Getting to Yes: Hegemonic Masculinity and Sexual Consent

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Alan, it is an unfortunate honor to be your last student at Mount Saint Vincent University. Thank you for your faith and your inspiration. Without it, I probably would have given up on this work long ago. I sincerely hope your future is better to you than we have been, so I dedicate this to your future. There are more students who need your help, and you are the only one who can provide it.

With sadness, guilt, frustration, uncertainty, relief, gratitude, and hope,

Geoff

INTRODUCTION

It is plainly obvious that a discussion about sexual consent is necessary. In Halifax, after the events of September, 2013 at Saint Mary's University, sexual consent became a prominent topic on my news feed on Facebook. I attended a public rally to "end rape culture" held on the Saint Mary's University grounds, near the student union building for symbolic emphasis. I listened to several speakers share impassioned talks, rants, poems, and chants. I saw several familiar faces in the crowd, some former professors of mine, some fellow students, and some other figures who I have seen in the local activist circle – of which I do not consider myself to be a part of. I usually do not involve myself in activism, especially not public protests.

I do not believe protests to be ineffective at communicating political goals, but they are very easily dismissed by the general public and even by individuals such as myself, who consider themselves to be intellectually engaged with various politics yet feel cynical about public protest as a means of bringing about change. To loosely quote a former professor of mine from my undergraduate degree, "spectacles do not create change, they create spectators." He was speaking about the Occupy protests of 2011 so I hope I am not taking him too far out of context. He surely did not mean to say public protests are ultimately pointless and unimportant. I believe he may have been talking about how such demonstrations often fail to produce a long lasting public involvement with social change – merely standing on the sidelines and observing is not sufficient to bring about meaningful change. I was left with a similar sort of feeling after the rally. I felt we were simply preaching to the choir; there was clearly nobody present at the rally who *dissented* with the overall message, and I do not believe a substantial amount of people were drawn to the rally. It felt like a few like-minded individuals getting together to blow off steam, and there was

a substantial amount of frustration amongst those of us who spoke. It was a cathartic and positive moment, but catharsis is self-serving. Likewise, writing for a degree as I am doing now is arguably self-serving; I am certainly not sitting here at my keyboard in some smug satisfaction that I know the best way to engage with the debate about sexual consent and how to go about creating a movement that will encourage the elimination of sexual violence.

I do not mean to rant, but I do approach the topic of sexual consent with considerable trepidation. I attended the rally to "end rape culture" because I wanted to seem like a person who cared and is involved with feminist politics. I wanted to show my support to a classmate who was involved with organizing the rally. Before this rally, I briefly took part in a couple of protests that were against rising tuition costs, one in Waterloo, Ontario and another here in Halifax. I also visited the Occupy site in Victoria Park in Halifax before the Occupiers were evicted. I did not feel particularly committed or passionate about any of the demonstrations that I attended. I am fortunate to have had my parents pay my tuition, I have no student debt. I am from a middle class background with a high degree of financial security so the Occupy movement did not resonate with me (perhaps it will in the near future when I move out of my parents' home). I do not live under a substantial risk of sexual assault and, much more importantly, I do not consider myself to be at risk of becoming an offender, so I do not feel particularly spurred along by the feminist demand to end sexual violence. I was taught in this graduate degree in Women's Studies that reflexivity in writing, the act of writing about yourself and taking yourself into account, is a good thing. Fortunately for me, I find that easy to do. However, how does reflexivity penetrate the anaesthesia I experience? How does a nauseating degree of privilege on the part of the author factor into or affect (his) work? The political fulcrum, if there is one, of this work is not to reform masculinity so men can lead happier, freer lives, it is to reduce or eliminate

sexual violence for the purpose of women's safety. Sexual violence is far more of an urgent cause than "new masculinities," insofar as the improvement of men's lives in concerned. On the other hand, perhaps new masculinities are absolutely essential in the reduction and elimination of sexual violence, making the critical analysis of masculinity a worthy cause, deserving of more attention.

In my first year of university I recall entering the library and hiding myself within the depths of the women's/gender studies aisle and pulling out titles which piqued my interest. I do not remember any specific books, but I did find myself gravitating towards issues of sexuality and I found the feminist perspectives to be very interesting. In my third year of my undergraduate degree I experienced my "intellectual awakening" when I took a course on critical/cultural theory. In that same year a fellow student encouraged me to enroll in the Honors program. I decided to do so, and I was accepted. I selected as my advisor the instructor of that theory course that had such an impact on me. I was inspired by his anarchist politics and I wanted to tackle alternatives to capitalism as my thesis topic. But, deep down, I knew I was ignoring a burning desire to delve into a discussion of gender and sexuality. Soon enough I was reading texts on masculinity and again, gravitating towards the discussion around things like sexuality and male body image. There was always an element of guilt and uncertainty while I was reading – why am I so interested in men's sexuality? I do not think I wanted people to know that I was interested in these subjects. I have always considered myself to be somewhat at odds with what I perceived as the established order of masculine sexuality and the way men are expected to treat women, as well as the ways in which men are supposed to relate to one another in sexual terms, such as through conversation, competition, and (strictly regulated) physical

contact. I was finding myself in the texts that I was reading, as though these books, many of them written before my birth in 1990, were taking words directly out of my mouth.

I think it is too easy to write that this work should be done because rape is bad and men ought not to do it. Besides, a work on sexual consent is not necessarily an anti-rape piece. I have read much about sexual consent which is geared towards improving the quality of sex for everybody who would engage in it, not to avoid or prevent rape. I believe a certain conception and mobilization of sexual consent, perhaps something like Hazel Troost's (2008) idea of "explicit verbal consent" (p. 173), where the only touch between people allowed is the touch that is asked for, an idea which I will be returning to later, would enhance the physical qualities of the relationships we engage in. Perhaps most of us would not be willing to take part in such a project, many of us do not mind if the right person touches us without asking first, but overall, I do believe that we would be well served by communicating with each other more about desire, and leaving less up to guesswork.

However, it appears we would run into significant difficulties if we tried to implement a "policy," as it were, of a certain form of sexual consent – we will continue to use Troost (2008) as an example. I do not mean a policy in a formalized sense; I mean the adaptation of a certain consent-oriented mindset, perhaps a better way of putting it is a personal project of consent, where we challenge ourselves to think about consent differently and to act differently with our partners. The level of lived experience is what I am most interested in and this is the level where individual action, done on a large enough scale, may translate into structural change. As I was saying, the charge of asking before touching, as Troost (2008) proposes, is in fact a radical subversion of the way in which we understand consent today. I have thought much about

"explicit verbal consent" or "consent as process" (Bussel 2008) and I believe they have real transformative potential. I would like to exercise them in my own life. But what has to change in order to allow new ways of thinking about consent to flourish?

This work explores a broad sociological theory developed by R.W. Connell which examines men in relation to one another, as well as to women in general so I am not engaging in autobiography merely to fill up space or to satisfy myself – I am trying to keep the voice of the author, my voice, present throughout this work. There is an undercurrent of autobiography in this work. My own life experiences have led me to asking my research question: how do dominant constructions of masculinity shape men's sexual experience with women, namely through negotiating sexual consent with them?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section is not meant simply as a "history" in the static sense of the word we may find ourselves defaulting to; history as that chain of events that happened before we find ourselves in the present. Rather, the work on masculinity we engage with now is the product of work done before. I know this seems like an obvious point to make, but it is a profound realization to know that past thought shapes what we know in the present. How we think in the present also shapes how we remember the past. As far as I understand, the future is still more or less uncertain. History is storytelling as much as it is analysis, and any time one invokes the ideas of the past, they are simultaneously emphasizing their importance in their own right, as well as mobilizing them to say something about the present. In other words, the past is important and we need to explain that it is important, but when we do so, we inevitably prime ourselves and the reader to look at the present and future in a certain way. It is impossible for me as the

writer to present an "unbiased" or "objective" account of the history of masculinity theory in an attempt to escape a particular ideological stance, or to avoid my own particular sense of what is important. The point here is to outline previous work done on understanding masculinity with a balance of brevity and detail for informational purposes as well as to illustrate that masculinity is a shifting subject. If you were to examine texts about masculinity from different points in history, masculinity would surely look quite different in each.

Michel Foucault (1990) argues in Volume 1 of *The History of Sexuality* that there was a proliferation of discourses, a "discursive explosion," as Foucault puts it, of sexuality during the Victorian era (p. 17). A discursive explosion is starkly different than our common understanding of the Victorian era as being sexually stifled, prudish, or *repressed*, to use Foucault's vocabulary. Quite the contrary, what was to become a vast body of new knowledges about sex, gender, and social organization have roots in this historical era. The knowledge gained in this period of time has profound implications for how we understand ourselves now, and what kinds of questions we think of asking ourselves.

In *Masculinities,* Connell (1995) provides a comprehensive background of the historical context leading up to the inception of his theory of hegemonic masculinity. Connell begins with the therapeutic settings and Freudian psychoanalytic thought of the 19th century, which is roughly where Foucault is writing about, moving into social psychology and "sex role theory" of the 19th-20th centuries, ending with more recent insights into men and masculinity gained through anthropology, histories, and sociology. Connell posits that these three distinctions exist as three attempts to create a "science of masculinity" (Connell 1995: 7). Surely, there are historical overlaps and blurred delineations; history does not happen in discrete moments. Connell

provides this historical story, with all its incongruences in an attempt to explain what knowledge about masculinity is exactly knowledge *of* (Connell 1995: 6-7).

The first attempt at a science of masculinity, the one arising from clinical knowledge and Freudian psychoanalytic theory, had the effect of naming *masculinity* as something that could be studied – that knowledge of masculinity could even be possible (Connell 1995: 8). Indeed, the idea of a "sex role," which will be discussed soon, for now you may rely on common-sense knowledge of "how men and women act," makes no sense at all without a subject to take up that role, and how we assign roles to subjects is a process we may take far too much for granted. Psychoanalysis allows us, or rather requires us to ask questions about our inner selves – to begin with, the idea of an inner self, or a subconscious comes from psychoanalysis (Whitehead 2002: 23). We find ourselves at an interesting question here – does an "inner self" exist in any empirical way or otherwise? It is probably sufficient to leave that as a rhetorical question, for now, but keep it in mind that our ways of speaking about gender and sexuality are historically recent, despite being "the stuff of everyday conversation" (Johnson 2005: 20).

To Freud, sexuality is the driving force behind this inner self. The basis of masculinity, in Freudian theory, at least, is based in a psychic anxiety felt by boys as they become to differentiate themselves from their mothers. Boys and their mothers are connected through birth; however cultural influence, or the effects of culture, will mark boys' bodies as "masculine," which contradicts the mother's femininity (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill 2003: 86). The "primal" connection with the mother is framed in sexual terms, as Freud's Oedipus complex. The Oedipus complex has been discussed by several authors (Brittan 1989: 29, Butler 2004: 43, Connell 1995: 8-12, Haywood & Mac an Ghaill 2003: 86, Johnson 2005: 189, Seidman 2010: 9) and it seems to be a familiar term which has made its way into everyday conversation. The Oedipus complex is a

psychological conflict that takes place during the early psychosexual development of boys. Boys initially identify with and desire their mothers, but live in fear of the castrating father, who has claimed the sexual attention of the mother. Boys must learn to disassociate from the mother and identify with the father in a healthy way, in order for the Oedipus complex to be "resolved," lest the boy become socially deviant and emotionally hampered (Connell 1995: 8-9, Seidman 2010: 9).

Out of psychoanalytic theory came the idea that masculinity and femininity were diametrically opposed – masculinity existed as an *opposite* to femininity. Certainly, the idea of men and women as "opposites" seems to be a truism, perhaps one that seeps into gender politics even amongst those of us who believe ourselves to be enlightened activists. If a feminist, women's movement exists, then a men's movement must exist in order for a society to be "equal." It would seem then, in an intellectual sense, that there must be some kind of scientific basis for "sex difference," a distinction which would by 1990 be questioned by works such as *Gender Trouble* by philosopher Judith Butler. If we are to understand ourselves socially as belonging to one of two sexes, we must have some kind of reason to believe as such.

 The second attempt at a science of masculinity is defined by sex role theory (Connell 1995: 21). It is absolutely erroneous to understand sex role theory as proceeding directly after psychoanalytic thought; there is considerable historical overlap between the bodies of thought. "Sex role" refers to the way in which:

> Being a man or woman means enacting a *general* set of expectations which are attached to one's sex – the 'sex role'. In this approach there are always two sex roles in any cultural context, a male one and a female one. Masculinity and femininity are quite easily interpreted as internalized sex roles, the products of social learning or 'socialization' (Connell 1995: 22).

Early academic studies on masculinities during the 1960s and 1970s were largely "sex role culturalist sociology, social psychology, and some 'men's movement' writing." Combined with studies on men from historical and literary perspectives, these early studies became the academic discipline of "men's studies" in the United States (Hearn & Morgan 1990: 5)

Sex role theory seems predominant in understandings of masculinity coming from psychological disciplines; perhaps sex roles fit psychological methodologies more appropriately than other approaches. Sex role theory has roots in psychoanalytic thought – indeed Blazina & Watkins Jr. (2000) say relationship anxieties felt by males during the early years of their lives with their parents can be easily operationalized to be used in experimental settings (p. 127). Sex role theory is also rooted in functionalism, a sociological perspective pioneered by Talcott Parsons in the 1950s (Whitehead 2002: 18).

This interdisciplinary overlap between psychoanalysis and sociology seems to point at a social underpinning for an understanding of gender, yet what we precisely mean by "gender" is difficult to define. Indeed, until the 1970s, "sex" was the word used to talk about what we now would use the word "gender" to describe. (Johnson 2005: 80). In the sex-role approach to research, there are two categories – masculine and feminine, which go on to imply a set of expectations for "men" and "women" in accordance with behavioural expectations, as well as physiological ones (Connell 1995: 22). Talcott Parson's approach differentiated between sex roles in family settings; "gender" emerged as the difference in function between men and women in small social groups (Connell 1995: 23). Masculinity and femininity became stable categories through the proper functioning of families (Whitehead 2002: 18).

Sex role theory has been subject to change over the course of history. During its rise to prominence in the 1950s, the Western labor force had been undergoing profound changes, such as women's "entrance" into the workforce. Changes such as this, as well as the further development of feminist thought in the following decades (the feminist "second wave") meant that sex role theory as it pertained to men and masculinity began to crystallize – men became "known" in social theory, however masculinity became problematized (Whitehead 2002: 20).

In functionalist theory, sex roles were relatively stable and necessary for that kind of understanding – men and women functioning properly led to a stable, properly functioning society as well as legible social theory! Perhaps a sense of conservatism crept into sex role functionalist thought – Connell (1995) points at this conservatism – Connell says "complacency," in sex role theory, not the idea of sex roles themselves – as a force which spurred growth in feminist thought (p. 23).

To some extent, I am sure, categories like "women" and "men" were necessary to feminist thought in order to articulate sexist oppression, how can oppression exist without an oppressed/oppressive subject(s)? How do we make sense of this subject? But we must not allow social theory to become deterministic, i.e. the female role was only that of an oppressed role. By extension, the male role was that of an oppressive role. Sex role theory was perhaps not guilty of determinism, as a characteristic of sex role theory, it's "advantage over psychoanalysis," was that internalized sex roles are subject to challenge from external social institutions (the school, church, family, etc.), so roles could change. If masculinity were defined institutionally in a certain way, then it is up to institutions and social norms to change definitions of masculinity (Connell 1995: 23). Of course, this is no guarantee that sex roles would change for the "better," from a feminist point of view.

The theory of hegemonic masculinity arose as an attempt to theorize masculinity in a more comprehensive way, drawing from knowledge gained from several disciplines, with several insights from feminism in particular. Connell, (1995) in *Masculinities* asserts that gender is a major force in the organization of social life. Connell argues that "we need at least a three-fold model of the structure of gender, distinguishing relations of (a) power, (b) production, and (c) cathexis (emotional attachment)" (p. 73-74). Patriarchy, or the broad dominance of men over women, is the major power structure this theory names as necessary to account for. Patriarchy however, is constantly challenged through the women's movement and by "local reversals" i.e. women-headed households, female heads of state, women in the military, etc. Connell (1995) recognizes these challenges and states that patriarchy exists in a state of uncertainty. It must reassert its legitimacy constantly, and this has implications for the "politics of masculinity" (p. 74). Patriarchy is even challenged *by men*, as men from the "New Left" around the 1970s had profeminist organizations dedicated to changing men to assist women's liberation (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005: 831). It is important to realize then, that power is not simply held by men or any group in particular, it is exercised and performed (Cowburn 2005: 218). Men can choose not to exercise patriarchal power, although this insight does nothing to ease concerns about how patriarchal power is *assumed* to be present in men – concerns that others behave towards men as though men are the bearers of a certain power. To challenge hegemonic masculinity is not to guarantee its removal, ushering in a new age of gender equality and utopia. Hegemonic masculinity responds to challenge simply by redefining itself (Ricciardelli, Clow, & White 2010: 65).

Connell's very use of the word "hegemonic" means the theory is explicitly about power. Power is always difficult to write and talk about as it is unclear what power is and what we mean when we speak about power, yet nobody disputes power exists. *Hegemony* is a Gramscian term which refers to the way in which dominant social classes maintain their social power over subordinate classes. Hegemony is defined by Buchbinder (2013) as a control of ideology so that subordinate classes are not necessarily ruled against their will, but rather they believe in an ideology which justifies and naturalizes the superior position and interests of the dominant social class (p. 91-92). Atkinson (2011) further explains that hegemony is "socially legitimate and enduring power [that is] established and maintained through subtle interinstitutional and cultural means" (p. 30). It is critical to maintain awareness that hegemonic masculinity is an ever-challenged position. Not all men represent hegemonic masculinity, and those who do are not necessarily the most powerful men (Connell 2005: 77). Hegemonic masculinity represents the "cultural benchmark" of masculinity, but it is not necessarily a "statistically prevalent" masculinity (Atkinson 2011: 32). Connell's own definition of hegemonic masculinity is as follows:

> Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (p. 77).

This means that hegemonic masculinity is *not* a description of a particular kind of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity refers to a position of power amongst a network of gender relations (Connell 1995: 81). However, authors still use "hegemonic masculinity" to refer to certain expressions of masculinity as it still does make reference to a culturally favored form of masculinity. It is most important to keep in mind that this culturally favored form of masculinity can change. What is hegemonic masculinity today may not be hegemonic masculinity ten years

from now, as it is "historically and culturally contingent" (Buchbinder 2013: 94), so while the phrase can refer to specific traits held by specific men, what is ultimately meant by the term is a reference to a position of social power (Whitehead 2002: 88) . More specifically, it refers to men's dominance over women.

Hegemonic masculinity as a theoretical concept can be further understood as differentiated social power amongst different groups of men, or amongst different forms of *masculinities* in the plural (Brittan 1989: 128, Buchbinder 2013: 95, Connell 1995: 76-81, Haywood & Mac an Ghaill 2003: 9, Hearn & Morgan 1990: 10). Connell (1995) gives three subtypes of masculinities in addition to hegemonic masculinity: subordinate masculinities, complicit masculinities, and marginalized masculinities (p. 78-81). Subordinate masculinities are marked by a "symbolic blurring with femininity" (p. 79), in accordance with hegemonic masculinity referring to the dominance of men over women. Subordinate masculinities then, are those forms which are rendered as feminine. Homosexual men are the clearest example (though not the only one) of a subordinated masculinity (Brittan 1989: 128, Connell 1995: 78-79).

Complicit masculinities are not hegemonic, but they do not seek to challenge hegemonic masculinity; in fact they benefit from hegemonic masculinity through the "patriarchal dividend," or the general benefit all men receive through patriarchal domination (Connell 1995: 79, Haywood & Mac an Ghaill 2003: 148).

Marginalized masculinities are difficult to define considering their apparently similarity to subordinate masculinities. The difference appears to be in the institutionalized social benefit meted out to particular groups of men. Individual black men in the United States in particular may be exemplars of hegemonic masculinity, but their status yields no benefit to black men in

general (Connell 1995: 81). In contrast, a gay white man can pass as heterosexual and reap the privileges afforded to him, albeit at the cost of his true identity. Structural racism is a key contributor to the realities of marginalized masculinities (Connell 1995: 80).

We may call the ways in which we act or dress, for instance remaining quiet and reverent at a funeral, exuberant at a party, or adhering to a dress code at a public school or workplace *disciplinary practices* or *disciplinary regimes* (Connell 1995: 61). These social situations or contexts have complex rules which influence the ways in which we think and act. Heterosexuality, for instance, is a disciplinary regime which structures the behavior of men to the point of it becoming an identity. Heterosexual men know their desire, they *feel* it in a very literal sense. I can recall my own first sexual experience with a woman and the way my body responded to her. It was during a time of doubt – this experience happened relatively late in my life (I had recently turned 23) and I was questioning my sexuality. I felt that since I did not seem to feel any strong desire for a woman that I am probably homosexual and living in denial. My "heterosexuality" did not proceed the same way I believed other men's – my peers, did. I had a complex understanding of heterosexuality and how it was integral to my sense of masculinity and my sense of being, my very existence – it was a way in which I (mis)understood myself. However, it was not until my experience that I "knew for sure," my body's emotional-physical response gave my heterosexuality its meaning.

> With bodies both objects and agents of practice, and the practice itself forming the structures within which bodies are appropriated and defined, we face a pattern beyond the formulae of current social theory. This pattern might be termed body-reflexive practice (Connell 1995: 61).

Simply put, I did not *really know* I was heterosexual until I literally felt it, thanks to my partner's touch. She introduced a "spark" that set in motion my heterosexual desire – for better

or for worse, my desire has increased: I want more. This is not a story that showcases the transgressive potential[1] of the body-reflective practice but it is an example of how it works. The body must be taken into account when we talk about "outside" social forces which structure our action.

<div align="center">CONSENT</div>

How would we go about finding out what the word "consent" means to most people? I suppose one could design a questionnaire, interview people, and write a paper detailing their findings, but they would surely be criticized for overgeneralizing. Is it important that people have different definitions of sexual consent? I would think yes, or else how would we go about treating consent as an ethical concern? As a legal concern? How is research about sexual consent applicable to the general public? Who gets to say what? I do not even know if I can find a singular definition of consent to use when working *with* this paper, that is to say, how do I conceptualize consent during the writing process? How do I think around the term? Is it important to have an operational definition, as my training from my undergraduate degree in sociology has taught me so? Or is it better to leave the concept of consent as fluid and subject to change, as my current education in women's studies is teaching me?

I would have to go with the latter, actually. I am starting from a personal belief that rape is wrong – I am sure most would agree with me that it is – but consent is more than "yes means yes" or "no means no." Perhaps a historical analysis of sexual consent of eras past would yield some insight as to how consent has been communicated over time, if it has, but it seems reasonable enough to me that there are more ways to ensure consent than a single word or

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[1] Connell (1995) tells the story of a Don Meredith, who, after having his anus digitally penetrated by a girlfriend went on to attempt a sexual encounter with another man (p. 60-62).

gesture. I would not think that conceptualizing consent as fluid leads to a justification or excusing of rape and other forms of sexual assault. But then, what if rape and sexual assault are subject to the same treatment as sexual consent? Would they not be equally as fluid and open to change? I know I am asking far more questions than I am capable of answering. What I ultimately mean is that consent should probably be treated as an ongoing process, both in the bedroom and outside of it in discourses such as the one I hope to contribute to here in this paper. Maybe the discourse of consent should be a never-ceasing conversation, and clearly such a fluid conception lends a host of challenges to writing about consent.

One of the difficulties that arises when thinking about sexual consent is the status of heterosexuality, in both common-sense and academic discussions. Heterosexuality enjoys a hegemonic status amongst human sexualities; it's exclusion from the ever-expanding LGBTQIA acronym in fact illustrates this status. Gay and lesbian orientations are often understood as having a marked political nature, if they are not outright political choices. To say that gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, and asexual orientations are political is to relax our definition of that word when we consider them as separate from heterosexuality, as we must not forget the feminist truism "the personal is political." Heterosexuality must be no different, it too displays politics. The dominant status of heterosexuality, however, masks its political nature. If we accept heterosexuality as a sort of default sexuality, perhaps we risk an uncritical acceptance of it. We can discursively freeze heterosexuality as subject entirely to nature, as ahistorical, and as asocial.

Such a naturalizing perspective and one of the understandings of heterosexuality is that put forth in evolutionary biology. Here, heterosexuality is explained in biologically determinist, evolutionary terms. That is to say, heterosexuality is a manifestation of human evolution (McCaughey 1996: 266-270). Care must be taken here, I certainly do not mean to undermine or

deny the theory of evolution, or to take completely the side of nurture in the nature versus nurture war, or to take a completely social constructionist view. Rather, as McCaughey (1996) suggests, we must exercise caution when we attempt to ascribe existing social values onto scientific findings. For example, it has been suggested by evolutionary biologists that human males have evolved psychological mechanisms which allow them to identify (apparently with hardly any success) when women are willing to have sex.

Since women must carry a child to term, give birth, and raise the child single-handedly, or so this narrative goes, it is a significant investment for a woman to become pregnant. Men, however, are under no such "natural" obligation to aid in child-rearing, nor can they become pregnant, so sex is not a risky commitment. This is a bleak world where women are rarely willing to have sex with men, so men would be well-served to have the ability to know when women do want to have sex, even if it meant misinterpreting her signals every now and again. It is for this reason that men are very likely to mistake a woman's friendliness as sexual attraction (McCaughey 1996: 266-270).

Perhaps a more popular example of the sexual consent debate is the "pick-up artist" seduction culture. In fact, hegemonic masculinity and pick-up artists is a topic worthy of a lot of attention. The seduction community exists on the internet in the form of online forums and dedicated websites, and in books written in the "self-help" style, such as *The Mystery Method: How To Get Beautiful Women Into Bed*, (Denes 2011: 411) authored by the self-styled pick-up artist who goes by "Mystery."

According to Denes (2011), pick-up artists operate under the guise of science – that is, pick-up artists believe their understanding of sexual relationships is rooted in scientific

understandings of men's and women's experience of heterosexuality. This is a reproductive-centric model which privileges heterosexual, procreative sex as the ideal form of sexuality. The invocation of our reproductive biology pulls our understanding of gender roles towards essentialism; that there are distinct "man-male" and "woman-female" binaries that are the manifestations of the "truth" of gender. The scientific language carries with it a certain authority; we are compelled to believe scientific findings. The focus of this paper is neither the philosophy of knowledge nor the philosophy of science, but those bodies of thought certainly have much in common with the questions asked by Denes (2011) and by myself, through choosing to cite her. I would not seek to dismantle science but I believe there is a cause for skepticism when scientific findings are used to justify harmful behaviours, in this case, ignoring women's verbal refusals, paying only attention to her bodily cues.

Bodily cues however, are not unimportant and they must be considered. In fact they appear to have great importance to many men and women of college/ university age, as they are a major factor in the negotiation of sexual consent between partners. Both college men and women may rely on their partner's nonverbal (bodily) cues to indicate consent (Jozkowsi & Peterson 2013: 518). A theory of masculinity which seeks to emphasize the embodied nature of gender practice, such as Connell's (1995), is also concerned with bodily cues. Also, biology is certainly not the only problematic domain when attempting to theorize sexual consent. In fact, a huge mixture of biological "reality," social gender roles, internalized understandings of gender, indeed the panoply of perspectives that may fall under the umbrella of social constructionism as it applies to gender are simultaneously in effect. Butler (1990) may call this the "heterosexual matrix:"

> [The heterosexual matrix is a] grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized ... a hegemonic discursive/epistemological model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality (p. 151).

Heterosexuality is, unsurprisingly, another component in this discussion about consent. Since this discussion is viewed through the lens of hegemonic masculinity, arguably part of Butler's (1990) "heterosexual matrix," as well as a precondition for achieving hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995: 123), heterosexuality is an inevitable point of analysis. However, as I have already mentioned, the "invisibility" of heterosexuality as a product of its privileged, hegemonic status presents us with a challenge – we must deliberately problematize heterosexuality and separate it from our common sense understandings of it in an attempt to free ourselves from making certain assumptions or taking things for granted.

We are not the only ones to blame. Heterosexuality has been insufficiently explored in a critical, theoretical sense. The academic literature in gender studies also seems to be guilty of making certain assumptions about heterosexuality. Heterosexuality has been examined by perspectives that implicate it in the realm of gender inequality; Connell's (1995) theory is certainly such an approach. Heterosexuality, in this vein of thought, is dangerous. Queer/feminist "pro-sex" perspectives have recently emerged in sex analysis, but heterosexuality is still cast as being somehow boring and nonsubversive (Beasley 2010: 204-205).

Heterosexuality may be also "invisible" in public discussion, not just in the academy – heterosexuality *itself* is something that is rarely spoken about. Sexual stories may indeed be shared amongst friends, male and female alike, but heterosexuality as an identity is not up for discussion. Heterosexuality does not necessarily carry with it any identity; any "heterosexual label" or "status" outside of its position of privilege in society – think about how nobody

"straight bashes." Most heterosexuals find it very difficult to speak of themselves in terms of their sexual orientation (Kitzinger 1994: 195-196). It is of little surprise that queer theorists would place non-heterosexuality at the site of non-normative, exciting, and pleasurable sex that is itself politicized, while heterosexuality does not offer these things (Beasley 2010: 205).

Connell (1995) offers a contradiction here, through her theoretical destabilization of masculinities as constantly in flux, heterosexuality could come under critical scrutiny and change form. Through the mechanism of the bodily-reflexive practice, "new" configurations of heterosexuality could emerge, possibly through drawing from insights gained in feminist thought about sexual consent. This idea, in fact came up during my conversation with Christopher, one of the men I interviewed for this work. Connell (1995), near the conclusion of *Masculinities*, says:

> Pursuing social justice in the structure of cathexis [desire and emotional attachment] means ending the stigma of sexual difference and the imposition of compulsory heterosexuality, and reconstructing heterosexuality on the basis of reciprocity, not hierarchy … Social justice in gender relations, understood in this way, is a generalizable interest but not a demand for uniformity. Complex equality is precisely the condition needed for diversity as a real practice, for open-ended explorations of human possibility (p. 230).

CRITICISMS OF CONNELL

Through talking about the hegemonic nature of heterosexuality masking its political nature I am of course also talking about power, the naming of groups which have power, and I am attempting to explain how this power works. "Power" is, admittedly, a pretty nebulous concept and it is difficult to define and explain. A criticism of Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity is the assumptions made about power – that it is held by certain groups and exercised in a particular way (Moller 2007: 268). This is to say a certain group of men can be defined as

hegemonic, and their dominant status is at the expense of other groups of men. The flow of power here is linear and "top-down." Heterosexuality, in comparison exists as a privileged sexuality and through its privilege it exists at the expense of other forms of sexualities. On the one hand, it is easy to see that certain forms of masculinity and certain forms of sexuality *are* discriminated against in symbolic and material (structural) ways, as Connell explains in her description of subordinated and marginalized masculinities (p. 78-81). On the other hand, it is easy to imagine categories like heterosexuality and (hegemonic) masculinity as monoliths, devoid of individuality and nuance. Is it really possible, even giving masculinity the room to be expressed as a multiplicity of masculinities, to break it down into four categories with hegemonic masculinity dominating all the others? Perhaps even Connell's multiple masculinities are too limited. According to Moller (2007), it is too simplistic to boil down power into "logic(s) of domination" using Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity (p. 269).

Likewise, Demetriou (2001) criticizes Connell's theory by bringing to light the absence of marginalized, subordinated, and complicit masculinities in Connell's historical account of the origins of hegemonic masculinity (p. 347). This is not to question the role or existence of "other" types of masculinity, but rather to question the historical legibility of Connell's theory.

Demetriou (2001) differentiates between *internal* and *external* hegemony – hegemonic masculinity is achieved through the struggle for internal hegemony, where a particular group of men come to dominate all other men, while external hegemony refers to the dominant status of men over women (p. 345-346). Connell, to Demetriou, oversimplifies the relationship between different masculinities, or what Connell (1995) speaks of when she writes about multiple masculinities existing in relation to one another, the hegemonic position remaining "always contestable" (p. 76). Demetriou (2001) introduces the concept of the "hegemonic bloc" in an

effort to add nuance to the process by which hegemonic masculinity changes form and reproduces itself. For example, during the gay liberation movements of the 1970s and 1980s, "gay visibility" meant that capitalism could subsume any expression of gay identity – gay men were merely another group to be marketed to and gay culture could be sold to anyone. The effect was not gay liberation, but the reproduction of capitalism and male hegemony (p. 350-351). Similarly, *pastiche hegemony* is the practice through which men, living in "late modernity" can construct complex, individual-oriented identities that break free from traditional codes of hegemony (Atkinson 2011: 108). Pastiche hegemony emerges when hegemonic masculinity is deemed by post-modern society to be anachronistic and even antagonistic, exposed as fraud by knowledge about class, race, orientation, etc. (Atkinson 2011: 107). Men are likewise free to negotiate hegemony in new ways – hegemonic masculinity is not abolished; it changes form in barely perceptible ways. As Demetriou (2001) caustically puts it, "to understand hegemonic masculinity as hybridity is therefore to avoid falling into the trap of believing that patriarchy has disappeared simply because heterosexual men have worn earrings or because Sylvester Stallone has worn a new masquerade" (p. 355).

RAPE CULTURE

Beres (2007) takes a term from Bourdieu: "spontaneous sociology … the adoption of the common sense meanings of concepts without critically reflecting on the cultural, historical, and social forces that produced those meanings" (p. 95). Bourdieu could have been writing for women's studies. This idea of spontaneous sociology seems to apply to how the topic and concept of sexual consent is discussed in nonacademic settings, i.e. in the realm of "practice" when we consider the "theory vs practice" dichotomy which has so often come up over the course of my education in social science. It is unlikely that most people apply a disciplined

framework of thought or feminist praxis when they talk about or negotiate sexual consent, but we must assume that consent *happens* one way or another. Perhaps "rape culture" as a concept is an example of spontaneous sociology, perhaps it is not. Upon reflection, I am inclined to believe the latter. In this section, I will discuss various definitions and articulations of rape culture as it appears to be a dominant lens through which we now discuss sexual consent.

In the editor's preface of the 1993 book *Transforming a Rape Culture*, rape culture is defined as:

> . . . a complex of beliefs that encourages male sexual aggression and supports violence against women. It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent. In a rape culture women perceive a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women *as the norm* (Buchwald, Fletcher & Roth 1993: 1).

This is a definition from 1993; I doubt it would hold up to scrutiny today. It is a problematic definition because it erases male victims of female-perpetrated rape, however rare that may be, it is still a possibility. In fact, we would probably cite rape culture as the reason why male victims of female-perpetrated rape would be hesitant to come forward and share their experience. This however is not to imply there is a female-perpetrated conspiracy to keep male victims silent. Male victims' silences can be traced back to male domination and hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, if a man is truly in control, how can he be raped (by a woman, nonetheless)? In instances of male rape perpetrated by other men, there is a feminization of the victim – a raped man is less of a man. In fact, their sexualities are brought into question, a male victim of rape may be presumed to be secretly homosexual and somehow deserving of rape because he must have wanted it to happen (Doherty & Anderson 2004: 86). The homosexualization of male rape victims implicates them in the realm of subordinate masculinities (Brittan 1989: 128; Connell 1995: 78-79).

This definition also places different sexual acts on a hierarchy as it makes a distinction between "sexual touching and *rape itself*" (Buchwald et al. 1993:1, emphasis added). There is a difficult gray area here. On the one hand, it seems clear that there are differences in severity between certain acts of violation – forced penetration is probably "worse" than unwelcome groping, but at the same time placing "rape itself," whatever that may be, at the most extreme end of the spectrum runs the risk of controlling the experiences of victims/survivors of rape/assault (two more troublesome distinctions). If we define "rape itself" as penile penetration, although the authors do not explicitly do this, we further reify phallic power and reinforce dominant constructions of intercourse as "real sex."

Rape culture can also be defined broadly as the way we "collectively think about rape" (Ridgway 2014). Language is a collective practice, and it is also one way in which the severity of rape is diminished. Anne-Marie Roy, a student union leader at the University of Ottawa became the target of several "rape threats" by fellow student union leaders (Williams 2014). Williams (2014) argues that rape is downplayed in media through neutral-sounding language. Alex Larochelle, another student leader said "someone punish her with their shaft." This is plainly a threat of rape, according to Williams (2014), yet since it is a euphemism it is acceptable to show it in printed form. Words like "rape" and "rape culture" would produce a visceral reaction amongst readers and that, to Williams (2014) would be a good thing. Benedict (1993) argues that such neutral or palatable language is merely reproducing the viewpoint of the rapist (p. 104).

Some believe that "rape culture" ought to be discarded, as demonstrated by Ian Brown (2014) in *The Globe and Mail.* Brown argues that there is hardly cause to believe we live in a "culture of rape" because there is a relatively low number of rapists among the general

population – somewhere around 3% of college men are responsible for 90% of rapes on campuses (2014).

Rape culture may be a useful theoretical tool. It is difficult to define as rape culture can mean so many different things; Ridgway (2014) lists no less than 25 different examples that are rape culture. It may be difficult to truly distinguish rape culture as anything more than another articulation of patriarchy. Rape culture defined as "[a culture that restricts] a person's control of hir[2] (sic) body, limiting hir sense of ownership of it, and granting others a sense of entitlement to it" (Troost 2008: 171) calls to mind what I mean. Troost's (2008) definition of rape culture seems to use rape as a metaphor for patriarchal domination. It is only implicitly about rape-as-sexual-assault or rape-as-act of power when Troost (2008) mentions "[others' sense] of entitlement [to a person's (a woman?) body]." "Culture" complicates the term as well. When we say rape culture, where and who, exactly, are we talking about? Maybe I am needlessly obfuscating the idea of rape culture with my questions – Williams (2014) considers the concept uncontestable and any questioning of it is *itself* an example of rape culture. It would appear to me to be philosophically dangerous to consider skepticism about rape culture as proof of its existence. But perhaps "rape culture" is more specific than simply naming "patriarchy" as a major contributing factor in rape, sexual assault, sexual objectification of women, and of women's subordination in general.

> When feminism around 1970 spoke of 'patriarchy' as the master pattern in human history, the argument was overgeneralized. But the idea well captured the power and intractability of a massive structure of social relations: a structure that involved the state, the economy, culture and communications as well as kinship, child-rearing and sexuality (Connell 1995: 65).

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[2] Gender-neutral pronoun. See Hazel Troost (2008) "Reclaiming Touch: Rape Culture, Explicit Verbal Consent, and Body Sovereignty" in *Yes Means Yes! Visions of Female Sexual Power & A World Without Rape* edited by Jaclyn Friedman & Jessica Valenti. Berkeley, CA: Seal Press.

Connell is not denying the existence of patriarchy, rather she is pointing out its very general applicability to several spheres of human action. Patriarchy is understood as a general pattern of male dominance basically anywhere you look. Rape culture perhaps is useful in the sense that it calls attention to patterns of women's (and men's, to a lesser extent) oppression along the lines of sexuality, itself an extremely diverse network of possibility and interaction.

METHODS

In keeping with my previous research project on the social construction of masculinity done in my undergraduate degree, I wanted the focus of my original data collected from research participants to be at the level of lived experience. Lived experience is often a focus of feminist thought and, with Connell's (1995) emphasis on *embodiment* (p. 52-54), especially in her own case studies which aids her illustration of hegemonic masculinity in *Masculinities*, I believe very unique, subjective accounts of masculinity to be a useful tool for my project because men's unique interpretations of their own experiences are inevitably based against their interpretations of the lives and social positions of other men, which is consistent with Connell's hegemonic masculinity as multiple masculinities understood in relation to each other (Connell 1995: 76). I believe men have detailed knowledges of their own masculinities, whether they possess the specialized language used in social sciences and women's studies to speak about themselves or not. I wished to delve into these personal stories and accounts through an open-ended one-on-one interview approach.

One's sense of masculinity can be difficult to talk about, as a certain amount of secrecy is necessary to maintain a position of power. Dominant constructions of masculinity do not allow for a very generous amount of self-disclosure as would be necessary in an interview setting.

Perhaps it is not possible to "tear down the walls," of what Johnson (2005) calls "patriarchal masculinity" (p. 148) but I think otherwise. I believe men will let their guards down and disclose personal information about their inner selves and lives. Still, I am asking men deeply personal questions and there is no guarantee of success, no guarantee that men will open up to me in the interview setting. Therefore, I must ensure that the men feel as comfortable as possible throughout the interview.

DATA COLLECTION

Qualitative data was collected through open-ended, unstructured one-on-one interviews with self-identified heterosexual male undergraduate students at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. All participants were recruited through various nonprobability sampling methods. My sample consisted of 5 individuals, all heterosexual-identified men. My only inclusionary criteria were that the men were approximately 19-25 years of age, enrolled in any program at Mount Saint Vincent University, are self-identified as male and heterosexual, and they are Canadian citizens. International students were not permitted in this research due to a concern of cultural difference confounding my collected data. However, two of my participants fell outside of this age range. One was 27, another 37. The reason I included an expected age bracket was to attempt to eliminate generational difference as a variable in my responses, however I doubt very much that this is a big concern. A sample size of 5 is not representative and each participant constituted their own unique case study. In fact, having a significantly older participant may have yielded more interesting responses. In any case, all of my participants had useful things to say about masculinity and sexual consent.

The men were be recruited through word of mouth, personal referrals (snowball sampling), social media, email, and posters placed around campus. I was interested in the men's personal views on their own masculinity, the masculinity of other men, their views on sexual consent, and their views on our current social-sexual context of "rape culture."

The men were interviewed one at a time, in a mutually agreed upon private location arranged beforehand. The interviews each lasted a little less than one hour. A questionnaire loosely guided the discussion, though at several points I deviated from the questionnaire when participant began developing a particular concept in a productive way. Each interview was audio recorded with a digital device and transcribed using Microsoft Word. Extracts of the data were used to compare and contrast with the literature-based research of this paper.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research involves human participants and the subject matter is sensitive in nature, so it was conducted according to the standards of the Tri-Council Policy Statement under the supervision of the Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board. Due to recent policy changes, a Course on Research Ethics (CORE) training module had to be completed. After CORE certification, the ethics approval process could continue. Participants were first briefed on the nature of the research and then they were required to read a Letter of Informed Consent, which informed them that their participation was voluntary, that they were to be tape-recorded, their identities concealed through the usage of pseudonyms, that excerpts from the conversations were to be used in the drafts of the final paper, and that recorded audio would be destroyed after the research was complete, in compliance with University guidelines.

Policy considerations aside, my own role as the interviewer is crucial to the ethics process. Throughout the interview, I had to be careful to gauge my participants' comfort levels, and if it seemed that the conversation was drifting towards an uncomfortable area, I would have had to steer it towards another subject. Of unique concern in this particular study is the possibility of illegal activity being reported during an interview. Since sexual consent is a main focus in the interview, it was possible that a participant could have accidentally disclosed an instance where they were involved as the perpetrator of a sexual assault. If such a thing were to happen, I would have been obligated to report them to the Halifax Regional Police. This is clearly worded in the Letter of Informed Consent, but there was some worry that participants may have felt threatened by the possibility of legal repercussions for having participated in a research project. There are no questions on the questionnaire that effectively asked participants to incriminate themselves, but I have very little control over what my participants said.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The primary objective of using interviews as a research method in my work would be to obtain original responses which add to the discussion of sexual consent, masculinity, and rape culture. The unstructured nature of the interviews will hopefully allow the men to self-reflect and generate new ideas and new frameworks about their own masculinities. From previous experience interviewing men, I know that it may be difficult for men to be thorough when talking about something such as their own masculinity and sexual consent. During my interviews in my undergraduate work, I often asked probing questions in an attempt to encourage my participants to elaborate on their responses but my own bias can easily enter the picture. I may have asked a participant to elaborate on a particular response but not another, or I may have

inadvertently steered the conversation away from the questions that guided my interviews, or even away from the main research question itself.

It is a concern of mine that academic language is utterly meaningless to those who are not specialized in a particular field. Certainly the knowledge of specialized language is a form of power that allows a researcher to interpret participants' knowledge (or the more impersonal sounding "data") in a particular way that fits the research question. The risk is attributing meaning where I cannot possibly be sure. To put it most bluntly, the power manifests itself in a sense that is as if to say "you may not think what you said means what I say it does, but trust me, it does." Perhaps some of my participants will have difficulty with a particular term or concept and I would be effective in explaining it through examples, drawing on the casual nature of a conversation and all its inherent possibility for education. Knowledge of a particular theoretical perspective on masculinity is not necessary to have sophisticated views on masculinity and sexual consent. Indeed, I am interested in the knowledge of masculinity and consent men have based on their own life experience – I have Connell (1995) to inform me about hegemonic masculinity!

Alcoff (2008) discusses the relevance of one's social location when conducting feminist research, cautioning that some social locations are "discursively dangerous" (p. 485). The problem of social location and position is not just present with knowledge generated by relatively privileged people. It is also a simplification to characterize the positions of "insider/outsider" in terms of social privilege. Naples (2003) discusses this distinction in her work about the insider/outsider dynamic present in some feminist research. Rather than boil down social position into a dichotomy of haves and have-nots, "others" are created through dynamic power

relations and this in turn structures and informs how individuals in a group see themselves and interact with one another (p. 50).

To apply this theoretical distinction to my work would mean to distinguish between the facts that everybody involved in my research is a heterosexual man of fairly privileged background and that not all men may necessarily view masculinity and consent in the same way. Connell's (1995) theory of masculinity allows for masculinities to be contested and reaffirmed (p. 76), or else the whole idea of a *hegemonic* masculinity would fall apart entirely. I imagine that there exists a connection of some kind between "insider/outsider" and Connell's theory of masculinity. The men are not "insiders" because of their relatively high level of social privilege; they would be insiders if they understood themselves and each other in a similar way.

In my interviewing process during my undergraduate research, I shared a very similar social location as the men I interviewed, but I was an "outsider" to some of the men due to how I understood masculinity and sexuality; my "academic" knowledge brought me to disagreement with some of the men so despite our very similar social locations, there was a division between us. Men who exhibited hegemonic masculinity in my interviews as Connell would describe (they exhibited it through their beliefs and attitudes i.e. "I think a real man never cries and always gets what he wants") enjoy a greater network of support in society than a man such as myself who identifies as feminist so a hegemonic man would be constructed as the "insider" in the greater society. Perhaps within the environment of the interview, despite being the "outsider," I enjoyed a greater amount of power simply because I was interpreted as a researcher, especially one within Mount Saint Vincent University, a unique institution that may discourage certain expressions of masculinity. A participant may not wish to voice his true opinion because he was

in some way intimidated by an implicit threat posed by the institution of the University itself, or that it may be socially undesirable to come off as a sexist man in today's culture. I hope to lessen this social desirability effect by conducting follow-up interviews with willing participants.

My position as a white heterosexual male is an interesting one when my subject matter is considered. I cannot avoid the reality of my privileged position, which can be "discursively dangerous" in social research because there is the risk that oppressive narratives about "others" will end up being reproduced in the research (Alcoff 2008: 485). However in my case I am very unsure as to how "othering" comes into play with my research, if it does at all. My demographic is heterosexual men and I wish for them to talk about masculinity and sexual consent. Heterosexuality already enjoys a privileged position amongst other configurations of sexuality (Beasley 2010: 204). There is a risk of reproducing oppressive narratives in my research of women as "sluts" or "easy" when it comes to sexual consent and traditional, normative narratives of men as sexual conquerors although such narratives might end up as useful in some way to my research inasmuch as they may indicate hegemonic masculinity. Interviews would constitute a "public, discursive setting" as Alcoff (2008) discusses, where:

> "…I (momentarily) create my self just as much as when I speak for others I create their selves – in the sense that I create a public, discursive self …The point is that a kind of representation occurs in all cases of speaking for, whether I am speaking for myself or for others, that this representation is never a simple act of discovery, and that it will most likely have an impact on the individual so represented" (p. 486).

Alcoff is speaking about instances where the researcher is reporting about particularly disadvantaged groups, where discursively "re-creating" the realities of these groups may be problematic when done from a privileged position or a position of greater power. Since I will not be "speaking for" in that sense, I will be "speaking with" men, as a social equal in a positional

sense. It stands to reason that our own common social position and the privilege that comes with it may have an effect on what gets talked about during the interview sessions.

ANALYSIS

Certain themes and ideas were important to me when I set out to conduct my interviews. Since I wanted to gain a sense of men's ideas surrounding masculinity and sexual consent, my questions were oriented around those two broad themes. I also wanted to see what the men would say about rape culture – what I consider to be the current discursive climate we find ourselves in now when we speak about sexual consent. I asked the men about their definitions of masculinity, their definition of consent, how they think consent is communicated, whether or not they believed there was a sort of sexual script that men follow when obtaining consent, and other questions. I anticipated (and hoped) that there would be conceptual overlaps between the different questions when the men answered them. For instance, when the men spoke about consent, they were also revealing aspects of traditional masculinity.

GEOFF: What about the non-verbal side of things?

LUCAS: That one's tougher. Because, well if we go back to the first question you asked me about masculinity, it's just like "I need to take charge of this situation" where she's giving you quote-unquote "the eyes" you gotta be like, okay I know what that is, or at least I *think* I know what that is . . . so I feel like I gotta make the first move or to like distinguish is this a friendship that we're talking about or is this like a hookup?

Lucas's answer is a great example of the kinds of responses I was hoping to get. I wanted the men to consider their ideas of masculinity and sexual consent simultaneously and I believe Lucas did just that when he tied the need to take control of sexual situations to the task of interpreting non-verbal consent communication.

Quite simply, I wanted to obtain authentic responses from men and attempt to situate them within the framework of Connell's hegemonic masculinity. To do this, I audio recorded each interview so that I may transcribe it later. I began transcribing my audio tracks verbatim, but soon I found this process to be unproductive and too time-consuming. For instance, my aim was not to transcribe my interviews at the level done by Kitzinger & Frith's (1999) article on the use of conversation analysis in feminist theory[3], but rather to look for themes about masculinity and sexual consent so that they may be contrasted with Connell (1995) and all related literature. My sample was small enough so that each man could be treated as a unique case with unique stories to tell. I could not draw any generalizable conclusions from my interview data nor did I have enough to work with to take on a grounded theory approach. My goal was to explore masculinity and sexual consent with the unique life experiences of the five men I interviewed.

I abandoned trying to transcribe each track verbatim and instead I listened to each track closely in an effort to focus on the most important parts of the conversation to pare down the amount of transcription I had to do and to carry out a pre-analysis before I interpreted each excerpt through the perspectives given by my base of literature.

I paid close attention for particular concepts to emerge from the conversations with each of the men; each one developed a different idea in more detail than the rest. Derrick, a 24 year old musician with a long-term girlfriend spoke at length about the symbolic subordination of women, even bringing up Simone de Beauvoir once during our conversation. Derrick was good enough to share with me his history of practicing affirmative consent with his girlfriend, and I took that as his major contribution to the discussion in this work. Richard, a 37 year old man

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[33] This article demonstrates a complex system of grammar to be used in transcribing spoken word into minute detail, including pauses, vocal inflection, breaths, etc.

with a wife and children offered his eloquent interpretation of traditional masculinity during his experience at an auto repair supply shop. Christopher was a 27 year old sociology student who was committed to social activism. Thomas, 22 and Lucas, 24 were both involved in team sports and both had very interesting contributions from their lives in athletics. Lucas was the only man I interviewed who did not mention anything about having a current partner, but he did give me the impression that he often seeks casual sex in the local bar scene in Halifax. Each of these men must be considered as having unique life trajectories, their unique masculinities each a project which has changed and will continue to change over time.

DISCUSSION

What happens when you ask men about their ideas about masculinity and how they think about sexual consent? In my experience doing interviews for my undergrad thesis work as well as this work at the graduate level, men open up fairly easily and tell you. However, there is a marked tendency for men to distance themselves from any definition of masculinity that they give. Most of my participants had difficulty in giving a clear definition of masculinity. As one participant, "Thomas" put it,

> I think everyone's definition is slightly different . . . I think what I've learned from gender at least even in courses I've taken in university is that gender is socially constructed, so I'm almost aware of the fact that I do things because of what society deems to be masculine.

Thomas is aware that masculinity is not a fixed concept; it is contingent upon social structure and through body-reflexive practice, or the mechanisms through which bodies are located in complex social orders - "the fact that I do things because of what society deems to be masculine" (Connell 1995: 59-61). It appears as though it is very difficult to strongly identify oneself with a particular definition of masculinity, just as it is difficult to define masculinity. Heterosexual masculinity, at

least from a psychoanalytical perspective, is marked by anxiety, due to the failed repression of the feminine (Cook 2005: 48). Feminism in particular has had a destabilizing effect on masculinity, making it much more difficult for individual men to act out dominant (hegemonic) forms of masculinity, especially when definitions of masculinity are subject to increasingly more individual interpretation (Cook 2005: 51). "Christopher" invokes the presence of a penis as the most basic definition of masculinity:

> I think the most basic definition of being a man is just having a penis to be honest with you, there's just so many different ways you can look at it, I mean there's a lot of stereotypes that go along with it like, you know you have to be strong, you have to be emotionally secure, financially secure and things like this and I think those have impacted the way I view my own masculinity to some extent, but the most basic definition is just what's between your legs.

Christopher also forgoes pinning down a particular definition of masculinity by effectively saying "as long as you have a penis, you are a man." While transgender conditions would introduce difficulty to what Christopher has said, that the presence of a penis does *not* signify manhood or masculinity, I believe Christopher meant that masculinity can take many forms. What is interesting in Christopher's response is the willingness to define an ideal form of masculinity but associate it with stereotypes – physical strength, emotional reticence, financial security. Christopher continues:

> You have your superheroes, like, you know, Batman. Everyone wants to be Batman. He's physically fit, he's a billionaire; he's got it all. He's got all the girls and that's kind of like, one of the stereotypes that I look at and say "you know there's no possible way that you can ever attain that."

Here, Christopher adds physical fitness, extreme wealth, and unlimited sexual access to women to the list of masculine stereotypes. This list is congruent with Johnson's (2005) control-oriented masculinity (p. 73-74). Physical fitness, strength, virtually unlimited money, and lack of

emotionality all point towards a refusal of weakness as a key component in this configuration of hegemonic masculinity. A true man has unlimited agency.

> DERRICK: There certainly is, and it has been over time, this mastery that has been attributed to being male . . . I would say mastery as in being an overviewing, omniscient type of gender. The one that is sort of the figurehead. And why that is, I don't know, would it be biological, some sort of historical accident but the state of it is over time, man has been the victorious gender over women.

"Toxic" masculinity is another phrase which has entered our discussion about gender politics. Toxic masculinity seems to be defined as the set of constraining, damaging effects of the gender expectations placed on men. Men are expected to be emotionally withdrawn and are to never show signs of weakness in front of male peers. These expectations carry disastrous consequences for men and boys (Kielburger & Kielburger 2015: n.p.). A Google search for "toxic masculinity" yields over 316,000 results from various online fora, news articles, and blog posts. Toxic masculinity can be wrapped up in the "masculinity crisis" discourse (Atkinson 2011) as revealing negative features of masculinity can be interpreted, or felt by men as an attack on institutional male power (p. 10).

Since hegemonic masculinity relies on institutional power, toxic masculinity is a relevant topic, however we must be careful in our usage of the word "crisis," as according to Connell (1995) it makes no logical sense to speak of "masculinity in crisis" as the word "'crisis' presupposes a coherent system of some kind, which is destroyed or restored by the outcome of the crisis," and masculinity is *not* such a system. Rather, when we say "crisis," we are really talking about a transformation of a certain configuration (masculinity) in our culture's larger gender order (p. 84). Toxic masculinity and the call for healthier men, then, is an attempt at a shift in hegemonic masculinity. Two of my participants, "Lucas" and "Richard," spoke about negative constructions of masculinity in our conversation.

> LUCAS: [my friends are] definitely more traditional . . . well, cause I play basketball so, when you're on the court a lot of things get said, and they actually uphold that in their real lives so, like you know, "don't be a little pussy" you know, stuff like that. So their views are just, you got to be rock hard, solid, don't be a pussy, don't be that guy to act like a little bitch, pretty much.

Lucas does not identify himself with the "traditional" gender performance of his basketball friends, a maneuver which suggests he is aware of the changing forms of masculinity. He tells the story of hegemony through his friends. Perhaps he was wary of appearing sexist. This is a possible downfall of my interview-based approach; it is possible for participants to feel as though they are being interrogated, especially about topics related to masculinity and consent, two broad areas which are under the microscope of feminist analysis.

> RICHARD: It came up when I visited [Princess Auto, an auto repair supply shop] during hunting season. And that's when in my mind I took the word "carnivore" and after "c-a-r" I put a hyphen in it, "car-nivore." The idea of dominance . . . your value is how you can subdue some Other, whether that's an animal, whether that's an environmental condition - man versus nature narratives, or your romantic liaisons. I use the word "romantic" there loosely, of course. The idea of subduing, the gladiator in the bedroom . . . the money shot they do in porn, the ejaculation, that being the goal . . . and that's the kind of goal-oriented carnivore culture, the overcoming, the challenge the [pitting] yourself against something and surviving, [defending] yourself from the adversarial situations and the "rah rah rah how big are your balls" kind of thing and it's everywhere, it is absolutely everywhere.

Here, Richard experienced a revelation at a traditionally male-dominated space, the auto repair supply shop, (let alone during hunting season). The environment of machinery, power tools, etc. all constitute a masculinized sector of domestic labor as well as public work – the store markets towards professionals and non-professionals alike. It is easy to draw parallels between auto repair and the control-oriented construction of "patriarchal masculinity" (Johnson 2005) as there are clear goals to be achieved. A broken machine must be fixed; an aspect of nature must be bent to a man's will. Later in our conversation, Richard, who felt very strongly against the

domineering nature of our current configuration of hegemonic masculinity, applied this will to dominate to intimate relationships:

> It's always competition, competition, competition. And why would you be competing with a sexual partner in the bedroom? That's terrible.

It is unsurprising that competitiveness would extend into the bedroom. Male peer groups are a powerful force in shaping men's relationships and sexual experiences with women. Schools in particular are influential in the regulation and construction of male heterosexuality, as discussed by Kehily (2001). Schools, bureaucracies, workplaces, militaries, team athletics, and indeed the auto repair supply shop all constitute examples of male-oriented, "homosocial" spaces where masculinities are produced and affirmed (Flood 2008: 342), sometimes through brutal policing. Lucas shared a story with me about a punishment exacted on a new player on the team[4]:

> LUCAS: I think the craziest thing I've heard so far was when uh . . . there's a rookie who was mouthing off a little bit . . .so in the middle of showering they tied him up and they pretty much left him in the shower in cold water until the next practice.
>
> GEOFF: What? (laughs) When was the next practice?
>
> LUCAS: The next practice was in the afternoon!
>
> GEOFF: So he was in there for hours, oh my God.

By "mouthing off," the new teammate was challenging the established hierarchy amongst the team members, challenging their solidarity. In the case of the basketball team Lucas plays for, the structure of the team depends on an implied misogyny – the team's solidarity cannot exist when a player is "being a little pussy." This behavior is upheld on and off of the court by Lucas's teammates. The masculinity of the individual teammates is brought constantly into question and affirmed by the "real men" of the team (Prohaska & Gailey 2010: 15). Lucas's *complicity* in this

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[4] Lucas played basketball, hockey, and football. According to his account, the football and hockey teams were responsible for the more extreme forms of hazing, compared to basketball. This story he shared was from his experience in either hockey or football – he did not specify which.

system of gender relations nets him the team's approval, an example of the "patriarchal dividend" (Connell 1995: 79).

It would certainly have made for easier writing if my participants all identified themselves closely with hegemonic ideals of masculinity and they believed they all had legitimate claims to override women's desires with their own. Instead, the men I spoke with all had different things to say about sexual consent, ranging from what could be called "traditional" or "hegemonic" views about sexual consent through to arguably progressive stances on consent. The point here is not to demonize or denigrate any of the men for their views. The different views expressed by the men I spoke with each illuminate different things about masculinity and the difference, in fact shows a spectrum of possibilities which is in line with the theory of hegemonic masculinity. Change is not just a possibility; it is an inevitable outcome of the relational nature of masculinities. Connell (1995) says that gender practice is *onto-formative*, meaning that we construct our reality and ways of knowing through our embodied selves – simply, what we do is what defines us (p. 81). Through body-reflexive practice new social realities come to light and are made real. Let us begin this portion, arguably the most important part and the true crux of the gender/political implications of this work, with an exploration of what I considered to be the "traditional" attitudes expressed or discussed by the men I interviewed.

It is indeed difficult to define exactly what we mean when we speak of what sexual consent is. Thomas recalled a conversation he had some time ago with his (now) long-term girlfriend about the idea of marital rape:

> I'll tell you first, I was having a discussion with my girlfriend not too long ago and she made a – actually this was quite some time ago, I think she's off this insane stance she

had at the time but she said if you're married you can't be raped and I was just like "that doesn't make any sense." She was basically saying once you've married someone and committed long term, like that is your consent . . . yeah, so I don't think it's necessarily a horrible – how do I say this without sounding like a (laughs) I don't think it's necessarily like a, like "let's take advantage of our wife" for every situation, uh, but I think to just use that as the definition of, you know, what we consider to be sexual consent is insane.

Thomas invokes a variety of topics in this response. His girlfriend believed in marriage as a contract for long term sexual consent with one's marriage partner, specifically, the wife consents to all sexual requests of her husband. Sexual consent, from this point of view, is not an ongoing process, it is literally a written contract imbued with the patriarchal nature of traditional marriage – the wife is the property of the husband. Marriage is also implicated in capitalist accumulation, where women maintain the private sphere with unpaid housework, keeping things running "behind the scenes" while husbands are out functioning as breadwinners, focusing the material, monetary, and property wealth in the hands of men – capitalism is, in this way, a "gendered accumulation process" (Connell 1995: 74) and an excellent example of how hegemonic masculinity must be (and is) institutionalized.

We won, our league, the other day – this was Friday night so we all wanted to go downtown, and I am not one for clubs really. Cause when you're in a relationship what is there at the Dome (a popular nightclub in Halifax) for you, $7 drinks? Why am I there? And you're not dancing with anyone. Anyway, this guy was hell bent on going to the Dome so we go in and sure enough he disappears within five minutes chasing women around trying to make it happen. And the thing that upsets me the most about how he does things – because, to a certain point it's fine, people are there to meet each other, if a one night stand is what they want to do and there's consent, whatever. But what he'll do is, if a girl isn't reacting well to his advances he'll just call her a slut. Obviously he's disappointed and embarrassed that she doesn't want him, but the way he's playing it out in his mind or at least vocally is "oh she's just a slut she doesn't know any better." And it's uh, it's really distressing. But that's just his script for it, if the girl doesn't follow his idea of what should be happening then there's something wrong with her, it's not him. . . . Another thing he'll do is to buy girls drinks . . . And, you know, he's got it in his head that if he spends enough money on her, she'll be coming home with him. So again, if she

doesn't, he just loses his mind. He can't accept the fact that . . . I guess he can't accept the fact that dancing on the dancefloor at the Dome equals consent to go home.

Thomas, like Lucas, is involved in team sports as well and, like Lucas, tells the story of masculinity and consent through a friend of his. Thomas's troubled friend must engage in misogynistic put-downs in order to reassert his masculinity over the women he believes have slighted him through their rejection. The patriarchal construction of masculinity, or the current configuration of masculine gender practice that is deemed hegemonic[5] is defined in part by control over sexual access to women (Prohaska & Gailey 2010: 15; Johnson 2005: 149). A woman's refusal of sex is, therefore, an affront to patriarchal masculinity. Since masculinity is constantly challenged, a misogynistic retort is more than crude language; it is a sophisticated mechanism through which men can manage their sense of masculinity in relation to other men and especially women in general. Calling a woman a slut in this regard reasserts the hegemonic claim to male dominance over women; it also mobilizes the patriarchal dividend as Thomas's friend is *empowered* by hegemonic masculinity to utilize sexism to his own benefit (Connell 1995: 79), even though his own claim to hegemony has been slighted by the woman's refusal.

The demand for men to be control-oriented, to take charge of sexual situations is probably the most obvious way in which hegemonic masculinity can be connected to sexual consent.

> CHRISTOPHER: I don't know, I guess I'm just aware of a lot of these issues and I was never really kind of comfortable with, you know asserting myself on a woman and I was always scared of rejection and what would happen, you know, what her reaction would be . . . it's your job as a man to kind of initiate things and get things going and get [her] in the mood and to do whatever you have to do to do that.

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[5] Johnson's (2005) idea of "patriarchal masculinity" is not to be used interchangeably with Connell's (1995) "hegemonic masculinity," however patriarchal masculinity is a defined set of traits which are congruent with what would be considered hegemonic masculinity today. It is important to keep in mind that "hegemonic masculinity" does *not* describe a particular type of masculinity, but patriarchal masculinity does.

Christopher is clearly uncomfortable with assuming the role of patriarchal masculinity. Throughout our talk he distinguished himself as a progressive individual, with feminist inclinations and a commitment to social justice concerns. However, the reason he gave for being uncomfortable with behaving in a domineering way towards women was because he feared rejection, not because he valued women's agency. I do not mean to imply that Christopher does not value women's agency, I doubt very much that he would not. What his fear of rejection illuminates, rather, is the power women have to disrupt claims to hegemony, especially through sexuality.

> I've only ever really been in two long term relationships so those are kind of the examples that I use when I'm kind of thinking about my personal life, but my first long term partner was really assertive and it was, you know there's always kind of the understanding that I was always okay with consenting to sex, so she would usually be the one who initiated things. And then with my current partner she suffers from depression and anxiety, and I was always kind of that submissive person which didn't always work in the relationship. I think if you have two kind of submissive people in a relationship it causes problems because the other person thinks you don't love them because you're not coming on to them because that's what she was used to in her previous relationships. So uh, I think talking about it is the main thing, like we've talked about it and I've assumed a more dominant role sexually in the relationship which is something that I was really uncomfortable with at first but, you know, the more we talked about it the more comfortable I was with it, I knew what she was comfortable and okay with.

Christopher's first partner subverted the patriarchal control-oriented sexuality which is crucial to hegemonic masculinity through her assertiveness. This in turn shaped Christopher's sexuality into something which was passive and receptive to his partner's advances. Christopher's second partner however, remained passive. She did not become dominant to complement Christopher's passivity; Christopher became dominant to complement her passivity. Christopher's first partner probably had a significant role in showing him how to assume a dominant role. Through body-reflexive practice he was able to experience the realm of possibility of assuming a more control-

oriented sexuality through his experiences with his first partner. Christopher performed an interesting sequence of embodying a subversive, passive masculinity, something more in line with a subordinated masculinity, in fact, to a more traditional, *hegemonic*, dominant sexuality. This shows that the body-reflexive practice can work for or against political goals of sexual equality – not that Christopher is oppressing his current partner by communicating with her a comfortable, consensual form of intimacy, but it shows the transformative potential of the body-reflexive practice. Indeed, many women may find non-hegemonic forms of masculinity unfamiliar and unpleasant, while hegemonic forms can be more familiar (Donaldson 2014: 645).

Lucas and I spoke about verbal consent communication with women. In our conversation, I asked him what it meant to consent to sex. Lucas struggled with answering, worried he would make a mistake and sound like he was advocating rape. I asked him to narrow his answer to what verbal consent might look like. He offered me an answer based on his own experiences with women in the local Halifax bar scene:

. . . if she said "let's go home together" I'm just like, that's consent for me where you're just kind of insinuating what's about to happen cause I feel like you wouldn't go home with me at this time if we weren't going to do something. But of course a no is no, if we're in bed together and if she doesn't feel comfortable anymore, and she says no then after I'll withdraw or take a step back and be like "do you want me to call you a cab or anything like that."

At first impressions it is easy to be concerned that Lucas believes that consent can be given by something other than a clear, explicit "yes." Actually, Lucas is giving women *room* to express their desire in ways they feel comfortable with. A woman may not want to explicitly ask for sex for similar reasons why they may give "token resistance," the phenomenon where a woman will refuse sexual contact despite her actual desire to engage in sex out of a concern with maintaining a reputation as nonpromiscuous (Sprecher, Hatfield, Cortese, Potapova & Levitskaya 1994: 125; Denes 2011: 416). A woman who is concerned with her reputation in this way is allowed to

conceal her desire through saying something like "let's go home together," rather than "let's have sex." Lucas continued:

I feel like [being asked to go home together] is full on consent . . . I don't feel like she would invite me anywhere without having intentions to do something with me, where if that's what it is – well I know it can get a little tricky. . . if I verbally say "hey, listen, are we hooking up or what?" most women would be like "I'm not doing that, I'm not a slut" like, you know? So I feel like if she's inviting me [she wants to have sex].

According to Lucas, men may be in a difficult situation here. It is true that a woman's indirect expression of desire, "let's go home together" *may indeed be communication of sexual consent*. But when Lucas attempts to make things clear by asking "are we hooking up?" it may turn women off. He did not seem to be speaking from personal experience and I must make the distinction that he is speaking from how he believes women would act in the given situation. From this excerpt I cannot say that women will refuse sex once it is made clear sex is on the table.

Derrick and I spoke at length about "affirmative consent," or the idea that sexual consent communication is an ongoing process where every new activity must be consented to (Bussel 2008: 43-44). This is approximately the way in which he and his current partner negotiate their consent to sexual activity with each other:

The first time I started becoming sexual with my partner now I asked for every next – not asked for, that sounds terrible, but I asked when I was thinking about a next step. And this was mid-act, I would ask about the next step. And she would too, it's like a back and forth thing. And there were times she said no, I don't feel that that's necessary at this point, and [that was], totally fine.

Derrick continued:

I feel like the average man who was met by a woman who said "no, I don't want that now" would just, lose an erection and be totally turned off and feel they had lacked some sort of – or had not reached the conquest that they felt they deserved by asking.

Derrick is invoking his relationship to hegemonic masculinity when he talks about the "average man's" response to a woman communicating non-consent. Here is an instance where the body-reflexive practice reproduces the dominant construction of masculinity-as-sexually aggressive. In this hypothetical situation, the man felt personally inadequate because the woman communicated non-consent. The loss of an erection is accompanied by personal feelings of lack, that they had not done enough to make the woman desire sex. Perhaps Derrick meant something more insidious; that the man's loss of arousal was directly caused by the woman's "no." Given the proximity of these two passages from our conversation, I am led to believe that Derrick meant that most men, especially those more closely aligned with hegemonic masculinity would not respond sexually to idea of affirmative consent. The topic of sex-as-conquest came up again during my conversation with Richard:

> RICHARD: It's always about competition, this idea, it's so toxic, of conquests. Using that word to describe romantically – terrible!
>
> GEOFF: What do you mean by "conquests?"
>
> RICHARD: The idea that women need to be negotiated around, not with.

The idea of women as the "gatekeepers" of sex is relevant here. The gatekeeper construct positions women as obstacles to be overcome, presumably by the man's skill in seduction, as *any* resistance is "token resistance" (Denes 2011: 416). In this view, "no" does not mean no, rather "no" means "try harder."

CLOSING REMARKS

The men I spoke with offered valuable insights and contributions to this work. None of them fit the mold, as it were, of hegemonic masculinity, and no man really does. It does seem clear that negotiating sexual consent with women is a process fraught with outside pressure to conform to the hegemonic ideal of being sexually aggressive, constantly desiring sex and constantly being able to get it.

If heterosexuality is necessary for the reproduction of patriarchy (Demetriou 2001: 344), then it has an obvious connection to hegemonic masculinity; if hegemonic masculinity justifies patriarchy (Connell 1995: 77), and heterosexuality is also required to achieve patriarchy, then hegemonic masculinity must be clearly heterosexual, both in the sense that this sounds like an obvious truth and in the sense that men's heterosexuality must be made publically visible in order to achieve a convincing hegemonic masculinity. Sexual consent is, therefore, and no matter how we conceptualize its process, a necessary part of the equation in doing hegemonic masculinity. What I mean here is that a particular conception of sexual consent, be it "consent as process" as discussed by Bussell (2008) or otherwise, will not change hegemonic masculinity per se. At this point I believe the topics of sexual consent and masculinity are interwoven and they must be examined together if any progress towards a more equitable system of sexual interaction is to be made. Hegemonic masculinity as it exists in its current form stands in opposition to ideas of consent that would give greater degrees of sexual agency to women – and men as well, if we take "agency" to mean the freedom to conduct oneself however one sees fit, as men's sexualities are constrained by pervasive and persistent notions of masculinity that limit the experiences men are likely to have in their lives.

Connell (1995) speaks of "crisis tendencies" within hegemonic masculinity, both as an inherent part of the construction of masculinity itself and as tendencies within systems of *cathexis*, or emotional attachment. As Connell (1995) says, "the patriarchal order prohibits forms of emotions, attachment, and pleasure that patriarchal society itself produces" (p. 85). This creates inescapable tensions for men and difficulties in negotiating their masculinities, for instance men are discouraged from adopting a passive kind of sexuality, the kind illustrated by my conversation with Christopher. Men's imaginations may be limited by their experiences – how would we, as men, envision for example, a less phallocentric (penis oriented) sexuality when we are taught our whole lives that our entire sexuality[6] is oriented around that organ?

These crisis tendencies can constrain masculinities but they also may be a mechanism through which (conscious) change is possible, and I think Connell would agree. In fact, localized structural changes brought about by feminism have radically altered the lives of the men affected by them (Connell 1995: 90). Feminism in particular has presented a global challenge to gender inequality that has been rapidly disseminated through capitalist media and now engages with thinkers all over the world (Connell 1995: 202).

This paper has been intentionally entirely male-centric and in doing so, I emphasize certain points of view over others. I believe this is an inevitable consequence but I am aware that everything we write has political implications. As I stated in the beginning, my own life experience has led me to having interest to write a paper such as this. My own perceptions of and experiences with gender politics are tainted with personal biases, bitterness, defensiveness – I am indeed a man negotiating feminism during a period of great backlash and I claim no proficiency in taking my own position of privilege into account.

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[6] Give the little guys a break!

This work would have been so much better if women were allowed into it. It was decided between me and my advisor that it would be a huge ethical dilemma to include women in my interviews. I would have had to hire a female assistant to interview the women, which is something I did not give the time or the resources for. I am not saying this in protest of the ethics department at Mount Saint Vincent University; this limitation of this paper is my own fault.

If I could do this over, I would like to explore the topic of women's complicity in hegemonic masculinity I believe there are important questions to be asked about the role women play in influencing men's masculinities. There is a need to problematize female desire. Note that this is saying something different than "women's desire is a problem, they are doing something bad and they need to fix it." Instead, to "problematize" means to intellectually destabilize something, to let go of what we think we know – we must not commit spontaneous sociology. That caution also means we must keep in mind that all analyses of gender politics are done through the lens (and under the effects of) patriarchy. What may be minor inconveniences for men can be serious threats to women, and it is much more urgent that men change but it seems clear that we will need help. The transformative power of masculinity politics could usher in a hegemonic masculinity that seeks to eschew hegemony.

. . . It must be a politics beyond interests, a politics of pure possibility. Though that is, perhaps, another way of expressing the interest all people on this planet share in social justice, peace and balance with the natural world.

- Raewyn Connell, Masculinities

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APPENDIX A

Women & Gender Studies

Getting to Yes: An Analysis of Connell's Theory of Hegemonic Masculinity and Sexual Consent Communication

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You are invited to take place in a research project titled "*Getting to Yes: An Analysis of Connell's Theory of Hegemonic Masculinity and Sexual Consent Communication"* here at Mount Saint Vincent University. This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Alan Brown. Your participation in this project is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw from this project at any time. This letter will describe the project along with any risks or benefits to you if you participate in it. This project may not benefit you directly, but we may learn things that can benefit others. Please ask Geoff Matheson about any questions you have about this project.

The purpose of this project is to examine the relationship between men's ideas of masculinity and their ideas of sexual consent. The study consists of a one-on-one interview between you and the Researcher, Geoff Matheson. The interview will be guided by questions about your ideas of masculinity, sexual consent, and the concept of "rape culture."

The location of the interview will be arranged at a time and location most convenient to both of us. You will be given a chance to review the questionnaire that will guide the interview as well as ask any questions before you give informed consent to participate. The interview should take approximately 45 minutes to one hour.

The data collected from you will be made anonymous. You will only be identified in the research project by a pseudonym. The interview will be audio recorded so it can be transcribed for analysis later. After transcription, recorded audio will be destroyed. This Letter of Informed Consent along with any other data will be kept in a secure location and destroyed five years after the end of this school term.

Since sexual consent can be a sensitive topic to talk about, it is possible that parts of the interview may make you feel uncomfortable. Remember that your participation in this research is voluntary. You do not need to answer any questions that you do not want to.You may also find the experience to be a positive one, as men generally do not openly speak about their ideas and feelings of masculinity and sexual consent.

There are legal limits on information The Researcher can promise to keep confidential. However, you will not be asked any questions which could be directly incriminating. **The questions are focused on your beliefs and attitudes about consent – not what you have actually done. If a question makes you uncomfortable, you are not required to answer it. It is advised that you do not share any possibly incriminating personal experiences in this interview.**

If you would like to obtain a copy of the results of this project, please indicate on the following page or contact Geoff Matheson.

If you have questions about how this research is being conducted and wish to speak with someone not directly involved in the research, you may contact the Chair of the Univeristy Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office at (902) 457-6350 or through email at research@msvu.ca. MSVU Counselling Services can be reached at (902) 457-6567 if you experience any distress at any point during your participation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

"I have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby consent to take part in the study. However, I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time."

Participant   **Researcher**

Name: _____   Name:

_____

Signature: _____   Signature:

_____

Date: _____   *Date:*

_____

☐ *"I agree to let you directly quote any comments or statements made in any written reports without viewing the quotes prior to their use and I understand that the anonymity of textual data will be preserved by using pseudonyms."*

Participant   **Researcher**

Name: _____Name: _____

Signature: _____   Signature: _____

Date: _____   **Date: _____**

☐ *"I would like to obtain a final copy of the results of this project."*

Participant   Researcher

Name: _____Name: _____

Signature: _____Signature: _____

Date: _____   Date: _____

☐ *"I would like to be notified of any subsequent presentation or publication of the results of this project."*

Participant   Researcher

Name: _____Name: _____

Signature: _____Signature: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____

LETTER OF PERMISSION

After having read the description of this thesis work entitled *Getting to Yes: An Analysis of Connell's Theory of Hegemonic Masculinity and Sexual Consent Communication*, I, _____, agree to participate in the group interview. I consent to having my voice audio recorded and later transcribed into a Word document to be analyzed later. I also consent to the reporting of the results of this study in the form of a written research paper with the understanding that the information I provide will be anonymous and that no names or other identifying characteristics will be used in any draft of the research paper.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____

(**OPTIONAL**) I wish to participate in a follow-up interview in addition to the group interview (check) ___

APPENDIX B

List of questions to guide one-on-one interviews. This list should be considered subject to slight changes. Indented bullets below questions are intended as probes or as explanations for questions, not as distinct questions.

To the Participant: These questions are much more concerned with your beliefs and attitudes towards masculinity and sexual consent than your actual personal experiences. The Researcher will advise you appropriately. You are not required to answer any questions that you do not want to, even if you consented to participate in this research. If you choose to skip a question, the Researcher will simply move on without asking you why you chose to do so.

1. What does it mean, to you, to be a man/How would you define masculinity?
    a. It's difficult to do. Can you think of any stereotypically masculine traits?
    b. Do you know anyone who fits these traits, real or fictional?
2. What does it mean to consent to sexual activity?
    a. Is it a legal process/interpersonal/active/passive?
    b. What role do men play in sexual consent?
3. Can you provide any examples as to what sexual consent looks like? Please do not draw on personal experience.**
    a. It's been shown that most communication is nonverbal. What role does nonverbal communication play in sexual consent?
    b. Do you think it is stereotypically "manly" to "just go for it," i.e. assume control of the situation and make a physical advance? Please respond only with your beliefs and attitudes, no personal experience.**
    c. Does asking for verbal consent kill the mood?
4. Do you feel as though there's a sort of traditional "script" that men and women typically follow before sex? (E.g. go to bar, dance with her, ask her to go somewhere more quiet, take her back home to "watch a movie" and then "watch a movie.") Can you define it? Please respond only with your beliefs and attitudes, no personal experience.**
    a. Where do you think yours (or others') idea of this/these script(s) come from?
5. Is it possible for consent to be miscommunicated? Can you say yes when you really mean no, or can you say no when you really mean yes? Please respond only with your beliefs and attitudes, no personal experience.**
    a. Media, for example, portrays men as sexually aggressive, always up for sex, while women are seen as passive, sexual "gatekeepers" who must not say yes too easily or else she's a slut. Or, say no too often and then she's a prude or frigid.
6. Is your view of sexual consent different from that of your male/female friends? If so, how?
7. All this time I've been using the word "consent" – what connotations does that word have for you?

      a.   In my opinion, "consent" in this context sounds like a kind of checkpoint, as it as if to say: "I have obtained consent, pass go and collect $200"

      b.   It can also be interpreted as an ongoing process, referring more to communication during sex (this is the ideal situation, I think)

8. Have you heard the term "rape culture?" What do you think of it? (Here I will accompany this question with a short video showing something like the SMU "rape chant" from last year)

      a.   Is the term an exaggeration, is it accurate, or somewhere in between?

*** It must be stated that the Researcher cannot guarantee anonymity if a participant discloses illegal activity during the interview. Please respond to these questions with **only** your beliefs and attitudes towards sexual consent – not your own personal experience.*