

Unwanted but Consensual Sexual Contact

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Title IX for a New Generation
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Our Question

How does unwanted but consensual sexual contact complicate traditional conceptualizations of consent?



The Multiple Definitions of Consent

Dictionary

“Noun. permission, approval, or agreement; compliance; acquiescence”

Legal

“A voluntary agreement to another’s proposition or to voluntarily agree to an act or proposal of another, which may range from contracts to sexual relations”

Georgetown

“‘Consent’ means words or overt actions indicating a freely given agreement to the sexual act or sexual contact in question.”

**What do these existing definitions
of consent NOT cover?**



**Why does unwanted but consensual
contact continue to occur?**

The Breakdown

1

Gender Norms

2

Power Dynamics

3

Contextual Influences



Gender Norms



A Shift in Gender Norms

traditional
gender
norms

The diagram features a horizontal timeline with two red circular markers. A red arrow points from the left marker to the right marker. A red box with a downward-pointing triangle is connected to the left marker, containing the text 'traditional gender norms'. A red box with an upward-pointing triangle is connected to the right marker, containing the text 'postfeminist gender norms'. A short red horizontal line is positioned above the center of the timeline.

postfeminist
gender
norms

What Does This Look Like?

Avoidance of the victim title



It feels
easier
to say
Yes
than
No.

Takeaways From Student Interviews

“Why did you give consent when you didn’t want to?”

It was late at night

It was the better alternative than having my no be ignored

I just wanted to get it over with

My partner was hot

My partner was kind



Power Dynamics



Power Dynamics



Intersectional

The interplay of multiple identities, when taken together, can contribute to unwanted but consensual sexual contact



Socially Fluid

A given identity or set of identities may have a different impact on a situation as the context changes

Interview & Survey Findings

Interview: Carol Day, director of Health Education Services; female junior in MSB
Survey: online questionnaire with 5 female student respondents

SOCIAL
STATUS

He was an athlete, and I wasn't. I figured he could find other people, so I went along with it.

YEAR IN
SCHOOL

EMOTIONAL
INVESTMENT

CLUB
CULTURE



Social Contextual Factors



Factors of Focus

Social/Sexual Scripts

URGIS SEXUAL SCRIPT PROJECT (2008)

Men's Sexual Scripts

- Have a physical approach to sex
- Are always ready for sex
- Initiate sex
- Should be knowledgeable about sex/skilled sexually
- Men who appear/act sexually are tolerated

Women's Sexual Scripts

- Have an emotional/relational approach to sex
- Refuse sex/are gatekeepers
- Women who appear/act sexually are judged
- Have equal sex drive
- Should be sexually skilled

Verbal/Non-verbal Cues

- Gender/Credibility Gap
 - using verbal/non-verbal cues



Non-verbal

- facial expressions
- body movement-postures
- eye contact
- tone of voice

Verbal

- yes/no
- im sure/im not sure
- i know/ i don't know
- i want to do this right now/ I don't know how to feel about this

Where To Go From Here?



Contact Us

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns...
feel free to contact the creators!

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