

The Failures of Consent: How the (En)gendering of Sexual Scripts and Desire within  
Consensual Sex Preserves Rape Culture within the University

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## Abstract

The epidemic of sexual assault on American university campuses that was first acknowledged by Mary P. Koss in 1987 has resulted in the centering of consent as a key way of distinguishing between acceptable, normal sex and unacceptable, punishable sex. Unfortunately, various experiences of sex that fit within the acceptable, normal sex category according to university policy frameworks can often have just as detrimental side effects on women as rape does. The need to investigate how simplistic notions of consent might be failing women in challenging rape culture then becomes paramount. This paper uses a mix of intersectional feminist theory and script theory to provide an analytical review of contemporary writings and studies derived from various books, journals, and news articles on sexual assault and consent movements available through the University of Washington library system and various online resources. The findings include how various forms of apparently consensual sex such as coerced sex, compliant sex, and even enthusiastic, pleasurable sex can play into upholding rape culture, harm women disproportionately, and uphold men's systemic power. By becoming involved in the continued modern discussions of consent, this paper seeks to redirect the current discourse on sexual consent now common on university campuses in hopes of broadening our perception of consensual sex and more adequately challenge rape culture.

*Keyterms:* consent, orgasm inequality, script theory, intersectionality, rape culture

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*Overview*

College in the United States is commonly portrayed as and understood to be one of the main places and times in people's lives where they can explore their sexualities. Unfortunately, college is also a site where a disproportionately high amount of sexual assault occurs compared to young adults of the same age who are not students (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Bachar & Koss, 2001). In contemporary discussions of sexual assault on college campuses it appears consent is a key factor in differentiating between autonomous experiences of desirable sex and non-consensual experiences of harmful sex or rape. This framework has led to the development of various movements on university campuses aimed at increasing the likelihood of consented sexual experiences. Regrettably, the countless ways in which apparently consensual experiences of sex end up privileging men sexually, within academia, and in life as a whole go unexamined and ultimately unchallenged. In following Gayatri Spivak, the goal then is to take the universalizing discourse of consent and find out what is useful and what is not. To do so, we push ourselves "to see where that discourse meets its limits and its challenge within [the] field" (Spivak & Harasym, 1990, p. 11). This leads to the examination of sexual coercion as our frontier, where some forms of coercion are deemed consensual and others are not according to university policies and state law. In approaching the periphery and softening the boundary of what defines acceptable and unacceptable sex, various experiences of sex, including pleasurable, consensual sex fall under scrutiny. The goal is to propose that there is not a binary of rape and consensual sex, but rather that there is a spectrum and that that spectrum needs to be carefully examined. Finally, the limits of consent are found in the examination of the ways sexual

satisfaction in enthusiastic experiences of sex is also gendered and thus contribute in ways to sexual inequality. Along the way, ties are continually made to the ways various experiences of consensual sex form some of the underpinnings of rape culture and gender inequality, continually perpetuating both.

### *Sexual Scripts*

Sexual scripts and gendered norms are guides passed to individuals as a source of guidance for how one should behave and what one should expect during a sexual encounter. They are made up of multiple dimensions: the cultural, the interpersonal, and the intrapersonal. The cultural plays a role in temporally and spatially locating scripts; each script is culturally specific and passed on through generations, changing as the culture does. The interpersonal dimension indicates the specific ways one is expected to behave when being sexual. There are meanings tied to sexual desires and behaviors that are used to indicate what an individual should expect in terms of actions as well as feelings during a sexual experience. The intrapersonal points to the roles these scripts play in how individuals come to understand themselves and their role in this world sexually (Simon & Gagnon, 1986; Gagnon, 1990). Overall, the cultural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions function simultaneously and are tied together in defining each other.

Within the U.S., particularly the mainstream, white middle class, the main script offered to men is centered on their own bodies and is largely coercive. Their role in sexual encounters is presented as the active subject who is worthy of pleasure, always desiring of sex, and knowledgeable about sex. On the other hand, the script for women defines them as partner-centered and encourages a romance-centered understanding of their encounters. This positions women as passive players, sympathetic to male sexuality, and portrays women as resisters to or

recipients of sex, i.e. gatekeepers (Bateman, 1991; Jackson, 2005; Hird, 2002; Jackson, 2006; Eaton & Rose, 2012; Rose & Frieze, 1993; Muehlenhard & Felts, 1998; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013). This is tied to women's virginity, which historically was used to encourage women to not have sex until they married a man, thus encouraging them to center and prioritize men over their own sexual desires. This keeps women "pure" and "innocent" and explains why women must be resistors to sex and why they are seen as not knowledgeable (Valenti, 2009). College students widely demonstrate approval and support for these sexual scripts (Edgar & Fitzpatrick, 1993; Bogle, 2008). Furthermore, it poses sex as a potential danger to women both physically and socially in that women are taught to consider the risks of sexual assault and even sexual excess as socially defined, of being perceived as responsible for any sexual harm, and of being called a "slut" or "whore" (Fine & McClelland, 2006, 2007; Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013). We can consider these the norms for men and women, which are nuanced further by race, class, and other identities. The problematic nature of these scripts and norms is accentuated by the ways in which society rewards those who follow them closely and punishes those that do not.<sup>1</sup> Overall, these norms can be seen as providing men with greater opportunities for safety, wellbeing, and sexual satisfaction than women (Gavey, 2005; Bradshaw, Kahn, & Saville, 2010; French & Neville, 2016). Thus these scripts are culturally specific in defining the ways interpersonal sexual interactions between men and women should occur, and also define the way individuals should think of themselves as sexual beings.

It is worth noting that this paper tends to focus on white, heterosexual, middle class experiences of sex among college students because they are the most studied individuals.

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<sup>1</sup> For further discussion on how this occurs, look at Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* and for an example of the application of Foucault's theory look at Sandra Lee Barkley's "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power."

However, despite the lack of data it is still possible to consider how scripts affect those more marginalized through a strong analysis on race and class, as will be done throughout the paper, particularly with a focus on Black women. Without such analysis, speculations based on race and class becomes an emerging theme in how researchers come to understand racial differences in experience (Eaton & Matamala, 2014). This is best exemplified by the use of lack of Western ideals, cultural valuation interdependency and social harmony, and Asian valuation of family honor to explain the conditions of sexual assault in Asian communities (Kennedy & Gorzalka, 2002; Koo, Stephens, Lindgren, & George, 2012; La Flair, Franko, & Herzog, 2008). The problematic assumptions involved in such an understanding include the essentialist notions of culture where the failed cross-cultural connection manifest through a failure to acknowledge the context of economically and political colonization in which various East Asian cultures developed. Then they are compared to a colonizing culture, like U.S. American culture. It ignores how the West ends up redeploying and eroticizing East Asian cultures in ways that feed into colonizing discourses (Kuo, 2015). Researchers also fail to use culture to explain white women's experiences of sexism and thus perpetuate culture being employed as something other races have, not white people. This is then used to locate culture in the past and thus something that needs to be overcome thus non-white people as in need of giving up their culture to be brought into the modern that white people occupy (Narayan, 2006; Hemmings, 2011). It is important to note that Asian women are portrayed as submissive, available, and willing sexual servants, often titled the "lotus blossom," or they are seen as cunning and seductive using their sexuality against the white man, often titled the "dragon lady." Both objectify Asian women as either an object for sexual pleasure or one for an exotic sexual adventure. Both are tied to the violent and colonial relationships the West has had with East Asian countries where Asia,

represented by its women, is both dangerous as well as a goal of conquest (Kuo, 2015).

References to culture and tradition make for poor explanations for the ways sexual experiences manifest across cultures.

A better method of analysis takes into account the context of various identities and how context plays a role in the lived experiences of those people. For example, as a result of systematic oppression, students who are unable to live independently, spatially and financially, from their families are less able to fulfill common sexual scripts. This affects mainly working-class individuals and people of color, Latinxs<sup>2</sup> in particular (Allison & Risman, 2014). Economically challenged people and people of color also tend to find college campuses more unfamiliar or alienating and consequently participate less in college culture, again limiting their access to the cultural sexual script of college life (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). White middle class individuals are specifically privileged in their ability to enact and explore their sexualities by not being as subjected to the constrictions of race and class and are more likely to partake in various sexual interactions while at the university (Allison & Risman, 2014; Bay-Cheng, 2010; Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009; Wade & Heldman, 2012). This is in part due to the white, middle class nature of most universities beyond specifically Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which are becoming more white (McGill, 2015; Butrymowicz, 2014). Furthermore, it is important to note university admissions privilege those who best fulfill these scripts and fit the white, middle class, heterosexual norm (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013). Universities actually produce rather than erase social inequalities. One way this is seen is that universities prefer upper-middle and middle class individuals who benefit the most from university structures and lower class individuals who can overcome their class status and fit in. Thus those lower class

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<sup>2</sup> Latinx is meant to be a gender-neutral alternative that avoids the gendering contained in Latino and Latina.

individuals enact normative scripts in fitting in as opposed to the lower class individuals who cannot fit in and finds college actually hinders their career (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013). While there are other factors at play and scripts aren't the only controllers of behavior, this suggests a tendency for universities to filter out individuals who enact radically different scripts, making analysis based on the mainstream scripts discussed more adequate. It also insists that while parts of this analysis can be used in understanding sexual experience outside of the U.S. university setting, the appropriation of this analysis would require further considerations of the historicity of sexuality and gender roles within those locations and their ties to other structures, such as imperialism and neocolonialism. While the focus throughout tends to be on the university as a location, we cannot deny the role the university plays in reinforcing the gendered and raced structures that maintain sexual scripts as well as how the university would benefit. The larger institutional and ideological analysis of consent and power is beyond the scope of this work and was something I covered in earlier work. It is also important to note that while in society as a whole this might occur as well, it is in a more diluted and complicated sense beyond the scope of this work. Still, the university feeds into this by reinforcing people's conceptions of gendered and racial scripts and leaving those unchallenged as students graduate.

I particularly focus on the experiences of Black women due to both my familiarity with Black feminisms and to their positioning at the intersection of racism, sexism, and often classism. While race and class are not the only identities shaping women's experiences, using them within my analysis highlights the need to take women's intersectional identities into account in confronting sexual violence. To do so requires collaborations and being open to and encouraging critique, one piece alone cannot take into account race, class, sexuality, gender, geographical location, ability, and so on. Because of the ways the Black woman is socially

constructed, understanding their experiences provides insight to the experiences of other women of color, poor women, and white women due to their sharing of racial, sexual, and class-based oppression (Grant, 2009). Black women's sexual scripts have foundations in historical images of the Jezebel, Mammy, Welfare Mother, and the Matriarch. In modern day, Black women's scripts include the Diva, Gold Digger, Freak, Dyke, Gangster Bitch, Sister Savior, Earth Mother, and Baby Mama each with separate relations to class, sexuality, etc. (French, 2013). Their scripts are more explicitly outlined compared to white women because of the way both race and gender are used to profile and contain cultural understandings of Black women's sexuality. Black women can choose to enact one, multiple, or none of these scripts. However, her success is largely determined by the perceptions of others who primarily interpret Black women's actions based on these scripts, which are framed within a male, white lens. Within these scripts, sexuality for Black women is commodified and presented as their most useful tool for negotiating interpersonal experience (French, 2013; Stephens & Phillips, 2003). Furthermore, it is important to note that the role of Black women in these scripts, as for women of other races, are similar to those imposed on white women, such as to fulfill the sexual desires of men, to reproduce, etc. Race mediates what meanings and expectations the women were attributed in fulfilling their expected role. This captures how Black women are subjected to more than simply the virgin/whore dichotomy white women experience and is something that will be considered in this paper's discussion of women's navigation of sexual experiences. It also demonstrates the ways that the scripts of white women are dependent on women of color. The virginal construction of the white woman is reliant on the production of the Black women as unable to be sexually pure. Overall, the racialization of women gives Black women less social power and underlies the fact that they are more likely to be victims of rape while the conviction rates for

their perpetrators are lower and the sentences their perpetrators receive shorter (Polta, 2013).

Race provides an additional way to devalue certain women, blame them for their experienced sexual harm, and further silence and control them (Polta, 2013; Rederstorff, Buchanan, & Settles, 2007).

Finally, it is important to note the ways neoliberalism has played a role in the modern shaping of sexual scripts. Neoliberalism originated in theory about economic policies that emphasized privatization, deregulation, free trade, and so on. It has been expanded to business models, to university models, and finally to individual ideologies and defining a code of ethics (Gaffikin & Perry, 2009). Neoliberalism constructs individuals as free, rational and autonomous, placing full responsibility on the individual regardless of context. In terms of sexuality, it insists individuals self-determine their sexuality and are responsible for their own self-interest. Neoliberalism thus justifies the removal of state and social resources that are needed to protect women from sexual violence, providing solely a discourse of self-determination and personal responsibility that encourages women to blame themselves for their victimization (Fine & McClelland, 2006, 2007). The way neoliberalism has affected sexual scripts can be seen in the commonly cited Pleasing Woman vs. Together Woman scripts. The Pleasing Woman can be considered the more traditional sexual script, privileging and serving male sexuality. The Together Woman is the emerging neoliberalist script where the woman is seductively portrayed as sexually empowered and completely in control of their life circumstances, meaning women who are victimized lacked self-respect, were weak, or were inept in some way (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008). In not challenging the gendered norms and scripts previously in place systematically, the modified script encourages women to take personal responsibility while

offering little personal liberty in return. It also further hides their partner's coercive behaviors and larger sexist social structures.

This script is further nuanced through class. We find middle class women at prestigious universities' successes dependent partially on neoliberalism, in turn encouraging them to more strongly identify with its scripts and thus personal responsibility. Working class women on the other hand, tend to identify less with this neoliberal script and are often aware of their lack of control over societal context (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008; Tolman, Szalacha, & Ussher, 1999; Martin, 1996). This is something that will be further explicated in the discussion of pleasure and desire. Furthermore, this script privileges men in attributing personal success to their own merits, asserting their rights to self-determination, and blaming others for not being responsible for acting in their own self interest (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008; Adam, 2005). The sexual double standard has simply re-emerged and expanded to all aspects of life to more adequately fit modern context. The progress narrative is further challenged when realizing the ways the image of sexual liberation plays a role in the maintaining of women's sexual oppression. Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* already suggested that the portrayal of the modern as more liberated is part of the legitimizing of the current establishment, even when the present might be more repressed. (Foucault, 1990).

These scripts and norms having been labeled "the cultural scaffolding of rape" compel one to keep them in mind when analyzing individual experiences of sex, no matter how seemingly consensual (Gavey, 2005). The claim is that they both serve in maintaining what is colloquially known as rape culture, or a rape-supportive social environment. Rape can be roughly defined as nonconsensual sexual intercourse, a definition that will soon become complicated. Rape itself has historically been used to control and maintain dominance over

women, regardless of whether or not a specific woman herself was victim to rape (MacKinnon, 1989, p. 340-341). Sexual scripts and gendered norms also play a part in the oppression of women as exemplified in the ways heteronormative expectations systematically disadvantage women and privilege men when it comes to specifically negotiating the terms of sexual encounters, not just outcomes (Basile, 1999; Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008; Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Gavey, 2005). One of the ways this occurs is seen in how traditional gender roles inhibit the development of women's sexual resourcefulness, hindering their ability to deal with instances of unwanted sex (Murnen, Perot, & Byrne, 1989; Albanesi, 2010). Other concerns about these sexual scripts and norms are raised when accounting for the ways they objectify women, which has repeatedly been shown to increase victim blaming and decrease the likelihood one will believe women's experiences of violence and suffering (Krahé, Bieneck, Scheinberger-Olwig, 2007, Hipp et al., 2015; Polta, 2013). They often function to justify the sexual harm women experience, but also justify the lack of sexual pleasure women obtain from sex (Hipp et al., 2015). Overall, it is important to think of power as constantly negotiated rather than as something either acting upon someone or not. Poor Black women are then understood as navigating a world where they not only lack the power gender provides men, but also that class and race provide middle class white people. Their negotiations are then further complicated. In this way, we can simultaneously acknowledge the lack of social power women have compared to men while still considering women as agentic subjects even in coercive or compliant instances of sex.

### ***Sexual Coercion***

On a spectrum of sexual behaviors and consent, one might place rape on one end and consensual, enthusiastic sex where each party gains equitable pleasure on the other end. On this

spectrum, one of the closest acts to rape is sexual coercion. I define rape as sex where no consent is given and sexual coercion where consent is given only after some sort of pressure. Sexual coercion serves as a marker for where to begin the critical analysis of various types of consensual sexual acts, moving down the spectrum from that most like rape to that least like it. The closeness of sexual coercion and rape is exemplified by the frequent labeling of experiences of sexual coercion as rape by legal and university policy frameworks as well as within various feminist discourses (Conroy, Krishnakumar, & Leone, 2015). This occurs through a logic where the pressure used to obtain consent is frequently seen as nullifying the consent given and thus the experience of sex is deemed nonconsensual and categorized as rape. The main two types of coercion labeled rape are those that involve physical force or threat of physical force and those that involve alcohol or drug intoxication. The prevalence of the use of physical harm or threat of physical harm by a male to gain consent and access to sex after a female college student refused sex is disproportionately high compared to when there is a female perpetrator and male victim. The rates of coercion are even more out of proportion in instances where a woman's intoxicated state is exploited to obtain consent and sex (Stuckman-Johnson, Struckman-Johnson, & Anderson, 2003). The higher rates of use of drugs and alcohol to obtain consent and the higher rates of coercion of women compared to men are also supported by various other previous studies (Larimer, Lydum, Anderson, & Turner, 1999; Zurbriggen, 2000; Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988). In recognizing that consent was given, but obtained through an abuse of power, we avoid creating the binary of rape/consensual sex that erases the presence of consent and in turn make other, subtler abuses of power visible. The purpose is not to suggest consent justifies the acts, but rather that consent's presence and the complexity of the situation needs to be taken up critically.

In allowing there to be suspicion about consent's presence in sexually coercive situations, two other types of coercion emerge that often fall outside of university and state frameworks and at times feminist ones: emotional manipulation and lies as well as nonverbal sexual arousal. Emotional manipulation and lies involves the use of both to wear down the woman's resistance and to take advantage of her desires and needs, such as the desire to maintain the relationship. It is experienced by a significantly higher proportion of female university students, some studies claiming more than twice that of coercion via alcohol or drug intoxication. More specifically it could entail using lies, authority, questioning the woman's sexuality, or threatening self-harm in order to obtain sexual consent. Nonverbal sexual arousal on the other hand involves the use of normative sexual seduction post-refusal as an attempt to obtain consent, such as through persistent kissing or touching, and is experienced by similar proportions of college women to that of emotional manipulation and lies (Struckman-Johnson et al., 2003). Just like rape, this has been shown to highly disproportionately affect women. The difference is in more than just prevalence rates, men are significantly more likely to experience coercion by women as mild unlike women who are coerced by men (Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988). This follows the pattern of the sexual scripts previously discussed: men are seen as constantly desiring of sex and women as gatekeepers, so we would expect men to be the ones pushing for consent post-refusal. Also, men might experience coercion more mildly because obtaining sex goes along with their given scripts, while women who experience coercion are failing at their script as gatekeepers. The experience might then create a dissonance between their experience and their perceived role in turn playing a part in their more severe ratings of their experience. Also, women typically use arguably less exploitive and gentler tactics and appear to limit themselves to using sexual arousal and repeated requests (Struckman-Johnson et al., 2003). This too follows the patterns of the

sexual scripts discussed as women are seen as less sexually desiring and pushed to follow a more romantic script where they use their bodies to obtain what they want. The ties to sexual script is furthered by research showing that men with stricter attitudes regarding normative gender and heteronormative beliefs about men and women are more likely to be coercive (Eaton & Matamala, 2014). Gendered cultural norms and sexual scripts function in mediating who experiences sexual coercion disproportionately, how they experience it literally, and in what way mentally.

The line between sexual coercion and rape is blurred even more when taking into account the psychological side effects of sexual coercion for women. Women who experienced verbal and emotional sexual coercion often demonstrate emotional and intrapersonal harm of equal or greater magnitude than women who were raped. Consequences measured include increases in defensive avoidance behaviors, feelings of anger and irritability, rates of depression, dissociative symptoms, impaired self-reference, sexual concerns, and tension reduction behaviors (Petretic & Broach, 2006). It is apparent that we are vastly underestimating the sexual harm women are enduring at the hands of men. State and university frameworks that punish non-normative sexual behaviors, such as rape, normalize and label as acceptable other forms of coercion by not disciplining men who perpetrate them. This is not to suggest feminists should push the university and state to also discipline those individuals, as it might only be furthering the power of the state to regulate gendered norms and sexualities (Foucault, 1990, 1995). It is conservatively estimated that a fifth to a third of women experience sexual assault or rape while in college (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987; Fisher et al., 2000; Bachar & Koss, 2001; Gross, Winslett, Roberts, & Gohm, 2006). Significantly more women, at times estimated to be a prevalence rate over two to three times higher, experience coercion that has a similar magnitude of harm (Petretic & Broach,

2006; Stuckman-Johnson et al., 2003; Eaton & Matamala, 2014) Given this, it becomes clear that gendered experience of severe sexual harm is not just an epidemic, rather almost a ubiquitous norm for women within the university. The conclusion made given these experiences rarely, if ever, fall under the scrutiny of law or university policy is that there is a severe failure in framework. To try to encapsulate these experiences within the definitions of rape would be to fail to realize the problematic nature of the rape/consensual sex binary, where some harmful experiences of sex will always fall outside of the protected category. It would maintain power as either present, such as in rape, or not, such as in consensual sex, rather than as constantly negotiated. It would also fail to acknowledge the differences and nuances between women's sexual experiences and it would not critically look at how normative sexual scripts play a role in the sexual harm women experience. In not expanding our framework, a large portion of women are left invisible and their experienced unacknowledged, leaving them with few significant routes through which to demand justice and accountability.

Not differentiating between all these tactics and experiences would lead to missing how the various means of obtaining consent create a web and reinforce each other, sexual scripts, and rape culture as a whole. In not taking into account the nuances of these experiences and how they relate we would miss how the use of psychological pressure is likely preferred because men are able to obtain sexual access without using more severe tactics that would increase the risk of state or university punishment (Katz & Tirone, 2010; Ramisetty-Mikler, Caetano, & McGrath, 2007; Abbey, BeShears, Clinton-Sherrod, & McAuslan, 2004). Furthermore, using psychological rather than physical pressure is deemed socially acceptable (Oswald & Russell, 2006). While women might react differently to the widespread pressures to have sex, the end result remains the same: women are taught consenting is the path of least resistance (Katz & Tirone, 2010). The

presence of implicit coercion and how easily it can be overlooked becomes more apparent given “I thought he would have forced me had I said no,” is rarely taken seriously if there is no explicit evidence that meet dominant standards of evidence. Women’s experiences of sexual coercion are unlikely to be recognized or validated if the male perpetrator lacks a state or university recognized history of sexual violence. The same is true if a woman discusses her frequent past experiences of being forced to have sex by men if they didn’t consent to try to demonstrate the presence of implied coercion. The acknowledgement of the possibility of implicit coercion is followed by the acknowledgement of the ways the social reality of rape for college women as well as cultural myths create an environment that encourages all women to feel a sense of risk of rape. A woman consenting to sex with a man out of fear of being raped that comes from not her personal experience with that man, but because of the general experiences of women like her with men, is unlikely to have her experience of feeling sexually coerced validated. Women consenting to sex because of no apparent pressure but due past experiences of partner violence, threats, and coercion can then be considered experiences of coercion because one man’s actions are enough to produce and maintain fear in a woman beyond his own actions in a way that benefits men and harms women (Mackinnon, 1989). This is demonstrated by the fact that women who experienced past coercion are significantly much more likely to comply to unwanted sex in the future, some studies saying up to 7.25 times more likely (Katz & Tirone, 2010; Daigle, Fisher, & Cullen, 2008). The woman consenting to sex due to past experiences is doing so due to experienced gendered sexual oppression and the man who is obtaining her consent without direct coercion is privileged in having greater access to her body thanks to other men within socially acceptable terms. The use of implicit coercive techniques serve not just individual men by allowing them to obtain sexual access to women, but it also functions as a way to control women

and maintain them subordinate even if their current male partner has not demonstrated willingness to escalate tactics.

### ***Social Coercion***

In a way similar to how the risk of rape is socially used to control all women, so are tacit forms of coercion, often defined as social coercion. Social coercion can be defined as the pressure felt to adhere to one's sexual script given the social and cultural expectations of them. Such aversion is insidious in that while the pressure is not readily apparent, it is still omnipresent in women's lives, similar to the threat of rape (Conroy et al., 2015; Finkelhor & Yllö, 1985; Basile, 1999; MacKinnon, 1989). The negotiation of sex and consent during a sexual interaction is tainted by the pressures produced by gendered sexual scripts and norms that privilege male ideas of sex and make truly autonomous consent difficult to conceptualize (Gavey, 2005, Basile, 1999; Finkelhor & Yllö, 1985; Tolman, 2002; McPhillips, Braun, & Gavey, 2001; Phillips, 2000). This is emphasized by further studies that demonstrate that men are the ones with more social power both within and outside of intimate relationships (Smith, Hamon, Ingoldsby, & Miller, 2009). Additionally, the fact that women are more often coerced can be partially explained due to the way their sexual scripts undermine their sexual agency (Crawford, Kippax, & Waldby, 1994). Women are rewarded, per say, for consenting and following social scripts by not having the use of force escalated on the individual level and not being labeled as non-normative on a cultural level. This in turn can lead to the internalization of these pressures leading women to pressure themselves into consenting and no longer requiring their partner to do so. So while a woman might "feel perfectly able to say no," she, without further male intervention ends up feeling "prudish, frigid, and a bit unfair" if she doesn't consent to sex (Gavey, 2005, p. 154). Initially, labels such as "prude" or "slut" might affect women because

they might fear the interpersonal or social consequences of such a designation when compared to the script they perceive they should be fulfilling. This can then end up being internalized, where women might not be worried about being called a “prude” or “slut,” but instead be worried about feeling like one (Hakvåg, 2009). The labels then not only encourage self-policing, but also produce harmful effects for women’s social status as well as personal well being, a harmful double bind that doesn’t exist for men (Bartky, 1998). This explicitly shows how power is negotiated and how it at times enacts itself through the body. In these ways, women’s sexualities are being regulated through widespread systematic processes occurring at the larger cultural-social level as well as the individual level. A woman consenting to unwanted sex without explicit pressure present might be seen as cause for concern, but when contextualized (e.g. the woman may not be able to afford housing on her own) her agency becomes apparent in how she manages the “flawed social and material conditions of her life” (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008, p. 396). In this way, we can acknowledge both the woman’s practice of agency as well as her position “as a victim of inequitable social conditions” (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008, p. 396). This points out that when studying women their marginalized position due to their gender that is beyond their control must not erase their subjectivity and agency.

Women internalize societal expectations about sexuality through gender socialization and thus we need to understand consent as learned and embedded within sexual scripts that privilege men’s sexuality (Walker, 1997; Gavey, 2005; Knobloch-Westerwick & Hoplamazian, 2012). Women disproportionately consenting to unwanted sex can be assumed to be partially because society values compliant and passive behaviors in women (Morgan, Johnson, & Sigler, 2006). The same is true for women who take partner centered approaches to sex and relationships (Impett & Peplau, 2003). The consideration of these experiences as coercion and not normative

experiences of sex is further exemplified by the negative psychological and physical outcomes including feelings of guilt, of feeling violated, of self-blame, of emotional and physical discomfort, and so on (Christopher, 1988; Basile, 1999; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Impett, Peplau, & Gable, 2005; Walker, 1997).

Similar to how women, due to their gender identity, are harmed by the ever-present threat of rape accompanied by social coercion, men, due to their gender identity, are privileged and benefited by it. To not actively challenge that privilege which, much like the threat of rape and presence of social coercion is ubiquitous for men is to allow it to continue as acceptable. Thus men should actively challenge the sexism of all men, particularly those prioritize their sexuality and desires. Men should also actively work to empower women, encourage development of resources for them to heal, and better understand how sexism affects women's lives. Men benefit from a system that privileges them due to the active oppression of women. If they don't challenge it, they are complicit in its presence. This perpetuates sexism and a culture that allows rape and broader definitions of sexual harm to occur to women. The point is not to suggest the criminalization of men who have sex with women that complied due to social coercion or past harmful experiences. It is to point out how men benefit from women's oppression without their knowledge and perpetuate sexism and sexual scripts that uphold rape culture. What is made clear is that "male dominance can be maintained in heterosexual practice often in the absence of direct force or violence" (Gavey, 1992, p. 325). This is part of how the subtle nature of social coercion makes it hard to point out and define experiences of unwanted sex given the frequent legitimization of normalized heterosexual gendered relations in relationships (Hakvåg, 2009). In this way, consent can be considered a means of negotiating the power imbalances in place within a patriarchal society rather than as an autonomous individual action. More clearly, a woman

might consent because she simply does not feel comfortable or safe doing otherwise given the dynamics between men and women as culturally scripted and as well as the more specific dynamics between her and her partner. A feminist male partner might then seek to create dynamics between himself and his partner that specifically undermine the social scripts that frequently serve to disempower women. In particular, given the power imbalance and vulnerability of women to sexual harm due to cultural understandings of gender, it would be reasonable to assume consent is not purely freely given unless shown otherwise, rather than vice versa. This would require a more critical analysis and understanding of consent such that in our heavily patriarchal society, until we get rid of the systematic oppression of women, we would assume the presence of social coercion, rightfully so given its ever present nature. In terms of relationships of unequal power, men, typically those with more social power compared to women, should do everything they can to try to assure consent is real, including working to diminish power imbalances in their relationships with women such as by countering sexism and his privileges in society overall. To assume consent is real risks not being critical of the social power someone like a man in power might not see in their relationship and the ways in which for women sex is often a negotiation of power, thus consent is tinged by it.

It is apparent that men abuse their socially given male power by using women's gender and sexual identities to benefit either themselves or other men. Women and their enactments of sexuality and gender are negotiations of power in a patriarchal society. Meanwhile, men and their enactments of sexuality and gender are acts of power, and at times negotiations of power. This idea is supported when looking at the data of men being sexually coerced by women, although at significantly lower rates than women are sexually coerced by men. Men tend to use sexual coercion as a means of getting their desires met, such as obtaining sexual consent.

Women tend to use coercion to negotiate or obtain control of a relationship. Women use the means available to them within a patriarchal society to meet their own emotional or sexual needs that are frequently suppressed by sexism (Mouzon, Battle, Clark, Coleman, & Ogletree, 2005; Sprecher, Hatfield, Cortese, Potapova, & Levitskaya, 1994). Men also tend to comply to unwanted sex to gain sexual experience, impress their peers, and gain popularity, unlike women (Impett & Peplau, 2003). Men's experiences social coercion actually works to reinforce ideas of contained within men's sexual scripts, such as them being knowledgeable about sex. This differentiates men from women given men's experiences of social coercion actually fortifies their social clout rather than harm it. This works for men overall in pushing men to engage in sex, even if unwanted, in such a way reinforces sexual scripts and male power, perpetuating sexism. On the other hand, a woman engaging in unwanted sex isn't a perpetuation of sexist culture, but rather a navigation of it.

One of the ways in which women are made vulnerable by a patriarchal society because of their gendered identities is seen in the connections of the scripts women are given to the privileging of male sexuality. Concern over the vulnerability of Black women because our white-supremacist, patriarchal society is then rightfully justified. Black women are at greater risk not by essence of who they are, but because of the systematic institutional racism and sexism at play. Black women are vulnerable to not only the use of racism at times and sexism at others thus increasing the frequency they experience potentially harmful experiences, but the simultaneous experience of both also increases the severity of the harm they experience. This work alone is not sufficient to fully understand the sexual harm women experience because women's identities are made up of more than just their gender, race, and class. Being Asian, queer, disabled, or another marginalized identity also likely put an individual at increased risk for sexual harm. The form in

which sexual harm manifests and how it is experienced is defined in part by the victim's different identities and specific contexts, so each needs to be considered in their own right. My essay doesn't seek to encapsulate all women's experiences, but rather highlights the need to take into account the various identities of women in confronting sexual violence and the dangerous, unacceptable risks of not doing so.

### *Intersection of Race and Gender*

The ways race and class nuance the different experiences of Black and white women becomes clear in combining the little research on Black women's experience with sexual coercion with the more relatively rich field of research on sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is a relevant topic given its sexual and gendered nature similar to rape, coercion, and other forms of sexual harm. It also works to produce and reinforce male power while seeking to pit women against each other and disempower them, again like various forms of sexual harm (Thomae & Pina, 2015). So while Black women's experiences of sexual harassment aren't identical to those of sexual coercion, the patterns that emerge can be seen within both research topics. Kimberlé Crenshaw has eloquently labeled two of the major patterns structural intersectionality and political intersectionality. Structural intersectionality refers to how women of color's location at the intersection of race and gender creates an experience of sexual violence fundamentally different from that of white women. It also refers to how the remedial and reformist solutions that work for white women tend to not work for, and at times further marginalize, Black women (1991). Political intersectionality refers to how mainstream feminist and anti-racist movements and ideologies generally function simultaneously in marginalizing the specific issue of sexual violence as related to Black women (1991). The pattern of structural intersectionality can be seen in the way Black women have their race and gender used against them in these acts of sexual

harm while the political intersectionality is seen in how mainstream, predominantly white, feminism serves white women in dealing with these sexually harmful experiences, while harming Black women who undergo similar experience.

Black women tend to have less traditional views of gender and what their role is in the world as a woman because of the ways “woman” has historically been defined by whiteness (Truth, 1997). Despite not buying into traditional views of gender as much, they are still at considerable risk for sexual harm, showing the need to consider how Black women view gender as separate, but together with how they experience it. Black women, unlike white women, tend to use cultural factors more in trying to understand why they were sexually assaulted. This means Black women tend to use cultural blame attribution such as the image of the Jezebel to understand their experience. Black women who do this identify the Jezebel and other images of Black women as the reason they were raped, thus resulting in a greater attribution of blame on themselves leading to more intense psychological harm (Neville, Heppner, Oh, Spanierman, & Clark, 2004). Poor Black women are particularly vulnerable to the detrimental psychological side effects of sexual harm such as PTSD, depression, suicidal ideation, and pain-related health problems as well as fatigue and nausea (Bryant-Davis, Ullman, Tsong, Tillman, & Smith, 2010). Even when controlling for other demographics such as education and class, Black women are significantly more likely to experience sexual coercion than white women and are less able to effectively negotiate the terms of sex, such as condom use (Gakumo, Enah, & Azuero, 2014). The fact that Black women also experience higher lifetime prevalence of rape than white women has been heavily supported by various studies (Thompson, McGee, & Mays, 2012; Black et al., 2010; Crouch, Hanson, Saunders, Kilpatrick, & Resnick, 2000; Rickert, Wiemann, Vanghan, & White, 2004).

Black women's experiences of sexual violence by white men can be traced well back into the times of slavery. Black women slaves were deemed economically more valuable than Black men because it was believed that not only could they be worked just as hard, but they also could reproduce the labor force. In effect, white men frequently claimed Black women as their sexual property to satisfy their needs, even post chattel slavery when Black women still lacked any protection from the state (Crenshaw, 1991; Stephens & Phillips, 2003; French & Neville, 2008; Collins, 2000). This is the context that the narrative of the sexually promiscuous and unrapable Jezebel originates from. Now, it underlies other scripts such as that of a video vixen or gold digger where Black women are still seen as always desiring of sex (French & Neville, 2008). Other narratives such as the Mammy have their own similar historical origins and have gone on to produce modern scripts such as the Baby Mama, which incorporates Black women's contemporary relationship to the welfare state and stigmatize Black women being single and having various children (French, 2013; Collins, 2000).

As previously stated, while Black women may enact one, many, or none of the sexual scripts offered to them, they are still judged by others who might still compare their performance to those scripts. This is exemplified in how Black women are perceived as suffering less harm compared to white women when experience sexual violence (Foley, Evancic, Karnik, King, & Parks, 1995) and are also more likely to be blamed for it (Donovan, 2007; George & Martínez, 2002). These perceptions have ties to the historical images of the Jezebel and contemporary hypersexualization of Black women where Black women are seen as wanting sex and seductive and thus seen as at fault. Other scripts meet the same ends through different means, such as the Strong Black Woman where the Black woman is seen as resilient as thus suffering less harm and having more control over the situation and thus also having some blame. These scripts also

influence the ways Black women respond to experiences of sexual coercion and may be why they are significantly less likely to report it to the police compared to white women (Krebs, Lindquist, & Barrick, 2011). At the individual level, general hostilities experienced by an individual or their peers plays into reluctance to report. Awareness that they are more likely to be compared to problematic sexual scripts and the negative results such as being blamed for the harm only increases their reluctance to report. At the cultural-social level, the private sphere, such as the home, represents a place free from the racist assaults of the public sphere. This, along with Black people's history of being policed and living under state surveillance plays into a widespread Black cultural mistrust of police (Wyatt, 1992; Crenshaw, 1991). This is one of the ways in which scripts affect the availability and usefulness of resources for Black women compared to white women and how their history is particularly relevant in making sense of those differences. This may also be due to how race adds another aspect as to why sexual violence might be suppressed within nonwhite communities. One way this manifests is Black women finding they are simultaneously torn between avoiding reinforcing distorted public perceptions of the Black community, which can subordinate their gendered identity to their racial one, while also recognizing their own needs to have their experience validated and dealt with, which is often criticized for prioritizing their gender over racial solidarity (Crenshaw, 1991). Another factor is the cultural script of the Strong Black Woman that is found in the traces in several of Black women's modern sexual scripts such as the Earth Mother who has a strong sense of self that is intimidating to men. The allure of these scripts is in part due to the fact they run counter to the historical narratives of Black women as property and lacking any agency. Unfortunately, Black women who embrace or identify with these enticing scripts are less likely to seek resources and help and embrace a more self-blaming understanding of their experience of sexual harm (West &

Johnson, 2013). These scripts are only part of how Black women have defined and understood themselves and how they have developed unique understandings of sexual harm and ways of healing.

Research on sexual harassment highlights the importance of considering Black women's race and gender as well as the importance in considering the perpetrator's identity. Taking into consideration the perpetrator's race, for example allows us to add nuance to differing experiences of sexual harm by differentiating between intraracial and interracial experiences. Similar to above, Black women's historical relationship to white men is likely part of what leads to sexual harassment or assault of Black women by white men being perceived as more severe than sexual harassment or assault of Black women by Black men (Shelton & Chavous, 1999; Woods, Buchanan, & Settles, 2009). The larger difference in social power between Black women and white men compared to Black women and Black men is likely at play (Collins, 2000) given that larger difference social status between victim and perpetrator has been shown to increase the perceived severity of sexual harassment (Langhout et al., 2005). The reason for the perception of increased severity in interracial experiences of sexual harassment is abundantly justified when considering Black women's lived reality of facing more severe and physical forms of sexual harassment from white men compared to white women's experiences from white men, such as sexual coercion (Woods et al., 2009; Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Bergman & Drasgow, 2003; Kalof, Eby, Matheson, & Kroska, 2001). A higher status perpetrator thus increases the chance of more severe harassing experiences and a white male perpetrator is likely of higher status than a Black male perpetrator, making cross-racial harassment as well as cross-racial sexual coercion more severe.

Most Black college women's experiences of sexual violence are intraracial (Krebs et al., 2011). But, Black women's experiences of cross-racial rape are less likely to be labeled "definitely rape", with Black women seen as more culpable and less credible. This is concerning, particularly as this effect is more pronounced with increased racist beliefs (George & Martínez, 2002). This effect can be tied to the presence of race, rape of a white woman by a white man would be defined as rape between a man and a woman, while rape of a Black women by a white man tends to evoke discussions of race. Thus, in cross-racial rape cases, racialized gendered sexual scripts that view Black women as hypersexual and not rapable will be evoked more frequently, benefiting the white male perpetrator and harming the Black woman victim more than cases of intraracial rape in the white community (Buchanan, 2005; Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002). Thus, like sexual harassment, cross-racial sexual coercion is more likely to be a racialized as well as gendered experience and even though intraracial sexual coercion can evoke these scripts, as discussed, it wouldn't be as accentuated. This means that Black women's experiences of sexual coercion are likely specific in manifestation as they draw on Black women's sexual scripts that hypersexualize them given cultural scripts are a large part of how people make sense of themselves (Duncombe & Marsden, 1996). This simultaneous experience of racism and sexism is an attributing factor explaining the more severe experience of sexual harm for Black women by white men.

The marginalization of Black women only worsens given their political intersectionality. For Black women simultaneously racialized and gendered experiences of sexual harm makes feminism a harmful ideology to embrace. While white women embracing feminist ideologies can minimize the psychological harm experiences by sexual harassment, and likely sexual coercion, Black women with feminist ideologies may actually experience more severe psychological harm

(Rederstorff et al., 2007). Mainstream feminism has developed understandings of gender that has not taken into account race, and thus its theories may not apply to Black women (Crenshaw, 1991). In turn, Black women have a different understanding of gender due to their racialized identities where mainstream, white feminism isn't as useful (Crenshaw, 1991; Moradi, 2005). One example might be how the push for birth control by white women used a rhetoric that stigmatized poor women of color for having multiple children and actually pushed tested the birth control drugs on poor women of color, sterilizing them without real consent (Gazit, Steward, & Klotz, 2003). Another example includes how white women pushed to join the labor force using feminist rhetoric that ignored the presence of women of color already in the workforce and how women of color would take on the housework white women left behind in joining the public sphere (Glenn, 1985). Black women thus have to know the reality of white women, as it is intrinsically tied to their own experiences of oppression and something they need to know for survival, as well as their own reality as Black women. Black women's sterilization cannot be understood without considering the white women's movement for reproductive rights. Meanwhile, white women's movement for reproductive rights can be understood and is often discussed without any acknowledgement to Black women's sterilization. This gives Black women a double consciousness where they are able to know the consciousness of white women, and men, as well as their own. White women lack that double consciousness because there is no need for them to know the experience of Black women, made clear given at times their feminist rhetoric is predicated on the erasure of Black women's experiences. Because of Black women's double consciousness, they are likely more aware of the various experiences and oppressions they face, which is only further emphasized if they're poor (Rederstorff et al., 2007; Collins, 2000; Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008).

White women's racial identity doesn't contribute to what can be perceived as an inescapable risk of sexual harm. In turn, white women may not be as conscious of the ways in which they are personally affected by inequitable social structures. This allows them to blame external factors like misogyny while also protecting themselves more from psychological harm compared to Black women (Rederstorff et al., 2007). Black women likely feel marginalized by multiple systems of oppression and thus specifically targeted as a Black woman, which is a relatively specific group in most spaces. White women on the other hand can brush off experiences of sexism as a man just generally being sexist against 50% of the population, women. They don't feel personally as single out or attacked because of what a general and prevalent group they belong to. Furthermore, white women have greater access to legal and mental health resources and their feminist attitudes may more encourage use of such resources and thus greater access to crucial help for healing. Meanwhile, Black women may be more skeptical of attempting to better their situations through resources like the law or counseling due to their increased consciousness of their racialized and gendered identity. This is in part because the medical, psychological, and legal fields historically have not worked to serve Black women and the Black community in general, but to further marginalize them (Rederstorff et al., 2007). Poor Black women are even more ignored by services due to their additional marginalized class status (West & Johnson, 2013).

It is important to note that while mainstream feminism might have failed Black women in some respects such as accounting for how Black women experience gender, Black women's development of theory through Black Feminisms or Womanism which develop a racialized gendered understanding of Black women's experiences does actually better protect them from psychological harm (Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson, 1997; Constantine & Watt, 2002;

Walker, 2009). Both emerged due to the failure of feminism's ability to account for Black women's experiences. Womanism in particular focuses on understanding how Black women's experiences make them who they are and encourages the interpretation of the world for Black women as opposed to accepting white men's interpretation (Grant, 2009). Unfortunately, with the development of ideologies that better serve Black women, such as womanist theology, come scripts such as Sister Savior that incorporate these empowering narratives and twist them to further marginalize Black women. The Sister Savior script and like scripts restrict and ground Black women's sexuality in the Black church, encouraging personal responsibility of maintaining sexually constrictive moral standards (Stephens & Phillips, 2003; French, 2013). An experience of sexual harm is explained by the woman's failure to maintain moral standards by being sexual rather than by the man's failure to respect women. This individualizes context and blames Black women for their oppression. Alternatively, if one were to acknowledge maintaining moral standards doesn't protect from being sexually assaulted, one might feel a lack of control over their personal safety regardless of how hard they try. It also results in encouraging Black women to police each other's behaviors in hopes of preventing their peers from fitting stereotypes of Black women as immoral and hypersexual (French, 2013).

Black women are faced with the challenge of finding authentic understandings of their sexuality that are truly liberating and don't make false promises about liberation like many sexual scripts do. Black women shouldn't have to do the work to end their oppression. It is the responsibility of individuals who perpetuate their oppression, such as men or white women. The goal isn't to vacate or destroy these scripts as that would only further police and limit Black women, but rather to end the power inequality that emanates from them. As Kimberlé Crenshaw beautifully stated, "The struggle over incorporating these differences is not a petty or superficial

conflict about who gets to sit at the head of the table. It is sometimes a deadly serious matter of who will survive and who will not” (1991).

### *Sexual Compliance*

Going back to a broader discussion of women’s experiences in general, without considering the role of social coercion, it is easy to see a clear distinction between sexual coercion and sexual compliance. The nuances race and class provide will be expanded on again by comparing and contrasting Black women and white women’s experiences. Sexual coercion refers to instances where one consents to sex only following pressure; sexual compliance refers to instances where one consents to unwanted sex with no apparent pressure present. While the concept of social coercion might heavily blur the line that distinguishes sexual coercion and sexual compliance, sexual compliance still remains a separate category in that a woman might consent to unwanted sex for the sake of making her partner happy without feeling implicitly pressured to. If the woman consented to unwanted sex because she felt it was her responsibility as a woman to please the man or due to other implicit pressures, this would be social coercion. Regardless, little research on sexual coercion or sexual compliance has significantly taken into consideration the possibility of social coercion. Individuals might not want sex yet they may still passively participate or explicitly consent due to various explicit or implicit pressures. This causes the concept of “freely given” consent to be problematized. Because of this, sexual compliance needs to be opened up so we might see how the reasons for compliance tie to social roles and their partners before making claims about the degree of consent present.

Sexual compliance is typically said to refer to experiences of unwanted sex where one complies to sex in the absence of external pressures, an experience not necessarily mutually exclusive from social coercion. Research often divides experiences of sexual compliance into

two categories: those where the person complies with sex for positive reasons and those where the person complies with sex for negative reasons. Negative reasons include doing so to avoid an argument, to not make a partner upset, or to prevent tension in the relationship (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Shotland & Hunter, 1995; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Impett & Peplau, 2002). Positive reasons might entail wanting to encourage intimacy, to make one's partner happy, or out of love (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Cooper, Shapiro, Powers, & Diener, 1998). The two are not necessarily mutually exclusive nor are they mutually exclusive from social coercion given that women's sexual script encourages them to center their partner and their relationships. The inability to truly differentiate between sexually compliant behaviors and social coercion, has led some researchers to use the term sexual acquiescence due to compliance's connotations of freely consenting. Sexual acquiescence doesn't make a claim about the consensual nature of sex, but refers to engagement in unwanted sex without protest or explicit pressure (Conroy et al., 2015). Still, the research on sexual acquiescence or what is arguably incorrectly termed sexual compliance provides further insight into the different gendered individual reasons for acquiescence, the effects of it, and their ties to larger gendered scripts. Given we have already complicated the term sexual compliance and challenged its connotations of free from coercion, we will still use that term. The prevalence of sexual compliance is slightly less disproportionately gendered than the prevalence of rape (Flack et al., 2007; Impett & Peplau, 2003; Sanchez, Fetterolf, & Rudman, 2012; Katz, Tirone, & Van Der Kloet, 2012). Some studies found the difference in prevalence rate of sexual compliance between men and women to be statistically insignificant (Katz & Schneider, 2015). However, it is important to note prevalence refers to amount of women affected by it, it doesn't take into account the fact that women experience a high number of

repeated compliance and experience repeated compliance at higher rates as well (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Impett & Peplau, 2003).

Women's experiences of sexual compliance and the reasons behind it differ from those of men in a way that further justifies our concerns over its ties to rape culture. Women tend to comply for altruistic reasons or out of fear of ending their relationship, pretty much positive and/or negative reasons where the concern was their partner and relationship (Katz & Schneider, 2015; Impett & Peplau, 2003). The concern is that when women comply for negative reasons it often has negative and harmful outcomes such as feelings of shame, anger, and fear, riskier sexual practices, less effective birth control use, lower condom use, and more unplanned pregnancies (Katz & Tirone, 2009; Impett et al., 2005; Impett & Peplau, 2002; Cooper et al., 1998). When women complied for positive reasons there was either positive or no effect on women's mental and emotional health and their relationship (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Impett et al., 2005; Katz & Tirone, 2009). Some women who complied for positive reasons claimed that it had positive effects for them when compliance actually had significant harmful psychological effects (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Impett & Peplau, 2003). When women comply to sex at highly disproportionate rates and those experiences produce negative psychological and interpersonal effects, cause for scrutiny of all compliant sex is clearly present. Regardless of the reason for compliance, compliant sex was less enjoyable than desired sexual experiences and could lead to a negative effect on the relationship and personal levels of sexual desire and arousal (Conroy et al., 2015; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2010; Sanchez et al., 2012; Kennet, Humphreys, & Bramley, 2013).

Women being encouraged to value relationships and their partner while men are encouraged to value sex and personal pleasure leads to these imbalances that disproportionately

disadvantages women. This is seen in that women are significantly more likely to consent to unwanted sex if they see themselves as more committed than their male partner to their relationship (Impett & Peplau, 2002). Something that disproportionately affects women given women engage in sex to increase the possibility of a long term relationship at up to four or five times the rate of men (Regan & Deyer, 1999; Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006). Even more concerning is that sex typically led women to have higher levels of love and commitment while men saw their partner as less attractive after sex (Haselton & Buss, 2001). Men are socialized to not value relationships as much and women to value them greatly, this creates an imbalance where these gendered distribution of values creates a situation where women are made more sexually accessible to men and deny their own desires.

Women who are secure in their relationship and those with male partner that make similar amounts of sacrifices tended to comply at lower rates and had increased intimacy and commitment in the relationship (Impett et al., 2005; O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998; Impett & Peplau, 2003). Women who don't internalize the need to value relationships and their partners over themselves, who were generally more resourceful, who were more sexually self-efficacious, and who had fewer reasons for consenting to sex were also found to be more sexually resourceful. This in turn led to lower rates of sexual compliance (Kennet et al., 2013; Humphreys & Kennet, 2010; Kennett, Humphreys, & Patchell, 2009). This was tied heavily to not valuing mainstream media portrayals of gender, beauty, and relationships highly (Kennett, Humphreys, & Calder, 2012). The importance of being sexually resourceful for woman is accentuated in nothing that women who were poorly sexually resourceful and unsatisfied with their relationship consented to sex at roughly twice that of women who were poorly sexually resourceful but satisfied in their relationship. Women who were highly sexually resourceful had rates of

consenting to unwanted sex be significantly lower regardless of satisfaction within the relationship (Kennett et al., 2013). This demonstrates the value of acknowledging women's desire and creating spaces where they can fulfill their desire as well as feel empowered, particularly through an increase in sexual resourcefulness. To add, those with low sexual resourcefulness and relationship satisfaction who had low endorsement of mainstream gender norms, while having higher rates of sexual compliance compared to other groups, they still had half the rates of those with just as low sexual resourcefulness and relationship satisfaction but who endorsed mainstream gender norms (Kennett et al., 2013). Women's low sexual resourcefulness, low satisfaction in relationships, and embracing of gender norms all benefit men by making women more sexually accessible and by effacing women's agency. Meanwhile, the women's number of previous partners, relationship status, and the length of relationship were found to be unrelated to their sexual resourcefulness (Kennett et al., 2012). In a broader sense, the harmful effects of compliant sex are a burden mostly women, not men, carry.

In studies that saw men and women consent to intercourse at similar rates, there was still a gendered difference seen given women complied significantly more with oral sex to avoid complying with vaginal sex to avoid being called "frigid" or "a tease" (Katz & Schneider, 2015; Gavey, 2005). Women disproportionately consenting to oral sex might represent a confounding variable in the rates of sexual compliance between men and women. Men and women might comply to sexual intercourse at similar rates because less women are complying to sex and instead diverting men's sexual desire to oral sex. Thus, given no explicit pressure, women might feel more power over a situation that a woman experiencing coercion and thus display agency in navigating power and choosing the way in which they favor male sexual needs. This in turn allows them to avoid complying with vaginal sex more than in experiences of coercion. Given

the high rates of women's experiences of sexual compliance, the reasons for them, and the effects they cause it is implied that women do not appear to, or at least do not feel free to, prioritize their own sexual desire, representing a disembodiment of women's sexual desires (Katz & Tirone, 2010). The need to investigate experiences of wanted sex and desire is because disembodiment of women from their sexual desire is a form of objectifying women.

Objectification of women is a structure that rape culture relies on (Hipp et al., 2015). Men who commit rape's justifications for sexual assault can be interpreted according to social norms, which increase men's proclivity for rape, and in terms of sexual scripts, which lead to objectification of women, both of which are major components of rape culture (Hipps et al., 2015; Buchwalk, Fletcher, Pamela, & Roth, 2005; Krahe et al., 2007; Bohner, Siebler, & Schmelcher, 2006). This directly affect women beyond their sexual relationships with men given it reinforces rape culture, which leads to various acts of sexism that hinder women's ability to socially compete with men, such as in academia (Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2015; Lemonaki, Manstead, & Maio, 2015).

### ***Pleasure and Desire***

Now that the conflation of consent and desire for sex as well as the conflation of consent and positive experiences of sex that aren't significantly harmful to women, it makes it possible to see the reason to investigate desire. The conflation of desire and positive experiences of sex can also easily be unpaired in acknowledging that women who experience rape or sexual coercion can at times experience sexual pleasure and nonconsensual sex can at times be wanted (Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999; Satterfield, 1995). This is important to note given the conflation of consent and wantedness is fundamental in victim blaming when the victim is perceived as "wanting it," otherwise the victim's behaviors wouldn't matter. Rape is scripted as an extremely

traumatic experienced, perhaps best exemplified by the use of the word “survivor” by some women who have experienced rape (Earnshaw, Pitpitan, & Chaudoir, 2011). Survivor means making it through a situation that put one close to death and thus fundamentally changing someone thus emphasizing the suffering experienced. The assumption is made that rape is an experience so awful it comes close to death, that that is something that someone could never want, and thus any wanting by the victim is proof rape did not occur. The erasure of wantedness as a possibility for such a negative experience leads to a dissonance that can cause women who experienced this to be unsure if it was actually rape and blame themselves (Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008; Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2007). They frequently find themselves having more emotional problems, feeling less supported, and consuming more alcohol, all of which impact their careers (Botta & Pingree, 1997). While desire might be an innate feeling for humans, the ways in which it manifests, is understood, and used is heavily socially determined and in turn gendered.

The gendering of sexual desire is made abundantly clear in seeing how penile-vaginal penetration makes sex clearly sex, unlike other types of sex such as vaginal-vaginal rubbing, and how the male orgasm defines the climax and typically the end of sex (Wade, 2010). Acknowledging men and women have equal levels of desire, but different levels of sexual satisfaction only emphasizes this point (Armstrong, England, & Fogarty, 2012; Katz et al., 2012). This is further nuanced in considering that men define their sexual satisfaction in terms of frequency of sex and how much it matched their own desire. Meanwhile women defined their sexual satisfaction in terms of frequency, but also trust and mutual enjoyment (McClelland, 2014; McCabe, Tanner, & Heiman, 2010; McNulty & Fisher, 2008; Daker-White & Donovan, 2002). For women, unlike men, being in love and having faith on the longevity of their

relationship tends to be correlated to sexual satisfaction. In this way, women's internalization of gendered sexual scripts can make it so their relationship to men and men's decisions play a defining point in their sexual satisfaction, while men see themselves as the center of their sexual pleasure. Another way women find their sexual pleasure being tied to men is that men and women question women's entitlement to pleasure in casual sex, but not men's. Meanwhile, in relationships men and women's entitlement to pleasure is something most people believe in (Armstrong et al., 2012). This is further stressed considering both men and women report not being concerned with women's pleasure during casual sex, but both report being attentive to it in relationships (Armstrong et al., 2012). It is only when women are tied to men through a relationship that women's pleasure is considered. Women's sexual desires are allowed within the supervision of the male who is scripted as knowledgeable about sex and always worthy of pleasure, unlike the woman. These perceptions of desire reinforce and demonstrate the very sexual scripts that play a role in enabling and perpetuating rape, sexual coercion, social coercion, and sexual compliance.

The relationship as one of the only sites for women where they might be able to obtain unscrutinized sexual pleasure needs to be considered cautiously. The structure of a romantic relationship, where men tend to have more of an investment in their partner than within a casual sexual relationship, can be understood as giving women more power over her male partner. This is likely a major part of why women within a relationship may be seen as more entitled to sexual pleasure and why women have higher sexual self-efficacy in romantic relationships than in casual sex (Armstrong et al., 2012). One must be caution in considering whether within a relationship men see increased value in their partner as a person and a woman or whether men see value in their female partner mainly in reference to themselves. Women being less explicitly

oppressed by men because men realize they aren't benefiting from it is not liberation.

Additionally, if the prior mentioned reason was the case, one would imagine that men's romantic relationships with women would make men value women as women beyond just their partner, which doesn't appear to be the case given that over half of college men who have been in relationships, a large percentage of college men engage in abusive behaviors, and the fact well over half of college women experience sexual harassment while in college (Hendy et al., 2003; Knox, Vail-Smith, & Zusman, 2008; Gavey, 2005; Regnerus & Uecker, 2011; Yoon, Funk, & Kropf, 2010). It is worth noting that sexual practice with a partner within a relationship explains less than half of the difference in orgasm for women when comparing their experience of casual sex and sex within a relationship (Armstrong et al., 2012). This is highlighted in seeing that men have higher rates of orgasm and sexual satisfaction in every type of sexual relationship (England, Shafer, & Fogarty, 2012). So while women might find romantic relationships a site of more equitable amounts pleasure, it is not a site free from sexual oppression. Furthermore, Men frequently coercively use women's valuation of relationships and love to obtain sexual access to their bodies (French & Neville, 2016).

Men can ensure their sexual desires are met as an individual and as men both inside and outside of relationships. This is seen in how men encourage body self-consciousness, shame, and embarrassment among women in various ways, with women who are casually having sex with a man they don't know well at particular risk to psychological attacks about their bodies (Wiederman, 2000; Bay-Cheng, Robinson, & Zucker, 2009). This arises in part from that norms and discourses that stigmatize and put down women's genitalia (Braun & Wilkinson, 2001; Reinholtz & Muehlenhard, 1995). Male partner's disrespect towards their partner effectively can block women's desires (Graham, Sanders, Milhausen, & McBride, 2004; Tolman, 1994). This

explains part of why while cunnilingus is rated just as favorable as sex, yet it occurred much less frequently (Bay-Cheng et al., 2009). To add on, privileging penile-vaginal sex positions that are better for men and marginalizing those better for women emphasizing the prioritizing of male desire even when fulfilling female desire (Moran & Lee, 2014; Braun, Gavey, & McPhillips, 2003). This is just an example of how our cultural scripts tell men that their desire fulfills women's desire, epitomized by various women pretending like it does (Wade, 2010). Men's lack of concern over their partner's orgasm is likely tied to the double standard where they are allowed to have casual sex but they can look down on the woman they are having with sex for the same behavior. This justifies his lack of concern over his partner, her lack of pleasure, and his self-centering attitude given he's the one fulfilling his culturally given scripts. The lack of pleasure for women is made clear given more than half of women have reported faking orgasms for reasons such as wanting to stop having sex or wanting to not hurt their partner's feelings (Bryan, 2001; Muehlenhard & Shippee, 2010; Wiederman, 1997). This is emphasize by data showing that men make exaggerated assessment of women's orgasms while women's assessment about men's orgasm matches men's experience (Ford & England, 2014). If women had the power men had in the world, it is arguable that men would learn to give women orgasms. Instead, men use that power to make women make the world the way they want it. Social scripts tell us that men want women to have orgasms because it proves their sexual virility and effectiveness and so women provide that appearance (MacKinnon, 2006, p. 263). This is because the reality for women is that it "is far less damaging and dangerous for" women to fake orgasm and "accept a lifetime of stimulated satisfaction, than to hold out for the real thing from" men (MacKinnon, 2006, p. 263). To not fake orgasm could threaten men's sense of masculinity, which could lead to violence. This conjecture is supported by data showing in situations where

male privilege is challenged, men tend to assert their masculinity, undermine women, and reinforce male power even more (Thomae & Pina, 2015). In this way, women take advantage of how men's use of "power to force the world to be their way means that they're forever wondering what's really going on" (MacKinnon, 2006, p. 263). Women are then the ones with a real grasp on the reality of the situation.

This serves all men as previously discussed; one man's shaming and blocking of woman's genitalia and pleasure can affect her future interactions with that man as well as other men. Within a patriarchal society, it is essential to assume the presence of sexism until proven otherwise or else we run the risk of allowing it to hide its power and go unchallenged. The larger social implications and benefits for men are made clearer in considering how men, unlike women, tend to comply to unwanted sex in order to gain sexual experience, impress their peers, and obtain social popularity (Impett & Peplau, 2003). Taking into account how men are more judgmental of women than of men who have casual sex and how men perceive casual sex as a means of reinforcing their social status while for women it diminishes their social status shows how men value social power over being true to personal, individual desires (England & Bearak, 2014). Women's means of fulfilling their sexual desires and means of obtaining social success are placed in opposition to each other, heavily disadvantaging women. Women tend to be motivated to have casual sex based on having interest in forming a relationship with their partner while men do not (England & Bearak, 2014; Bogle, 2008; England et al., 2012; Paul & Hayes, 2002). However, college women find that committed relationships end up taking valuable time and energy that could be put into their education and career (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). Men on the other hand tend to find sufficient pleasure outside of relationships and don't involve themselves as much in casual sex for the sake of a relationship. Thus men's desires and pleasures

are not positioned in opposition to their educational and career goals in terms of time and energy, but rather in support of them.

Pushing women to center relationships, their partners, and men's pleasure overall while lacking an alternative sexual script with a surrounding positive discourse is part of the cultural scaffolding of rape culture. Women who seek to challenge this find themselves at serious physical, social, and emotional risk. Women who seek out pleasure outside of a relationship tend to have less enjoyable sex that is more often labeled as regrettable or disappointing and associated with negative emotions such as guilt, depression, and loss of self-worth compared to men (Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Owen & Fincham, 2011; Fisher, Worth, Garcia, & Meredith, 2012; Grello et al., 2006). This can be tied to the fact that women tend to blame themselves for the gender gap in sexual pleasure since cultural sexual scripts portray male pleasure as entitled and natural while female pleasure is seen as unworthy of entitlement unless proven otherwise and as problematic (Wade, 2010). Men are allowed to be more sexually permissive and thus casual sex doesn't violate their perceived role (Crawford & Popp, 2003) while women might experience negative feelings because such acts do contradict the social definitions set about women's sexual behaviors (Bersamin et al., 2014). Women in turn avoid casual sexual interactions because of the lack of social and sexual benefits (Bogle, 2008; England et al., 2012; Freitas, 2008) while men seek them out since it presents them with the opportunity to enact and reinforce their masculinity (Allison & Risman, 2014). For women, according to their sexual script an attempt of express any power or control over a sexual interaction is counter to their femininity. This is seen as not only threatening to her male partner, but to masculinity and gender relations as a whole (Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe, & Thomson, 1991).

*Neoliberalism, Class, and Race*

Race, class, and the presence of neoliberalism further nuance these productions of desire, pleasure, and sexual scripts. Neoliberalism provides a particularly interesting way of interrogating and investigating the recent rise in the predominance of casual sex among college students, resulting in a valuable analysis of class and race (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). Prior to the gendered desegregation of education and the work force, coupling, particularly through marriage, for white heterosexual women was valuable in obtaining upward mobility. In this market, white class privileged women were able to exchange their chastity and domesticity for access to men's material resources such as money (Becker, 1991; Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). As previously discussed, these structures depended on the exclusion of Black women and the creation of the Black woman as incapable of being chaste or domestic. Poor women were also excluded given they couldn't afford not to work and not to have children who could work as well.

We can think of capitalism and patriarchy as flexible, capable of giving and gaining ground when needed in order to survive. This can be seen in how white men gave up control over white women's labor in the home as white women were included in the workforce. Capital's investment in profits transformed social structures as well as relations of production (Hartmann, 1979). Capital also produced an ideology, which was produced along with its more material conceptions, which valued individuality, competition, domination, and consumption (Hartmann, 1979). This did not replace patriarchy; rather patriarchy through men's dependence "on one another to maintain their control over women" persevered (Hartmann, 1979, p. 11). While white women were able to join the workforce, which poor and Black women already were a part of, and educational field, all women were still excluded from having access to essential

resources such as jobs that paid living wages. Marriage provided a means for which men could control both women's labor or production as well as sexuality or reproduction in a way that serves men. For example, men were seen as having the right to their wife's bodies and given women were unable to earn the "family wage" offered to men, they remained dependent on men and thus also remained under their control as the financial head of the household (Hartmann, 1979). In this way, men no longer had to do undesirable jobs outside the home as well as inside the home and capitalism and patriarchy become intertwined as they work to produce and reproduce themselves. This presents how the system on college campuses for developing romantic or casual relationships can be seen emerging in the 1920's and was designed by and for white class privileged heterosexual men and women. Thus, it was something available to neither Black people nor working-class individuals.

With time, this system can be seen making a push towards neoliberalization given the further emphasize of accumulation of capital and on hyper-individualization, self-responsibility, and deregulation. Lower class women and Black women, not meant to be mutually exclusive categories, become more included as they too gained better access to education, although they still continue to exist at the margins of the university and the dating system. With neoliberalization, marriage became less about women exchanging their sexuality for men's access to essential resources and more about a consolidation of both partners' privilege and productivity (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). People are pushed to set aside their gendered expectations of involvement in long-term relationships because they take away time and energy from their own careers hence from their ability to produce capital. Thus, widespread appearance of the casual sexual relationship emerged as a way to better enable individuals to have access to

“sexual pleasure without derailing investment in human capital,” going along with neoliberalism’s goals (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009, p. 594).

Patriarchal structures remain as men have better access to pleasure in their ability to easily find it in a culture that normalizes casual sex for men. Meanwhile, class privileged women are caught in a double bind created by their class and gender. On one hand, their class discourages their involvement in long-term relationships that take away from the time and energy they could put into their career and encourages them to leave themselves available for meeting a wealthy man after college. On the other hand, their gender discourages their involvement in casual sex due to its gendered social stigma and it being a poor site to find genuine, full sexual satisfaction. In this way, class privileged women in the university are harmed regardless of their choice: by the stigma and gendered risks of casual sex or by the taking away of time and energy from self-development, etc. In each case, the woman’s individual choice is emphasized and she is deemed responsible for it; if she is oppressed because of her class it is her fault for choosing love over her career and if she is oppressed because of her gender it is her fault for choosing her career over love. Meanwhile, men find no stigma or gendered risks in casual sex nor find that the satisfaction of sexual desire goes against their economic goals. Men are able to choose both their career and relationship without being hindered by either. Overall, casual sex provides men with significantly more benefits than it does women (French & Neville, 2016).

The neoliberalist ideals of physical and emotional self-protection are central to this dating structure. This can be seen in the calculated approaches people take to sexual and romantic relationships. This is perhaps best exemplified by the development of various so-called “erotic marketplaces” for sexual partners on college campuses such as the smartphone app, Tinder, or

the online dating website, OK Cupid (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2009). Socially, people are encouraged to be strategic about how they create their profile and interact with people they meet online, such as not responding too quickly to a message to avoid appearing desperate, lonely, or lacking a social life (Gross, 2013; Stevens, 2016; Krupp, 2015).

On college campuses in particular then alcohol can be perceived as a tool to release the mind from the binds created by the internalization of classed, gendered, and racialized scripts. Women are able to perceive themselves as capable of being sexually assertive by losing inhibition. It also causes them to see it as a way to reduce a lot of the stigma of casual sex in place for women (French & Neville, 2016; Lindgren, Pantalone, Lewis, & George, 2009). This means her being drunk, not her being a “slut,” is the reason for her deviant behavior, thus avoiding the stigma behind the word “slut.” Unfortunately, the neoliberalist emphasis on individual choice remains present even if the woman is drunk. For example, if she is perceived as being aware of her behaviors, she is still seen as to blame and alcohol is deemed an excuse, not a reason for her “slutty” behaviors (French & Neville, 2016). So while it is meant to serve as a means of escaping the constraining webs of cultural sexual scripts, it is unable to escape the material reality of patriarchal life. The use of alcohol by men to gain sexual access to women in harmful and coercive ways attests to this. In a similar way alcohol is used to relieve women of their perceived responsibility to meet social expectations, men use it as a way to relieve themselves of responsibility for committing unlawful sexual violence such as sexual coercion (French & Neville, 2016). Alcohol is even more clearly used against women in victim blaming, as people focus on her individual choice to drink, claims that she chose to ignore the known risks of drinking for women in regards to rape, and her lack of “responsible” friends (French & Neville, 2016). In the end, this normalizes and excuses men’s behaviors and doesn’t take into

consideration larger social structures. Men's use of alcohol thus serves as some of the means through which rape culture is strengthened and reinforced

With the focus on career goals rather than relationship goals and the use of coupling to combine and enhance two partners' privileges, one would imagine that class differences would partially diminish. Unfortunately, class divisions actually widen as men and women of privileged classes date and couple within their own class, maximizing each of their earning potentials. This is "reflected in [the] increased levels of educational homogamy" (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2009, p. 610; Schwartz & Mare, 2005; Sweeny, 2002). Working class women then tend to marry working class men or not marry at all. The delaying of marriage through casual sex is less understood, often seen "as puzzling or immature," resulting in an increased sense of alienation from college campuses (French & Neville, 2016, p. 609). Their lack of economic privilege only worsens the risks of casual sex given poorer access to resources that are meant to help ameliorate the common emotional abuse, physical assault, and sexual harm done by men. The risks are only made worst if the woman is Black as well (West & Johnson, 2013). The overall pressure to delay a committed relationship for the sake of not closing off the opportunity to pair off with an affluent man is much less present for working class women.

Given the present educational homogamy, it is important to consider what factors play into maintaining this. In doing so, Contact Theory developed by Gordon Allport, provides valuable insight. Contact Theory asserts that given the proper context, interpersonal contact will effectively diminish many of the prejudices between races, classes, genders, and so on (1954). While there are various criteria he lays out to define proper context, the one that is most relevant is the need for equal social status between the two individuals. In terms of interracial relationships, casual and committed, research seems to support this as one of the explanations for

racial homophily, particularly among Black individuals, which increases as the level of commitment increases (McClintock, 2010). It is the rate of interpersonal contact between different individuals of two races with equal social status that is a major determining factor, not just the rate of contact between individuals of two races in general. This suggests diversity is not enough to undo the problems of sexism, classism, and racism; actual work needs to be put into bringing the various races, genders, and classes to an equal social status.

In dwelling deeper into the topic of interracial dating more subtleties are found. White people date outside of their race more than any other race, but were the least tolerant of cross racial dating. Black people date interracially the least out of any race, but were actually the most tolerant of cross racial dating (McClintock, 2010; Fang, Sidanius, & Pratto, 1998). This can be tied to white eroticization of other races, particularly Black men and Asian women (Kuo, 2015; Ferber, 2007). This would explain the large outdating as well as the low tolerance of outdating given that the eroticization of other races plays a role in the perpetuation of racism. The fact that Black individuals experience intense discrimination shown by the widespread anti-Blackness across races explains the lack of cross racial dating given they don't hold equal social status racially (Pham, 2016; Vasquez, 2015; Bashi, 2004). Black women in particular compared to the men of other races are even less likely to hold equal social status and thus date cross racially (McClintock, 2010). This is supported by the fact most cross racial dating between Black and white individuals involves a Black man and a white woman (Heaton & Jacobson, 2000). In following Contact Theory, the status of a Black man being hindered due to his race but not his gender and that of a white woman being hindered by her gender but not her race likely places them at relatively close social-status. Furthermore, Black individual's lack of investment in racism and anti-Blackness also likely plays a role in why they are the most tolerant of cross

racial dating. Class differences would likely follow this pattern and only accentuate homophily and reinforce power differences.

A focus on consent fails to acknowledge the ways in which casual and romantic dating structures feed into classed, racialized, and gendered differences in power. Considering how racism, classism, and sexism are tied to dating structures is of the essence because marginalized identities are continually harmed by the ways the binary of consensual sex and nonconsensual sex/rape hides and worsens their experiences of sexual violence. Without an account of the interactions of race, class, and gender one would risk viewing the increased acceptance of casual sex as liberating for women rather than simply a rearrangement of oppressive power structures. To not challenge the structures that maintain gender differences in power is a failure to adequately challenge rape culture since it depends on those differences fundamentally.

### ***Conclusion***

Given the prevalence of consent as a discourse across the U.S., further studies are needed to research what changes might be occurring, particularly on college campuses. This is important because we need to be able to differentiate between whether instances of sexual harm are being reduced in prevalence or simply becoming more hidden by finding ways to fit within the definitions of consensual sex. There is a great need for further research that evaluates the effects of consent based trainings and movements on college campuses. Cause for concern is made abundantly clear when looking at research on sexual harassment training programs that show that the programs might in fact be making the situation worse and paralleling it to consent programs. A comparison of the two is appropriate given the previously discussed gendered and sexualized nature of both as well as the various patterns of dominance each displays.

What is seen is that while sexual harassment training programs did increase people's knowledge about the policies and laws surrounding sexual harassment, it didn't cause people to widen their perceptions of what constitutes sexual harassment (Bingham & Scherer, 2001). The same is true about consent training programs, they increase knowledge, but don't help beyond that (Davis, DeMaio, & Fricker-Elhai, 2004; Rowe, Jouriles, McDonald, Platt, & Gomez, 2012). Concern begins in seeing that male participants of sexual harassment programs were actually significantly less likely than nonparticipants and female participants to see "one of the most blatant forms of sexual harassment," sexual coercion, as sexual harassment (Bingham & Scherer, 2001, p. 143; Gutek & O'Connor, 1995). They were also less likely to report it and more likely to victim blame (Bingham & Scherer, 2001). The implications this makes about sexual consent trainings are made clear when taking into account the explanation for this behavior in men.

In focusing on punishment, men, whose sexual freedom is reinforced by sexual scripts, might perceive the sexual harassment policies and laws as an attempt to limit their sexual freedom and thus show resistance (Bingham & Scherer, 2001). Given consent programs' focus on punishment and creating more constrained definitions of acceptable sex, such as affirmative consent which claims the need for an active yes, not just an absent no, one can see how a male would perceive this as limiting his sexual freedom as well (Welche, 2014; Gray, 2014). This is in part due to the broad definition of sexual harassment that includes subtle behaviors and the seemingly uncompromising nature of its goal in changing the norms (Bingham & Scherer, 2001). This again parallels discussion on consent discourse given discussions of complex situations of sexual assault such as that involving alcohol sometimes labeled "gray rape" are defiantly said to be clearly either rape or not rape (Friedman & Valenti, 2008; Peterson, 2013). To add, the fact that men make up almost all of the accused perpetrators of sexual harassment, as well as sexual

assault and rape, might mean they identify more with the perpetrator than the victim (Bingham & Scherer, 2001; Struckman-Johnson et al., 2013; Bohner et al., 2006; Gavey, 2005). In fact, focus on the victim as the center when it comes to defining the act of sexual violence and reporting it might cause men to have an increased fear of being accused (Bingham & Scherer, 2001). This would explain why men attribute more blame on the victim in response, given it acts as psychological defense against themselves being blamed in the future. What is made clear is that men are resistant to “being told that a traditionally safe avenue for expressing sexuality or dominance toward women is prohibited” (Bingham & Scherer, 2001, p. 144). This reflects that men have a blatant discomfort with sexual harassment policies, and likely consent policies, that “shift power to women that has traditionally belonged to men, namely, the power to define social reality” (Bingham & Scherer, 2001, p. 144).

Consent does not make the “changes in attitudes, values, skills, and ways of relating” required for a successful movement since it doesn’t challenge the underlying sexual scripts of rape culture (Bingham & Scherer, 2001, p. 144). While some might argue that any action is better than no action at all, this is shown to not be the case. Belief in the previous statement could be dangerous given ineffective “programs may be particularly harmful because they can meet an institution’s burden of doing something about the problem without actually affecting the problem in a positive way” (Bingham & Scherer, 2001, p. 145). The need for more work challenging consent’s effectiveness in undermining rape culture and coming up with an alternative is made dire as universities nationally adopt consent-based frameworks without adequate research proving its effectiveness, particularly when works like my own show the dangers of consent-based frameworks (Gordon, 2014).

In traveling down the spectrum of consent and sex from coerced sex to desired sex, the importance in seeing how sexual scripts underlie all parts of the spectrum and reinforce rape culture is vitally important. To not see the ties to rape culture and to not see the ties made to structures that uphold racism, classism, and other identity-based systems of oppression risks preventing a movement from truly undermining rape culture's foundations. The focus on Black women, especially poor Black women, is indispensable if we want to account for the nuances of class and race. To focus on white, middle class women and base a movement on them would risk further marginalizing women of color and poor women. This would not be a feminist movement given feminism's dedication to the liberation of all women, not just white, middle class women. Further ties need to be made about the effects of sexuality, geographic location outside of the U.S., ability, and other identities. Also, further extrapolation on the effects of race, gender, and class are needed, particularly with a focus on trans\* and Indigenous women. Still, what has been made clear is the ways that consensual experiences of sex need to be scrutinized from a fundamentally intersectional perspective.

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