent with their non-romantic peers, similar to heterosexual young adults.

Interestingly, self-reported masculinity and femininity did not interact with gender for heterosexual participants in predicting endorsement of any of the barriers to affirmative consent. Given that gender roles and sexual scripts were not particularly strong predictors of affirmative consent, this may suggest that for most self-perceived gender is not central to attitudes about consent.

Finally, at the end of the survey participants were able to provide feedback on the survey. One participant – a heterosexual man – added that fear of appearing *too* assertive limited him from asking for consent:

> An option I did not see that I feel applies to me is my main concern about verbally asking for consent is seeming too forward or aggressive. That is more about being passive though, I don't want to push people to do things they don't want so I err on the side of caution and do not initiate sex if I feel too uncomfortable to ask.

This person provides helpful insight into heterosexual men's reluctance to ask for consent. While asking for consent does seem to be tied to masculine gender roles and sexual scripts, it is possible that men are also wary of going too far in demonstrating a relaxed masculine proscription of aggression, which may make women feel uncomfortable. Men may feel they have to walk a tightrope of masculinity when it comes to sexual behaviors – appearing assertive enough, but not too much. This feedback may suggest insight into why heterosexual men and

women did not differ in their endorsement of Feminine Gender Role Barriers. Perhaps while women are concerned about being viewed as too assertive because doing so violates gender roles, heterosexual men are concerned about being viewed as too assertive as well, not because it violates gender roles but because it overly confirms them. When men are too assertive they risk being viewed as dangerous and may be motivated to avoid this, especially in the context of intimate partnerships.

Only four Barriers were not significant predictors of Affirmative Consent. First, respondents were not held back by shyness. Second, they were not held back by a lack of concern over their partner consenting to sex. This may reflect a positive attitude about consent – that they are concerned but are restricted by other barriers. Additionally, an item used in Humphries and Brosseau (2010) indicating that asking for consent reminds the person that they are sexually active did not predict Affirmative Consent behaviors, possibly suggesting a shifting norm in regards to sexual openness, comfort, or shame. Lastly, whereas Masculine Sexual Scripts was a predictor, Feminine Sexual Scripts was not. This finding may indicate that men are more bound than women by the traditional sexual scripts for their gender. I further explore the weight of the traditional heterosexual initiator/gatekeeper sexual script in predicting affirmative consent in Study 3.

Notably, the predictor with the strongest correlation with sexual consent was the belief that doing so "ruins the flow" of sex. This attitude is in line with previous qualitative research (Humphreys, 2000; Fouber et al., 2006; Shumlich & Fisher, 2020). Following concerns about ruining the flow, participants expressed concern over what their partners and peers might think of them if they practiced affirmative consent. Study 2 investigates if this belief is founded in reality, or a misperception of peer attitudes.

Study 2

Humphreys and Brosseau (2010) identified a lack of peer norms endorsing affirmative sexual consent. However, research suggests that young adults do not have conversations with their peers (Humphreys & Brosseau, 2010) or potential partners (Humphreys, 2004) about affirmative consent. While young adults are not conversing with their peers about consent, they are consuming media that does not depict affirmative consent behaviors as normative (Jozkowski et al., 2019). Pluralistic ignorance has been explored in norms adjacent to affirmative consent; however, research is still lacking examining possible pluralistic ignorance of same-sex peer norms and cross-sex peer norms for affirmative consent behaviors. If affirmative consent does indeed challenge traditional gender roles, then men may be especially likely to publicly rebuke affirmative consent. For men, public declarations of not using affirmative consent (which may or may not reflect their behavior behind closed doors) may strengthen the misperception for other men and women that most men hold negative attitudes about affirmative consent. Additionally, research is needed to explore peer (mis)perceptions of affirmative consent in sexual minority samples. Lastly, in addition to misperceptions of peer behaviors and attitudes, young adults may also misperceive their peers' and partners' interest in being asked for consent, which may deter asking. Qualitative research suggests some young adults believe potential partners are not interested in being verbally asked for consent, because it would be awkward or because it is unnecessary (e.g. Humphreys, 2000).

This study is intended to address these gaps in the literature. Participants responded to measures assessing their own consent behaviors, consent attitudes, and interest in being asked by a partner for consent. They were also asked their perceptions of the consent behaviors, attitudes, and interests of most men and most women of their same sexual orientation. Comparisons between self and perceived other were used to assess the potential misperceptions young adult have regarding peer norms of consent. To minimize length and retain participant attention, the affirmative consent measure in Study 2 was a shortened version of the measure from Study 1. While in Study 1 three items were used, assessing the likelihood of asking for permission to kiss, sexually touch, and have sex with a new partner, in Study 2 a single item was used to assess the likelihood of general sexual behavior that includes kissing, sexual touching, and taking off clothes.

In sum, Study 2 had two overarching goals:

1. Quantitatively explore potential pluralistic ignorance of peer and partner consent behaviors, attitudes, and interest.
2. Explore gender and sexual orientation differences in potential pluralistic ignorance of peer and partner consent behaviors, attitudes, and interest.

In pursuit of addressing the above goals, Study 2 specifically explored the following hypotheses and exploratory questions related to consent behavior, attitudes, and interest:

Consent Behavior:

- Hypothesis 1: Participants will believe same-sex peers are less likely to verbally ask for consent than they themselves are.
- Exploratory Question 1: Are there differences by gender and sexual orientation in (mis)perceptions of peers asking for consent?

Consent Attitudes:

- Hypothesis 2a: Men will predict that same-sex peers believe verbally asking for consent is less masculine than they believe themselves.
- Hypothesis 2b: Women will predict that same-sex peers believe verbally asking for consent is less feminine than they believe themselves.
- Hypotheses 3: Compared to heterosexual women, heterosexual men will be more likely to predict their peers hold more negative attitudes about consent than they themselves hold (i.e. the self-perceived other gap will be larger for men than women).
- Hypothesis 4: Participants will predict that potential partners hold more negative attitudes about consent than they themselves hold.
- Exploratory Question 2: Are there differences by sexual orientation in underestimations of peer gendered attitudes about consent?

Consent Interest:

- Hypothesis 5: Participants will predict same-sex peers and other-sex peers are less interested in being verbally asked for consent than they themselves are.
- Hypothesis 6: Men, compared to women, will be more likely to underestimate peer interest in being asked for consent.
- Hypothesis 7: Heterosexual women, compared to heterosexual men, will be more likely to underestimate partner interest in being asked for consent.
- Exploratory Question 3: Are there differences by sexual orientation in underestimations of same-sex and other-sex peer interest in being asked for consent?

Methods

Participants

Participants included cisgender heterosexual women and men, and gay and lesbian (GL) men and women between the ages of 18 and 25, United States citizens, living in the United States. Because participants were asked to reflect on hypothetical partners, participation was not restricted by relationship status, nor sexual activity.

Previous literature has found fluctuating Cohen d effect sizes ranging from large to small for pluralistic ignorance (Brown & Messman-Moore, 2009; Lambert et al., 2003; Prentice & Miller, 1993), and so I conservatively used a small-to-medium effect size to estimate sample size. A power analysis using G*Power for a 2 (man or woman) x 2 (heterosexual or GL) x 2 (self-other) repeated measures ANOVA with an alpha of .05, power of .80, $r = 0.5$ correlations among repeated measures, looking for a small to medium effect size ($f = .18$), suggested a total sample of 260 participants, or 65 per group. To account for attrition, I oversampled by five per group, resulting in a total sample of 280 participants.

Participants were recruited using the online crowdsourcing platform Prolific (www.prolific.co). Participants were paid $0.33 for this study, which took approximately three minutes to complete.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to collect data for all gay participants, despite increasing the pay to $.48. The final sample included only 32 gay men (14.5%). The remainder of the sample included 63 heterosexual men (28.5%), 66 heterosexual women (29.9%), and 59 lesbian women (26.8%). Mean age was 21.93 ($SD = 1.93$). The sample was primarily White (74.1%) and non-Hispanic (83.2%). See Table 22 for full Study 2 participant demographics.

Table 22

Study 2 Participant Demographics

Variable	*n* (%)
Identity	
Heterosexual Man	63 (28.5%)

Table *22* (Continued)

Heterosexual Woman	66 (29.9%)
Gay Man	32 (14.5%)
Lesbian Woman	59 (26.8%)
Age	*M* = 21.93 (*SD* = 1.93)
Race/Ethnicity (select all that apply)	
American Indian or Native Alaskan	6 (2.7%)
Asian	32 (14.5%)
Black or African American	26 (11.8%)
Middle Eastern or North African	4 (1.8%)
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1 (.5%)
White or Caucasian	163 (74.1%)
Other	1 (.5%)
Prefer not to say	1 (.5%)
Are you Latino/Latiné/Hispanic?	
Yes	26 (11.8%)
No	194 (88.2%)
Religion	
Judaism	6 (2.7%)
Christianity	71 (32.3%)
Islam	6 (2.7%)
Buddhism	3 (1.4%)
Hinduism	3 (1.4%)
Chinese Folk	0 (0%)
Atheism	39 (17.7%)
Agnosticism	40 (18.2%)
None	44 (20.0%)
Other	8 (3.6%)
How religious would you describe yourself?	
Not at all religious	121 (55%)
Slightly religious	52 (23.6%)
Moderately religious	26 (11.8%)
Very religious	12 (5.5%)
Extremely religious	9 (4.1%)
Number of Sexual Partners	*M* = 4.24 (*SD* = 2.0)
Years of Sexual Activity	*M* = 2.87 (*SD* = 2.0)
Sexual Experience	
Not at all experienced	41 (18.6%)
Barely experienced	38 (17.3%)

Table 22 (Continued)

Somewhat experienced	54 (24.5%)
Moderately experienced	60 (27.3%)
Very experienced	27 (12.3%)

Materials and Procedure

Participants were selected using a pre-screening process provided by Prolific. Due to low participation, participants who completed Study 1 were eligible to complete Study 2 (88 participants took both Study 1 and Study 2). Prescreening questions selected only for cisgender men and women and only heterosexual, gay, or lesbian sexual identities. They were then linked to the survey on the online platform Qualtrics. Upon opening the survey they read an informed consent statement. Next, they completed the following measures in the order they are described. Two attention checks were distributed throughout the survey.

Consent Behavior. A three-item measure assessing Self Affirmative Consent and Peer Affirmative Consent behavior. Participants were asked to indicate their likelihood of asking a new partner consent prior to any sexual activity (Self Affirmative Consent). Participants were also given the same question as Self Affirmative Consent two more times, with altered instructions to reflect perceived norms about men in general and women in general: "When with a new partner, how likely are most men[women] to verbally ask for permission before sexually touching them (e.g. kissing, rubbing, taking off their clothes)?" Participants were matched to the item that reflects perceptions of people of their same gender. This is Peer Affirmative Consent. See Appendix E.

Consent Attitudes. A measure of self and peer attitudes about affirmative consent, developed for the purpose of this study. This measure includes 11 items, repeated three times. Participants were asked to rate verbally asking for consent prior to any sexual activity using 11 descriptions (e.g. masculine, feminine, assertive, passive, sexy, attractive, awkward, weird,

tedious, smart, normal). They were asked to rate asking for consent three times, once from their own perspective (Self Consent Attitudes), once for "most men," and once for "most women." Peer Attitudes were composed of scores for whichever gender matches that of the participant. Partner Attitudes were composed of scores for whichever gender the participant indicates they typically date. Responses were given using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). See Appendix F.

Consent Interest. A three-item measure of self and peer interest in being verbally asked for sexual consent, developed for the purpose of this study. Participants were asked to rate how interested they are (Self Interest), most men are, and most women are in being verbally asked for consent. Peer Interest was composed of scores for whichever gender matches that of the participant. Partner Interest was composed of scores for whichever gender the participant indicates they typically date. Responses were given using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). See Appendix G.

Demographics. Demographics from Study 1 were used in Study 2.

Attention Checks. Attention Checks from Study 1 were used in Study 2.

Results

Preliminary Data Cleaning and Screening

Data from participants who did not pass all attention checks or meet the inclusion criteria were removed from all analyses (n = 17[3]). Missing data was handled using listwise deletion across all analyses. All variables were checked for normality (skewness within ± 1 and kurtosis within ± 3). Six variables were skewed and/or kurtotic: CB_self (skew = -1.78; kurtosis = 3.52),

[3] This included four participants, all lesbian women, who were removed for expressing confusion over how to respond to items asking about "most men of your same sexual orientation". These women indicated that their sexual orientation was lesbian, which men could not be.

CA_attr_self (skew = -1.07; kurtosis = .54); CA_smart_self (skew = -2.29; kurtosis = 6.73); CA_norm_self (skew = -1.16); kurtosis = 1.27); CI_self (skew = -1.45; kurtosis = 1.92); and CA_smart_peer (skew = -1.14; kurtosis = 1.11).This is unsurprising and in line with hypotheses that young adults privately strongly endorse positive consent attitudes. Several studies suggest ANOVAs are robust to moderate violations of normality (Glass et al., 1972; Lix et al., 1996; Knief & Forstmeier, 2021) and so I continued with my planned analyses.

Due to the number of planned analyses, I used a corrected alpha level, using the Holm-Bonferroni method (Holm, 1979), to reduce family-wise error rates.

First, I assessed if sexual experience, number of sexual partners, or length of sexual activity differed by gender or sexual orientation. They did not (all $p > .05$) and so I entered the three variables as covariates within all analyses.

Next, I submitted all outcome variables to a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with Order as the predictor variable, to determine if participant responses differed depending on whether they were first presented with questions about their own attitudes or others' attitudes. While the omnibus test suggested there may be differences on consent attitudes based on order, $F(1, 235) = 1.48$, $p = .04$, Wilk's lambda = .74, there were no significant effects for any individual attitude. I therefore did not include Order as a variable in any analyses.

Primary Analyses

For all hypotheses I submitted the outcome variables[4] to a 2 (gender) x 2 (sexual orientation) x 2 (self-peer) ANCOVA with gender and sexual orientation as between-subjects

[4] Due to an error during data collection, participant responses for "Most men of the same sexual orientation as myself believe verbally asking a sexual partner for consent prior to any sexual activity is: - Dominant" and "Most men of the same sexual orientation as myself believe verbally asking a sexual partner for consent prior to any sexual activity is: - Submissive" were not collected.

predictor variables and self-peer perceptions as the within-subjects variables, controlling for sexual experience, number of sexual partners, and length of sexual activity. Self-peer – or, for some hypotheses, self-partner – refers to the comparison of personal attitudes held by participants and their predictions of their peers' (or those of people of the gender they primarily date, i.e. potential partners') attitudes. The self-peer gap refers to a discrepancy between personal attitudes and predictions of peer attitudes.

In order to investigate the exploratory questions of group differences by gender and sexual orientation, I followed each mixed ANCOVA with a pair of simple effects of analysis within gender and within sexual orientation.

All analyses examining for grouping differences between sexual orientations were treated as exploratory. Notably, sample sizes for gay men (n = 32) were approximately half of those for lesbian women (n = 59), heterosexual men (n = 63), and heterosexual women (n = 66). While ANCOVAs can be robust to unequal sample sizes, any analyses involving comparisons with gay men ought to be considered with caution.

Lastly, as a deeper exploration of the interaction between gender and sexual orientation, I resubmitted each variable an ANCOVA with an Identity predictor variable that divided the sample into each gender by sexual identity group (i.e. heterosexual men, heterosexual women, gay men, and lesbian women). Doing so allowed me to discern the significance of the self-peer gap within each gender x sexual orientation subgroup. Results for Identity differences are included within the Tables describing the mixed ANCOVAs for each outcome variable.

For the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment to alpha levels, I grouped and adjusted all analyses (i.e. first mixed ANCOVA, simple effects, and second mixed ANCOVA by identity) by outcome

variables (e.g. if there were ten p-values produced within a set of three analyses per outcome variable, these ten p-values were adjusted together).

Consent Behavior:

Supporting Hypothesis 1, participants believed they were more likely to ask for consent than they predicted of their same sex peers (see Table 23). Exploratory Question 1 queried if there are differences by gender and sexual orientation in (mis)perceptions of peers asking for consent. Results indicated an interaction between self-peer beliefs and gender. Although men and women both believed their peers were less likely to ask for consent, men were more likely than women to believe they were less likely than their peers to ask for consent. However, there was no interaction between self-peer beliefs and sexual orientation. Further exploration by identity revealed a significant self-peer gap for heterosexual men, heterosexual women, gay men, and lesbian women, with gay men expressing the largest self-peer gap.

Consent Attitudes:

Next, I analyzed the data for discrepancies between personal attitudes about sexual consent and predicted peer attitudes. Overall, participants tended to predict that their peers believed asking for consent was *less* sexy (Table 24), attractive (Table 25), smart (Table 29), and normal (Table 30), and *more* weird (Table 27), tedious (Table 28), than they believed it is. There was no general self-peer gap for awkward (Table 26).

Table 23

Self-Peer Consent Behavior by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Peer		$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Peer	6.05	1.25	4.8	1.52	44.89	< .001*	.174
Self v. Peer*Gender					40.10	< .001*	.158
Self v. Peer *SO					.008	.93	.000
Self v. Peer *Gender*SO					3.22	.074	.015
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender				**Mean Difference (I – J)**			
Man	6.13	1.01	4.27	1.48	1.90	< .001*	.47
Woman	5.99	1.41	5.24	1.42	.75	< .001*	1.7
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	5.84	1.46	4.53	1.47	1.31	< .001*	.39
Gay/lesbian	6.35	0.79	5.23	1.51	1.33	< .001*	.30

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		p	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	1.73	6.25	1.08	4.51	1.44	< .001*	.35
Het Women	.90	5.44	1.67	4.56	1.51	< .001*	.13
Gay Men	2.07	5.88	0.83	3.81	1.47	< .001*	.28
Lesbian Women	.59	6.61	0.64	6.00	0.81	< .001*	.06

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 24

Self-Peer Consent Attitudes_Sexy by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Peer		*F*(1, 220)	*p*	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Peer	5.15	1.64	4.64	1.76	7.66	.006*	.04
Self v. Peer *Gender					19.73	< .001*	.09
Self v. Peer *SO					1.82	.178	.01
Self v. Peer *Gender*SO					.84	.360	.00
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender				**Mean Difference (I – J)**			
Man	4.78	1.68	3.71	1.66	.99	< .001*	.16
Woman	5.43	1.57	5.35	1.49	.08	.530	.00
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	5.04	1.62	4.38	1.78	.68	< .001*	.12
Gay/lesbian	5.31	1.68	5.01	1.68	.40	.01	.03

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		*p*	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	1.23	4.81	1.59	4.81	1.59	< .001*	.18
Het Women	.13	5.26	1.62	5.26	1.62	.488	.00
Gay Men	.76	4.72	1.85	4.72	1.85	.003*	.04
Lesbian Women	.04	5.63	1.50	5.63	1.50	.841	.00

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 25

Self-Peer Consent Attitudes_Attractive by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Peer		$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Peer	5.48	1.56	4.79	1.76	11.91	< .001*	.05
Self v. Peer *Gender					22.65	< .001*	.10
Self v. Peer *SO					1.16	.282	.01
Self v. Peer *Gender*SO					.001	.979	.00
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender				**Mean Difference (I – J)**			
Man	5.12	1.59	3.83	1.71	1.24	< .001*	.22
Woman	5.75	1.48	5.51	1.42	.24	.073	.02
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	5.36	1.60	4.52	1.78	.85	< .001*	.17
Gay/lesbian	5.65	1.49	5.16	1.67	.63	< .001*	.07

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		p	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	1.35	5.03	1.67	3.67	1.67	< .001*	.20
Het Women	.35	5.67	1.47	5.33	1.48	.06	.02
Gay Men	1.13	5.28	1.42	4.16	1.76	< .001*	.08
Lesbian Women	.12	5.85	1.49	5.71	1.34	.522	.00

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 26

Self-Peer Consent Attitudes_Awkward by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Peer		*F*(1, 220)	*p*	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Peer	3.56	1.81	4.14	1.81	4.56	.034	.021
Self v. Peer *Gender					10.82	< .001*	.048
Self v. Peer *SO					6.32	.013	.029
Self v. Peer *Gender*SO					.49	.484	.002
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender				**Mean Difference (I – J)**			
Man	3.83	1.77	4.86	1.69	-.92	< .001*	.13
Woman	3.36	1.81	3.59	1.71	-.23	.09	.01
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	3.60	1.78	4.42	1.79	-.83	< .001*	.16
Gay/lesbian	3.52	1.85	3.75	1.79	-.34	.058	.02

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		*p*	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	-1.25	3.73	1.72	4.98	1.62	< .001*	.18
Het Women	-.41	3.47	1.83	3.88	1.78	.026	.02
Gay Men	-.58	4.03	1.87	4.63	1.83	.028	.02
Lesbian Women	-.04	3.24	1.79	3.27	1.58	.850	.00

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 27

Self-Peer Consent Attitudes_Weird by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Peer		$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Peer	2.56	1.56	3.55	1.82	16.66	< .001*	.07
Self v. Peer *Gender					16.05	< .001*	.07
Self v. Peer *SO					7.49	.007*	.03
Self v. Peer *Gender*SO					3.26	.072	.02
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender				**Mean Difference (I – J)**			
Man	2.71	1.50	4.34	1.71	-1.44	< .001*	.23
Woman	2.46	1.61	2.95	1.57	-.51	< .001*	.05
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	2.74	1.59	4.00	1.87	-1.29	< .001*	.28
Gay/lesbian	2.32	1.49	2.90	1.54	-.66	< .001*	.06

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		p	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	-1.96	2.71	1.44	4.70	1.65	< .001*	.30
Het Women	-.61	2.76	1.74	3.33	1.83	.003*	.04
Gay Men	-.91	2.69	1.64	3.63	1.62	.002*	.04
Lesbian Women	-.40	2.12	1.39	2.53	1.38	.06	.02

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 28

Self-Peer Consent Attitudes_Tedious by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Peer		*F*(1, 220)	*p*	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Peer	2.54	1.61	3.58	1.85	17.62	< .001*	.08
Self v. Peer *Gender					11.10	.001*	.05
Self v. Peer *SO					1.36	.245	.02
Self v. Peer *Gender*SO					1.86	.174	.02
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender					**Mean Difference (I – J)**		
Man	2.86	1.65	4.40	1.78	-1.4	< .001*	.25
Woman	2.30	1.53	2.95	1.66	-.69	< .001*	.11
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	2.74	1.67	3.88	1.86	-1.17	< .001*	.27
Gay/lesbian	2.26	1.47	3.14	1.75	-.92	< .001*	.13

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		*p*	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	-1.68	2.97	1.63	4.67	1.77	< .001*	.27
Het Women	-.66	2.52	1.70	3.14	1.64	< .001*	.05
Gay Men	-1.14	2.66	1.70	3.88	1.70	< .001*	.08
Lesbian Women	-.71	2.05	1.29	2.75	1.67	< .001*	.06

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 29

Self-Peer Consent Attitudes_Smart by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Peer		$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Peer	6.32	1.07	5.69	1.37	25.40	< .001*	.103
Self v. Peer *Gender					35.28	< .001*	.142
Self v. Peer *SO					.000	1.0	.000
Self v. Peer *Gender*SO					.01	.911	.00
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender				**Mean Difference (I – J)**			
Man	6.26	1.12	5.03	1.53	1.20	< .001*	.29
Woman	6.38	1.07	6.18	.99	.21	.043	.02
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	6.23	1.22	5.55	1.47	.71	< .001*	.18
Gay/lesbian	6.47	0.86	5.89	1.21	.71	< .001*	.13

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		p	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	1.21	6.21	1.22	4.97	1.61	< .001*	.24
Het Women	.20	6.26	1.23	6.11	1.07	.163	.01
Gay Men	1.19	6.38	0.91	5.16	1.39	< .001*	.13
Lesbian Women	.22	6.51	0.84	6.27	0.89	.145	.01

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 30

Self-Peer Consent Attitudes_Normal by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Peer		*F*(1, 220)	*p*	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Peer	5.82	1.26	5.16	1.55	11.49	< .001*	.051
Self v. Peer *Gender					18.29	< .001*	.079
Self v. Peer *SO					1.49	.223	.007
Self v. Peer *Gender*SO					2.09	.150	.01
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender					**Mean Difference (I – J)**		
Man	5.89	1.40	4.47	1.64	1.03	< .001*	.24
Woman	6.00	1.12	5.69	1.25	.32	.002*	.04
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	5.64	1.38	4.88	1.66	.78	< .001*	.22
Gay/lesbian	6.08	1.01	5.58	1.28	.58	< .001*	.09

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		*p*	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	1.25	5.46	1.52	4.21	1.68	< .001*	.26
Het Women	.30	5.80	1.22	5.52	1.38	.037	.02
Gay Men	.81	5.84	1.08	5.00	1.46	< .001*	.07
Lesbian Women	.34	6.22	0.97	5.88	1.07	.024	.02

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Hypothesis 2a and 2b predicted that men and women will predict same-sex peers hold beliefs that asking for consent is less masculine/feminine than they believe themselves, while Exploratory Question 2 queried if there are differences by sexual orientation in underestimations of peer gendered attitudes about consent. Supporting Hypothesis 2a, men predicted that same-sex peers believe asking for consent is less masculine than they believed themselves (Table 31). Further exploration by Identity revealed this was only true for heterosexual men. Additionally,

heterosexual men perceived a self-peer gap for femininity, believing peers believe asking for consent is more feminine than they believe it is. Contrary to Hypothesis 2b, women did not predict their same sex peers believe verbally asking for consent is less feminine than they believed themselves (Table 32), and this was true for both heterosexual and lesbian women. Additionally, there were no group differences by gender or sexual orientation for Assertive or Passive.

Digging further into effects within gender and sexual orientation, results suggested that overall men and women both tended to perceive a self-partner gap, as did heterosexual and gay/lesbian participants, with one exception. For awkward, there were no effects within men, nor were there effects within gay/lesbian participants. Indeed, only heterosexual women perceived a self-partner gap for awkward, indicating women believe men think asking for consent is more awkward than men actually believe (Table 35). Further examining the self-partner gaps by Identity, it appears the effects within gender and sexual orientation may be driven primarily by heterosexual women, who perceive a larger self-partner gap than heterosexual men and lesbian women on all self-partner comparisons.

Hypotheses 3 predicted that compared to heterosexual women, heterosexual men would be more likely to predict their peers hold more negative attitudes about consent than they themselves hold (i.e. the self-perceived other gap will be larger for men than women). Supporting Hypothesis 3, overall, heterosexual men were more likely to predict their peers would hold more negative attitudes than heterosexual women. Specifically, men perceived a self-peer gap for sexy (Table 24), attractive (Table 25), awkward (Table 26), smart (29), and normal (Table 30), whereas women did not. Additionally, both heterosexual men and women perceived a self-other gap for weird (Table 27) and tedious (Table 28), however, the self-other gap was

Table 31

Self-Peer Consent Attitudes_Masculinity by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Peer		$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Peer	4.06	1.63	3.71	1.61	.02	.889	.000
Self v. Peer*Gender					3.31	.07	.015
Self v. Peer *SO					.443	.51	.002
Self v. Peer *Gender*SO					.27	.603	.001
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender				**Mean Difference (I – J)**			
Man	4.39	1.54	3.82	1.57	.66	<.001*	.5
Woman	3.81	1.66	3.62	1.64	.28	.22	.01
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	4.19	1.70	3.75	1.63	.15	.001*	.05
Gay/lesbian	3.88	1.52	3.65	1.59	.01	.08	.01

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		p	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	.68	4.41	1.61	3.76	1.59	< .001*	.06
Het Women	.18	3.97	1.77	3.74	1.68	.336	.00
Gay Men	.43	4.34	1.41	3.94	1.54	.111	.01
Lesbian Women	.15	3.63	1.53	3.49	1.61	.44	.00

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 32

Self-Peer Consent Attitudes_Femininity by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Peer		*F*(1, 220)	*p*	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Peer	4.16	1.55	4.37	1.51	.53	.455	.00
Self v. Peer *Gender					1.05	.308	.01
Self v. Peer *SO					1.55	.214	.01
Self v. Peer *Gender*SO					1.20	.274	.01
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender					**Mean Difference (I – J)**		
Man	4.09	1.47	4.47	1.41	-.29	.056	.02
Woman	4.21	1.61	4.29	1.58	-.09	.477	.00
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	4.16	1.62	4.46	1.47	-.31	.011	.03
Gay/lesbian	4.16	1.45	4.24	1.55	-.07	.658	.00

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		*p*	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	-.52	3.98	1.57	4.51	1.35	.003*	.04
Het Women	-.10	4.32	1.67	4.41	1.59	.554	.00
Gay Men	-.06	4.31	1.26	4.41	1.54	.807	.00
Lesbian Women	-.08	4.08	1.56	4.15	1.56	.679	.00

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

larger for men than for women. Self-peer interactions with gender and sexual orientation, as well as effects within Identity are included in each table.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that participants will believe that potential partners hold more negative attitudes about consent than they themselves hold. Supporting Hypothesis 4, participants tended to report that people of the gender they typically date believed asking for consent was *less* sexy (Table 33), attractive (Table 34), smart (Table 38), and normal (Table 39),

and *more* weird (Table 36) and tedious (Table 37). There was no main effect for awkward (Table 35).

Consent Interest:

Hypothesis 5 predicted that participants will believe same-sex peers and other-sex peers are less interested in being verbally asked for consent than they themselves are. Supporting Hypothesis 5, participants believed same-sex peers were less interested in being asked for consent than they were themselves (see Table 40). Participants also believed other-sex peers were less interested in being asked for consent than they were themselves (note that for gay/lesbian participants same-sex peers are also potential partners) (see Table 41). Further examining the self-peer gap by Identity in response to Exploratory Question 3, gay men perceived a self-peer gap in consent interest, while lesbian women did not.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that men, compared to women, will be more likely to underestimate peer interest in being asked for consent. Supporting Hypothesis 6, men predicted peers were less interested in being asked for consent, whereas women did not perceive a self-peer gap for interest in being asked for consent (see Table 40).

Table 33

Self-Partner Consent Attitudes_Sexy by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Partner		$F(1, 213)$	p	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Partner	5.15	1.64	4.29	1.88	10.85	.001*	.05
Self v. Partner *Gender					2.34	.13	.01
Self v. Partner *SO					15.41	< .001*	.07
Self v. Partner *Gender*SO					26.30	< .001*	.11
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender					**Mean Difference (I – J)**		
Man	4.78	1.68	4.17	1.63	.69	< .001*	.07
Woman	5.43	1.57	4.38	2.05	.99	< .001*	.21
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	5.04	1.62	3.78	1.85	1.24	< .001*	.30
Gay/lesbian	5.32	1.67	5.02	1.67	.42	.01*	.03

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		p	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	.54	4.81	1.59	4.27	1.61	.004*	.04
Het Women	1.94	5.26	1.62	3.30	1.95	< .001*	.34
Gay Men	.80	4.72	1.85	3.97	1.67	.003*	.04
Lesbian Women	.04	5.63	1.50	5.58	1.39	.841	.00

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 34

Self-Partner Consent Attitudes_Attractive by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Partner		$F(1, 213)$	p	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Partner	5.48	1.57	4.43	1.86	20.27	< .001*	.09
Self v. Partner *Gender					2.10	.149	.01
Self v. Partner *SO					12.84	< .001*	.06
Self v. Partner *Gender*SO					39.66	< .001*	.16
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender					**Mean Difference (I – J)**		
Man	5.11	1.59	4.35	1.63	.87	< .001*	.11
Woman	5.75	1.48	4.50	2.03	1.90	< .001*	.26
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	5.36	1.60	3.91	1.82	1.42	< .001*	.34
Gay/lesbian	5.65	1.49	5.16	1.67	.64	< .001*	.06

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		p	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	.57	5.03	1.67	4.44	1.56	.003*	.04
Het Women	2.27	5.67	1.47	3.41	1.92	< .001*	.40
Gay Men	1.17	5.28	1.42	4.16	1.76	< .001*	.08
Lesbian Women	.11	5.85	1.49	5.71	1.34	.57	.00

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 35

Self-Partner Consent Attitudes_Awkward by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Partner		$F(1, 213)$	p	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Partner	3.56	1.81	4.25	1.85	5.32	.022	.02
Self v. Partner *Gender					3.26	.073	.02
Self v. Partner *SO					7.77	.006*	.04
Self v. Partner *Gender*SO					18.87	< .001*	.08
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender					**Mean Difference (I – J)**		
Man	3.83	1.77	4.20	1.75	-.44	.017	.03
Woman	3.36	1.81	4.28	1.94	-.87	< .001*	.14
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	3.60	1.78	4.60	1.83	-.98	< .001*	.18
Gay/lesbian	3.52	1.85	3.75	1.79	-.33	.076	.02

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		p	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	-.25	3.73	1.72	3.98	1.68	.23	.01
Het Women	-1.71	3.47	1.83	5.18	1.78	< .001*	.24
Gay Men	-.63	4.03	1.87	4.63	1.83	.04	.02
Lesbian Women	-.03	3.24	1.79	3.27	1.58	.90	.00

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 36

Self-Partner Consent Attitudes_Weird by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Partner		*F*(1, 213)	*p*	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Partner	2.56	1.56	3.62	1.88	14.25	< .001*	.06
Self v. Partner *Gender					2.79	.096	.01
Self v. Partner *SO					9.00	.003*	.04
Self v. Partner *Gender*SO					14.89	< .001*	.07
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender					**Mean Difference (I – J)**		
Man	2.71	1.50	3.51	1.61	-.82	< .001*	.09
Woman	2.46	1.61	3.71	2.06	-1.22	< .001*	.24
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	2.74	1.59	4.12	1.93	-1.38	< .001*	.29
Gay/lesbian	2.32	1.50	2.91	1.55	-.67	< .001*	.06

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		*p*	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	-.72	2.71	1.44	3.44	1.61	< .001*	.05
Het Women	-2.03	2.76	1.74	4.77	1.99	< .001*	.31
Gay Men	-.93	2.69	1.64	3.63	1.62	.002*	.04
Lesbian Women	-.41	2.12	1.39	2.53	1.38	.063	.02

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 37

Self-Partner Consent Attitudes_Tedious by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Partner		$F(1, 213)$	π	η_π^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Partner	2.54	1.61	3.67	1.90	20.66	< .001*	.09
Self v. Partner *Gender					5.13	.022	.02
Self v. Partner *SO					2.46	.119	.01
Self v. Partner *Gender*SO					16.17	< .001*	.07
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender					**Mean Difference (I – J)**		
Man	2.86	1.65	3.63	1.64	-.81	< .001*	.08
Woman	2.30	1.53	3.70	2.09	-1.41	< .001*	.26
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	2.74	1.67	4.05	1.92	-1.31	< .001*	.25
Gay/lesbian	2.26	1.47	3.14	1.75	-.91	< .001*	.09

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		*p*	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	-.50	2.97	1.63	3.51	1.61	.027	.02
Het Women	-2.12	2.52	1.70	4.56	2.07	< .001*	.30
Gay Men	-1.13	2.66	1.70	3.88	1.70	< .001*	.06
Lesbian Women	-.70	2.05	1.29	2.75	1.67	.003*	.04

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 38

Self-Partner Consent Attitudes_Smart by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Partner		*F*(1, 213)	*p*	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Partner	6.33	1.09	5.39	1.59	31.40	< .001*	.13
Self v. Partner *Gender					.63	.43	.00
Self v. Partner *SO					5.93	.016*	.03
Self v. Partner *Gender*SO					19.29	< .001*	.08
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender					**Mean Difference (I – J)**		
Man	6.26	1.12	5.27	1.53	1.03	< .001*	.18
Woman	6.38	1.07	5.48	1.62	.88	< .001*	.19
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	6.23	1.22	5.05	1.73	1.19	< .001*	.32
Gay/lesbian	6.46	0.86	5.88	1.21	.72	< .001*	.10

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		*P*	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	.84	6.21	1.22	5.33	1.61	< .001*	.1
Het Women	1.54	6.26	1.23	4.77	1.80	< .001*	.28
Gay Men	1.22	6.38	0.91	5.16	1.39	< .001*	.11
Lesbian Women	.21	6.51	0.84	6.27	0.89	.23	.01

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 39

Self-Partner Consent Attitudes_Normal by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Partner		$F(1, 213)$	p	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Partner	5.82	1.26	4.97	1.67	7.84	.006*	.04
Self v. Partner *Gender					1.12	.29	.01
Self v. Partner *SO					5.25	.023	.02
Self v. Partner *Gender*SO					12.47	< .001*	.06
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender					**Mean Difference (I – J)**		
Man	5.59	1.40	4.92	1.67	.73	< .001*	.09
Woman	6.00	1.12	5.02	1.68	.94	< .001*	.20
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	5.64	1.38	4.55	1.79	1.07	< .001*	.25
Gay/lesbian	6.09	1.02	5.57	1.28	.60	< .001*	.06

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		p	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	.60	5.46	1.52	4.87	1.77	.001*	.05
Het Women	1.54	5.80	1.22	4.24	1.75	< .001*	.25
Gay Men	.85	5.84	1.08	5.00	1.46	.001*	.05
Lesbian Women	.34	6.22	0.97	5.88	1.07	.07	.02

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 40

Self- Same Sex Peer Consent Interest by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Peer		*F*(1, 220)	*p*	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Peer	5.80	1.43	5.11	1.64	12.15	< .001*	.054
Self v. Peer *Gender					55.37	< .001*	.21
Self v. Peer *SO					4.22	.04	.02
Self v. Peer *Gender*SO					.01	.91	.00
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender					**Mean Difference (I – J)**		
Man	5.42	1.58	4.00	1.58	1.48	< .001*	.35
Woman	6.10	1.23	5.96	1.07	1.5	.191	.01
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	5.60	1.50	4.99	1.70	.63	< .001*	.13
Gay/lesbian	6.09	1.27	5.29	1.53	.99	< .001*	.20

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		*p*	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	1.31	5.24	1.66	3.94	1.63	< .001*	.24
Het Women	-.05	5.95	1.25	6.00	1.02	.776	.00
Gay Men	1.65	5.78	1.36	4.13	1.50	< .001*	.20
Lesbian Women	.34	6.25	1.20	5.92	1.13	.038	.02

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 41

Self- Other Sex Peer Consent Interest by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Peer		*F*(1, 220)	*p*	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Other Sex Peer	5.80	1.42	4.55	1.64	22.17	< .001*	.094
Self v. Other Sex Peer *Gender					121.57	< .001*	.363
Self v. Other Sex Peer *SO					3.36	.068	.016
Self v. Other Sex Peer *Gender*SO					.473	.492	.002
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender					**Mean Difference (I – J)**		
Man	5.42	1.58	5.53	1.30	-.01	.929	.93
Woman	6.10	1.23	3.82	1.49	2.27	< .001*	< .001
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	5.60	1.50	4.64	1.63	.94	< .001*	.20
Gay/lesbian	6.09	1.27	4.45	1.66	1.32	< .001*	.24

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		*p*	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	-.27	5.24	1.66	5.51	1.31	.137	.01
Het Women	2.16	5.95	1.25	3.80	1.48	< .001*	.40
Gay Men	.25	5.78	1.36	5.56	1.32	.346	.00
Lesbian Women	2.39	6.25	1.20	3.85	1.51	< .001*	.43

*Indicates significance after Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 42

Self-Partner Consent Interest by Gender and Sexual Orientation (SO)

Variable	Self		Partner		$F(1, 220)$	p	η_p^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Self v. Partner	5.80	1.43	4.90	1.62	25.36	< .001*	.11
Self v. Partner *Gender					7.22	.008*	.03
Self v. Partner *SO					.24	.62	.00
Self v. Partner *Gender*SO					111.47	< .001*	.34
Pairwise Comparisons by Gender					**Mean Difference (I – J)**		
Man	5.42	1.58	5.04	1.52	.73	< .001*	.11
Woman	6.10	1.23	4.80	1.69	1.23	< .001*	.35
Pairwise Comparisons by SO							
Heterosexual	5.60	1.50	4.64	1.63	.94	< .001*	.24
Gay/lesbian	6.10	1.27	5.29	1.52	1.02	< .001*	.20

Group	(I – J)	Self		Peer		p	η_p^2
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*		
Het Men	-.28	5.24	1.66	5.51	1.31	.09	.02
Het Women	2.15	5.95	1.25	3.80	1.48	< .001*	.46
Gay Men	1.74	5.78	1.36	4.13	1.50	< .001*	.21
Lesbian Women	.31	6.25	1.20	5.92	1.13	.069	.02

Hypothesis 7 predicted that heterosexual women, compared to heterosexual men, will be more likely to underestimate partner interest in being asked for consent. In exploration of Hypothesis 7 I created two new variables: Women's Interest and Men's Interest. Women's Interest included women's personal interest in being asked for consent and men's perceptions of women's interest in being asked for consent. Men's Interest included men's personal interest in being asked for consent and women's perceptions of men's interest in being asked for consent. I then submitted Women's Interest and Men's Interest to independent samples t-tests with Gender

as the predictor, limited to heterosexual participants. In support of Hypothesis 7, there were significant gender differences in Men's Interest, but not Women's Interest (see Table 42). Heterosexual men (M = 5.24, SD = 1.66) were more interested in being asked for consent than women predicted (M = 3.80, SD = 1.48), $t(127) = 5.18$, $p < .001$. Meanwhile heterosexual men's predictions of women's interest in being asked for consent (M = 5.51, SD = 1.31) were similar to women's actual interest (M = 5.95, SD = 1.25), $t(127) = -1.99$, $p = .05$.

Discussion

Results from Study 2 provide robust support for the hypothesis that young adults experience pluralistic ignorance surrounding sexual consent. Overall, participants believed same-sex peers are less likely to ask for sexual consent, hold more negative attitudes about consent, and are less interested in being asked for consent than they are themselves. Additionally, participants believed people of the gender they typically date (i.e. prospective partners) hold more negative attitudes about consent than they do themselves. This was true for men and women, although less so lesbian women specifically.

Trends suggested that heterosexual women were most likely to perceive a self-partner gap in consent attitudes. This may be due to the heterosexual initiator/gatekeeper sexual script. If heterosexual women are most often in the position of receiving sexual advances – rather than initiating – they are also more likely to take note of when they are not asked for consent. If being asked for consent is indeed more salient for heterosexual women, then they may assume heterosexual men do not ask for consent due to negative attitudes. However, results suggest that heterosexual men do not avoiding asking for consent due to their own attitudes, but rather their predictions of heterosexual women's negative attitudes.

Heterosexual men – but not gay men – predicted their same-sex peers believe asking for consent is less masculine and more feminine than they believe it is. However, this effect did not extend to heterosexual or lesbian women, who did not misperceive their same-sex peers' attitudes about femininity or masculinity of asking for consent. This suggests that for heterosexual men, concerns of demonstrating gender may be especially salient through sexual consent communication. I return to this in the general discussion.

Lastly, heterosexual women significantly underestimated men's interest in being asked for consent, whereas men accurately estimated women's interest in being asked. Women's misperceptions of men's interest may in part account for heterosexual women being less likely to ask for sexual consent, compared to heterosexual men.

In Study 3 I further examine the potential mismatch between people's predictions of partners attitudes and partners' actual attitudes. Results from Studies 1 and 2 suggest men and women, particularly heterosexual men and women, are concerned their partners may view them negatively if they verbally ask for consent. Study 3 examines this potential misperception. Additionally, while Study 3 directly addresses the role of the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script in predicting consent behaviors.

Study 3

The initiator/gatekeeper sexual script has been described in an abundance of consent literature by researchers and indicated in narrative responses from young adults. This script is hypothesized as a barrier to affirmative consent (Hoover & Johnson, 2015), due to the specific gender roles it projects for men and women. Consent researchers believe that breaking from the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script risks portraying men as insufficiently masculine and women as insufficiently feminine. However, this hypothesis has yet to be tested. Furthermore, to date no measure directly assesses endorsement of this script.

Furthermore, although young adults may perceive that breaking from the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script influences their appearance of masculinity or femininity, this may be a misperception. Consistent with the results from Study 2, it is possible that partners are not as concerned with their partner's consent behavior as individuals may think.

Because this study was specific to a traditionally heterosexual script, participation was limited to heterosexual men and women. Participants were asked to respond to a measure assessing their endorsement of the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script, which was then used to predict sexual consent behaviors. I predicted that this association would be mediated by perceptions that asking for consent decreases a person's projected masculinity or femininity. Additionally, this study assessed if potential partners agree that asking for consent decreases one's masculinity/femininity.

Thus, Study 3 has four overarching goals:

1. Examine the rate of endorsement of the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script among young adults.
2. Test the hypothesis that endorsement of the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script negatively predicts affirmative consent.
3. Test the hypothesis that endorsement of the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script negatively predicts perceptions of one's own masculinity or femininity.
4. Explore if young adults misperceive partners' perceptions of being asked for consent.

In pursuit of addressing the above goals, Study 3 explored the following hypotheses and exploratory questions:

- Hypothesis 1: Heterosexual men and women high in endorsement of the traditional initiator/gatekeeper sexual script will be less likely to ask for affirmative consent from a partner.
- Hypothesis 2a: For heterosexual men, the relationship between initiator/gatekeeper sexual scripts and affirmative consent will be mediated by beliefs that they would be perceived as less masculine if they verbally asked for consent.
- Hypothesis 2b: For heterosexual women, the relationship between initiator/gatekeeper sexual scripts and affirmative consent will be mediated by beliefs that they would be perceived as less feminine if they verbally asked for consent.
- Hypothesis 3: Heterosexual men and women will underestimate how masculine/feminine a potential partner would perceive them as if they verbally asked for sexual consent.

- Exploratory Question: Will men and women differ in their underestimations of how masculine/feminine a potential partner would perceive them as if they verbally asked for sexual consent?

Methods

Participants

Participants included cisgender heterosexual women and men between the ages of 18 and 25, United States citizens, living in the United States. Because participants were asked to reflect on hypothetical partners, participation was not restricted by relationship status, nor sexual activity.

For the mediation analysis, a Monte Carlo power analysis with 80% power, 10000 replications, 20000 draws per rep, looking for a small-medium effect size (r = 0.3 correlations between variables) suggested a sample size of 320, or 160 per group. To account for attrition, I oversampled by five per group, resulting in a total sample of 330 participants (Sample A). Participants were recruited using the online crowdsourcing platform Prolific (www.prolific.co). Participants were paid $0.33 for this study, which took approximately 3 minutes to complete.

For the comparison of self-gendered consent perceptions to partner-gendered consent perceptions, an additional sample (Sample B) was collected. It may be disadvantageous to ask participants both about how they feel a partner would view them and how they would view a partner on the same criteria, because realizing a lack of concern with partner behavior may call into question concerns about how a partner would view them. Therefore, I collected a second sample to assess perceptions of partner only. A power analysis using G*Power for a two-way ANOVA with a small-medium effect size (f = .18) and 80% power recommended a sample size of 245 total participants, or 62 people per group. Half of these participants were taken from

Sample A (i.e. the first 62 men and 62 women). The remaining 62 men and 62 women were separately recruited via Prolific. The same participation criteria was applied. However, because participation only took two minutes (as they received fewer questions), participants in Sample B were paid $0.22. Sample A demographics can be seen in Table 43 and Sample B Demographics can be seen in Table 44.

Table 43

Study 3 Sample A Participant Demographics

Variable	*n* (%)
Identity	
Heterosexual Man	163 (49.7%)
Heterosexual Woman	165 (50.3%)
Age	*M* = 22.23 (*SD* = 1.98)
Race/Ethnicity (select all that apply)	
American Indian or Native Alaskan	2 (.6%)
Asian	28 (23.8%)
Black or African American	36 (11%)
Middle Eastern or North African	7 (2.1%)
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	5 (1.5%)
White or Caucasian	214 (65.2%)
Other	10 (3%)
Prefer not to say	5 (1.5%)
Are you Latino/Latiné/Hispanic?	
Yes	51 (15.5%)
No	277 (84.5%)
Religion	
Judaism	12 (3.7%)
Christianity	148 (45.1%)
Islam	7 (2.1%)
Buddhism	4 (1.2%)
Hinduism	9 (2.7%)
Chinese Folk	2 (.6%)
Atheism	36 (11%)
Agnosticism	54 (16.5%)
None	46 (14%)
Other	10 (3%)
How religious would you describe yourself?	
Not at all religious	132 (40.2%)
Slightly religious	99 (30.2%)
Moderately religious	67 (20.4%)

Table 43 (Continued)

Very religious	23 (7%)
Extremely religious	7 (2.1%)
Number of Sexual Partners	*M* = 4.57 (*SD* = 2.0)
Years of Sexual Activity	*M* = 3.15 (*SD* = 3.0)
Sexual Experience	
Not at all experienced	62 (18.9%)
Barely experienced	47 (14.3%)
Somewhat experienced	92 (28%)
Moderately experienced	81 (24.7%)
Very experienced	46 (14%)

Table 44

Study 3 Sample B Participant Demographics

Variable	*n* (%)
Identity	
Heterosexual Man	123 (49.8%)
Heterosexual Woman	124 (50.2%)
Age	*M* = 22.25 (*SD* = 1.98)
Race/Ethnicity (select all that apply)	
American Indian or Native Alaskan	3 (1.2%)
Asian	67 (27.1%)
Black or African American	28 (11.3%)
Middle Eastern or North African	5 (2.0%)
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0 (0.0%)
White or Caucasian	152 (61.5%)
Other	8 (3.2%)
Prefer not to say	5 (2.0%)
Are you Latino/Latiné/Hispanic?	
Yes	45 (18.2%)
No	199 (80.6%)
Prefer not to say	3 (1.2%)
Religion	
Judaism	8 (3.2%)
Christianity	101 (40.9%)
Islam	4 (1.6%)
Buddhism	5 (2.0%)
Hinduism	5 (2.0%)
Chinese Folk	2 (0.8%)
Atheism	22 (8.9%)
Agnosticism	50 (20.2%)
None	48 (19.4%)
Other	2 (0.8%)

Table 44 (Continued)

How religious would you describe yourself?	
Not at all religious	106 (42.9%)
Slightly religious	77 (31.2%)
Moderately religious	41 (16.6%)
Very religious	20 (8.1%)
Extremely religious	3 (1.2%)

Pilot Testing

While there are many scales that address stereotypes and attitudes regarding heterosexual sexual interactions, currently no existing scale clearly addresses the traditional heterosexual sexual script that dictates men are sexual initiators and women are sexual gatekeepers. Thus, in preparation for Study 3 I developed a scale measuring men's and women's endorsement of the traditional Initiator/Gatekeeper Sexual Script (IGSS) that within heterosexual relationships men are responsible for initiating sex while women are responsible for deciding when sex occurs. I piloted this measure within a sample of 72 undergraduate students using the USF SONA pool (60% women; 72% heterosexual; 61% White or Caucasian, M_{age} = 20.90). Participation was not restricted by gender, sexual orientation, or age (see Table 1 for full participant demographics). Participants responded to 14 items using a 7-point Likert-type scale. These items were based upon items across several related measures of heterosexual interactions and from participant language reported in qualitative studies addressing heterosexual sexual scripts. Participants were instructed: *There are a lot of beliefs about how sex and relationships work for men and women within heterosexual relationships. We want to know what you think. Please rate how much YOU agree with the following statements. You do not need to be heterosexual or have sexual experience to give your opinion.*

The recommendations for subject to item ratios in exploratory factor analyses vary greatly, ranging from 4:1 (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006) to 20:1 (Costello & Osborne, 2005).

In an effort to collect data as quickly as possible and bearing in mind recent low SONA participation rates, I sought a 5:1 ratio of cases to free parameters.

To assess convergent validity, I also collected data for two additional measures. First, I included the Heterosexual Sexual Script Scale (HSS; Seabrook et al., 2016). HSS is a 22-item measure that addresses several aspects of the heterosexual sexual script across four factors (although notably not the gatekeeper/initiator dynamic). I utilized one item from HSS in the IGSS and thus excluded this item from all analyses. Second, I included Traditional Sexual Attitudes (TSA; Keifer & Sanchez, 2007), which addresses the belief that men should be agentic and women should be passive during sexual activity. The latter is quite similar conceptually to the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script, although not exactly the same as it moreso addresses who directs sexual activities, not who initiates and stops sex; and so while I expected a high correlation between Traditional Sexual Attitudes and the new sexual script scale, I did not expect a correlation above r = .70. I also measured a single-item self-report of sexual experience (i.e. *How sexually experienced would you say you are? (1) Not at all experienced… (5)Very experienced*) to assess whether endorsement of this sexual script is merely a reflection of low sexual experience (thereby relying on cultural scripts, rather than actual experience).

First, I submitted all items to the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy test, which indicated that the data were well-suited for factor analysis (KMO = 0.83). I also examined bivariate correlations between items to determine redundancy; no item pairs had bivariate correlations greater than .80.

Next, I submitted all items to an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using principal axis factoring and listwise deletion. Initial results indicated a four-factor solution using the eigenvalue ≥ 1 method; however, the initial scree test (Cattell, 1966) indicated a single factor solution (see

Figure 1). Upon examination of the factors and loadings and culling items that either loaded below 0.4 or cross-loaded onto other factors (i.e. loaded positively onto another factor at least half as strongly as it loaded onto the first factor), I identified one of the factors as most clearly representing the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script, with seven retained items. Three of the remaining items represented endorsement of men's initiator roles and four represented endorsement of women's gatekeeper roles. For parity between items about men and items about women, I additionally culled one item about women that approached my cross-loading criteria and did not thematically fit well the other retained items (Item #8). Factor loadings for the final six items were above 0.4 and communalities were above 0.2. I resubmitted the retained six items to a secondary EFA to ensure a clean single factor solution. See Table 47 for item loadings and communalities for all 14 items (retained items in bold), Table 48 for the item loadings and communalities from the secondary EFA on the retained six items, Figure 1 for scree plot on the original 14 items, Figure 2 for the scree plot for the final six items, and Table 49 for item-level descriptive statistics. Internal consistency reliability was acceptable (a = .831) and no items suppressed Cronbach's alpha. I labeled this final six-item measure Initiator/Gatekeeper Sexual Script (IGSS) (M = 3.00, SD = 1.16). IGSS met the standards for normality (skewness within ± 1 and kurtosis within ± 3) (see Table 49).

Next, I correlated IGSS with HSS and TSA. As expected, IGSS correlated strongly positively (but not above .7) with HSS (r = .69) and moderately positively with TSA (r = .56), demonstrating strong convergent validity. Additionally, IGSS and sexual experience were not correlated, r = .18, p = .13.

Lastly, as an exploratory analysis, I compared the IGSS scores of heterosexual (n = 52) and bisexual (n = 16) participants (there were not enough lesbian/gay or asexual participants to

include them in this analysis). Unsurprisingly, bisexual individuals scored significantly lower on IGSS (M = 2.45, SD = 1.44) than heterosexual individuals (M = 3.12, SD = 1.04), $t(66) = 2.07$, $p = .04$. Additionally, women (M = 2.75, SD = 1.19) scored significantly lower on IGSS than men (M = 3.51, SD = .933), $t(66) = 2.67$, $p = .01$. Although underpowered, this analysis provides some preliminary insight into the variance of endorsement of the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script by sexual orientation, masculinity, and femininity.

Secondary Analysis. I resubmitted the final six items to an EFA using the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012) in R (R Core Team, 2019), restricted to a single factor. As can be seen in Table 45, fit indices (i.e. CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR) indicated poor fit for a single factor model. I next restricted the model to a two factor solution, which demonstrated superior fit. Due to this, I planned to submit the new data for IGSS to a confirmatory factor analysis in the primary study, to further explore the best fit of IGSS.

Table 45

Fit Indices of One Factor and Two Factor Models of IGSS Pilot Data

Model	χ^2	*df*	CFI	TLI	RMSEA [90% CI]	SRMR
One Factor	136.91	9	.95	.92	.21 [.18, .24]	.06
Two Factor	21.21	4	.99	.98	.12 [.07, .17]	.02

Table 46

Pilot Participant Demographics.

Variable	*n* (%)
Gender	
Women/female	43 (59.7%)
Man/male	26 (36.1%)
Nonbinary/third gender	2 (2.8%)
Are you transgender?	
Yes, I am transgender	0 (0%)
No, I am not transgender	71 (98.6%)
Age	*M* = 20.90 (*SD* = 3.94)
Sexual Orientation	
Heterosexual or straight	52 (72.2%)
Gay or lesbian	1 (1.4%)
Bisexual, pansexual, or plurisexual	16 (22.4%)
Asexual	1 (1.4%)
Other	1 (1.4%)
Race/Ethnicity	
White/ European American/ Caucasian	44 (61.1%)
Black or African American	13 (18.1%)
Asian	8 (11.1%)
Middle Eastern or North African	4 (5.6%)
Hispanic/Latina/o American/ Latinx American	
American Indian or Native Alaskan	2 (2.8%)
Biracial/Multiracial	6 (8.3%)
Are you Latino/Latine/Hispanic	
Yes, I am Latino'Latine/Hispanic	18 (25%)
No, I am not Latino'Latine/Hispanic	57 (72.2%)
Prefer not to answer	1 (1.4%)
How sexually experienced would you say you are?	*M* = 2.83 (*SD* = 1.45)
Not at all experienced	20 (27.8%)
Barely experienced	10 (13.9%)
Somewhat experienced	16 (22.2%)
Moderately experienced	14 (19.4%)
Very experienced	12 (16.7%)

Table 47

IGSS Item Loadings and Communalities for Original 14 Items.

Item	Pattern Coefficients				Communality
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	
1. Men should be the ones to initiate sexual contact	**0.649**	0.14	-0.121	0.176	**.486**
2. It's mostly up to men to get sex started	**0.738**	-0.253	-0.006	-0.302	**.700**
3. It's more natural for men to make the first move, sexually	**0.493**	-0.067	0.021	-0.313	**.346**
4. It's awkward if a woman is the one to initiate sex	0.568	0.443	-0.332	-0.155	.654
5. Women who initiate sex are too aggressive	0.655	0.513	-0.182	-0.024	.727
6. Women should wait for men to express interest in sex before expressing their own willingness	0.469	0.363	0.051	0.026	.355
7. Women show their interest in sex by going along with what the man is doing	0.576	0.108	0.339	0.13	.476
8. Women show their interest in sex by not stopping their partner's sexual advances	0.589	0.051	0.262	-0.039	.420
9. Men have to earn sex from women by wooing them (e.g. planning a nice date, paying for dinner, giving women special attention)	0.623	0.033	0.579	0.158	.750
10. Women should wait for men to prove themselves before having sex with them	0.28	0.016	0.108	0.268	.152
11. Slowing or stopping sex should mostly be up to women	0.646	-0.37	-0.298	0.372	.782
12. It is mostly up to women to decide when sex happens	**0.622**	-0.342	0.056	-0.319	**.608**
13. It is mostly up to women to decide if sex should slow down or stop	**0.774**	-0.271	-0.27	0.222	**.795**
14. It is up to women to keep things from moving too fast sexually	**0.67**	-0.129	-0.026	-0.128	**.482**

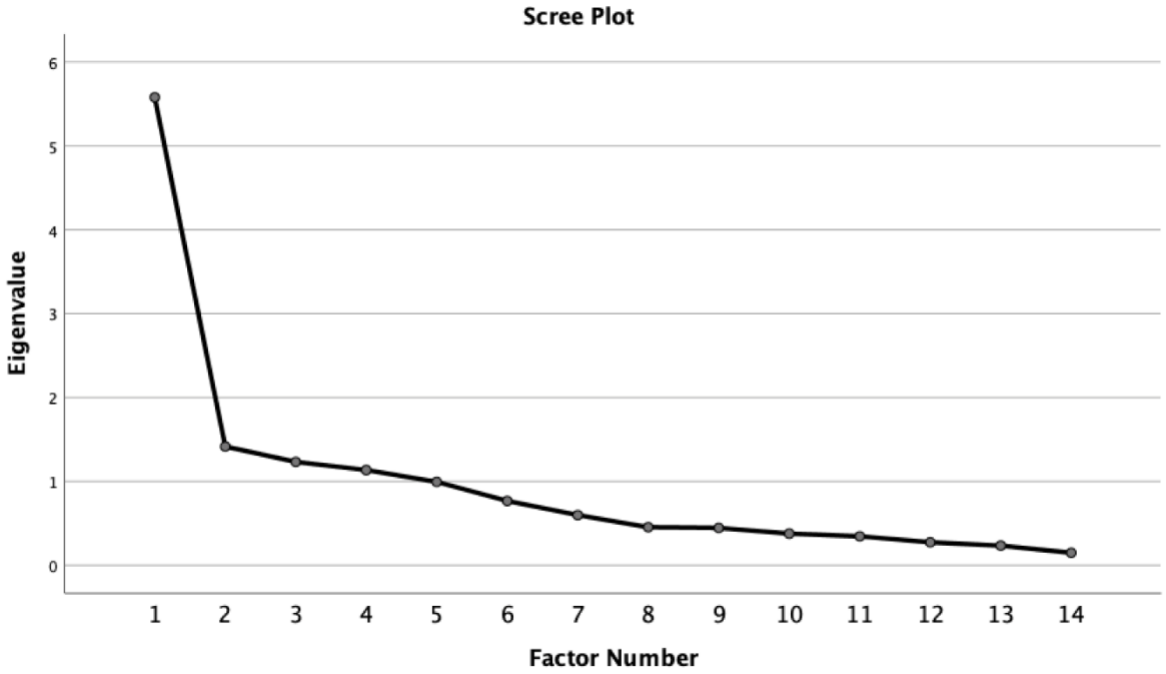

Figure 1. Scree plot of original 14 IGSS items.

Table 48

IGSS Item Loadings and Communalities for Final 6 Items.

Item	Pattern Coefficients	Communality
IGSS 1: Men should be the ones to initiate sexual contact	0.533	.284
IGSS 2: It's mostly up to men to get sex started	0.841	.708
IGSS 3: It's more natural for men to make the first move, sexually	0.528	.278
IGSS 4: It is mostly up to women to decide when sex happens	0.724	.523
IGSS 5: It is mostly up to women to decide if sex should slow down or stop	0.735	.541
IGSS 6: It is up to women to keep things from moving too fast sexually	0.680	.463

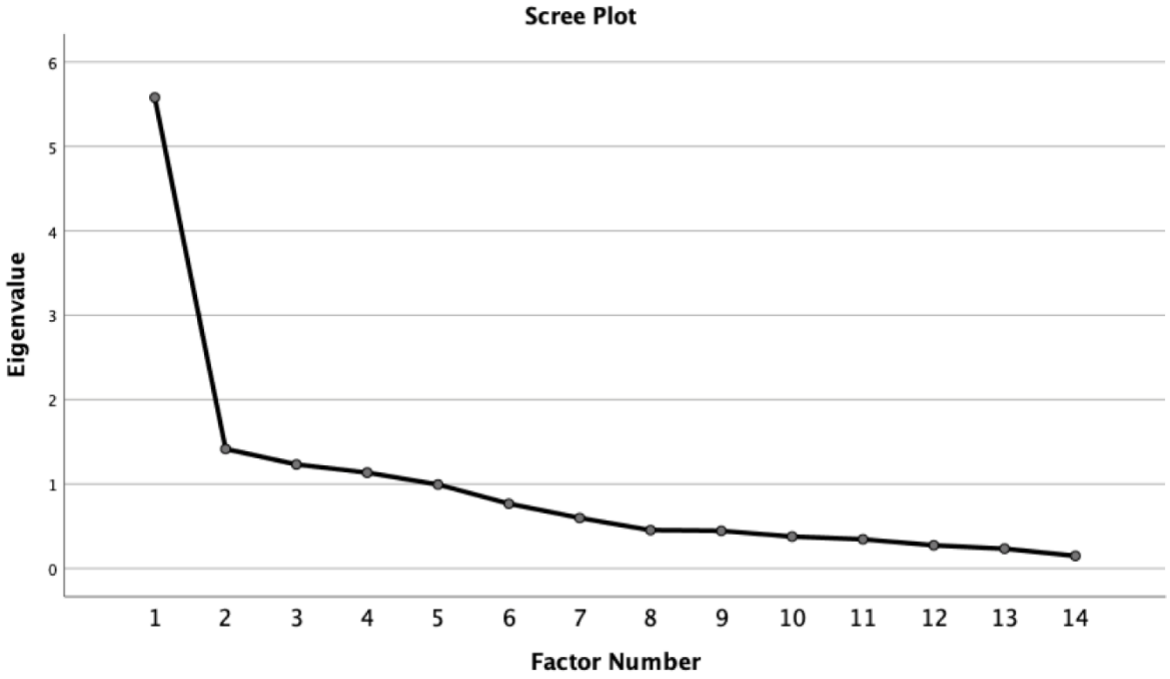

Figure 2. Scree plot of final six IGSS items.

Table 49

Descriptive Statistics for Final IGSS Items.

Item	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
IGSS 1: Men should be the ones to initiate sexual contact	2.81	1.401	0.421	-0.246
IGSS 2: It's mostly up to men to get sex started	2.76	1.419	0.341	-1.021
IGSS 3: It's more natural for men to make the first move, sexually	3.69	1.544	-0.365	-1.084
IGSS 4: It is mostly up to women to decide when sex happens	3.14	1.698	0.452	-0.471
IGSS 5: It is mostly up to women to decide if sex should slow down or stop	3.06	1.759	0.552	-0.518
IGSS 6: It is up to women to keep things from moving too fast sexually	2.57	1.591	0.744	-0.405

Materials and Procedure

All participants were selected using a pre-screening process provided by Prolific. There was no overlap in participants who completed Study 1 or Study 2 and those who completed Study 3. Prescreening questions selected only for cisgender heterosexual men and women. They were then linked to the survey on the online platform Qualtrics. Upon opening the survey they read an informed consent statement. Next, Sample A completed the IGSS, followed by a measure of how masculine/feminine they believe they would seem if they verbally asked for consent, followed by a measure of their consent behavior and demographics. Sample B received a measure of how masculine/feminine they believed a potential partner would seem if they verbally asked for consent, followed by demographics. Two attention checks were distributed throughout the survey for Population A and there was a single attention check for Population B.

Initiator/Gatekeeper Sexual Script (IGSS). I used the six-item scale assessing endorsement of the traditional initiator/gatekeeper sexual script developed in the pilot study. Responses were given using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Scores were averaged to create a composite score, with greater values indicating higher endorsement of the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script. See Appendix H. See Results for further discussion of this measure.

Gendered Consent Perceptions. A six-item measure of gendered traits potentially characterizing someone who asks for consent was developed for this study. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree, "If I were to verbally ask my partner for consent prior to any sexual activity, I would seem…" and then were presented with six items (e.g. dominant, submissive). Responses were given using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). See Appendix I.

Partner Consent Perceptions. The same items within Gendered Partner Perceptions were administered to Sample B, with the instructions to indicate extent of agreement with, "If my partner were to verbally ask me for consent prior to any sexual they would seem…." See Appendix J.

Masculine and Feminine Consent Perceptions. When I submitted all six Gendered Consent Perceptions items to an analysis of internal consistency Cronbach's alpha was low, α = .69. Inspection of Cronbach's alpha if item is deleted did not suggest any items were suppressing the total alpha. I then explored if masculine and feminine were internally consistent with each other, by submitting the three masculine and three feminine items to separate analyses of internal consistency. These groupings met the standard for acceptable consistency (Masculine α = .70; Feminine α = .73). I averaged the masculine and feminine items separately to create two aggregate scores, Masculine Consent Perceptions (MCP) and Feminine Consent Perceptions (FCP).

Affirmative Consent. The Affirmative Consent measure from Study 1, assessing personal likelihood of asking for consent before kissing, sexually touching, and having sex with a new partner was used for this study. Scores were averaged to create an aggregate measure of Affirmative Consent (AffC; α = .84)

Demographics. Demographic questions from Studies 1 and 2 were used in Study 3.

Attention Checks. Attention Checks from Studies 1 and 2 were used in Study 3.

Results

Preliminary Data Cleaning and Screening

Data from participants who did not pass all attention checks were removed from all analyses (n = 16). Additionally, participants who indicated they primary dated people of their

same gender or people who are nonbinary were removed from all analyses. Missing data was handled using listwise deletion across all analyses. Bivariate correlations between all continuous variables are available in Table 1. All variables were checked for normality (skewness within ± 1 and kurtosis within ± 3) and fell within the normal limits. Due to the number of planned analyses I used a corrected alpha level, using the Holm-Bonferroni method (Holm, 1979), to reduce family-wise error rates.

Preliminary Analyses

First, I submitted the six IGSS items to a confirmatory factor analysis using the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012) in R (R Core Team, 2019), using maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors (MLR; Yuan & Bentler, 2000). Data from the EFA suggested a possible two-factor solution, and so I explored three possible models in the CFA: a single factor model, a higher order two factor model, and a bifactor model. Contrary to a classic hierarchical higher-order model, a bifactor model estimates a single general factor onto which all items load, as well as multiple subscales. This general factor is related to all items, and thus allows for all items to be aggregated into a single measure. For the two factor higher order model, I created a masculine sexual script factor comprised of the three masculine script items and a feminine sexual script factor comprised of the three feminine script items.

Table 50

Study 3 Descriptive Statistics and Zero Order Correlations

Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. IGSS	328	3.51	1.19	-						
2. AffC	328	4.99	1.56	-.20 p < .001*	-					
3. MCP	328	3.85	1.31	.20 p < .001*	.10 p = .069	-				
4. FCP	328	3.01	1.31	.31 p < .001*	-.21 p < .001*	.03 p = .62	-			
5. SexExp	328	3.14	2.98	-.1 p = .076	-.24 p < .001*	-.01 p = .88	.01 p = .829	-		
6. SexAct	327	3.15	2.97	-.11 p = .045	-.25 p < .001*	-.07 p = .22	.05 p = .349	.66 p < .001*	-	
7. SexPart	327	4.66	17.46	.06 p = .275	-.19 p < .001*	-.08 p = .133	.11 p = .04	.24 p < .001*	.27 p < .001*	-

IGSS = Initiator/Gatekeeper Sexual Script; AffC = Affirmative Consent; MCP = Masculine Consent Perceptions; FCP = Feminine Consent Perceptions; SexExp = sexual experience; SexAct = how long participant has been sexually active; SexPart = number of sexual partners

*denotes significance using the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Table 51

IGSS CFA

Model	c^2	*df*	CFI	TLI	RMSEA [90% CI]	SRMR
One Factor	50.33*	9	.93	.88	.12 [.09, .15]	.05
Two Factor	15.73***	7	.98	.97	.06 [.03, .09]	.03
Bifactor	2.3	3	.999	.996	.02 [.00, .08]	.01

* significance level $p = .05$
*** significance level $p = .001$

Table 52

CFA Standardized Factor Loadings on the Bifactor Model.

Item	Standardized Factor Loading
IGSS	
1. Men should be the ones to initiate sexual contact	.73
2. It's mostly up to men to get sex started	.80
3. It's more natural for men to make the first move, sexually	.51
4. It is mostly up to women to decide when sex happens	.73
5. It is mostly up to women to decide if sex should slow down or stop	.65
6. It is up to women to keep things from moving too fast sexually	.67
Masculine Sexual Script	
1. Men should be the ones to initiate sexual contact	.22
2. It's mostly up to men to get sex started	.22
3. It's more natural for men to make the first move, sexually	.63
Feminine Sexual Script	
4. It is mostly up to women to decide when sex happens	.22
5. It is mostly up to women to decide if sex should slow down or stop	.81
6. It is up to women to keep things from moving too fast sexually	.19

Before moving on to the primary analyses I explored if sexual experience, number of sexual partners, and length of time participant has been sexually active were correlated with the dependent variables (see Table 50). Sexual experience, number of sexual partners, and years of

sexual activity were negatively correlated with AffC, but not with IGSS (I return to this finding in the discussion). Thus, sexual experience, number of sexual partners, and years of sexual activity were included as covariates in all analyses[5].

Primary Analyses

I first split the file by men and women and explored correlations (controlling for all sexual experience related covariates) between IGSS, AffC, MCP, FCP (see Tables 53 and 54). In support of Hypothesis 1a, IGSS was negatively correlated with AffC for both men and women. This indicates that both men and women high in endorsement of the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script reported they were less likely to ask for sexual consent.

Table 53

Study 3 Descriptive Statistics and Partial Correlations for Men, controlling for sexual experience, number of sexual partners, and how long participant has been sexually active

Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. IGSS	163	3.74	1.49	-			
2. AffC	163	4.94	1.55	-.22 p = .006*	-		
3. MCP	163	3.86	1.24	.18 p = .021	.25 p < .001*	-	
4. FCP	163	3.70	1/21	.36 p < .001*	-.25 p < .001*	-.17 p = .032	-

IGSS = Initiator/Gatekeeper Sexual Script; AffC = Affirmative Consent; MCP = Masculine Consent Perceptions; FCP = Feminine Consent Perceptions
*denotes significance using the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

[5] Due to an issue during data collection, responses for sexual experience, number of sexual partners, and age of onset of sexual experience were not collected for Sample B participants, and thus are not included as covariates during sample comparison analyses for Study 3.

Table 54

Study 3 Descriptive Statistics and Partial Correlations for Women, controlling for sexual experience, number of sexual partners, and how long participant has been sexually active

Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. IGSS	164	3.28	1.19	-			
2. AffC	164	5.03	1.58	-.24 p = .002*	-		
3. MCP	164	3.85	1.38	.25 p = .002*	-.02 p = .789	-	
4. FCP	164	3.00	1.16	.20 p = .01	-.13 p = .100	.23 p = .004*	-

IGSS = Initiator/Gatekeeper Sexual Script; AffC = Affirmative Consent; MCP = Masculine Consent Perceptions; FCP = Feminine Consent Perceptions
*denotes significance using the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment

Examining partial correlations within men, IGSS was not correlated with MCP, but was positively correlated with FCP, indicating men high in endorsement of the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script believed that asking for sexual consent prior to sexual activity would make them appear more feminine. Further, for men, AffC was positively correlated with MCP and negatively correlated with FCP, indicating that men who believed that asking for consent would make them appear masculine were more likely to ask for consent, while men who believed asking for consent would make them appear feminine were less likely to do so. MCP and FCP were not correlated for men.

Examining partial correlations within women, IGSS was not correlated with FCP, but was positively correlated with MCP, indicating that women high in the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script believed that asking for sexual consent prior to sexual activity would make them appear masculine. This result followed the same pattern as men's responses. However, in contrast to men's results, for women, AffC was not significantly correlated with either MCP or FCP. Additionally, for women, MCP and FCP were *positively* correlated, indicating women

believed that asking for consent made them appear both masculine and feminine. I return to this finding in the discussion.

Next, I tested Hypothesis 2, that for Heterosexual men and women, the relationship between initiator/gatekeeper sexual scripts and affirmative consent will be mediated by beliefs that they would be perceived as less masculine/feminine if they verbally asked for consent. Because the masculine and feminine items could not be aggregated into a single measure due to low internal consistency, I individually explored both MCP and FCP as separate mediators for both men and women. I used Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 4) with 10,000 bootstrapped samples. Importantly, the PROCESS macro reports bootstrapped confidence intervals, without an accompanying p-value, for interpreting the indirect effect of mediation. Therefore, I could not use a Holm-Bonferroni adjusted p-value to evaluate the significance of the indirect effect. To account for this, I only explored mediations which earlier partial correlations using the adjusted p-values suggested could be significant. For example, because for men there was no significant corrected relationship between IGSS and MCP, I did not enter MCP as a mediator. However, because there was a significant corrected relationship between IGSS and FCP among men, I did include enter FCP as a mediator for men. Similarly, for women, IGSS was not correlated with FCP, but was with MCP, and so I only entered MCP as a mediator for women. See Tables 2 and 3 for mediation analyses within men and women.

Within the sample of men, I entered IGSS as the predictor variable, FCP as the mediator variable, and AffC as the outcome variable, covarying all three sexual experience variables. This analysis indicated support for Hypotheses 2a, which predicted that, for heterosexual men, the relationship between initiator/gatekeeper sexual script and affirmative consent would be mediated by beliefs that they would be perceived as less masculine if they verbally asked for

consent. Although masculine items could not be tested, this analysis revealed that FCP fully mediated the relationship between IGSS and AffC (indirect *b* = -.13, 95%CI [-.25, -.02]; direct *b* = .22, 95%CI [.-.49, .05]) (see Table 55), suggesting that men high in the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script reported a lower likelihood of asking their partner for sexual consent prior to sexual activity, due to the perception that asking for sexual consent would make them appear *more feminine*.

Table 55

Study 3 Mediation Analysis of IGSS on AffC via FCP for Men, controlling for sexual experience, number of sexual partners, and how long participant has been sexually active

Outcome Variable	Estimate	*SE*	p	95% CI	
				LL	UL
FCP					
IGSS	.38	.08	< .001	.23	.53
AffC					
IGSS	-.19	.11	.09	-.40	.03
FCP	-.25	.10	.01	-.46	-.05
Direct effect of X on Y	-.19	.11	.09	-.40	.03
Indirect effect of X on Y	-.07	.05	-	-.19	-.01

Within the sample of women, I entered IGSS as the predictor variable, MCP as the mediator variable, and AffC as the outcome variable. This analysis did not indicate support for Hypothesis 2b, which predicted that, for heterosexual women, the relationship between the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script and affirmative consent would be mediated by beliefs that they would be perceived as less feminine. Although feminine items could not be tested, this analysis revealed that MCP did not mediate the significant relationship between IGSS and AffC (indirect *b* = .01, 95%CI [-.-6, .10]; direct *b* = -.41, 95%CI [-.66, -.14]) (see Table 56), indicating that women high in the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script did indeed report a lower likelihood of

asking for sexual consent, but not due to beliefs that doing so would make them appear more masculine.

Table 56

Study 3 Mediation Analysis of IGSS on AffC via MCP for Women, controlling for sexual experience, number of sexual partners, and how long participant has been sexually active

Outcome Variable	Estimate	*SE*	p	95% CI	
				LL	UL
MCP					
IGSS	.28	.09	.002	.11	.46
AffC					
IGSS	-.31	.10	.002	-.51	-.11
MCP	.04	.09	.62	-.13	.21
Direct effect of X on Y	-.31	.10	.002	-.51	-.11
Indirect effect of X on Y	.01	.03	-	-.04	.08

Lastly, I tested Hypothesis 3 (Heterosexual men and women will underestimate how masculine/feminine a potential partner would perceive them as if they verbally asked for sexual consent) and the Exploratory Question (Will men and women differ in their underestimations of how masculine/feminine a potential partner would perceive them as if they verbally asked for sexual consent?), by comparing Gendered Consent Perceptions from Sample A to Partner Consent Perceptions.

In order to create cross-comparisons of self-perceptions and other perceptions of the other gender (e.g. men evaluating the self and women evaluating men), I created a new variable of Target Gender, coded for men if men are evaluating the self or if women are evaluating men and coded for women if women are evaluating the self or if men are evaluating women. I ran a 2 (Men's and Women's Predictions of Partner Perceptions) x 2 (Men's and Women's Partner Perceptions) ANOVA and examined simple effects for self-other on MCP and FCP. See Tables 57 and 48 for both comparisons.

Table 57

Predictions of how a partner would view men if they asked for consent, compared to how women report they would actually perceive a partner if he asked for consent.

Variable	Men's Predictions of Women's Perceptions	Women's Actual Perceptions	*d*	*r*	*p*	LCI	UCI
MCP	3.75 (1.17)	4.65 (1.41)	-0.69	-0.33	<.001*	-1.36	-0.44
FCP	3.89 (1.11)	3.13 (1.18)	0.66	.31	<.001*	0.33	1.19

*denotes significance using the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment
MCP = Masculine Consent Perceptions; FCP = Feminine Consent Perceptions

Table 58

Predictions of how a partner would view women if they asked for consent, compared to how men report they would actually perceive a partner if she asked for consent.

Variable	Women's Predictions of Men's Perceptions	Men's Actual Perceptions	*d*	*r*	*p*	LCI	UCI
MCP	3.87 (1.44)	3.99 (1.13)	-0.09	-.05	.60	-0.58	0.34
FCP	3.08 (1.32)	3.74 (1.20)	-0.52	-.25	.003*	.234	1.09

*denotes significance using the Holm-Bonferroni adjustment
MCP = Masculine Consent Perceptions; FCP = Feminine Consent Perceptions

First, I compared men's perceptions of how masculine they would appear if they asked for consent (MCP) to women's perceptions of how masculine a potential partner would appear if they asked for consent. This analysis revealed support for my hypothesis, with men believing they would appear less masculine (M = 3.75, SD = 1.17) than women reported men would appear (M = 4.65, SD = 1.41), $p < .001$, d = 0.69. There were no significant differences between women's perceptions of how masculine they would appear and men's perceptions of how masculine women would appear if they asked for consent, p =.60.

Next, I compared men's perceptions of how feminine they would appear if they asked for consent (FC) to women's perceptions of how feminine a potential partner would appear if they asked for consent. This analysis also revealed support for my hypothesis, with men believing they would appear more feminine (M = 3.89, SD = 1.11) than women reported men would appear (M = 3.13, SD = 1.18), p = .60, d = 0.66. Additionally, women believed they would appear less feminine (M = 3.08, SD = 1.32) if they asked for consent than men reported women would appear (M = 3.74, SD = 1.20), p = .003, d = -0.52.

To evaluate my exploratory question examining if men and women differ in their misperceptions of how masculine/feminine they would appear to a potential partner if they asked for sexual consent, I calculated the effect size r for each analysis and then conducted a z test to determine if the two effect sizes were significantly different.

First, I compared men's misperceptions of masculinity to women's misperceptions of femininity. These effects were not significantly different, indicating men's underestimation of their perceived masculinity was not greater than women's underestimation of their perceived femininity, z = -.68, p = .25. Next, I compared men's misperceptions of their perceived femininity to women's misperceptions of their misperceived masculinity. These effects were significantly different, indicating men's overestimation of their perceived femininity was greater than women's overestimation of their perceived masculinity, z = -2.88, p = .002. I also compared if men and women differed in their misperceptions of how masculine or feminine they believed they would be perceived as if they asked for consent. I found that men's underestimation of their perceived masculinity was significantly greater than women's overestimation of their perceived masculinity, z = 3.05, p = .001. However, women's

underestimation of their perceived femininity did not significantly differ from men's overestimation of their perceived femininity, $z = .51$, $p = .307$.

Discussion

This study provided further validation of IGSS. Although a single-factor model was initially hypothesized, a bifactor model consisting of two factors is unsurprising. Sexual scripts of male roles and female roles are complementary, rather than inverse. For a sexual script between men and women to be successfully enacted, both men and women must play their corresponding roles. Men's roles include initiating sex and progressing it, whereas women's roles include allowing sex and then stopping or slowing it if need be. These two roles represent the interactive nature of the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script but are distinct behaviors. Therefore, items describing men's roles and women's role loading onto distinct factors yet also corresponding to a general factor of heterosexual sexual scripts makes sense.

Whereas in the pilot construct validity was assessed by examining convergent validity, here discriminant validity was assessed. IGSS was only weakly correlated with MCP and FCP which indicates that endorsement of the initiator gatekeeper sexual script is not merely a reflection of the belief that asking for consent is gendered. Additionally, IGSS was not correlated with sexual experience, number of sexual partners, or length of sexual activity, meaning individual's IGSS attitudes are not swayed by their own sexual experience. Finally, this study assessed the concurrent validity of IGSS. In support of Hypothesis 1, men and women who endorsed the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script did report they were less likely to ask a new partner for sexual consent prior to sexual activity. Predictive validity was not assessed; future research should administer IGSS at a prior timepoint to AffC to determine if IGSS predicts later behavior.

Unexpectedly, masculine and feminine consent perceptions did not have sufficient internal consistency. Presumably, femininity, submissiveness, and passiveness are the antithesis of masculinity, assertiveness, and dominance. And yet, it appears participants in this study did not agree that being perceived as more of the former meant being perceived as less of the latter, or vice versa. This may suggest some ambivalence surrounding the gendered nature of sexual consent. Perhaps the very nature of actively asking for consent suggests some level of assertiveness, while simultaneously suggesting passivity by asking rather than moving forward decisively. Future research is needed to explore this ambivalence.

Examining the partial correlations of MCP and FCP with AffC within men and women, this may be because the two are valued differently for each gender. Within men, FCP was a significant predictor of AffC, while MCP was not, suggesting men are more concerned with appearing too feminine than less masculine. It could be that a range of masculinity is acceptable, whereas no amount of femininity is. Similarly, within women, MCP was a significant predictor of AffC, while FCP was not, suggesting the inverse may be true of women, where appearing less feminine is not concerning, but appearing masculine in any way is. Interestingly and unexpectedly, MCP and FCP were significantly positively correlated within women, but uncorrelated within men. This may suggest that women experience more ambivalence about asking for consent than men.

Because IGSS scores only correlated with FCP for women and MCP for men, I can only deduce partial support for Hypothesis 2, that the relationship between IGSS and AffC is mediated by concerns of appearing less masculine/feminine if men/women asked for consent. Instead, what I found is that this relationship is mediated by concerns of appearing *too* gender-atypical. For men high in the IGSS, lower likelihood of asking for consent was mediated by

beliefs that doing so would make them appear feminine. Additionally, this trend was only significant for men; although women high in IGSS were less likely to ask for consent, this relationship was not mediated by the belief that doing so would make them appear masculine. This gender difference most likely emerges because women are rarely called upon to ask for consent and therefore any potential gendered reasons for not doing so are superseded by other concerns, such having less practice or believing their male partner would be offended. Indeed, other research suggests that women alter their sexual communication to protect their male partner's masculinity (Jordan et al., 2022) and it is possible women avoid asking for consent because it may imply that their partner is not fulfilling his male duty to initiating sex.

Lastly, I found partial support for Hypotheses 3, that men and women would misperceive how masculine/feminine they would appear to a partner if they asked for consent. Men underestimated how masculine they would appear and overestimated how feminine they would appear. Similarly, women underestimated how feminine they would appear. However, their estimations of how masculine they would appear did not significantly differ from men's estimations of how masculine a female partner would appear if they asked for consent.

These findings are consistent with those of Study 2, which found that men perceived a self- (same sex) peer gap for beliefs that asking for consent is masculine, whereas women did not perceive a self- (same sex) peer gap for beliefs that asking for consent is feminine. Together, results from Studies 1 and 2 suggest that men may be more concerned than women with failing to adequately portray their gender-conformity. I return to this idea in the General Discussion

General Discussion

These three studies provided valuable insight into affirmative consent attitudes and behaviors among heterosexual and sexual minority men and women. First examining general trends in consent behaviors and attitudes among heterosexual and sexual minority men and women, some notable patterns emerged. Across Studies 1 and 2, heterosexual men and lesbian women were more likely to ask for consent. In Study 2, lesbian women were least likely to perceive a self-peer/self-partner gap. This may reflect a cultural difference for lesbian women in openness to talk about sex and consent with peers and partners. While lesbian women may be unhindered by the traditional heterosexual scripts and gender roles, this does not explain why lesbian women perceived less of a self-other gap than gay men. Perhaps gay men discuss sex less frequently with peers and partners, or feel more pressure than lesbian women to perform traditional gender roles. However, lesbian women did still perceive a self-other gap in consent behavior, believing they were more likely to ask for consent than their peers/prospective partners.

Barriers to Consent

In Study 1, the predictor with the strongest correlation with Affirmative Consent was the belief that asking for consent ruins the "flow" of sex. Items included attitudes that asking for consent is awkward, reduces the pleasure of the encounter, and is unsexy. This finding supports other research which finds that young adults describe asking for consent as awkward and unrealistic (Curtis & Burnett, 2017; Humphreys, 2000), ruins the mood (Fourber et al., 2006;

Schumlich & Fisher, 2020), and believe that potential partners would view asking for consent as weird (Humphreys & Brosseau, 2010).

Indeed, the second strongest predictor was concern for partner's perceptions; however, results from Study 2 and Study 3 suggest this concern may be unfounded or at least overblown. In Study 2, men and women tended to perceive a self-partner gap, although this was less often true for lesbian women. Ironically, this indicates that while heterosexual men, heterosexual women, and gay men are concerned their partners hold negative attitudes about asking for consent, their partners may be concerned *they* hold these negative attitudes as well. This mutual private concern of partner attitudes likely stymies sexual consent communication. Even more ironically, young adults report an interest in being asked for consent. Therefore, we can imagine young couples in which both partners are wishing they would be asked for consent, yet not initiating consent conversations with their partner due to anticipation of their partners' negative attitudes. Notably, again, lesbian women appear to be the exception to this trend – they appeared the most accurate in predicting other lesbian's consent attitudes and interest. However, lesbian women did underestimate their peer's behavior, suggesting they may be able to guess what their peers *think* but are less confident in what they *do*.

Following concerns of partner perceptions in Study 1 were concerns of peer perceptions. Heterosexual and sexual minority men and women similarly indicated that they are hesitant to ask for consent because their peers do not. This misperception was born out in Study 2, in which results suggested that heterosexual men, heterosexual women, and gay men believe their peers hold more negative attitudes than they hold themselves about asking for consent. Again, lesbian women did not follow this pattern.

In Study 2, heterosexual women were more likely that heterosexual men to perceive a self-partner gap in consent attitudes. Following from the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script, men are likely expected to broach the subject of consent more than women, as men are expected to always be interested in having sex (and therefore not requiring consent). Thus, when women note men not asking for consent, they may assume it is due to men holding negative attitudes. Alternatively, perhaps social movements such as #MeToo, which has primarily focused on gaining *women's* sexual consent, have marginally succeeded in lifting men's perceptions of women's consent attitudes, but not women's perceptions of men's consent attitudes. Notably, however, men still predicted a self-partner gap in consent attitudes and interest, suggesting the success of such social movements may be limited.

Lastly, in Study 3, heterosexual men and women both misperceived partner perceptions. Men believed potential partners would view them as less masculine and more feminine than women indicated they would actually view a man if he asked for consent. Meanwhile women believed a potential partner would view them as less feminine than men indicated they would.

Together, these trends indicate a breadth of pluralistic ignorance surrounding sexual consent. Young men and women – both heterosexual and gay/lesbian – believe their peers and potential partners are less likely to practice affirmative consent and more likely to hold negative attitudes about consent than they hold themselves. This may be because young adults do not discuss consent with their peers (Humphreys & Brosseau, 2010) or potential partners (Humphreys, 2004), which could disillusion their misguided perceptions, and may be further reinforced by media that does not depict sexual consent as normative (Jozkowksi et al., 2019). The outcome of such misperceptions may be a recursive cycle of miscommunication. Young men and women likely refrain from honestly communicating about their consent behaviors,

attitudes, and interests with peers and partners, or even purposefully misrepresent themselves in order to conform to their perceptions of peer standards. Doing so propagates the misperception that affirmative consent is not normative. The final outcome may be dissuading others from practicing affirmative consent, even when they privately want to. Notably, the questions in this survey asked about *likelihood* of asking for sexual consent. Responses to this question may assess young adults' positive attitudes about doing so, yet may not accurately capture their true behavior.

Gender Roles and Gendered Sexual Scripts

In addition to peer misperceptions, gender roles and sexual scripts played a role in predicting consent behavior and attitudes, particularly for heterosexual young adults. However, this trend was less consistent than misperception of peer norms and stronger for men than women. In Study 1, masculine gender roles and masculine sexual scripts were stronger predictors of affirmative consent than feminine gender roles and feminine sexual scripts (the latter was not a significant predictor). Exploring endorsement by gender, heterosexual men endorsed masculine gender role barriers at higher rates than women, whereas heterosexual women endorsed feminine sexual scripts at higher rates than men. However, men and women did not differ in endorsement of feminine gender roles or masculine sexual scripts as barriers to consent. In Study 2, heterosexual men (but not gay men) predicted same-sex peers believe asking for consent is less masculine than they believe themselves. However, women did not hold this same misperception of femininity.

In Study 3, endorsement of the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script predicted men's beliefs that asking for consent would make them appear more feminine and women's beliefs that asking for consent would make them appear more masculine. Interestingly, IGSS endorsement did not

predict men's attitudes that asking for consent would make them appear less masculine or women's attitudes that it would make them appear less feminine. This result suggests that men and women's behaviors may be driven less by a motivation to appear gender conforming and more by a motivation to avoid being seen as non-conforming. Put another way, there may be leeway in appearing less masculine or feminine, but not for appearing similar to the other gender. Notably, the negative relationship between IGSS endorsement and affirmative consent was significant for both heterosexual men and women. However, the relationship was only mediated by gender non-conformity concerns for men, but not women.

Precarious manhood

Throughout the three studies, concerns about gender typicality appeared to be stronger motivators for men – particularly heterosexual – than for women. In Study 1, heterosexual men endorsed masculine gender roles as barriers to affirmative consent at rates higher than heterosexual women, whereas women did not endorse feminine gender roles as barriers at rates higher than men, which may be due to men walking a tightrope between being sufficiently assertive to meet gender prescriptions while not appearing so assertive that they come across as unsafe. In Study 2, heterosexual men, but not gay men, predicted peers believe asking for consent is less masculine than they believe themselves, whereas women did not predict the same self-peer gap for the belief that asking for consent is less feminine. Additionally, heterosexual men believed asked for consent was viewed by peers as more feminine than they thought it was. In Study 3, heterosexual men's endorsement of the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script predicted beliefs that asking for consent would make them appear feminine, which predicted a lower likelihood of asking for consent. However, while heterosexual women's endorsement of the

initiator/gatekeeper sexual script also predicted a lower likelihood of asking for consent, this relationship was not mediated by perceptions that they would be perceived as more masculine.

Overall, these results suggest that heterosexual men's sexual consent behaviors and attitudes may be driven by concerns of losing masculinity when they break from stereotypical gender roles. This pattern provides support for precarious manhood theory (Vandello et al., 2007), which purports that manhood, as opposed to womanhood, is a tenuous social status that men are afraid to lose and motivated to maintain. Additionally, the comparison within sexual orientation provided by Study 2 offers new insight into the precarious state of manhood for gay men, or lack thereof. While heterosexual men anticipated a self-peer gap in beliefs about masculinity and femininity surrounding asking for consent, gay men did not. Because gay men otherwise perceived self-peer gaps on other consent attitudes (e.g. normal, smart, attractive), we can possibly assume that gay men are not as worried about loss of masculinity or excessive femininity as their heterosexual counterparts.

Sexual Experience

Throughout the three studies, people with greater sexual experience, number of sexual partners, and years of sexual activity tended to report being less likely to ask a new partner for consent. This finding is consistent with extant literature, finding that college students with more sexual partners scored lower on the belief that asking for consent is important (Humphries & Herold, 2007). This may be because as experience with sex increases, comfort with deducing a partner's interest in sex increases as well, thus decreasing a perceived need to ask for consent, although their accuracy in deducing consent may not truly improve. Alternatively, early sexual encounters may already feel so uncertain and awkward that asking for consent may not feel like a burden, whereas those more accustomed to enacting sexual scripts may be more likely to notice

the awkwardness of asking for consent, and thus less likely to do so. Notably, sexual experience, number of sexual partners, and years of sexual activity did not correlate with IGSS, suggesting IGSS represents a cultural belief that does not shift as people have more experience enacting the sexual script themselves.

Limitations and Future Research

First and foremost, the sample sizes for gay men in studies 1 and 2 were not sufficient, leading to underpowered analyses. Data collection for these samples is still underway and all analyses should be repeated when collection is completed. Until then, analyses including gay men should be treated as exploratory and taken with caution. However, using a Holm-Bonferroni alpha adjustment decreases the likelihood of making a type 1 error of incorrectly rejecting the null hypothesis. This lends an increased measure of confidence to the existing analyses that did find group differences or effects within gay men.

In Study 2, peer and partner are conflated for gay men and lesbian women. However, this conflation may not be the case in real life. Asking about "most men of my same sexual orientation" and "most women of my same sexual orientation" may bring to mind peers, yet gay men and lesbian women may hold different beliefs about the subset of men and women they date. It is also possible this conflation may not hold true for heterosexual men and women. Perhaps they also hold different beliefs about men and women in general that do not extend to the people they specifically date or the friends they have. Future research is needed to tease apart these groups and determine if young adults believe their friends and partners hold the same attitudes as the general public.

Additionally, these studies operationalized consent behavior as the likelihood of asking for consent, which may not reflect true, in the moment, behavior. Perhaps young adults do

believe they are more or less likely to ask for consent but behave differently when in a sexual scenario. Future research should address this concern by asking retrospectively what young adults did in their most recent sexual encounter with a new partner.

More research is needed to further validate the IGSS. While the current studies provided convergent, discriminant, and concurrent validity, predictive validity must be assessed to determine if endorsement of the initiator/gatekeeper sexual script can be used to predict future behavior. A longitudinal design assessing IGSS scores at time 1 and retrospective affirmative consent behavior (following time 1 but asking about their last sexual encounter) at time 2 would be ideal.

Notably, these studies utilized a broad definition of sexual consent, within a narrow scenario. Affirmative consent was operationalized as asking for consent before any sort of physical touch. While in Study 1 and Study 3 sexual consent before kissing, sexual touching, and sex were strongly correlated, they are likely treated differently, especially when in the moment. Future research should further delve into the differences in these behaviors and how attitudes about consent differ in predicting each one. Additionally, this research was specific to new partners. Consent behaviors differ within established partnerships (Humphreys, 2000; Humphreys, 2007; Humphreys & Brosseau, 2010; Masters et al., 2013). The findings from these studies may not generalize to sexual encounters with repeat sexual partners.

Conclusion

Together, this research suggests that young adults are grossly misguided in their perceptions of their peers' sexual consent attitudes and behaviors. Not only were the participants in this study incorrect in their perceptions of their peers' attitudes and behaviors, they also underestimated how potential partners would view them if they asked for consent and how much

potential partners are interested in being asked for consent. Such misunderstandings likely hinder sexual consent practices and pressure young adults to keep their beliefs to themselves, propagating the pluralistic ignorance engulfing affirmative consent. These findings may provide insight into why college programs and state laws have not been more successful in increasing affirmative consent practices among young adults. This research suggests that a necessary next step in changing young adult's attitudes and behaviors requires addressing their misperceptions of peer norms and highlighting partner attitudes about and interests in being asked for consent.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Barriers to Affirmative Consent

Many organizations, States, and college campuses have adopted a model of affirmative consent that requires verbally and directly asking for consent from any potential sexual partner. Affirmative consent requires explicitly asking about any wanted sexual activity. Explicit consent refers to directly stating the wanted activity, such as asking "Can I touch you here?", rather than indirectly alluding to the activity, such as "Do you want to fool around?".

Many people express discomfort with using affirmative consent, and believe asking for consent in a clear, verbal, and direct way for all activity is unrealistic. In order to develop a more reasonable model of consent, we are interested in the reasons people feel this way. We are especially interested in how people feel about consent with a new partner.

There are many reasons why a person may feel uncomfortable or like they don't need to verbally ask for affirmative consent from a new sexual partner. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree that each of the following reasons would make you hesitant to ask for affirmative consent from a new sexual partner.

I would feel hesitant to <u>VERBALLY</u> ask a new sexual partner for consent before any sexual activity (including, but not limited to, kissing, touching, making out, feeling up, oral sex, sexual intercourse) because:

(1) Strongly Disagree	*(2) Disagree*	*(3) Somewhat Disagree*	*(4) Neutral*	*(5) Somewhat Agree*	*(6) Agree*	*(7) Strongly Agree*

Masculine Gender Roles:

1. I would not feel like I was assertive enough if I stopped to verbally ask for consent
2. Stopping to verbally ask for consent would indicate I am not very masculine
3. My partner would view me as not assertive enough if I stopped to verbally ask for consent
4. My partner would view me as less masculine if I stopped to verbally ask for consent
5. I would be worried I would look too hesitant
6. I don't need to stop to verbally ask for consent because most people of my partner's gender are comfortable saying "no"
7. Asking for consent would make me seem not eager enough for sex

Feminine Gender Roles:

8. I would feed too assertive If I stopped to verbally ask for consent
9. Stopping to verbally ask for consent would indicate I am not very feminine
10. My partner would view me as too assertive if I stopped to verbally ask for consent
11. My partner would view me as less feminine if I stopped to verbally ask for consent
12. I would be worried I would look too sexually available
13. I don't need to stop to verbally ask for consent because most people of my partner's gender would usually want to have sex

14. Asking for consent would make me seem too eager for sex

Masculine Sexual Scripts
15. Asking for consent would feel like slowing sex down
16. It is up to me to get sex started
17. It would feel unnatural for me to pause sexual activity
18. It is up to my partner, and not me, to slow sex down

Feminine Sexual Scripts
19. Asking for consent would feel like initiating sex
20. I believe my partner would prefer to take the lead in initiating sex
21. It would feel unnatural for me to initiate sexual activity
22. It is up to my partner, and not me, to get sex started

Sexual Script – Ruining the Flow
23. I would have difficulty verbally asking for consent because it would spoil the mood.
24. I would have difficulty verbally asking for consent because it doesn't really fit with how I like to engage in sexual activity.
25. I think that verbally asking for sexual consent is awkward.
26. I have not asked for sexual consent (or given my consent) at times because I felt that it might backfire and I wouldn't end up having sex.
27. I believe that verbally asking for sexual consent reduces the pleasure of the encounter.
28. Stopping to verbally ask for consent feels unromantic/unsexy
29. Stopping to verbally ask for sex would remove the spontaneity

Lack of Script
30. I don't know how to verbally ask for consent
31. I think my partner would be confused if I stopped to ask for consent
32. I don't know the right way to verbally ask for consent
33. I struggle to come up with right thing to say in asking for consent
34. I haven't seen enough other people verbally ask for consent, so I don't know what to do

Partner Perceptions
35. I am worried that my partner might think I'm weird or strange if I asked for sexual consent before starting any sexual activity.
36. I don't think my partner wants me to stop to verbally ask for consent
37. My partner would prefer I read their body language, instead of verbally ask them
38. My partner would view me stopping to verbally ask for consent as awkward
39. My partner would view me stopping to verbally ask for consent as unromantic/unsexy

Peer Perceptions
40. I would worry that if other people knew I asked for sexual consent before starting sexual activity, that they would think I was weird or strange.
41. My friends don't stop to ask for consent.
42. Stopping to ask for consent is something that most people just don't do.
43. Nobody else I know stops to ask for consent

44. I get the sense that stopping to ask for consent is viewed as weird by most people

Unnecessary

45. I don't need to stop to verbally ask for consent because my partner will clearly object to doing anything they don't want to do
46. I don't need to stop to verbally ask for consent because it is easy for me to read my partner's nonverbal signals as indicating consent or non-consent to sexual activity
47. I don't need to stop to verbally ask for consent because I am always confident my partner is as into it as I am
48. If my partner consents to some behaviors, such as kissing, then I know they are consenting to other behaviors, such as sex.

Lack of Concern for Consent

49. Asking for sexual consent is not my problem
50. I'm not worried about my partner consenting to sex
51. Asking for consent is tedious

Other

52. I would not want to verbally ask a partner for consent because it would remind me that I'm sexually active.
53. I would have a hard time verbally asking for consent because I am too shy
54. Verbally asking for sexual consent puts me in the position to be rejected

Appendix B: Short Form of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI)

Below you will find listed a number of personality characteristics. We would like you to use those characteristics to describe yourself, that is, we would like you to indicate how much each characteristic is like you.

1 (not at all like me) – 4 (somewhat like me) – 7 (extremely like me)

1. Assertive
2. Leadership ability
3. Dominant
4. Strong personality
5. Forceful
6. Aggressive
7. Willing to take a stand
8. Independent
9. Defends own beliefs
10. Willing to take risks
11. Understanding
12. Sympathetic
13. Eager to soothe hurt feelings
14. Sensitive to the needs of others
15. Compassionate
16. Loves children
17. Affectionate
18. Gentle
19. Warm
20. Tender

Appendix C: Affirmative Consent

When with a new partner, how likely are you to verbally ask for permission before kissing them?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

When with a new partner, how likely are you to verbally ask for permission before sexually touching them, including rubbing, petting, and stimulation with hands (e.g. fooling around *before* sex)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

When with a new partner, how likely are you to verbally ask for permission before initiating sex with them (define sex as whatever kind of sex you *most typically have*, including penis in vagina, anal, and oral sex)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Appendix D: Demographics

Please answer the following questions.

1. What is your gender?
    - Man
    - Woman
    - Nonbinary
2. Do you most frequently date men or women?
    - Men
    - Women
    - Nonbinary
3. How old are you? _____
4. What is your race? Please select all that may apply.
    - American Indian or Alaska Native
    - Asian
    - Black or African American
    - Middle Eastern or North African
    - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
    - White or Caucasian
    - Other _____
    - Prefer not to say
5. Are you Latino/Latine/Hispanic?
    - Yes, I am Latino/Latine/Hispanic
    - No, I am not Latino/Latine/Hispanic
    - Prefer not to answer
6. How would you describe your religion?
    - Judaism
    - Christianity
    - Islam
    - Buddhism
    - Hinduism
    - Chinese Folk
    - Tribal Religious
    - Atheism
    - Agnosticism
    - None
    - Other _____
7. How religious would you describe yourself?
    - Not at all religious
    - Slightly religious
    - Moderately religious
    - Very religious
    - Extremely religious
8. How sexually experienced would you say you are?

- Not at all experienced
- Barely experienced
- Somewhat experienced
- Moderately experienced
- Very experienced

9. How long have you been sexually active? _____ years
10. How many sexual partners have you had? _____
11. Please respond to the following statement: When it comes to the roles of men and women my beliefs are:

1	2	3	4	5
Very Traditional	Somewhat Traditional	Neither Traditional nor Untraditional	Somewhat Traditional	Not at all Traditional

1	2	3	4	5
Very Old Fashioned	Somewhat Old Fashioned	Neutral nor Untraditional	Somewhat Modern	Very Modern

1	2	3	4	5
Very Conservative	Somewhat Conservative	Moderate	Somewhat Progressive	Very Progressive

Appendix E: Consent Behaviors

When with a new partner, how likely are **YOU** to verbally ask for permission before sexually touching them (e.g. kissing, rubbing, taking off their clothes)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Extremely Unlikely Somewhat Likely Extremely Likely

When with a new partner, how likely are **MOST MEN of the same sexual orientation as yourself** to verbally ask for permission before sexually touching them (e.g. kissing, rubbing, taking off their clothes)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Extremely Unlikely Somewhat Likely Extremely Likely

When with a new partner, how likely are **MOST WOMEN of the same sexual orientation as yourself** to verbally ask for permission before sexually touching them (e.g. kissing, rubbing, taking off their clothes)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Extremely Unlikely Somewhat Likely Extremely Likely

Appendix F: Consent Attitudes

I believe verbally asking a sexual partner for consent prior to any sexual activity is:

(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*	*(7)*
Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*

- Masculine
- Feminine
- Assertive
- Dominant
- Passive
- Submissive
- Sexy
- Attractive
- Awkward
- Weird
- Tedious
- Smart
- Normal

Most men of the same sexual orientation as myself believe verbally asking a sexual partner for consent prior to any sexual activity is:

(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*	*(7)*
Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*

- Masculine
- Feminine
- Assertive
- Passive
- Sexy
- Attractive
- Awkward
- Weird
- Tedious
- Smart
- Normal

Most women of the same sexual orientation as myself believe verbally asking a sexual partner for consent prior to any sexual activity is:

(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*	*(7)*
Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*

- Masculine
- Feminine
- Assertive
- Passive
- Sexy
- Attractive
- Awkward
- Weird
- Tedious
- Smart
- Normal

Appendix G: Consent Interest

I want a new partner to verbally ask me for sexual consent.

(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*	*(7)*
Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*

Most men of the same sexual orientation as myself want a new partner to verbally ask them for sexual consent.

(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*	*(7)*
Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*

Most women of the same sexual orientation as myself want a new partner to verbally ask them for sexual consent.

(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*	*(7)*
Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*

Appendix H: Initiator/Gatekeeper Sexual Script

There are a lot of beliefs about how sex and relationships work for men and women within heterosexual relationships. We want to know what you think. Please rate how much YOU agree with the following statements. You do not need to be heterosexual or have sexual experience to give your opinion.

1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*):

1. Men should be the ones to initiate sexual contact.
2. It's mostly up to men to get sex started.
3. It's more natural for men to make the first move, sexually.
4. It is mostly up to women to decide when sex happens.
5. It is mostly up to women to decide if sex should slow down or stop.
6. It is up to women to keep things from moving too fast sexually.

Appendix I: Gendered Consent Perceptions

If I were to verbally ask my partner for consent prior to any sexual activity, I would seem:

(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*	*(7)*
Strongly Disagree	*Disagree*	*Somewhat Disagree*	*Neutral*	*Somewhat Agree*	*Agree*	*Strongly Agree*

- Masculine
- Feminine
- Assertive
- Dominant
- Passive
- Submissive

Appendix J: Partner Consent Perceptions

If my partner were to verbally ask me for consent prior to any sexual activity, they would seem:

(1) Strongly Disagree	*(2) Disagree*	*(3) Somewhat Disagree*	*(4) Neutral*	*(5) Somewhat Agree*	*(6) Agree*	*(7) Strongly Agree*

- Masculine
- Feminine
- Assertive
- Dominant
- Passive
- Submissive