

Consent Communication: What Does it Mean for Student Athletes?

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Research in Brief

Recent headlines about sexual assaults involving student athletes do not paint a complete picture of the issue. Rooted in these incidents is a culture of how sexual consent is communicated among college students. The current project's aim has been to develop a deeper understanding of student perceptions of consent prior to a sexual encounter, whether there are significant differences between student athletes and other students, and which strategies may be most effective at promoting healthier attitudes and behaviors around sexual consent.

Not surprisingly, male students are more likely than female students to wrongly perceive when consent is given. Furthermore, athletes are more likely than non-athletes to misperceive consent – and this is true among both men and women. The study also indicates that female athletes hold misperceptions about consent at an alarmingly higher rate than non-athlete women.

Training around sexual assault and consent has been shown to reduce misperceptions that can contribute to potentially risky situations. However, the content and structure of many programs currently utilized on college campuses may not be as effective with student athletes. In particular, the type of programming available does not address female athletes' sense of self-confidence which may in turn lead to a greater acceptance of myths around consent.

While more research is needed, the findings discussed in the full report support the following recommendations:

- **Need for more programs presented by sexual assault victims and/or offenders** – *Both male and female athletes report that these types of presentations would be the most effective, especially among those who hold high levels of consent misperception.*
- **Programs involving peer-to-peer discussions led by counselors or other experts would be particularly effective for female athletes** – *Current training program content tends to present the female participant as a passive actor, which runs contrary to the female athlete's self-image. This type of portrayal hinders the effectiveness of these programs for female athletes who may overestimate their own capacity to avoid risky sexual situations. Guided discussions can be useful in counteracting this gap in training content.*
- **A variety of delivery modes is most effective, particularly for male athletes** – *While male athletes can easily disassociate themselves from the male actors presented in online training vignettes, short targeted online training programs can be effective if used in tandem with high impact in-person programs.*
- **Use the "team" construct to affect positive change** – *While the "locker room mentality" has been cited in recent high profile cases of sexual assault, the survey results suggest that the team mindset can also be used to establish healthy norms for attitudes and behaviors around sexual consent, particular among men who play contact team sports.*
- **Programs need to be reinforced throughout the college athlete's career** – *Students relayed experiences with effective programming that unfortunately occurred only once during their college years. The study underscores that programming is most effective when it is presented through a variety of methods. This requires the buy-in and support of coaches and administrators to make programs and discussion around positive consent messages a regular part of the annual athletic training schedule.*

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Problem Statement

The issue of sexual assault on college campuses received renewed attention when President Obama created the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. In its first report, the task force prioritized prevention and strongly suggested researching and developing new strategies to curb sexual violence (White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault, 2014). Young adults increasingly choose to engage in sexual behaviors outside of committed relationships. As this hookup culture has become the norm on many college campuses, colleges and universities have raised questions about how their students communicate desire and intent to their sexual partners (Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012). This intersection of rape culture and hookup culture has inspired educators and students to take a fresh look at the idea of affirmative consent (Moriarty, 2008; Subotnik, 2006). A broad national conversation has been ignited (Bazelon, 2014; Essig, 2014; Wilson, 2014) yet there is surprisingly little research on how college students understand and communicate consent (Beres, 2007).

While they are part of the campus culture, athletes often operate with a set of norms and expectations that differ from their non-athlete peers. Coakley (2014) argues that sexual assault is associated with sporting cultures that emphasize proving masculinity through violence, treat women as exploitable 'groupies', and create a sense of privilege for athletes. University athletic departments should be proactive in designing and implementing programs that address the unique needs of student-athletes and contribute to the overall health and safety of all students on campus (Jackson & Davis, 2000), but very little is known about how these ideologies influence athletes' perceptions and behaviors relating to sexual consent. Having specific knowledge about athlete attitudes towards consent is important because rape awareness and prevention programs are more effective when educators understand the specific group and individual dynamics.

Literature Review

While sexual assault is a problem for all college students, a number of high profile cases of prominent athletes have called attention to a hegemonic masculine culture of sports with an emphasis on violence and misogyny. These ideals are not present in all sports at all levels of competition. Coakley (2014) argues that sexual assault is associated with sporting cultures that emphasize proving masculinity through violence. For example, one study found that cultures of violence were more prevalent among football players and wrestlers. Those athletes were much more likely to be involved in fights than other athletes and non-athletes (Kreager, 2007). When these violent ideals are present in social spaces that also treat women as exploitable and create a sense of privilege for athletes, they contribute to a rape-prone culture among college athletes (Martin, 2015; Sanday, 1996). Though not all athletic departments or sports would be classified as rape-prone, they contain both structures and cultural attitudes that facilitate rape culture because most college sports are segregated by sex and many sports tap into deeply held notions about patriarchy, power, and privilege (Crosset, 2015).

Athletes report that social norms about masculinity, physicality, and toughness create environments where violence and aggression are encouraged. In addition, negative attitudes towards women are sustained through locker room dynamics, where men are encouraged to bond by discussing their sexual exploits and demeaning women (Coakley, 2014; Curry, 1991;

Messner, 2014; Pappas, McKenry, & Catlett, 2004). For example, a hockey player explained that his teammates didn't "care about what happens to the girl as long as he is getting what he wants – or getting what the groups wants (Pappas et al., 2004, p. 306)."

Though few would deny the hegemonic masculinity evident in sport, scholarly research has produced mixed results as to whether or not athletes are more likely than non-athletes to commit sexual assaults (Crosset, 1999; McCray, 2014). The literature does suggest that student athletes are more likely to have attitudes that support sexual aggression (Boeringer, 1996), are more likely to identify with hypermasculinity (Murnen & Kohlman, 2007), are more likely to support a sexual double standard (Allison & Risman, 2013), and are more likely to accept rape myths than non-athletes are (Boeringer, 1999; McMahan, 2015; Murnen & Kohlman, 2007; Swope, 2012). Male athletes are also more likely than non-athletes to say that they would "force a woman to do something sexual that she didn't want to do" if they knew they would not be caught (Boeringer, 1996, p. 138). These attitudes and behaviors place athletes at a high risk for committing sexual assaults though some sports teams are more strongly associated with risky sexual behaviors than others (Humphrey & Kahn, 2000). According to one study, male athletes in team sports are more likely to subscribe to rape myths than individual sport athletes are (Sawyer, Thompson, & Chicorelli, 2002). In order to understand sexual violence, it is important to focus on how these attitudes and behaviors are enabled and constrained by teammates, peers, and unique cultural norms in different sporting environments (Coakley, 2014; Crosset, 1999).

Student-athletes are enmeshed within the broader culture of campus life where students seek friendships, romantic relationships, and sexual partners. In this landscape, gender often influences how people view others' behaviors. Abbey's (1982) seminal research demonstrated that males frequently misperceive female's friendly behaviors as sexual. This study has been replicated numerous times with similar results. Though men and women vary on how they ascribe sexual intent to behaviors, men who adhere to more traditional views of masculinity are even more likely than other men to overestimate women's sexual interest (Fisher & Walters, 2003). These disparate perceptions are evident in daily interactions as well in intimate encounters that develop.

When it comes to sex and physical intimacy, young adults increasingly choose to engage in sexual behaviors outside of committed relationships. This behavior is frequently referred to as the hookup culture. Because both men and women are engaged in this culture, most college students hold permissive attitudes towards hooking up for both genders; however, men are more likely to hold a sexual double standard than women are. In other words, men are still likely to lose respect for women with multiple sexual partners more quickly than they would lose esteem for men with similar behavior (Allison & Risman, 2013). This is supported by Bogle's (2008) assertion that females' reputations are more damaged than men's reputations are when their sexual exploits are transmitted through the campus rumor mill.

Gendered thinking also carries over to dating and relationships. College students who read vignettes about a sexless date that followed a hookup believed that the woman's decision to forgo sex was likely an effort to impress the man by redeeming her reputation and appearing more respectable. While some respondents also noticed that the man wanted to impress the woman, they didn't claim that he had to restore his reputation (Reid, Elliott, & Webber, 2011). In another study, college students read vignettes about rape that occurred in two scenarios, one that happened between people who were in a long term relationship and the other that occurred among casual acquaintances. Female readers found both scenarios to be wrong, but male

students were much more likely to justify the actions of the man who forced his long term girlfriend to have sex (Sheldon-Keller, Lloyd-McGarvey, West, & Canterbury, 1994). This shows that despite liberalized views of sex on campus today, gender and social context can still influence how individuals interpret others' sexual intentions and motives.

The rapid rise of hookup culture and the persistent gender differences that permeate sex, dating, and long term relationships have raised questions about how college students communicate desire and intent to their sexual partners (Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012); indeed, the intersection of rape culture and hookup culture has inspired educators and students to take a fresh look at the idea of affirmative consent (Moriarty, 2008; Subotnik, 2006). As campus personnel have replaced the phrase 'no means no' with "yes means yes" in their discussions about sexual assault, some campuses have adopted policies requiring students to gain affirmative consent before engaging in sexual activity. Most notably, Governor Jerry Brown signed a bill in October 2014 that required all universities receiving California state funding to adopt such policies (Lovett, 2014).

These events have ignited a broad national conversation about affirmative consent (Bazelon, 2014; Essig, 2014; Wilson, 2014), which is critical for both preventing sexual violence and promoting healthy sexual relationships (Borges, Banyard, & Moynihan, 2008). Prior studies show that college aged men with limited knowledge of consent are more likely to report sexually aggressive behavior (Warren, Swan, & Allen, 2015) but there is surprisingly little research on how college students come to understand and communicate consent in the first place (Beres, 2007; Martin, 2015). The small but growing body of literature about consent shows young people's definitions of consent are not always consistent with legal definitions (Beres, 2014). Students define consent as an explicit spoken permission but actually use a variety of signals to indicate and interpret consent, like implicitly voicing their desire (for example, asking their partner if he/she has access to condoms). During casual sexual encounters, students claim that they are more likely to look for non-verbal cues as signs of their partners' willingness to proceed (Jozkowski, Peterson, Sanders, Dennis, & Reece, 2013). These indirect verbal cues and non-verbal signs are more ambiguous than a clear verbal affirmation (Jozkowski & Wiersma, 2014). Missed signals can lead to uncertainty about consent which could result in sexual assault.

This ambiguity is further complicated by gender differences. Data suggest that men and women vary on the types of signals that they use and how they interpret the actions of their partners (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999; Jozkowski et al., 2013; Levesque, Nave, & Lowe, 2006). These miscommunications are exacerbated by the presence of alcohol and drugs. Men are even more likely to assign sexual signals to female actions especially if those men are under the influence. They are also more likely to interpret a woman's behavior as sexual if she is drinking (Abbey, 2011; Abbey & Harnish, 1995; Abbey, McAuslan, & Ross, 1998; Abbey et al., 1998; George et al., 2006). Additionally, multiple studies show that intoxicated men evaluate vignettes about rape more favorably than sober men do. In other words, intoxicated men are more likely to interpret the scenarios as acceptable and consensual. They are also more likely to imagine that the woman enjoyed the encounter and to express willingness to use similar tactics to gain consent in their future interactions (Abbey, 2011).

Information on alcohol use is especially pertinent because athletes are more likely to participate in binge drinking activities than non-athletes. While athletes drink less during their competitive seasons, they report very high levels of binge-drinking in the off-season. The highest drinking rates belong to men on team sports (Brenner & Swanik, 2007), the same group that is

already at higher risk for sexual assault. Athletes also report more alcohol related problems than non-athletes, such as doing things they regretted, having unplanned or unprotected sex, and getting in trouble with police (Nelson & Wechsler, 2001).

Though it is clear that consent is important to college students' experiences, there is minimal research specifically examining how student athletes understand and interpret communication signals in sexual situations. While not focused specifically on consent, McMahon's (2007) study demonstrates the importance of studying this unique population. Using a survey given to student athletes, she found that they were unlikely to support rape myths. However, subsequent focus groups and interviews with the same population showed that many athletes relied on those same myths to discuss sexual assault and sexual consent. In general, student-athletes were aware that proceeding with sex after a verbal no was wrong, but expressed confusion and lack of clarity about some of the other signals and about the role of alcohol. In fact, some students believed that rape could happen accidentally. Because the research was broadly focused, this study gives only a small glimpse into student-athletes' understanding of consent. In addition, student-athletes were not compared to the general study body. Much more research is needed on how athletes understand consent, how those viewpoints compare with the non-athletes, and what types of educational programs can broaden their knowledge of sexual consent.

Having specific knowledge about athlete attitudes towards consent is important because rape awareness and prevention programs are more effective when educators understand the specific team dynamics (Parrot & Cummings, 1994). While they are part of the general campus culture, athletes are likely to establish friendships with other athletes and can sometimes operate with a set of norms and expectations that differ from their non-athlete peers. Research shows that peer networks can influence the violent behaviors of athletes (Kreager, 2007). Because knowledge about consent is shaped by social norms and peer group interactions (Warren et al., 2015), it is important to understand how these factors influence athletes' perceptions and behaviors relating to sexual activity.

Despite the demonstrated importance of consent, few athlete training programs make consent education the centerpiece of their curriculum. Other models, like bystander intervention, have recently gained traction among those who work with student athletes (McMahon & Farmer, 2009; Moynihan & Banyard, 2008; Moynihan, Banyard, Arnold, Eckstein, & Stapleton, 2010). Both male and female student athletes enrolled in bystander awareness programs have reported a greater intention to intervene in potentially dangerous situations (Moynihan et al., 2010), with females reporting an even greater likelihood of intervening than male athletes (McMahon, 2015).

While bystander intervention has proven to be effective, there are some major issues with this approach when working with college students in general and athletes more specifically. First, there is mixed evidence about whether these programs change students' understanding of rape myths. Second, program assessment demonstrates that short term modifications in behavior and understanding often fade over time. Furthermore, most sexual assaults occur in private spaces where bystanders are not able to intervene (Henriksen, Mattick, & Fisher, 2015). More specific to athletes, team norms may discourage bystander intervention, especially if that action is seen as interfering with a teammates' ability to 'score' and if the perpetrator would be heavily sanctioned by the coach and/or athletic department (Kroshus, Paskus, & Bell, 2015). Finally, these programs suggest that rape is inevitable. The strengths of these programs should not be

underestimated; however, it is clear that they cannot function without additional educational programs, such as those that provide students with healthy models of sexual communication.

Among the general student body, consent education has been far less popular than bystander intervention programs, but there is some evidence that it can be effective. Two years after participating in a preventative program that included some information on sexual consent, nearly twenty percent of male students reported that their attitudes towards sex and communication had changed (Foubert, Godin, & Tatum, 2010). This represents a positive trend but it is noteworthy that the majority of men did not report changes. They were much more likely to report attitudinal changes towards the use of alcohol in sexual situations and about the severity and consequences of rape. A program that was more intentional in educating men about consent could potentially produce more attitudinal change about sex and communication. One sport-specific violence prevention program aimed at high school athletes, *Coaching Boys Into Men*, includes a weekly lesson centered around consent and communication. Early assessments of this program claim that athletes who are exposed to the program increased their awareness of abusive behavior and likelihood of intervening with positive bystander behaviors (Miller et al., 2012), but again here the program and the results are not deliberate enough about how ideas of consent can and do change.

Though programs should emphasize consent education, they should also acknowledge the role of other factors, such as alcohol usage, peer support, and gender. Since sexual violence on college campuses is heavily related to alcohol use and because college athletes report greater levels of alcohol use, prevention programs must also discuss the role of alcohol in giving, receiving, and interpreting consent. Peer support is also integral to an effective consent education program. Many men desire a safer environment, but are unlikely to experience social situations where their male peers stand up to sexual violence and thus need preventative programs that generate more shared awareness and responsibility for stopping sexual assault (McMahon & Dick, 2011; Stein, 2007). Programs that rely on student peer leaders are successful because they have the potential to create these conversations and to change the informal norms and cultures that are so integral to shaping attitudes and behaviors (Stein, 2007; Thomas-Card & Eichle, 2015).

Gender should also be an important focal point. Current research on student-athletes tends to focus on males as perpetrators. There is very little research that looks at the uniqueness of female student athletes and how their social position may influence their experiences with sex. In one study, female student athletes from four different teams declared themselves as less likely to experience sexual assault than other women on campus because of their “mental strength, self-esteem, and confidence” (McMahon, 2007, p. 365). This attitude exists despite the fact that another study showed no difference in victimization rates between female athletes and non-athletes (Limegrover, 2011). Additionally, female athletes are more likely than non-athlete women to engage in binge drinking (Nelson & Wechsler, 2001). Taken together, this research shows that female athletes may be more likely to enter risky situations and may also overestimate their ability to deal with sexual violence. Their confidence may also potentially reduce their willingness to report assaults or seek assistance because they should have been able to fight back. While training programs should direct their attention to potential offenders, they should not do so without simultaneously addressing the unique needs of female student athletes.

Study Methods

The purpose of the current project is to further our understanding of the perceptions and communication that occur around sexual consent among college students and whether they differ among student athletes. Further, the study endeavored to make an initial assessment about the efficacy of current training regimens. The study was conducted with students at a mid-sized university with a Division I (Football Championship Subdivision) athletics program. Approximately eleven percent of undergraduates play a Division I sport.

The study involved both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The first phase of the project involved student focus groups. These groups were segregated by gender as well as by athlete status. Further, because the literature suggests differences in sexual behavior and attitudes by the type of sport played. Seven group discussions were held, four with men (football players, other team sports, individual sports, and non-athletes) and three with women (team sports, individual sports, and non-athletes). The focus group protocol (*see appendix*) involved prompted discussion about how sexual consent is communicated, responses to a scenario involving two students, and reactions to online sexual assault training materials.

The second phase of the project involved a survey with students expanding on the themes raised in the focus groups and information derived from literature on consent, sexual violence, and rape myth acceptance. The survey was conducted mainly online, with telephone follow-ups to boost the athlete proportion of the response pool. A total of 1,003 students completed to the survey. The majority of the respondents (78%) were traditional students who were between 18-22 years of age. The remainder of the respondents were between 23 and 25 years old (11%) or age 26 and older (11%).¹ The latter groups were primarily composed of graduate students. Initial analysis demonstrated that younger undergraduate students were significantly more likely to hold misperceptions about sexual consent than older adults. Additionally, there was only one student athlete who identified as older than 25. Therefore, in order to ensure a meaningful comparison groups for the student athletes, all respondents over the age of 25 were eliminated from the final analysis.

This left a total sample size of 923 respondents, including 118 male athletes (78 team sports and 40 individual sports), 133 female athletes (69 team sports and 64 individual sports), 193 male non-athletes, and 479 female non-athletes. It is worth noting that the sample is more heavily skewed toward female students.² Among the study site's student population, 39 percent of athletes are women and 60 percent of non-athletes are women. Among the survey response sample, 53 percent of athletes and 71 percent of non-athletes were women. Because of this skew, the discussion of survey results that follow will examine each of these groups independently.³

The survey questionnaire (*see appendix*) included 18 items to assess how students perceived sexual consent. Fourteen of those items were used to develop a Sexual Consent Misperception ("SCM") Index that ranges from 1 to 5 with higher scores indicating higher levels of misperception about when consent is given. One item was dropped because it was not worded

¹ For 30 students who did not report their age, values were imputed using the sample's mean age by class year.

² Response rates: male athletes 40%, female athletes, 72%, male non-athletes 10%, female non-athletes 16%.

³ The proportion of team versus individual sport participants among male and female athletes in the sample, however, does conform to the population distributions among all student athletes.

in a clear misperception direction and three others were dropped because the results showed minimal variance among the 923 respondents.

The survey also included a brief vignette about a sexual encounter. In this situation, two students are engaged in intimate behavior but consent is not clearly established. An index based on student responses to the scenario was created. The scenario index ranges from 1 to 3, with higher scores representing a greater likelihood of perceiving the situation as consensual.

The study was purposively designed to compare the attitudes and perceptions of student athlete relative to non-athletes on a typical college campus. It is important to keep in mind that the results discussed here only represent the students from one institution. As such, the conclusions should be considered preliminary and that further work needs to be done to extrapolate these findings to college students nationwide. Furthermore, because of small sample sizes among some groups, significant differences may actually exist in the full population which the data in this single survey was not robust enough to identify. This is particularly true when comparing team sport athletes with individual sport athletes. The following discussion of results focuses mainly on the survey findings, with information from the focus groups included where they provide context or suggest contradictory inferences.

Results

--Sexual Consent Perceptions--

The survey included 18 items to assess how students perceive sexual consent. Fourteen of these items were used to develop a Sexual Consent Misperception (“SCM”) index (*Cronbach’s* $\alpha=.86$). The scale ranges from 1 to 5, with higher scores representing greater misperception of when sexual consent has been given. Overall, the average scores for both male and female students, including athletes and non-athletes, were below the midpoint for the scale, meaning that all student segments were relatively less likely to assume sexual consent was given when it was not. However, there were some significant differences by student type.

As may be expected, male students scored slightly higher than female students on the SCM index. This was true for male athletes ($\bar{x}=2.79$) compared with female athletes ($\bar{x}=2.48$), as well as male non-athletes ($\bar{x}=2.64$) compared with female non-athletes ($\bar{x}=2.21$). Some of the most interesting findings, though, were between athletes and non-athletes of the same gender.

Among Men

Among male students, the SCM score was $\bar{x}=2.79$ for athletes and $\bar{x}=2.64$ for non-athletes (Table 1). This .15 difference in these means was not statistically significant. An ANOVA analysis of key demographic variables found that student age and whether students have ever had sex were the only statistically significant contributing factors for non-athlete men on the SCM index, with younger men and those who have had sexual intercourse scoring higher on the index. The data also suggest that being in a “serious” romantic or sexual relationship can be an intervening factor that lowers SCM scores, particularly for older students.

None of these demographic factors was a significant contributing factor for male athlete SCM index scores. The focus group discussions suggested that there may be differences in the language used by male athletes around sexual consent perceptions depending on the type of sport played, but the study data do not reveal a significant difference in consent misperceptions

between students who play on a team sport such as football, basketball, or soccer (\bar{x} =2.75) and those who play an individual sport such as swimming or track and field (\bar{x} =2.88).

**Table 1: SEXUAL CONSENT MISPERCEPTION INDEX
MALE STUDENTS**

| <i>MEAN (Scale=1-5)</i> | ATHLETES | | | NON-ATHLETES |
|----------------------------|----------|------------|------------------|--------------|
| | ALL | Team sport | Individual sport | |
| TOTAL | 2.79 | 2.75 | 2.88 | 2.64 |
| Age 18-19 | 2.87 | 2.85 | 2.92 | 2.71 |
| Age 20-21 | 2.84 | 2.75 | 3.01 | 2.69 |
| Age 22-25 | 2.56 | 2.52 | 2.61 | 2.48 |
| Honor Society-Yes | 2.82 | 2.83 | + | 2.66 |
| Honor Society-No | 2.80 | 2.73 | 2.95 | 2.63 |
| Intramural/club sports-Yes | 2.88 | 2.89 | + | 2.79 |
| Intramural/club sports-No | 2.79 | 2.72 | 2.91 | 2.59 |
| Live on-campus | 2.73 | 2.79 | 2.57 | 2.78 |
| Live off-campus | 2.85 | 2.72 | 3.11 | 2.73 |
| Live with family | + | + | + | 2.46 |
| White, non-Latino | 2.86 | 2.79 | 2.97 | 2.61 |
| Black, Latino, Asian | 2.69 | 2.75 | * | 2.69 |
| In a relationship | 2.78 | 2.80 | 2.74 | 2.62 |
| Not in relationship | 2.81 | 2.70 | 3.03 | 2.64 |
| Sex exper. - past month | 2.81 | 2.77 | 2.89 | 2.72 |
| Sex exper. - longer ago | 2.68 | + | + | 2.70 |
| Sex exper. - never | + | + | + | 2.33 |
| Consent programs | 2.72 | 2.68 | 2.78 | 2.66 |
| No consent programs | 2.93 | 2.84 | 3.18 | 2.62 |

+ fewer than 10 respondents

In general, male athletes scored higher (i.e. demonstrated greater misperceptions) than non-athletes on the 18 individual consent perception items included in the survey questionnaire, but the differences were significantly different ($Tau p < .05$) for just four items (Table 2). Specifically, more male athletes than non-athletes agreed that it is okay to take it to the next level unless you get a definite “no” (63% athlete / 47% non-athlete), it is okay to assume the woman is willing to have sex if she does not say anything when the man announces he is getting a condom (53% athlete / 30% non-athlete), you can assume the other person is okay with initiated sexual activity unless they actually say “no” (51% athlete / 34% non-athlete), and there is no need for the woman to ask a man for permission if the couple has been having sex for a few weeks (44% athlete / 30% non-athlete). Of note, the difference in agreement between male athletes (31%) and non-athletes (18%) is not statistically significant if the question is whether the man no longer needs to ask the woman for consent if the couple has been having sex for a few weeks.

Among male athletes, members of individual sports programs were slightly more likely to accept certain myths and misperceptions, but the differences are only just significant ($Tau p < .10$) for a few items. Individual sport athletes were more likely than team sport athletes to agree that consent is not required for non-intercourse sexual activities (28% individual / 18% team) and less likely to *strongly* disagree (28% individual / 41% team). They were also slightly more likely to agree that a “hand job” signifies a woman’s willingness to have vaginal sex (16% individual / 6% team) and less likely to *strongly* disagree (40% individual / 55% team) that this is a consent signal.

| Table 2: SEXUAL CONSENT PERCEPTIONS – MALE STUDENTS | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Percent who agree | ATHLETES | | | NON-ATHLETES |
| | TOTAL | Team sport | Individual sport | |
| P5. It is equally important to ask for sexual consent in all relationships regardless of how long they have been going on. | 76 | 79 | 68 | 76 |
| P10. It's pretty easy to read a man's signals about whether he wants to have sex without having him say "yes" or "no". | 69 | 71 | 65 | 54 |
| P11. If you have already started kissing, it is okay to take it to the next level unless your partner says "no." | 63 | 63 | 63 | 47* |
| P18. If a guy says he is going to get a condom and the woman doesn't say anything, it's fair for the guy to assume she is willing to have sex. | 53 | 55 | 48 | 30* |
| P1. When you initiate sexual activity, you can assume the other person is okay with it unless they actually say "no." | 51 | 54 | 46 | 34* |
| P17. Sometimes a woman doesn't even want to have oral sex with a guy, but she does it anyway to get out of having vaginal sex with him. | 48 | 46 | 50 | 32 |
| P9. It's pretty easy to read a woman's signals about whether she wants to have sex without having her say "yes" or "no". | 48 | 51 | 43 | 37 |
| P4. If a heterosexual couple has already been having sex for a few weeks, the woman doesn't really need to ask the man for permission to have sex any more. | 44 | 42 | 48 | 30* |
| P6. Having to verbally ask for permission to have sex while you are "in the moment" really destroys the mood. | 43 | 40 | 48 | 36 |
| P7. If your partner is a little drunk, it is okay to have sex with them as long as they verbally say "yes." | 35 | 37 | 33 | 32 |
| P14. Many women who say they were date-raped actually just regret having sex and changed their mind about it afterward. | 33 | 35 | 30 | 23 |
| P13. Going home with a man at the end of a date is a woman's way of letting him know that she is willing to have sex. | 32 | 27 | 40 | 23 |
| P3. If a heterosexual couple has already been having sex for a few weeks, the man doesn't really need to ask the woman for permission to have sex any more. | 31 | 28 | 35 | 18 |
| P12. Women often say "no" to sex when they really mean "yes" because they don't want to appear too easy. | 31 | 31 | 33 | 18 |
| P8. You really only need to ask for consent for sexual intercourse. You don't need it for just "hooking up" or touching. | 21 | 18 | 28 | 21 |
| P16. If a woman gives a guy a hand job, it means she is also willing to have vaginal sex. | 9 | 6 | 16 | 4 |
| P2. If a male and female are starting to hook up and the guy wants to take it further, it's okay if he treats the first time the woman says "no" as really meaning "maybe." | 8 | 5 | 13 | 9 |
| P15. If a woman initiates "hooking up" but doesn't want to have vaginal sex, it's only fair that she should give the guy oral sex. | 4 | 1 | 8 | 6 |

Note: first item in table (P5) is worded positively, remainder are worded negatively.

* Significant differences ($\tau p < .05$) between athletes and non-athletes: P1, P4, P11, P18.

A couple of other items in the index are worth mentioning specifically because there was no difference by athlete status. Just one-third of men (35% athletes and 32% non-athletes) agreed that it is okay to have sex with someone who is a little drunk as long as they verbally say “yes” while fewer than 3-in-10 men completely reject this as acceptable by saying they *strongly* disagreed with the statement (29% athlete / 25% non-athlete). Similarly, just 1-in-5 men agreed (21% athlete / 21% non-athlete) that you do not need consent for touching or other-than-vaginal intercourse activities, but only about 1-in-3 *strongly* disagreed that consent is not required in these situations (36% athlete / 37% non-athlete). The small number of men who completely rejected these perceptions of consent underscores the ambivalence and situation-specific attitudes that men, regardless of athlete status, expressed in the focus group discussions.

Among Women

While the data showed similar levels of sexual consent misperception among male athletes and non-athletes, there were significant differences among female students. The .27 variance between female athlete (\bar{x} =2.48) and non-athlete (\bar{x} =2.21) SCM index scores was statistically significant, with female athletes being more likely to hold consent misperceptions as a whole (see Table 3). Among athletes only, there was no significant difference in SCM index scores between students who play on a team sport such as basketball, soccer, or field hockey (\bar{x} =2.45) and those who play an individual sport such as swimming or track and field (\bar{x} =2.51). ANOVA analysis also showed that age and relationship status were not significant factors for female students.

| Table 3: SEXUAL CONSENT MISPERCEPTION INDEX FEMALE STUDENTS | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| MEAN (Scale=1-5) | ATHLETES | | | NON-ATHLETES |
| | ALL | Team sport | Individual sport | |
| TOTAL | 2.48 | 2.45 | 2.51 | 2.21 |
| Age 18-19 | 2.40 | 2.30 | 2.46 | 2.15 |
| Age 20-21 | 2.49 | 2.54 | 2.43 | 2.28 |
| Age 22-25 | 2.51 | 2.42 | 2.74 | 2.21 |
| Honor Society-Yes | 2.42 | 2.36 | 2.48 | 2.12 |
| Honor Society-No | 2.49 | 2.53 | 2.45 | 2.27 |
| Intramural/club sports-Yes | 2.29 | 2.23 | + | 2.41 |
| Intramural/club sports-No | 2.49 | 2.54 | 2.45 | 2.19 |
| Live on-campus | 2.39 | 2.43 | 2.36 | 2.20 |
| Live off-campus | 2.48 | 2.41 | 2.57 | 2.34 |
| Live with family | + | + | + | 2.16 |
| White, non-Latino | 2.50 | 2.47 | 2.55 | 2.23 |
| Black, Latino, Asian | 2.42 | 2.37 | 2.45 | 2.13 |
| In a relationship | 2.51 | 2.52 | 2.50 | 2.24 |
| Not in relationship | 2.44 | 2.36 | 2.52 | 2.16 |
| Sex exper. - past month | 2.55 | 2.46 | 2.64 | 2.31 |
| Sex exper. - longer ago | 2.31 | 2.47 | 2.08 | 2.13 |
| Sex exper. - never | + | + | + | 1.87 |
| Consent programs | 2.42 | 2.40 | 2.44 | 2.15 |
| No consent programs | 2.83 | + | 2.80 | 2.40 |

+ fewer than 10 respondents

The analysis did find that, similar to male students, women who have had sexual intercourse scored higher on the SCM index. Furthermore, among both female athletes and non-athletes who have ever had sex, SCM index scores were even higher for those who have had a sexual encounter in the past month. Among non-athletes, SCM scores were significantly higher for female students who participate in non-varsity sports (i.e. club sports or intramurals), whereas the relationship between SCM and participation in club/intramural sports was not significant among male non-athlete students.

As with male students, female athletes scored higher than non-athletes on most of the 18 individual consent perception items included in the survey questionnaire, with the differences being statistically significant ($Tau\ p < .05$) for nine items (see Table 4). Of note, more female athletes than non-athletes agreed that it is okay to “take it to the next level” unless the partner says “no” (51% athlete / 39% non-athlete), it is okay to assume consent if the woman doesn’t say anything when a man announces he is getting a condom (43% athlete / 31% non-athlete), and that there is no need for the woman to ask a man for permission if the couple has been having sex for a few weeks (27% athlete / 15% non-athlete).

More female athletes (63%) than non-athletes (44%) said it is easy to read a man’s signals about wanting sex, although they were no more likely to say the same about reading a woman’s signals (29% of athletes and 27% of non-athletes said this is easy). However, female athletes were more likely to say women can purposely give mixed signals, specifically that women often say “no” when they actually want to have sex because they don’t want to appear easy (27% of female athletes agreed compared with 15% of non-athletes).

Among female athletes, there were only a few differences in responses between those who play team sports and those who participate in individual sports, but these variances provide a conflicting picture. Individual sport athletes were more likely than team sport members to say that sexual consent is needed in all relationships, but they were also more likely to say that it is okay to take things to the next level once a couple has started kissing and that going home with a man can be taken as an indication that a woman is willing to have sex. However, there are no statistically significant differences on responses to any of the other consent perception items based on whether female athletes play a team or individual sport.

On a number of items, female athletes’ level of consent misperception was closer to the results for male athletes than it was for female non-athletes. Specifically, among non-athletes, male students scored significantly higher than female students on consent misperception for all 18 items ($Tau\ p < .05$). However, male athletes scored significantly higher than female athletes on 11 of the 18 items, but there was no statistical difference between male and female athlete responses on seven statements (P items 1/3/7/10/12/17/18). For example, 36 percent of female athletes said that it is okay to have sex if your partner is a little drunk as long as they verbally say “yes.” This was statistically higher than the number of female non-athletes (27%) who agreed with this statement, but was similar to the percentage of male students (35% athletes and 32% non-athletes) who also agreed.

Other items where athlete status had a greater impact than gender on consent misperception include feeling it is easy to read a man’s signals (63% of female athletes and 69% of male athletes compared to 44% of female non-athletes and 54% of male non-athletes), it is

| Table 4: SEXUAL CONSENT PERCEPTIONS – FEMALE STUDENTS | | | | |
|---|--------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Percent who agree</i> | TOTAL | ATHLETES | | NON-ATHLETES |
| | | <i>Team sport</i> | <i>Individual sport</i> | |
| P5. It is equally important to ask for sexual consent in all relationships regardless of how long they have been going on. | 83 | 76 | 93 | 81 |
| P10. It's pretty easy to read a man's signals about whether he wants to have sex without having him say "yes" or "no". | 63 | 68 | 58 | 44* |
| P11. If you have already started kissing, it is okay to take it to the next level unless your partner says "no." | 51 | 39 | 64 | 39* |
| P18. If a guy says he is going to get a condom and the woman doesn't say anything, it's fair for the guy to assume she is willing to have sex. | 43 | 45 | 40 | 31* |
| P1. When you initiate sexual activity, you can assume the other person is okay with it unless they actually say "no." | 47 | 48 | 45 | 26* |
| P17. Sometimes a woman doesn't even want to have oral sex with a guy, but she does it anyway to get out of having vaginal sex with him. | 49 | 50 | 49 | 61* |
| P9. It's pretty easy to read a woman's signals about whether she wants to have sex without having her say "yes" or "no". | 29 | 24 | 34 | 27 |
| P4. If a heterosexual couple has already been having sex for a few weeks, the woman doesn't really need to ask the man for permission to have sex any more. | 34 | 28 | 41 | 19* |
| P6. Having to verbally ask for permission to have sex while you are "in the moment" really destroys the mood. | 31 | 32 | 28 | 23 |
| P7. If your partner is a little drunk, it is okay to have sex with them as long as they verbally say "yes." | 36 | 35 | 36 | 27 |
| P14. Many women who say they were date-raped actually just regret having sex and changed their mind about it afterward. | 13 | 12 | 15 | 9 |
| P13. Going home with a man at the end of a date is a woman's way of letting him know that she is willing to have sex. | 21 | 14 | 27 | 15 |
| P3. If a heterosexual couple has already been having sex for a few weeks, the man doesn't really need to ask the woman for permission to have sex any more. | 30 | 28 | 33 | 17* |
| P12. Women often say "no" to sex when they really mean "yes" because they don't want to appear too easy. | 27 | 26 | 28 | 15* |
| P8. You really only need to ask for consent for sexual intercourse. You don't need it for just "hooking up" or touching. | 13 | 13 | 13 | 8 |
| P16. If a woman gives a guy a hand job, it means she is also willing to have vaginal sex. | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| P2. If a male and female are starting to hook up and the guy wants to take it further, it's okay if he treats the first time the woman says "no" as really meaning "maybe." | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| P15. If a woman initiates "hooking up" but doesn't want to have vaginal sex, it's only fair that she should give the guy oral sex. | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

Note: first item in table (P5) is worded positively, remainder are worded negatively.

* Significant differences ($\tau p < .05$) between athletes and non-athletes: P1, P3, P4, P7, P10, P11, P12, P17, P18.

okay to assume consent once sexual activity is initiated unless the other person actually says “no” (47% female athletes and 51% male athletes compared to 26% of female non-athletes and 34% of male non-athletes), and women sometimes use oral sex as a way to get out of having vaginal sex (49% of female athletes and 48% of male athletes compared to 61% of female non-athletes and 34% of male non-athletes). On this last item, it is worth noting that female athletes were *less* likely than female non-athletes to say women use oral sex as an “escape mechanism,” whereas male athletes were *more* likely than male non-athletes to say the same.

--Consent Scenario--

The survey also included a brief vignette about a sexual encounter. In this situation, two parties are engaged in intimate behavior but consent is not clearly established. An index based on student responses to the scenario (*Cronbach's* $\alpha=.77$) was created. The Scenario Index ranges from 1 to 3, with higher scores representing a greater likelihood of perceiving the situation as consensual.

Men were significantly more likely than women to interpret this ambiguous situation as consensual. This was true for athletes and non-athletes alike. There was no significant difference between male athletes ($\bar{x}=1.91$) and male non-athletes ($\bar{x}=1.85$); however, female athletes were significantly more likely to perceive the situation as consensual ($\bar{x}=1.64$) than non-athletes ($\bar{x}=1.53$). It is worth noting that for all respondents, the mean scores seemed to indicate uncertainty about the situation, rather than clear perceptions about consent.

Student responses to the scenario were highly correlated with their scores on the SCM Index ($r=.65$), meaning that perceptions about consent in general strongly predicted how students interpreted the elements of consent in this specific scenario. The correlation coefficient was similar among males, regardless of their athlete status ($r=.65$ for athletes and $r=.68$ for non-athletes); however, there were some differences among the women. For female non-athletes, the correlation coefficient was similar to men ($r=.61$), but was not as strong for female athletes ($r=.46$). In other words, female athletes' attitudes toward consent in general (SCM index scores) are relatively less reliable for predicting their response in specific situations.

Among Men

While the mean scores do not reflect large differences between athletes and non-athletes (Table 5), there are noticeable differences on the individual items (Table 6). Though consent was not clearly given in the vignette, male athletes were more likely to respond in ways that presumed consent in almost all of the items. Specifically, male athletes were more likely than non-athletes to believe that the fictional couple could assume consent based on the signals given (42% athletes / 26% non-athletes) and that Ashley would have stopped Chris if she didn't want to have intercourse (76% athletes / 58% non-athletes). Male athletes were more likely to believe that Ashley was giving mixed signals (70% athletes / 54% non-athletes).

Though non-athletes and athletes recorded similar “yes” responses to other questions, there are major differences in the percentage of students who responded “no” and those who weren't sure on all but one of the eight scenario items. About 32 percent of all male students agreed that Ashley can't blame Chris if she regretted her decision; however 52 percent of

Table 5: SCENARIO INDEX – MALE STUDENTS

| <i>MEAN (Scale=1-3)</i> | ATHLETES | | | NON-ATHLETES |
|----------------------------|----------|------------|------------------|--------------|
| | ALL | Team sport | Individual sport | |
| TOTAL | 1.91 | 1.90 | 1.95 | 1.85 |
| Age 18-19 | 1.98 | 1.98 | 2.00 | 1.89 |
| Age 20-21 | 1.86 | 1.82 | 1.95 | 1.81 |
| Age 22-25 | 1.92 | 1.93 | + | 1.81 |
| Honor Society-Yes | 1.85 | 1.77 | + | 1.80 |
| Honor Society-No | 1.93 | 1.92 | 1.96 | 1.86 |
| Intramural/club sports-Yes | 1.81 | 1.78 | + | 1.90 |
| Intramural/club sports-No | 1.93 | 1.90 | 1.95 | 1.83 |
| Live on-campus | 1.87 | 1.89 | 1.79 | 1.90 |
| Live off-campus | 1.94 | 1.91 | 2.01 | 1.86 |
| Live with family | + | + | + | 1.80 |
| White, non-Latino | 1.93 | 1.89 | 2.00 | 1.82 |
| Black, Latino, Asian | 1.90 | 1.96 | + | 1.92 |
| In a relationship | 1.85 | 1.86 | 1.82 | 1.79 |
| Not in relationship | 1.97 | 1.92 | 2.06 | 1.87 |
| Sex exper. - past month | 1.91 | 1.89 | 1.94 | 1.87 |
| Sex exper. - longer ago | 1.92 | + | + | 1.88 |
| Sex exper. - never | + | + | + | 1.75 |
| Consent programs | 1.85 | 1.85 | 1.85 | 1.83 |
| No consent programs | 2.03 | 1.97 | 2.20 | 1.87 |

+ fewer than 10 respondents

Table 6: SEXUAL CONSENT SCENARIOS – MALE STUDENTS

| | TOTAL | ATHLETES | | NON-ATHLETES |
|--|-------|------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | Team sport | Individual sport | |
| Percent Who Said Yes (Correctly Perceived Need for Consent) | | | | |
| C2. Chris should have waited for Ashley to say yes before having sex with her | 69 | 73 | 60 | 70 [^] |
| C4. Chris really should have asked Ashley's permission before touching her under her clothes. | 63 | 63 | 62 | 57 [^] |
| Percent Who Said Yes (Misperceived Consent) | | | | |
| C6. If Ashley really didn't want to have sexual intercourse, she would have stopped Chris. | 76 | 74 | 80 | 58 ^{*^} |
| C3. Ashley was really giving Chris mixed signals. | 70 | 68 | 75 | 54 ^{*^} |
| C1. It is okay for Chris to assume that Ashley agreed to have sex | 42 | 37 | 50 | 29 [*] |
| C5. This couple was probably able to read each other' signals well enough to assume consent was given for sex. | 42 | 41 | 45 | 26 ^{*^} |
| C7. Ashley may not have wanted to have sex, but you really can't blame Chris if she gets upset about it later. | 32 | 35 | 28 | 32 [^] |
| C8. If Ashley really didn't want to have sex, she would have just given Chris a hand job. | 5 | 6 | 3 | 4 [^] |

* Significant difference ($p < .05$) between athletes and non-athletes on "Yes" responses
[^] Significant difference ($p < .05$) between athletes and non-athletes on "Not sure" responses

athletes clearly answered “No” in comparison with 36 percent of non-athletes. In other words, athletes were more sure of themselves. A similar pattern emerged when students were asked about Ashley’s willingness to give a hand job. Very few athletes and non-athletes agreed with this but non-athletes were more likely to give a clear no response. This indicates that while they may have some confusion about consent in the “heat of the moment”, they appear to be more certain than non-athletes about other situations.

Of course, this certainty isn’t always a good thing. While similar percentages of male students felt that Chris needed to wait for Ashley’s verbal consent before touching her or having sex with her, athletes were more likely to answer “No” and non-athletes were more likely to answer “Not Sure.” For these scenarios, there were no major significant differences between team sport athletes and individual sport athletes.

Among Women

There were fewer differences among women; however, these differences reflected some of the patterns that was observed in the SCM Index. There were no statistically significant differences between team athletes and individual athletes but there were some differences between the student athletes and non-athlete women.

The mean differences reported in Table 7 show a few noticeable differences between athletes and non-athletes. For example, the differences between female athletes and non-athletes appear largest and most significant among younger females who live on campus and among white athletes. Though the mean differences were small in magnitude, bigger differences emerged when looking at the individual items (Table 8).

| Table 7: SCENARIO INDEX – FEMALE STUDENTS | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| MEAN (Scale=1-3) | ATHLETES | | | NON-ATHLETES |
| | ALL | Team sport | Individual sport | |
| TOTAL | 1.64 | 1.61 | 1.66 | 1.53* |
| Age 18-19 | 1.64 | 1.58 | 1.69 | 1.49* |
| Age 20-21 | 1.62 | 1.64 | 1.60 | 1.56 |
| Age 22-25 | 1.62 | 1.58 | + | 1.55 |
| Honor Society-Yes | 1.60 | 1.54 | 1.66 | 1.51 |
| Honor Society-No | 1.68 | 1.67 | 1.69 | 1.55* |
| Intramural/club sports-Yes | 1.51 | 1.49 | + | 1.53 |
| Intramural/club sports-No | 1.66 | 1.65 | 1.67 | 1.53* |
| Live on-campus | 1.66 | 1.62 | 1.68 | 1.49* |
| Live off-campus | 1.61 | 1.59 | 1.64 | 1.58 |
| Live with family | + | + | + | 1.55 |
| White, non-Latino | 1.62 | 1.57 | 1.69 | 1.50* |
| Black, Latino, Asian | 1.68 | 1.78 | 1.63 | 1.64 |
| In a relationship | 1.67 | 1.69 | 1.66 | 1.52* |
| Not in relationship | 1.59 | 1.52 | 1.68 | 1.54 |
| Sex exper. - past month | 1.62 | 1.61 | 1.63 | 1.56 |
| Sex exper. - longer ago | 1.67 | 1.65 | 1.68 | 1.50 |
| Sex exper. - never | + | + | + | 1.45 |
| Consent programs | 1.63 | 1.59 | 1.67 | 1.50* |
| No consent programs | 1.73 | + | 1.67 | 1.63 |

+ fewer than 10 respondents

* Significant difference ($F p < .05$) between athletes & non-athletes

| Table 8: SEXUAL CONSENT SCENARIOS – FEMALE STUDENTS | | | | | |
|--|---|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| | | ATHLETES | | NON-ATHLETES | |
| | | TOTAL | Team sport | | Individual sport |
| Percent Who Said Yes (Correctly Perceived Need for Consent) | | | | | |
| C2. | Chris should have waited for Ashley to say yes before having sex with her | 92 | 93 | 90 | 88 |
| C4. | Chris really should have asked Ashley's permission before touching her under her clothes. | 72 | 71 | 73 | 78 |
| Percent Who Said Yes (Misperceived Consent) | | | | | |
| C6. | If Ashley really didn't want to have sexual intercourse, she would have stopped Chris. | 59 | 52 | 67 | 41*^ |
| C3. | Ashley was really giving Chris mixed signals. | 62 | 61 | 62 | 42*^ |
| C1. | It is okay for Chris to assume that Ashley agreed to have sex | 19 | 17 | 20 | 13 |
| C5. | This couple was probably able to read each other's signals well enough to assume consent was given for sex. | 17 | 15 | 20 | 13 |
| C7. | Ashley may not have wanted to have sex, but you really can't blame Chris if she gets upset about it later. | 29 | 30 | 27 | 18* |
| C8. | If Ashley really didn't want to have sex, she would have just given Chris a hand job. | 4 | 1 | 6 | 2 |

* Significant difference ($p < .05$) between athletes and non-athletes on "Yes" responses

^ Significant difference ($p < .05$) between athletes and non-athletes on "Not sure" responses

Female student athletes were more likely to misperceive consent and express confusion than non-athlete women were. The differences were only large and statistically significant on three of the eight items. Specifically, female athletes were more likely than non-athletes to believe that Ashley was giving mixed signals (62% athletes / 42% non-athletes) and that Ashley would have stopped Chris if she didn't want to have intercourse (59% athletes / 41% non-athletes). Additionally, female athletes were more likely to believe that Chris could not be blamed if Ashley later regrets her decision (29% athletes / 18% non-athletes).

--Bystander Scenarios--

Respondents were also asked to read a scenario where a friend of theirs was at risk of being involved in a group sex situation at a party. Following the scenario, the students were given certain action items and asked how they would respond. Men and women were given slightly different scenarios and slightly different response questions.

Among Men

Males were told that their friend was planning to join other men who were having group sex with one woman. Overall, male athletes (47%) were more likely than non-athletes (34%) to report that they would not intervene in the situation at all (Table 9). On the other hand, athletes (26%) were somewhat more likely than non-athletes (14%) to totally disagree that they would stand by and do nothing. Of particular interest, team sport athletes were divided at opposite ends of the scale, with 21% saying they would be very likely to do nothing and a similar 26% saying they would be unlikely to do nothing. Fewer individual sport athletes said they were very likely

(10%) to do nothing versus very unlikely (28%). The findings suggest a contradictory dynamic among team sport athletes – whether to trust one’s teammate to act appropriately or to intervene to protect the teammate (or the team itself). This tension is borne out by some of the responses to suggested intervention strategies.

Table 9: BYSTANDER SCENARIO – MALE STUDENTS

| <i>Percent likely to take action</i> | | ATHLETES | | | NON-ATHLETES |
|--------------------------------------|--|----------|------------|------------------|--------------|
| | | TOTAL | Team sport | Individual sport | |
| C14 | Do nothing; it’s none of my business. | 47 | 48 | 45 | 34 |
| | Very likely to do nothing | 17 | 21 | 10 | 12 |
| | Somewhat likely to do nothing | 30 | 27 | 35 | 22 |
| | Not sure | 14 | 13 | 18 | 32 |
| | Somewhat unlikely to do nothing | 13 | 14 | 10 | 20 |
| | Very unlikely to do nothing | 26 | 26 | 28 | 14 |
| C19 | Go upstairs to see what is going on. (<i>voyeur</i>) | 27 | 24 | 32 | 27 |
| C16 | Tell my friend to be careful. | 88 | 95 | 75 | 73 |
| C15 | Urge my friend not to go upstairs. | 65 | 71 | 55 | 55 |
| C17 | Find the woman’s friends and tell them what is going on. | 55 | 54 | 58 | 49 |
| C18 | Call the campus police. | 14 | 14 | 13 | 12 |

Specifically, nearly all team athletes (95%) said they would be likely to at least tell their friend to be careful; a significantly higher prevalence than for both individual sport athletes (75%) and non-athletes (73%). Team sport athletes (71%) also would be significantly more likely than both individual sport athletes (55%) and non-athletes (55%) to urge their friend not to go upstairs. In this case, the team bonding component works as a protective factor and appears to prompt male athletes on team sports to look out for each other. On the other hand, male athletes, whether team sport (54%) or individual sport (58%), were not significantly more likely than non-athletes (49%) to say they would try to find the woman’s friends to let them know what was going on. Few athletes (14%) or non-athletes (12%) would call the campus police.

Table 10: BYSTANDER / SCM INDEX CORRELATIONS – MALE STUDENTS

| <i>Pearson’s r</i> | | ATHLETES | | | NON-ATHLETES |
|--------------------|--|----------|------------|------------------|--------------|
| | | TOTAL | Team sport | Individual sport | |
| C14 | Do nothing; it’s none of my business. | .23* | .25* | -.19 | .26* |
| C19 | Go upstairs to see what is going on. (<i>voyeur</i>) | .07 | -.06 | .28 | .26* |
| C16 | Tell my friend to be careful. | -.10 | .00 | -.18 | .04 |
| C15 | Urge my friend not to go upstairs. | -.06 | .03 | -.17 | -.12 |
| C17 | Find the woman’s friends and tell them what is going on. | -.36* | -.34* | -.40* | -.08 |
| C18 | Call the campus police. | -.34* | -.32* | -.38* | -.38* |

To examine these relationships further, scores on each of these items were correlated with the SCM index (Table 10). Both athletes and non-athletes who scored higher on the SCM Index were significantly more likely to say that would “do nothing.” In fact, 57% of very high SCM athletes (top quartile) indicated that they would be likely to do nothing, as compared to 29% of

the lowest scoring male athletes. For all athletes, high SCM scores were associated with lower likelihood of seeking out the woman’s friends. For example, 82% of the low SCM athletes would find a woman’s friends but only 35% of the high quartile SCM scorers would do the same. This same relationship between consent misperceptions and likelihood of alerting the woman’s friends was not found among non-athlete men.

Among Women

Women read a slightly different party scenario. They were told that their friend had been flirting with some men earlier and that she was rumored to be upstairs having sex with those men. Women were asked to respond to four actions. Overall, women were less likely than men to “do nothing.” Though 47 percent of male athletes would be likely to do nothing, only 23 percent of female athletes said the same thing (Table 11). Like male students, though, female athletes (23%) were slightly more likely than non-athletes (15%) to say they would be likely to do nothing, while team sport athletes (46%) were more likely than both individual sport athletes (36%) and non-athlete women (36%) to say they would be *very unlikely* to simply stand by.

| Table 11: BYSTANDER SCENARIO – FEMALE STUDENTS | | | | | |
|---|---|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Percent likely to take action | | ATHLETES | | | NON-ATHLETES |
| | | TOTAL | Team sport | Individual sport | |
| C20 | Do nothing; it's none of my business. | 23 | 21 | 24 | 15 |
| | Very likely to do nothing | 5 | 1 | 8 | 4 |
| | Somewhat likely to do nothing | 18 | 20 | 16 | 11 |
| | Not sure | 16 | 9 | 23 | 18 |
| | Somewhat unlikely to do nothing | 20 | 23 | 17 | 30 |
| | Very unlikely to do nothing | 41 | 46 | 36 | 36 |
| C21 | Find some of my other friends and go upstairs and see what is going on. | 87 | 91 | 81 | 82 |
| C23 | Go upstairs by myself to see what is going on. | 67 | 69 | 64 | 60 |
| C22 | Call the campus police. | 15 | 17 | 12 | 14 |

On the other hand, there were no significant differences in the likelihood of female athletes and non-athletes to take three specific intervention strategies, including going up to investigate with other friends (87% athlete / 82% non-athlete), going up on their own to investigate (67% athlete / 60% non-athlete), or call the campus police (15% athlete / 14% non-athlete). However, it is worth noting that a larger proportion of team sport athletes said they would be *very likely* to intervene either with friends (61% team / 48% individual / 49% non-athlete) or on their own (36% team / 25% individual / 22% non-athlete).

Looking at how female responses correlated with their SCM scores, a similar pattern emerges (Table 12). There are no significant correlation with the SCM score and helping the friend. In other words, female students’ level of consent misperceptions does not predict their willingness to intervene directly in a specific situation involving a friend. However, athletes, particularly team sport athletes, with high SCM scores are more likely to report that they would “do nothing.” This is significant among team athletes but not among individual sport athletes.

| Table 12: BYSTANDER / SCM INDEX CORRELATIONS – FEMALE STUDENTS | | | | | |
|---|---|----------|------------|------------------|--------------|
| <i>Pearson's r</i> | | ATHLETES | | | NON-ATHLETES |
| | | TOTAL | Team sport | Individual sport | |
| C20 | Do nothing; it's none of my business. | .32* | .42* | .24 | .14* |
| C21 | Find some of my other friends and go upstairs and see what is going on. | -.07 | -.09 | -.04 | -.08 |
| C23 | Go upstairs by myself to see what is going on. | .02 | -.00 | .04 | .02 |
| C22 | Call the campus police. | -.20* | -.21 | -.18 | -.26* |

The correlation between not intervening and SCM scores is also significant for non-athlete women, but the magnitude of the coefficient is not as large, mainly because female athletes have higher SCM scores than non-athletes. When those scores are held constant, there is no difference between athletes and non-athletes. This points to the importance of changing underlying beliefs of female athletes. Female athletes who hold tightly to misperceptions about consent are reluctant to get involved in a situation involving a female friend, perhaps based in a belief that women can handle these situations on their own or would not allow themselves to get into such a situation unless they were willing.

--Consent Communication--

During the focus groups, students expressed a lack of opportunities to discuss the topic of sexual consent. The survey included questions that probed students about their experiences talking about the issue. Students responded on a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Table 13).

| Table 13: CONSENT COMMUNICATION | | | | | |
|--|--|----------|------------|------------------|--------------|
| <i>Percent who agreed</i> | | ATHLETES | | | NON-ATHLETES |
| | | TOTAL | Team sport | Individual sport | |
| MALE STUDENTS | | | | | |
| E4 | I have heard my friends talking about making sure you get consent from another person before having sex. | 61 | 67 | 50 | 45* |
| E2 | I have heard my friends talking about the ways you can tell if a <u>woman</u> wants to have sex. | 55 | 62 | 43 | 48 |
| E3 | I have heard my friends talking about the ways you can tell if a <u>man</u> wants to have sex. | 41 | 42 | 38 | 32* |
| FEMALE STUDENTS | | | | | |
| E4 | I have heard my friends talking about making sure you get consent from another person before having sex. | 42 | 43 | 42 | 49 |
| E2 | I have heard my friends talking about the ways you can tell if a <u>woman</u> wants to have sex. | 45 | 41 | 50 | 47 |
| E3 | I have heard my friends talking about the ways you can tell if a <u>man</u> wants to have sex. | 63 | 59 | 67 | 55 |

Among Men

About half of all men had heard their friends discuss how you can tell if a woman wants to have sex, with only small differences between athletes (55%) and non-athletes (48%). While men were less likely to have conversations about male sexual signals than female signals; however, athletes were somewhat more likely to be a part of these conversations (41% athlete / 32% non-athlete). Athletes were also more likely to hear their friends talk about the need to get consent prior to sex (61% athlete / 45% non-athlete). A pattern also emerged by sport type. Team athletes reported being more likely to discuss consent than individual sport athletes did. Team athletes were much more likely to report hearing discussions about women's sexual signals (62% team / 43% individual) and about the importance of obtaining consent (67% team / 50% individual).

Among Women

Female athletes, on the other hand, did not differ much from their non-athlete peers when it came to talking about the importance of obtaining consent (42% athlete / 49% non-athlete), talking about women's sexual signals (45% athlete / 47% non-athlete), and talking about men's sexual signals (63% athlete / 55% non-athlete). Individual sport athletes are slightly more likely than team sport athletes to report being part of conversations about both women's and men's sexual signals, but these differences are not significant. Though there were no significant findings for athletes, the findings about gender difference are important to the overall picture. Just as male students were more likely to discuss reading women's signals than men's signals, female students were more likely to talk with their friends about reading men's signals than women's signals.

--Consent Policy and Training--

The survey asked students to indicate their level of agreement with the following prompt: "The university may have a sexual consent policy, but it's not going to change anyone's behavior." Most female students – athletes (59%) and non-athletes alike (60%) – and male athletes (56%) as well as just under half of male non-athletes (45%) feel that university sexual consent policies will not change anyone's behavior. Individual sport athletes (69% female and 68% male) are even more likely than team sport athletes (52% female and 50% male) to have a negative view of the efficacy of university sexual consent policies. In fact, few students feel that requiring consent to be verbally given prior to sexual intercourse – as specified in many institutions' policies – is a realistic expectation for most college students. Less than half of female athletes (42%), female non-athletes (44%) and male non-athletes (47%) agree that a verbal consent expectation is realistic. A significantly smaller number of male athletes (35%) agree.

Taken together, this data suggest that when compared to non-athletes, male athletes talk about consent and sexual signals more but have less faith in the effectiveness of explicit verbal consent policies. Female athletes don't differ much from their non-athlete peers when it comes to talking about consent, and there are mixed results as to their attitudes about policy. Compared to non-athletes, they appear to be slightly more favorable towards consent policy in a general sense but lack faith in the ability to implement a verbal consent policy. These results lead to an important question: if students have little faith in policy to effect change from the top, what is the

role of training and education programs in changing the social norms among the students themselves?

Students were asked to report if they had ever participated in live or online programs about sexual consent, sexual assault, date rape, or related issues. Women (86% athletes / 78% non-athletes) were more likely than men (63% athletes / 66% non-athletes) to report having participated in such a program. Generally speaking, students felt these programs use realistic scenarios and language that college students can relate to. There was a noticeable gender difference, but no difference by athlete status. Specifically, 6-in-10 female students (62% athletes / 60% non-athletes) and 5-in-10 male students (52% athletes / 50% non-athletes) found these programs to use realistic language that college students can relate to. It should be noted, though, that the focus group discussions – which actually presented elements of some online programs – suggested that athletes, particularly male athletes, did not engage with these online vignettes in a way that led to personal introspection.

The results of the SCM index and the scenario scale were analyzed in relation to participation in consent training programs. Participation in sexual consent training programs may have a positive impact on lowering male athletes’ consent misperceptions, particularly when compared to non-athletes (Table 14). Male athletes who have taken part in such a program, either in-person or online, had an SCM index score (\bar{x} =2.72) similar to male non-athletes who have attended such a program (\bar{x} =2.66). On the other hand, male athletes who have not participated in such a program have a statistically higher SCM index score (\bar{x} =2.93) than male non-athletes who have not (\bar{x} =2.62). Scores on the scenario index were also significantly lower for male athletes with training (\bar{x} =1.85) than for athletes without training (\bar{x} =2.03), and athletes with training were similar to non-athletes with (\bar{x} =1.83) or without (\bar{x} =1.87) training. Interestingly, consent program participation appears to have a significant impact among male athletes but not for non-athlete men.

| Table 14: CONSENT PROGRAM IMPACT MALE STUDENTS | | |
|---|-----------------|---------------------|
| | ATHLETES | NON-ATHLETES |
| SCM Index | | |
| Training program participant | 2.72 | 2.66 |
| Online programs only | 2.76 | 2.80 |
| In-person programs only | 2.84 | 2.59 |
| Both types of programs | 2.50 | 2.60 |
| No program participation | 2.93 | 2.62 |
| Scenario Index | | |
| Training program participant | 1.85 | 1.83 |
| Online programs only | 1.98 | 1.84 |
| In-person programs only | 1.88 | 1.86 |
| Both types of programs | 1.70 | 1.81 |
| No program participation | 2.03 | 1.87 |

SCM means were also examined by consent program delivery mode. Male athletes who participated in both online and in person programs scored nearly a half point lower (\bar{x} =2.50) than men who attended no programs (\bar{x} =2.93) or attended only one type of program (\bar{x} =2.76 for

online programs and 2.84 for in-person programs). Among non-athletes, online programs (\bar{x} =2.59) seemed to be less effective than in-person programs (\bar{x} =2.80) for lowering consent misperception.

Participation in sexual consent training programs also has a positive impact on lowering female athletes’ misperceptions (Table 15). The .39 difference in the SCM index scores between athletes who have participated in such a program (\bar{x} =2.42) and those who have not (\bar{x} =2.83) is statistically significant, but athletes remain significantly higher on the index than female non-athletes based on training exposure (\bar{x} =2.15 for non-athletes who participated in a consent program and \bar{x} =2.40 for those who have not). This stands in contrast to the findings for men, where participation in sexual consent programs contributed to lowering SCM index scores among athletes to a level comparable with male non-athletes. For female athletes, it did not seem to matter which delivery mode was used; all women with programming experience had similar SCM scores. This suggests that multi-mode delivery may be significantly more effective – even necessary – for male athletes, but does not explain why female athletes with consent training experience still maintain higher levels of misperception than non-athlete women with similar programmatic exposure.

| Table 15: CONSENT PROGRAM IMPACT FEMALE STUDENTS | | |
|---|-----------------|---------------------|
| | ATHLETES | NON-ATHLETES |
| SCM Index | | |
| Training program participant | 2.42 | 2.15 |
| Online programs only | 2.36 | 2.20 |
| In-person programs only | 2.46 | 2.26 |
| Both types of programs | 2.40 | 2.07 |
| No program participation | 2.83 | 2.40 |
| Scenario Index | | |
| Training program participant | 1.62 | 1.50 |
| Online programs only | 1.70 | 1.52 |
| In-person programs only | 1.61 | 1.52 |
| Both types of programs | 1.61 | 1.48 |
| No program participation | 1.73 | 1.63 |

Students who participated in a consent training program were also asked to rate program effectiveness. Students were asked to rate the level of effectiveness of each program mode for both men and women who participated. The answers were recoded into an ordinal measure ranging from 1 to 5, with 5 indicating “very effective.” For the entire sample, respondents rated programs as more effective for women than for men (Table 16). This was true for both in-person (effective for men \bar{x} =3.30 / effective for women \bar{x} =3.91) and online program (effective for men \bar{x} =3.26 / effective for women \bar{x} =3.78). This finding was consistent among athletes and non-athletes, showing that both men and women perceive programming as “somewhat effective” for women and girls but “mixed” for men and boys.

There were minimal differences among men, but the most notable one was that male athletes rated in-person programs significantly higher than non-athletes (\bar{x} =3.66 athletes / \bar{x} =3.26 non-athletes). They also rated them higher than online programs, indicating that athletic

departments should strongly consider in-person programs for male athletes. Among women, there were small but significant differences in perceptions of effectiveness for females. Female athletes ranked online programs slightly higher and non-athletes ranked in-person programs slightly higher. While significant, the differences are small in magnitude.

| Table 16: EFFECTIVENESS OF CONSENT TRAINING PROGRAMS | | |
|---|-----------------|---------------------|
| <i>MEAN (Scale=1-5)</i> | ATHLETES | NON-ATHLETES |
| <u>Effective for Men/Boys</u> | | |
| MALE STUDENTS | | |
| Online programs | 3.37 | 3.30 |
| In-person programs | 3.66 | 3.26 |
| FEMALE STUDENTS | | |
| Online programs | 3.52 | 3.18 |
| In-person programs | 3.20 | 3.26 |
| <u>Effective for Women/Girls</u> | | |
| MALE STUDENTS | | |
| Online programs | 3.56 | 3.49 |
| In-person programs | 3.81 | 3.63 |
| FEMALE STUDENTS | | |
| Online programs | 4.10 | 3.82 |
| In-person programs | 3.91 | 4.01 |

With this in mind, all students were asked to rate the potential effectiveness of several programming strategies involving different types of presenters. For each presenter, students were asked to rank the potential presenters on a scale from “very effective” to “not at all effective.” Overall, students responded either neutrally or favorably to all seven presenter possibilities, with minimal difference by gender or by athlete status. Male athletes were slightly more likely to think a police officer or a coach would be effective than non-athletes were. In order of mean scores, both male and female athletes ranked victims as the most effective teachers followed by offenders, counselors, police officers, coaches, students’ mothers, and faculty advisors.

Following this, the analysis focused more intently on effective strategies for athletes. Each programming strategy was correlated with athlete scores on the SCM index (Table 17). In general, among male athletes, higher SCM scores were negatively correlated with lower ratings for these strategies. In other words, the more likely men were to misperceive consent, the less likely they were to believe that these programming strategies would be helpful. These correlations were significant for all strategies except for students’ mothers. Furthermore, these associations were much stronger among athletes than among non-athlete males. A similar negative relationship existed among female athletes, however, the correlation coefficients were weaker and not statistically significant. The two exceptions were for counselors ($r=-.21$) and faculty ($r=-.24$). The higher a woman scored on the SCM Index, the less likely she was to believe that these two programming strategies would be effective. These relationships did not exist among non-athlete females. Again, it is female athletes with healthier attitudes about consent that appear most open towards programming strategies.

| Table 17: CONSENT TRAINING PRESENTER POTENTIAL EFFECTIVENESS | | | |
|---|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| MEAN (Scale=1-5) | ATHLETES | NON-ATHLETES | Correlations for athletes |
| MALE STUDENTS | | | |
| Victim | 4.55 | 4.56 | -0.31 |
| Offender | 4.42 | 4.20 | -0.34 [^] |
| Counselor/expert | 3.80 | 3.76 | -0.33 [^] |
| Police officer | 3.66 | 3.34 [*] | -0.34 [^] |
| Team coach | 3.61 | 3.06 [*] | -0.28 [^] |
| Student's mother | 3.46 | 3.21 | -0.08 [^] |
| Faculty advisor | 2.95 | 3.08 | -0.34 [^] |
| FEMALE STUDENTS | | | |
| Victim | 4.80 | 4.82 | -0.06 |
| Offender | 4.64 | 4.57 | 0.00 |
| Counselor/expert | 4.10 | 4.04 | -0.21 [^] |
| Police officer | 3.53 | 3.45 | -0.15 |
| Team coach | 3.38 | 3.23 | -0.13 |
| Student's mother | 3.15 | 3.21 | -0.11 |
| Faculty advisor | 2.87 | 2.96 | -0.24 [^] |

^{*} Significant difference between athletes and non-athletes ($p < .05$)

[^] Significant Pearson correlation ($p < .05$)

In order to look deeper into effective strategies for athletes, student athletes were grouped into four quartiles based on their SCM scores. Among male athletes, the perceived level of effectiveness for all programming strategies goes down as SCM scores go up (Table 18). For example, only 73 percent of the highest scoring men believed an offender would be an effective presenter, as compared to over 90 percent of all other students. Regardless, the vast majority of male athletes with high SCM scores feel that both victims (81%) and offenders (73%) would be effective consent training presenters, suggesting that these may be the most effective strategies for male athletes most at risk.

| Table 18: PRESENTER EFFECTIVENESS by SCM QUARTILE | | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| MALE ATHLETES: SCM | Very low | Low | High | Very high |
| <i>(n)</i> | <i>(28)</i> | <i>(30)</i> | <i>(23)</i> | <i>(37)</i> |
| <i>Percent saying effective</i> | | | | |
| Victim | 93 | 100 | 96 | 81 |
| Offender * | 96 | 93 | 91 | 73 |
| Counselor/expert * | 89 | 90 | 70 | 62 |
| Police officer * | 86 | 87 | 70 | 57 |
| Team coach | 82 | 73 | 74 | 57 |
| Student's mother | 64 | 71 | 70 | 63 |
| Faculty advisor * | 75 | 53 | 43 | 32 |

^{*} Significant relationship ($p < .10$)

Among female athletes, the perceived level of effectiveness goes down for four types of presenters as SCM scores go up, but remains high for three programming strategies (Table 19).

Specifically, nearly all high-SCM female athletes said that programs presented by sexual assault victims (97%) or offenders (97%) would be effective. The vast majority of female athletes (82%), unlike male athletes, believed that a counselor or other expert would also be effective. This finding has important implications for programming given the findings about female athletes consent misperceptions discussed in this report.

| Table 19: PRESENTER EFFECTIVENESS by SCM QUARTILE | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| FEMALE ATHLETES: SCM (n) | Very low (16) | Low (36) | High (41) | Very high (34) |
| <i>Percent saying effective</i> | | | | |
| Victim | 100 | 97 | 98 | 97 |
| Offender | 94 | 91 | 92 | 97 |
| Counselor/expert | 94 | 94 | 87 | 82 |
| Police officer | 62 | 74 | 80 | 64 |
| Team coach | 73 | 71 | 72 | 59 |
| Student's mother | 56 | 56 | 56 | 48 |
| Faculty advisor | 62 | 64 | 38 | 27 |

--Personal Experiences--

It is important to view these results within the context of students' own sexual experiences. Student athletes, particularly men, report higher levels of sexual activity than non-athletes. Specifically, 84 percent of male athletes and 71 percent of female athletes report having sexual intercourse within the past month, compared with 51 percent of male non-athletes and 61 percent of female non-athletes. Conversely, only 3 percent of male athletes and 5 percent of female athletes report never having sex, compared with 19 percent of male non-athletes and 14 percent of female non-athletes. Sexually active students were asked follow-up questions about the prevalence of six negative experiences, ranging from a partner's misinterpretation of their own willingness to have sex and being told by a partner that they regretted having sex.

Overall, about 3-in-5 sexually active female students report at least one of these negative experiences compared to just 1-in-3 men. In most cases, there are significant differences in these reports among female students by athlete status, whereas there are no discernable differences in the reports of male students. For example, 58 percent of female non-athletes and 47 percent of female athletes have experienced a situation where someone misinterpreted how far they were willing to go sexually. The rate is significantly lower among male students (23% non-athlete / 21% athlete). It is also important to note that the difference between athletes and non-athletes on this experience is statistically significant ($p < .05$) for women, but not for men. Among female students, non-athletes are also more likely than athletes to report giving into sex play such as oral sex under pressure (42% non-athletes and 34% athletes) and giving into vaginal sex under pressure (31% non-athletes and 21% athletes). However, the difference in female students' reports of being threatened or forced to have sex (12% non-athletes / 8% athletes) is not statistically significant.

Among male students, 16 percent of non-athletes and 14 percent of athletes report being in a situation with someone who didn't really want to have sex, but gave in anyway. Interestingly, 11 percent of female non-athletes and 18 percent of female athletes report the same experience (with the difference by athlete status being statistically significant for females). Also, 7 percent of male non-athletes and 4 percent of male athletes report being told after sex that their

partner regretted it. Among female students, 5 percent of non-athletes and 11 percent of athletes report the same experience (with the difference by athlete status being statistically significant for females).

It is worth noting that the vast majority of athletes who reported these negative experiences said that alcohol was involved when they happened. While there was no difference between the prevalence of these experiences when drinking among female athletes (59%) and non-athletes (59%), male athletes (68%) were much more likely than male non-athletes (37%) to say these experiences happened when the respondent was drinking.

Participation in a sexual consent training program does not seem to have an impact on reports of these experiences except among female non-athletes. Specifically, the prevalence of any one of these negative experiences is higher among non-athlete women who report having participated in a consent training program (68%) than among those who have not (53%). There is no difference in the prevalence of these negative sexual experiences among female athletes by whether they participated in a consent program (62%) or not (58%). Similarly, there are no significant differences in these reports among male students by consent training – 38 percent of non-athletes and 33 percent of athletes who have participated in a program and 30 percent of non-athletes and 33 percent of athletes who have not participated in a program report at least one of these negative experiences.

In addition to these specific questions, students were asked if they personally had an experience similar to the Chris and Ashley scenario included in the survey or had heard about this type of experience from one of their friends. About 2-in-5 female students and 1-in-5 male students reported experiencing a similar situation, a large and statistically significant difference. There was a small and statistically insignificant difference among men by athlete status (23% athlete / 16% non-athlete) but differences among women were more pronounced. Non-athlete females (41%) were much more likely than athletes (29%) to report experiencing a similar situation. There were no differences among athletes by type of sport.

Two-in-five respondents had heard about a similar situation happening to a male friend, with no significant differences in these reports by gender, athlete status, or sport type. Significant differences were apparent when speaking about female friends. Just over 2-in-5 male respondents (42% athletes / 44% non-athletes) had heard about a similar situation happening to a female friend, while about two-thirds of female respondents had heard a story from another female (60% athlete / 69% non-athlete).

Finally, men were more likely than women to say that women frequently give mixed signals when it comes to sex, although there was no difference by athlete status (46% male athlete / 45% male non-athlete and 36% female athlete / 35% female non-athlete). Very few students, regardless of gender or athlete status, reported that men frequently give mixed signals (13% male athlete / 14% male non-athlete and 10% female athlete / 12% female non-athlete).

The questions about frequency of mixed signals included responses along a 5-point scale from all of the time to never. The mean responses for these questions were compared against the SCM scores of students divided into quartiles, with higher scores translating to greater belief that women/men give mixed signals about sex (Table 20). The most notable relationships occurred at the extreme ends of the SCM scale. Men who scored in the highest quartile of consent misperception were much more likely than others to believe that women give mixed signals (\bar{x} =3.70 athletes / \bar{x} =3.89 non-athletes). Conversely, women who scored at the lowest end of the

SCM index – i.e. those with the healthiest consent attitudes – were significantly less likely to say that women give mixed signals (\bar{x} =2.86 athletes / \bar{x} =2.78 non-athletes).

| Table 20: MIXED SEXUAL SIGNALS by SCM QUARTILE | | | | | |
|---|--------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|------------------|
| <i>Mean scores (range 1-5)</i> | Total | Very low | Low | High | Very high |
| <i>WOMEN give mixed signals</i> | | | | | |
| Male athletes | 3.37 | 3.04 | 3.28 | 3.35 | 3.70 |
| Male non-athletes | 3.39 | 3.11 | 3.32 | 3.37 | 3.89 |
| Female athletes | 3.26 | 2.86 | 3.08 | 3.36 | 3.46 |
| Female non-athletes | 3.20 | 2.78 | 3.27 | 3.44 | 3.49 |
| <i>MEN give mixed signals</i> | | | | | |
| Male athletes | 2.35 | 2.57 | 2.20 | 2.39 | 2.77 |
| Male non-athletes | 2.55 | 2.62 | 2.61 | 2.55 | 2.34 |
| Female athletes | 2.41 | 2.33 | 2.44 | 2.45 | 2.39 |
| Female non-athletes | 2.44 | 2.37 | 2.49 | 2.51 | 2.43 |

Conclusions and Implications

Recent headlines about sexual assaults involving student athletes has brought attention to the issue, but does not paint a complete picture. Rooted in these incidents is a culture of how sexual consent is communicated among college students and the conditions which must exist for consent to be freely given. The current project’s aim has been to develop a deeper understanding of student perceptions of consent prior to a sexual encounter and whether there are significant differences between student athletes and other students.

Not surprisingly, male students are more likely than female students to wrongly perceive when consent is given. Furthermore, athletes are more likely than non-athletes to misperceive consent – and this is true among both men and women. This finding is of particular significance because the vast majority of athletes are sexually active, with very few never having any sexual experience.

The literature – and indeed the content of many sexual assault training programs – tends to focus on the role of the perpetrator. The study results indicate that misunderstanding, or even ignoring, the need for consent is certainly an issue among men, but that athlete status does not *a priori* determine the individual’s mindset. The findings for female athletes, however, are more complex. Athlete women are more likely than non-athlete women to feel capable of avoiding problems that arise from misinterpretation of consent, even though the study results suggest that many female athletes “buy into” some of the myths and misperceptions around consent communication.

Among Male Athletes

Male athletes scored higher than non-athlete men on the Sexual Consent Misperception (SCM) index, but those differences were not statistically significant except for a few specific items. The variance generally revolved around the expectation that a woman will give a verbal “no” if she does not want to proceed with a sexual encounter. In other words, male athletes are more likely than other male college students to expect their female partners to be unambiguous when they do not want to have sex rather than when they do. Male athletes are less likely to have internalized the “yes means yes” mantra.

Furthermore, male athletes tend to be conflicted on whether they should intervene when a male friend is about to enter into a situation with the potential for sexual assault. They are initially divided between staying out of the situation and feeling they would do something. In the end, nearly all male athletes report that, at the very least, they would tell their friend to be careful and the majority say they would urge their friend not to engage in potentially risky behavior. However, the higher probability of intervening seems to be specifically among athletes who play team sports. Moreover, this willingness to intervene was true regardless of whether the individual held high or low levels of consent misperceptions. It seems that the team mentality can work both ways for male athletes. On one hand, they are reticent to interfere with a fellow teammate outside of the athletic context, but on the other hand, they have a desire to act to protect their teammate, or indeed the team itself. The focus groups emphasized the importance for athletes to consider how an action could affect the entire team. This mindset appears to be even stronger among athletes who play a team sport rather than an individual sport.

The focus group discussions found that male athletes were much more at ease discussing their expectations for a sexual encounter than non-athletes were. The survey confirmed that male athletes were more likely to talk about sex and “consent” in general. The camaraderie of being amongst fellow athletes in the setting of a focus group seemed to make them more comfortable expressing socially undesirable notions of consent. In the context of filling out an individual survey, though, they expressed ideas about consent that were largely in line with their non-athlete peers. Taking the findings of both the focus groups and the survey into account, it seems that the “team mentality” trait can be used positively to help establish group norms about sexual consent in the context of a comprehensive training programming.

The survey results demonstrate that a multi-pronged approach to training can have an impact on lowering consent misperceptions among male athletes. Male athletes who participated in consent training had notably lower SCM scores than male athletes who had no training exposure. However, athletes who participated in both online and in-person training programs had the lowest scores of all. In fact, their scores were even lower than non-athlete men who had participated in both program modes.

Currently, online training is a popular program mode, but the study results suggest that this type of programming on its own may be ineffective and perhaps even counterproductive for male athletes. The focus group protocol had participants react to clips from a selection of online training modules. Certain clips were viewed antiseptically; the presentation of a sexual encounter being so stilted that athletes were able to disassociate themselves from the perpetrator. Another clip was very provocative, but seemed to have the effect of erecting a barrier when participants viewed the message as a personal attack on them. The survey results support the focus group finding that a reliance on online-only training programs is not particularly effective for male athletes.

Older athletes in the focus groups recounted an in-person training led by a convicted sex offender that they found particularly compelling. The survey results support that in-person sessions led by either an offender or a victim would be effective for male athletes, particularly those who cling to high levels of consent misperception. Moreover, these in-person programs should be reinforced (the athletes who brought up the experience with the offender noted that the program’s impact was fleeting because it was only held once). As such, targeted online programs can be used to supplement periodic in-person training. Furthermore, the survey results

underscore that it is important that training programs address the role of alcohol in male athletes' risk-taking.

It is also important for coaches and athletics administrators to provide opportunities for structured conversations about consent in tandem with a comprehensive training program. Not only will this serve to instill healthy expectations about the need for active consent in all sexual encounters, but it will help to establish a "team norm" for both attitudes and behaviors around consent.

Among Female Athletes

Female athletes exhibit higher levels of consent misperceptions than non-athlete women, regardless of whether they have been exposed to a sexual assault training program. The differences in acceptance of consent myths between athletes and non-athletes is greater among women than it is among men. While non-athlete women score significantly better than non-athlete men on every one of the consent perception items included in the survey, female athletes' responses were more similar to male athletes' responses than to their same-gender college peers on a sizable number of indicators. For example, nearly half of female athletes agree that consent for initiating sexual activity can be assumed unless the woman actually says "no." This level of misperception is similar to male athletes' views on this item and is significantly higher than the one-quarter of non-athlete women and even one-third of non-athlete men who say the same. Female athletes are also more likely than non-athlete students – both male and female – to agree that women often say "no" when they mean "yes" in order not to come off as sexually easy.

Female athletes are also more confident than non-athlete women in their ability to read a man's sexual signals and are less likely to report being involved in a situation where their own consent was misinterpreted. The results also suggest that female athletes with higher levels of consent misperceptions are less likely to intervene when a friend is in a risky situation. These findings indicate that the "sports culture" framework plays a significant role in consent perceptions for all athletes, but the impact is qualitatively different for female athletes.

Female athletes tend to exhibit a higher level of self-confidence about their own ability to be unambiguous regarding sexual situations and they assume that other women should be able to show the same levels of clarity in communicating consent. Relatedly, they are more likely to accept myths about women "playing coy" when a verbal "no" is not given or that these women lack self-confidence to say "no" because they do not want to risk their partner ending the relationship.

It is not clear, however, that female athletes hold an accurate picture of their own capacities in these situations. They are less likely than non-athlete women to report giving into sex play or intercourse under pressure, but not significantly less likely to report being forced to have sex. Female athletes operate in an environment where they are seen as "competing at a man's level." One possibility is that female athletes may compensate for this in their behavior outside the athletic arena. This could include having sex without giving consent but being less likely to report the incident because that would be admitting a lack of strength. The team culture – i.e. the need to protect the team or indeed the entire athletic program if a male athlete is involved – may also have a negative impact on female athletes.

Unlike the results for male athletes, these initial findings do not necessarily point to a high potential for using the team mindset as a way to foster positive attitudes and behaviors

around consent among female athletes. This may be at least partially due to the fact that much of the content in consent training programs is geared toward changing the behavior of the potential offender. Of course, the reason for this approach is to reinforce that the victim is not to blame. However, this presents the victim as a passive actor in the situation, which runs counter to the female athlete's self-image as a confident pro-active figure. Thus, female athletes are less likely to see themselves in the vignettes and scenarios utilized in most training programs.

It is true that exposure to existing sexual assault training programs does correlate with lower levels of consent misperceptions among female athletes, but the cumulative impact of a multi-modal approach is not as significant as it is for male athletes. The focus groups also revealed a desire for discussion opportunities as part of consent training. Women who participated in the focus groups expressed the need for more opportunities to have peer-to-peer – and gender segregated – conversations about consent rather than just attending programs “where you are talked at.” Past experiences with consent training in a lecture format may be why the survey found a slight preference for online rather than in-person programs among female athletes.

The need for discussion opportunities is further supported by the types of presenters female athletes find to be the most effective, especially among those who show high levels of misperceptions around consent. Like their male counterparts, female athletes see sexual assault victims and past offenders as the most effective presenters of messages around the importance of obtaining sexual consent. However, female athletes also rate counselors and other experts highly in this regard. This seems to be related to the need for having conversational opportunities in addition to lecture-style programs.

It is important for coaches and athletics administrators to provide opportunities for structured conversations about consent in tandem with training content that is geared specifically toward the female athlete. Granted, there is a dearth of this type of content available just as there is a scarcity of research on women regarding sexual consent communication. The results of this study serve to highlight the need to develop programs – and further research – that address women, specifically female athletes, in ways that engage them on their own terms.

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