

Seduction and Sexual Violence in Entertainment: A Content Analysis

By

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“How old are you? How much do you weigh? What did you eat that day? Well what did you have for dinner? Who made dinner? Did you drink with dinner? No, not even water? When did you drink? How much did you drink? What container did you drink out of? Who gave you the drink? How much do you usually drink? Who dropped you off at this party? At what time? But where exactly? What were you wearing? Why were you going to this party? What’d you do when you got there? Are you sure you did that? But what time did you do that? What does this text mean? Who were you texting? When did you urinate? Where did you urinate? With whom did you urinate outside? Was your phone on silent when your sister called? Do you remember silencing it? Really because on page 53 I’d like to point out that you said it was set to ring. Did you drink in college? You said you were a party animal? How many times did you black out? Did you party at frats? Are you serious with your boyfriend? Are you sexually active with him? When did you start dating? Would you ever cheat? Do you have a history of cheating? What do you mean when you said you wanted to reward him? Do you remember what time you woke up? Were you wearing your cardigan? What color was your cardigan? Do you remember any more from that night? No? Okay, well, we’ll let Brock fill it in.”

-Excerpt from Chanel Miller’s victim impact statement

Abstract

This study analyzed seduction scenes in movies and tv shows relating to the sexual scripts and how quickly it can turn into sexual assault. The way that sex and consent is taught in the U.S. is unhealthy and can often lead to unrealistic and problematic expectations which is reflected in media and entertainment. Toxic masculinity is also examined to explain the male need to exert power over women often in destructive and violent ways, as well as to give reason as to why men are the main perpetrators of rape and sexual assault. A content analysis was used for this study examining five tv shows and movies to see how seduction and sexual scripts are being depicted in entertainment and what consequences derive from them.

Up until recently, the majority of on screen entertainment reflected outdated sexual scripts. Sexual script theory, introduced by sociologists John Gagnon and William Simon is the notion that there are guidelines to how we should behave regarding how we engage in sex and relationships. Sexual scripts are emdedded in society through cultural norms that are learned through one's upbringing, education, religion, media and entertainment, etc. Sexual scripts are incredibly heteronormative, as they dictate that the man is supposed to take charge and make the first move, while the women is supposed to act coy initially, but then eventually accept these advances. Also included in these outdated sexual scripts is that asking for consent is less of an important factor as it "ruins the mood." Sexual scripts can be visually seen in action through media and entertainment and are able to heavily influence people's perceptions of how romantic and sexual relationships are supposed to go- especially younger people. Additionally, the way that sex and consent is learned and taught in America is

unhealthy and often leads to problematic and unrealistic attitudes about sexual relationships.

This study will examine how sex and consent is presented in entertainment. Excepted results include that seduction methods of men perpetuate rape culture and create an environment where communication about consent is unclear, and that this often leads to sexual assault.

Sex education has always been a controversial topic within the American education system. For the past century, parents, lawmakers, conservatives and health advocates have argued what should and shouldn't be included in health education classes. The majority of health classes today only cover topics such as puberty, sexually transmitted diseases, birth control and abstinence, but is lacking in conversations about boundaries and consent. To this day only 9 states require students to learn about consent (Weyrick, 2021). Additionally, girls and boys are often split up in health class, and only learn information about their assigned genders. All of this leaves young adolescents' perceptions of sex and consent up for interpretation, as they're only able to learn about it through their parental teachings, peers, and media and entertainment consumption. Separation of gender within health classes is incredibly harmful as 1) it assumes everyone identifies within the binary genders, and 2) it creates a sort of mystery and stigma around puberty and what human bodies are able to do.

In many parts of the country there is a huge push for an abstinence-only approach in sex ed classes. This is also unproductive and unrealistic, as many people begin to engage in sexual relationships in their teenage years. When people do start having sexual relationships it's necessary for them to be comfortable talking about sex

and sexual issues. Sex education from a young age is incredibly important as humans are innately sexual beings. Unfortunately, talking about sex, especially with young people, is often seen as “taboo” in our society. Societal standards have made sex out to be something that should only be discussed and done between the two people having it. Consent being taught from a young age is most important as children need to be aware that they have autonomy over their own bodies. A lot of parents will give their kids the “sex talk” at some point in their adolescent years. In a nationally representative survey taken Planned Parenthood in 2012, it was found that 89 percent of parents talk to their kids about a wide range of sexuality related topics, but aren’t talking with them about the more complicated issues such as how to say no to sex. Understanding consent from an early age allows a foundation for what healthy relationships look like. Consent, in general, is also an important life skill outside of sexual relationships, as boundaries are able to be crossed in any human relationship.

Society has a long history of controlling women’s bodies. This can be seen through abortion laws, beauty standards, and the concept of virginity. Virginity is a social construct. There’s a high pressure on adolescents to either save their virginity until marriage and/or have their first time having sex to be incredibly special. Additionally, there’s a double standard when it comes to virginity where boys are often encouraged and congratulated when they lose it, while women are shamed for it. Virginity for women has long been seen as a symbol of their purity and “worth.” Women are put in an impossible position as they risk being called easy or a “slut” when they’re too promiscuous, but are also called prudes when they don’t engage in any sexual relationships. Sex in health classes are normally taught through a heteronormative

lense which leaves the LGBTQ community completely out of the conversation. The traditional idea of virginity buys into the concept that only penetrative penis-in-vagina, counts as losing one's virginity and enforces a very particular idea of how sex is supposed to go.

The Me Too Movement has highlighted how widespread sexual violence is. The phrase "me too," first coined in 2006 by Tarana Burke is something that resonated with sexual violence survivors across the globe, as people came forward on social media about their experiences with sexual assault. The #metoo hashtag went viral after Harvey Weinstein was exposed for numerous sexual abuse allegations. Actress Alyssa Milano wrote on Twitter "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet." This was quickly followed by many high profile celebrities to talk about their own experiences of sexual abuse at the hands of the powerful men in Hollywood. The movement showed the magnitude of how many women have experienced sexual harassment and/or assault. "Hookup culture," however, has continued to be ever so popular, even encouraged through the glorification of college. Hookup culture is extremely prominent on college campuses, which is often accompanied by drug use and binge drinking. A lot of colleges are seen as "total institutions." Coined by Erving Goffman, total institutions are "an organization that collects large numbers of like individuals, cuts them off from the wider society, and provides for all their needs" (Wade, 2017). For many young people, moving to college is the first time they're living on their own, which allows great freedom, and "hooking up" is almost seen as a right of passage. This newfound freedom, combined with copious amounts of alcohol, and a lack of healthy sex education can leave students extremely

susceptible to sexual assault. Education programs in college about sexual assault, and what bystander intervention looks like can be the difference in someone having a great night, and someone being assaulted. Teaching people from a young age that sex and relationships should not have a “script” is key to interrupting harmful associations with sex and consent, and decreasing gender power differences.

Literature Review

Toxic Masculinity

In the past decade, the feminist movement has been roaring, with many feminists attributing misogyny, homophobia, and men’s violence to toxic masculinity (Harrington, 2021). Toxic masculinity refers to the traditional masculine norms that are harmful to men and society overall. These norms include suppressing emotions, demonstrating power and dominance, rejecting feminine qualities, and disdain for homosexuals. Toxic masculinity is learned by men through their upbringing, education, media, entertainment and general societal attitudes. From a young age, boys are rewarded for being tough, and told to “man up” when they’re not. The common phrase “boys will be boys” so many young boys hear easily evolves into men being excused for their actions and enables them to continue violent and disruptive behaviors. A big part of toxic masculinity is feeling the need to dominate and prove their masculinity (Harrington, 2021) and most often do this in destructive ways such as being sexually violent and degrading women. Rape culture and sexual violence are direct result of toxic masculinity (Posadas, 2017). Men have certain expectations of how sex is supposed to go that they learn often in their adolescent years through media, entertainment, porn, etc. Through this, men are

heavily pressured to be aggressive and engage in sexual activities with many different women. Society pushes men to constantly think about sex in a way where its not a mutual shared activity, but that sex is something that's being done to a woman (Kelly, 2015). Additionally, society makes men feel like they must constantly "score" to prove their masculinity. Whether men feel this way consciously or subconsciously, it clearly manifests in real life. To eradicate sexual violence we must stop all channels to which boys grow up to be toxic men (Posadas, 2017). This would essentially mean not raising children in separate gendered ways which would completely alter the way society functions. This would mean not enforcing toxic masculinity in pop culture. It would mean punishing men for their actions. Not enabling toxic masculinity is key to deconstructing it.

Consent and Sexual Scripts

The definition of what sexual consent means has changed immensely over the past decade. Surprisingly, there is still no single universally accepted definition of consent. However the most common definition is that both partners are 100% willing to engage in sexual activities and show this through verbal and non-vebral clues without any coercion, manipulation or force. Additionally, sex is an ongoing negotiation and consent can be withdrawn at any time (Kelly 2015). In discussions of what consent means, people must keep in mind the society we live in which involves navigating through the different cultures we live in (Levand, 2020).These include college culture, hegemonic masculinity, rape culture, as well as gender stereotypes and sexual "scripts." To effectively teach consent these "cultures" cannot be discounted as they play a role in what leads to sexual assault (Levand, 2020). Young people aren't taught consent in a

healthy and constructive way in their adolescent years (Palermo, Harkins & Campbell, 2022) so when they do start engaging in sex they don't have a good model of what consent is supposed to look like. Verbal consent isn't emphasized in the teachings of consent or modeled in media/entertainment which ultimately creates an environment where communication about consent isn't clear. (Palermo, Harkins & Campbell, 2022).

A sexual script can be defined as "script" or ideas of how people are supposed to act when it comes to romantic and sexual relationships. Like social scripts, we learn sexual scripts from our upbringing, education, friends, entertainment, media, etc (Rieck & Lundin, 2021). The sexual scripts within media and entertainment present unrealistic and problematic expectations of how romantic and sexual encounters are supposed to go, as well as attitudes that contribute to toxic masculinity and rape culture. Traditional sexual scripts have three assumptions: 1) Men constantly want sex, 2) women aren't as interested in sex than men, and 3) women should not have as many sexual partners as men (Palermo, Harkins & Campbell, 2022). Traditional sexual scripts reflect gender stereotypes and power, where the man is supposed to take charge, and the all the pleasure is based around him. Men also often ignore meeting the sexual needs of women (Shafer, Ortiz, Thompson & Huemmer, 2018). Sexual scripts have a double standard in that it's acceptable for men to have multiple sexual partners but it's taboo for women to do the same. But at the same time, the script dictates that women should fulfill their partners' needs. The sexual script also holds women to be sexual gatekeepers- responsible for refusing or giving consent as opposed to men wanting and waiting for consent (Shafer, Ortiz, Thompson & Huemmer, 2018). Sexual scripts are outdated, give into gender stereotypes and perpetuate rape culture (Ryan, 2011). Sexual

scripts objectify women and create the narrative that women are here to please men and that they're not as interested in sex as men are (Hust, Rodgers & Bayly, 2017). Additionally the script pushes the idea that women are always looking for a commitment from their partners when this is simply untrue. The teaching, enforcing and participation in sexual scripts ultimately leads to less sexual and bodily autonomy for women (Seabrook, R, et al. 2016) which in turn makes sexual assault more likely to happen.

Male Initiated Contact

The traditional sexual script begins with the man, who initiates contact with the women - this contact is often unwanted. This first contact point can happen anywhere and between anyone - at a bar, at work, between acquaintances, friends, etc. In society, men are given more sexual freedom than women (Dworkin & O'Sullivan, 2005) and social norms have made men feel that are entitled to anything want, and are encouraged to chase after those things. In traditional sexual scripts, sex is seen as a game for men and the concept of consent is skewed as they've been taught to believe that any "no" can be turned into yes if they pursue hard enough (Palermo, Harkins & Campbell, 2022). Therefore, when a man is interested in a woman and stays persistent, not taking no for an answer- this is seen as normal. When men are rejected in their romantic or sexual advances, they see this as a bruise to their ego and threat to their masculinity, (Reidy, Swahn, & Jacobs, 2019) and feel the need even more to "score." Men are also likely to misinterpret certain signals as an indicative of sexual consent (Shafer, Ortiz, Thompson & Huemmer, 2018) such as agreement to kissing or movement to a more private place.

It's important to note that while there are a lot of men who conform to the sexual script, there's also men who want to move away from it and would prefer a more equal process of initiation (Dworkin & O'Sullivan, 2005) As the most frequent perpetrators of sexual assault and harrasment, men being in tune with other people's emotions, and being aware that their advances may come off as aggressive is the first step in deconstructing the sexual script.

Female Expected Behaviors

In response to male initiation the traditional sexual script dictates that the woman is supposed to act coy and not give in to the man's desires, at least initially. In this stage a man will pursue a woman, and she'll be reluctant and refuse multiple times (Littleton & Axsom, 2003). If she gives in too fast people will consider her "easy" or a slut, while if she doesn't give in, she risks the man becoming verbally aggressive and violent. Many men believe women engage in "token resistance" (Shafer, Ortiz, Thompson & Huemmer, 2018) in which a woman says no when they really mean yes, and any "no" can be turned into a yes. They see women as if they're playing hard to get and that they would be able to be convinced. This blurs the lines of consent when a woman "gives in," and many men would not see this as coercion. Men who do not always resort to physical aggression but when they do it's usually after a woman has rejected multiple advances and is losing his patience.

The Assault

Men who continuously pursue women after rejected advances will likely become angry and will lead them to feeling justified in using coercion/ physical force to obtain

sex (Littleton & Axsom, 2003). Rape as a result of coercion is not always interpreted as rape. This is often because the women will eventually give in, only after being threatened and badgered down by men. Similarly, up until the past decade, rape as a result of a man taking advantage of a woman who was too intoxicated to consent was not seen as rape or sexual assault. People excused men for this and rather blamed the women for being too drunk, wearing too revealing clothing, or leading the man on. For instance, in the high profile case *People v. Turner*, Brock Turner was convicted for raping Chanel Miller while she was unconscious. Chanel Miller wrote an impact statement letter, mainly to address Turner, that was read aloud during the sentencing phase of his trial. In the letter, she highlights how Turner and his team of lawyers and investigators were going to do everything in their power to prove that Turner's actions were consensual. Miller was unconscious and had no memory from that night, and was told that because of this, Turner would be able to “rewrite the script” of how that night happened. In the trial, Miller was forced to answer invasive questions that made it seem like that rape was her fault. Miller was met with scrutiny and judgment, while Turner was met with compassion as news articles circulated about his college and swimming career being over. Society knows this narrative all too well where a woman gets blamed for being raped or assaulted because she was too intoxicated. There’s a magnitude of victims who do not come forward simply because they don’t think people will believe them. As history shows, societies response to sexual assault has lacked empathy and solidarity.

Today sexual violence remains one of the most underreported crimes to the police (Oikonen, 2020) with less than 5% of sexual assaults reported. Police hold a

unique position as they are given the responsibility to investigate sexual assault cases where its often a “he said, she said” situation and 20 percent of sexual assault cases are deemed baseless by the police, (Oikonen, 2020) with less than 1% of perpetrators being convicted. Rape victims hesistate to come foward because of this, along with the shame and guilt society has placed surrounding the topic, as well as invasive yet necessary medical practices victims go through to collect evidence. Rape victims also often receive backlash from people who defend perpetrators (Kelly 2015), which only enables society to continue to condone rape culture.

College Statistics

It can be argued that colleges are breeding grounds for sexual violence an there are multiple factors that come into play in sexual assault on college campuses. These include the increase of partying and alcohol use, gender stereotypes, societal/sexual scripts, as well as general glorification of college culture through pop culture (Oliver, 2015). The acceptance of rape culture and rape myths on college campuses is extremely common (Oliver, 2015) and helps foster the environment where sexual violence is passed off as a norm for college. Hookup culture is also extremely common among college students as the atmosphere associated with college includes living in close quarters with people of the same age group (Shafer, Ortiz, Thompson & Huemmer, 2018). Many movies like Animal House and the American Pie series glorify college to be a non stop sex fest with fraternities being ever so popular. Rape is especially prevalent among fraternities as party and frat culture are often endorsed. Frat culture being defined as “hooking up, sexual competition among brothers, and collective disrespect for women” (Jozkowski, 2017) which is practically identical to characteristics

of toxic masculinity. Fraternities are especially known for targeting women, especially those who underage and can't party/drink in residence halls. Acquaintance rape at parties is one of the most common forms of sexual assault that happens on college campuses, usually when one or both individuals are under the influence. Consent however cannot be given if one or both parties are intoxicated. Up until recently, this type of sexual assault was downgraded to "non consensual sex" (Oliver, 2015) often to protect the perpetrator from receiving consequences. Although women are the majority of victims within sexual violence, its important to note that women are just as capable of being perpetrators (Hust, Rodgers & Bayly, 2017), and that part of the traditional gendered script views women's violence towards men as less harmful. Male victims of sexual violence are often neglected and even asked insensitive questions about why they didn't enjoy it.

Shifting the way society practices consent from negative consent (no means no) to affirmative, enthusiastic consent (Shafer, Ortiz, Thompson & Huemmer, 2018) can play a key role in preventing sexual violence. Research also suggests that education about sexual scripts, rejection of gender roles and toxic masculinity is important in adolescent years before any sexual activity begins (Hust, Rodgers & Bayly, 2017). Early intervention of teaching young people healthy relationship practices can prevent them from enacting violent sexual scripts in the future. Additionally, it would be most beneficial for colleges to implement sexual assault prevention programs (Hust, Rodgers & Bayly, 2017) to keep the conversation ongoing and to increase awareness on the issue.

Sexual Scripts in Entertainment

While young adolescents learn about sexual scripts through parents and peers, media and entertainment is one of the richest sources people turn to for information about sex and consent (Seabrook, R, et al. 2016) and plays a significant role in forming sexual attitudes. Sexual content appears in 82% of TV programs and 85% of major motion pictures and young adults aged 18-24 spend average around 2-3 hours watching tv and 12 hours per day with media (Seabrook, R, et al. 2016.) Several studies suggested that students place media among their “top sexual informants” above their parents and peers (Wade & Friedman, 2006.) As stated previously, media and entertainment often do not depict sex and relationships in a healthy manner. Sex in entertainment is presented as a casual activity where its motivated by “physical pleasure and personal gain” (Wade & Friedman, 2006) and there’s a constant double standard in which men are portrayed as uncontrollable sexual creatures, while women portayed as the gatekeepers of sex. Cultivation theory states that long term exposure to media results in internalization of the messages it puts out. (Wade & Friedman, 2006.) Adolescents are far more vulnerable to messages that come from the media as they don’t have as many real life experiences to compare them to, are more likely to idolize certain media figures, and have less refined reasoning abilities (Wade & Friedman, 2006.)

Through pop culture and entertainment, the sexual script is presented in a way where persistent men are seen as romantic, and their advances aren’t seen as harmful. In a study done at the University of Michigan, 415 sexual active undergraduate women were surveyed and found that tv exposure of gendered sexual scripts often resulted in

acceptance of these scripts, and was ultimately associated with diminished sexual agency (Seabrook, 2017.) Women who abide by the sexual script will feel like they have to put the man's needs ahead of her own, and will be reluctant to express their own desires (Seabrook, R, et al. 2016.) This diminished sexual agency leaves a huge power differential between men and women, and leaves women without the ability to advocate for what they want (or don't want) sexually. While older people who are more sexually experienced, may feel more comfortable deviating from the sexual script, adolescents entering the sex world are far more impressionable by what they see and hear through media.

Methodology

The research questions for this study are as follows: how do sexual scripts affect how people practice sex and consent, how are sexual scripts depicted in entertainment, what are the consequences of sexual scripts. A content analysis was used for this study.

Data was collected from the following television shows and movies: Promising Young Women, The Accused, I May Destroy You, Degrassi, and You. All entertainment was analyzed fully with the exception of the shows "Degrassi" and "You." Episodes of "You" analyzed were season 1 episodes 1 and 2. Episodes of "Degrassi" include season 2 episode 7 + season 4 episode 1. The following phases were used for coding: "rape culture and victim blaming," "men protecting men/men being protected," "men not taking no's for an answer" and "manipulation of women." For the purpose of this study gaslighting, coercion, and any attempt to force women to consume alcohol/drugs were considered manipulation. Seduction scenes, rape/assault scenes and aftermath of rape scenes were specifically analyzed.

A content analysis of on screen entertainment was chosen because sex and consent easily seen in action. I also chose to collect data from movies and tv shows that have come out in the past few years, with the exception of *The Accused* and *Degrassi* because I wanted to see the difference 20 or 30 years would make in how sex and consent was being presented in entertainment to now. Based on this data, I examine the ways men try to seduce woman in entertainment, how sexual scripts perpetuate rape culture, and as well as other consequences of the sexual script.

Data

	Manipulation of Women	Rape Culture and Victim Blaming	Men Not Taking No's For an Answer	Men Protecting Men/Men Being Protected
Promising Young Women	5	10	6	6
I May Destroy You	4	7	1	4
The Accused	4	9	7	3
You	12	2	0	0
Degrassi	6	8	3	2

Analysis

Manipulation of Women

Manipulation of women was seen in all shows and movies analyzed. Joe Goldberg from the show “You” seduces women by manipulating them into believing they’re falling for him naturally. Joe however, uses extreme tactics to get close to these women (stealing their phone, stalking them outside their houses/other places, etc.) to trick them into thinking everything is happening naturally. People may allow certain things to happen because they’re not aware of the full situation and that absence of knowledge crosses a boundary even though they might not be aware that it's happening. This idea can also be seen in the show “I May Destroy You,” when Terry has a seemingly unplanned threesome with two guys who she thought didn’t know each other, turned out to be a set up, as they did know each other. Terry was obviously very distressed after finding this out, but didn’t know exactly how to process it as she did give initial consent to the threesome, but still knew she had been violated. Manipulation is such a subtle way of violating someone's boundaries as the victim hardly ever knows it's happening to them in the moment.

Gaslighting is another form of manipulation that men use against women. In “I May Destroy You,” there’s a scene where main character Arabella begins to have consensual sex with a man, but he takes the condom off midway without her knowing. Arabella doesn’t think anything of it at the moment, as she’s not aware that stealing is considered sexual assault. When she finally confronts him about it, he gaslights her into believing he didn’t do anything wrong. Gaslighting can also be seen in Paige’s rape

case of Degrassi as her rapist is seen telling her it was “such a long time ago” and tries to get her not to testify. In another episode Paige is seen having a dream sequence where her rapist was gaslighting her by saying they had a “good time” and that she wanted it. Gaslighting is such a dangerous form of emotional abuse because it makes the victim question their own sanity. When one emotionally abuses it's very easy for that to turn into physical abuse. Joe Goldberg from “You” is introduced as a soft and charming guy but as the show unfolds we see that he has dark urges and tendencies that ultimately puts the people he comes in contact with in danger. The scary part of “You” is that there are so many men like Joe Goldberg in real life who are seen as “nice guys” but actually have ulterior motives and feel validated in their actions of stalking and manipulation. A lot of abusive relationships will go on for so long because someone will draw you in and show you all their redeeming qualities and it makes people think that person is trustworthy and harmless when they're really not.

Manipulation can also happen if the form of pressuring someone to consume alcohol or drugs. In the dark comedy rape revenge movie, “Promising Young Women,” we see predatory men try to take advantage of “intoxicated” Cassie. The satisfying plot twist however, is that Cassie is in fact, not drunk and she reveals her sobriety right before they assault her. Promising Young Women is a breath of fresh air compared to the usual plotlines where men aren't shamed or receive consequences for their actions. The movie highlights how many men know that taking advantage of women who are intoxicated is wrong, but still continue to do it, and even more frustrating- still consider themselves “nice guys.” The movie is a complete satire and gives a very accurate view of how men really try to seduce and take advantage of women. There was a frequent

theme in all the movies and shows analyzed, where men would try to get a woman drunk, in hopes that it would lower her inhibitions, and therefore would be more willing to sleep with them. This tactic by men is so normalized it often goes unnoticed. It's so common for a man to ask out a woman at a bar by buying her a drink, which is not to say that this isn't okay to do, but the question becomes is the man's intentions genuine? Or is he just doing that in hopes she'll be loose enough to sleep with him.

Men Protecting Men/Men Being Protected

There's a certain "brotherhood" among men that stems from toxic masculinity. The so-called "bro code" includes protecting male friends from receiving consequences of their actions, and it thrives on complicitness. In *Promising Young Woman*, lack of bystander intervention resulted in a woman being raped. Ryan, Cassie's love interest, was a bystander, among other men who did nothing to stop the rape from happening. The men in this movie had so many opportunities to do the right thing by women and ended up falling short every time. Lack of bystander intervention was also seen in "The Accused" rape scene. The movie heavily goes into bystanders of assault/rape and if they should be held just as accountable as the rapists are. If there can be accomplices to murders why can't it be the same for rape? There are so many men who feel like they need to be loyal to their guy friends and won't call them out when they're being sexist or predatory. Men not holding other men accountable for their actions only allows men to continue destructive and toxic behaviors. Men may feel reluctant to stand up to their guy friends in fear of them becoming hostile towards them or appearing "weak" as they're siding with women. This however is a cowardly move on men's parts and is one of the reasons why we're not making a lot of progress deconstructing toxic masculinity. Men

have been put on such a high pedestal for so much of history and feel valid in protecting themselves and the men around them more than doing what's right.

Take Judge Aaron Persky, who only gave Brock Turner six months in jail and three years of probation for raping Chanel Miller while she was intoxicated and unconscious. In his sentencing, Pensky said that he must consider "the severe impact" and the "adverse collateral consequences" a prison sentence would have on Turner. Many attributed Persky's leniency to Turner's developing swimming career, as well as the fact that he was white. Conversations of privilege and race arose as there were arguments that Turner received the light sentence because of his identity. The media also played a part in protecting Turner as they would often call him "Ex-Stanford Swimmer" instead of "rapist" in their headlines. Additionally, Turner was released three months early from jail on account of good behavior, which caused even more outrage. Conversations also arose about why Turner's life was valued more than Chanel Millers. Why people were able to look past his disgusting acts, and gain sympathy for what he was going through.

Men Not Taking No's For an Answer

As stated previously, token resistance is the idea that women are playing hard to get when they reject a man's advances. This idea can be seen in almost any rom-com analyzed. Guy meets a girl, he asks her out on a date- she says no and then he goes through extraordinary measures to get a yes out of her. These "extraordinary" measures may include badgering, blowing up her phone, romantic gestures, stalking, and pretending to be someone that he's not. In "Promising Young Woman," Cassie gave Ryan a fake number after he asked her out on a date, and any logical person would take this as a

sign that the woman isn't interested. Token resistance can be clearly seen here as Ryan went back to where Cassie worked the next day to "try" again, and make her say yes. In the movies, they make all this seem incredibly romantic but in real life it would be considered harassment. In the movies, it's depicted that the woman finally realizes that she's into the man after all, but in real life, a "yes" is beaten out of the woman. A lot of women are scared of rejecting men in fear that they'll become emotionally abusive or physically aggressive. Coercion is the act of persuading someone to do something against their will with the use of physical and/or emotional force.

In "The Accused," the rape scene at the bar all started with a man (Danny) sending over a drink to Sarah completely unasked for, going to sit with her, and getting her drunk. While Sarah was initially accepting of these advances, soon after they started kissing, Danny became much more aggressive, clearly wanting more. The more Sarah said no, the more aggressive Danny became verbally and physically. This goes beyond token resistance and into men feeling entitled to women's bodies.

In Paige's rape scene of *Degrassi*, the interaction began consensual as they were just kissing, but when Paige asked Dean if they could take it slow, he didn't listen to her. Instead he does the opposite and pulls out a condom, Paige immediately says no multiple times and Dean pins her down. This is an example of men misinterpreting signals as a sign that a woman wants to have sex. Dean, as an older guy, took advantage of Paige and her crush on him. Dean's physical strength overpowered Paige and there was nothing she could do to stop him.

Rape Culture and Victim Blaming

The movie *Promising Young Woman* was a satire making fun of the rather pathetic (and predatory) ways men try to seduce and sleep with women. It depicted rape culture and victim blaming accurately as it happens in real life, and was an informative movie that shed light on the real issues that women face. The movie begins with the main character Cassie slumped over on a couch in a club, looking incredibly wasted. A group of men watch her from the other side of the club. The first line in the movie was “You know they put themselves in danger, girls like that... If she’s not careful, someone’s gonna take advantage... I mean, that is just asking for it.” Men who say things like this imply that women create their own danger and play a role in the violence that happens to them. Society finds any way to place blame on the rape victims by how they dress, how they act, if they led someone on, if they didn’t fight back, etc. It’s incredibly unfortunate that rape victims are held more accountable than actual rapists. The movie also went into how rape cases aren’t taken seriously, which is a huge part of rape culture. For example, Cassie’s friend Nina was a rape victim in college, and the rape case was pushed aside and downplayed by the dean of the school, and the case ended up being dismissed for lack of evidence.

Another example of a rape/assault case not being taken seriously is in “*I May Destroy You*,” where Kwame, a gay man, is sexually assaulted by another man, and when he goes to report this to the police, they are of no use to him. Rape and sexual assault of men are often overlooked as the statistics are much lower than women’s are, and the conversation tends to stray away from them as they’re usually the perpetrators and not the victims. There’s a certain stigma attached to male rape victims as many

men may not want to come forward because they feel shame and don't want to appear weak. Men who have been violated in the same way a woman has been violated may feel emasculated and not want to talk about their feelings. Men in society have been socialized to want sex, so when they experience an unwanted interaction they may not know how to process it and be hesitant to reach out for help. Our society has tolerated rape and assault of all genders, but is just normalized for different reasons.

Another example of rape culture is the sexualizing of women and women's bodies. In "The Accused," the rape scene depicts how men see women as objects and that women are there to "please" them. The scene began with the group of men in the bar watching Sarah dance seductively. They gathered around her as if she were prey just waiting for the chance to pounce on her. During the rape scene, the men were screaming such vulgar things to Sarah to the point where it was dehumanizing. Tying this back to the real world, there's a lot of men who will go out to bars and clubs in sole hope that they'll have sex with a woman that night. They'll see someone attractive in the bar and decide to make them their mark, and will see it as a game to try to succeed in sleeping with them. If the woman rejects them, men may start to act cold towards the women in an attempt to mend their bruised ego. This can include cursing at the women and belittling them, as well as physical assault. Once again, men feel entitled to act out after being rejected because they're not used to being told no, and this is a result of toxic masculinity that can be seen in entertainment and tied back to real life scenarios.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to see how sex and consent were being depicted in entertainment today in 2022. Entertainment makers have to be careful what they're

putting in their content to make sure they're being politically correct or they risk being "canceled." Entertainment makers also have the responsibility of being aware that young people spend more time now than ever before viewing media in some shape or form, and internalize the things they see. Anything endorsing rape culture and sexual violence should not be included in movies and tv shows. The only reason these should be included in entertainment is if it's raising awareness about it and discouraging it, and that is exactly what entertainment is doing today.

"Promising Young Woman" and "I May Destroy You" are both entertainment that takes a deep dive into the world of consent and sexual assault, and places you into the lives of people who have been raped and assaulted. The aftermath of sexual violence is rarely talked about as victims are left to fend for themselves as they go through the emotional and psychological effects of being assaulted. "I May Destroy You" is a brilliant show because it showed the different ways that boundaries and consent can be crossed. Everyone can be in agreement that a forcible rape is wrong but other forms of assault aren't treated as "rapey." "I May Destroy You" begins with main character Arabella being roofied and raped in a bar bathroom. This was seen as a clear cut rape case but on the other hand, Arabella's friends Terry and Kwame had sexual interactions with people where their consent and boundaries were crossed, but they were left to wonder if what they experienced was really assault. People not being aware of what is and isn't sexual assault is a huge issue as it can not only lead people to be taken advantage of, but also leaves a whole group of predators and assaulters unaccountable for their actions. Rape for a long time was seen as a scenario where a stranger would start following someone at night and then attack them. We've become more aware that

while yes, this does happen, it's much more likely to be perpetrated by someone you know. A friend, a date, someone you thought you could trust who takes advantage of you and crosses the moral compass line. It's an ugly truth that society rarely acknowledges.

Overall the tv shows and movies analyzed accurately depicted seduction, sexual scripts, assault, and how victims are treated in real life. As we've become more aware about the destruction sexual violence causes, media and entertainment has changed the way it's showcased. Today, it's shown in the tv shows and movies that there's something inherently wrong with rape culture and any form of a sexual script should not be adhered to. Men who think they're entitled to women's bodies are portrayed as toxic, and see women as inferior to them. Men who continue to pursue women after they repeatedly reject their advances are depicted as predators. Men who take advantage of women who are drunk are depicted as rapists. This behavior had been normalized for so long but now the pattern has started to begin being broken down.

Entertainment like "I May Destroy You" and "Promising Young Women" would have not been made 20 years ago because people weren't aware of how widespread of an issue sexual violence is. It wasn't talked about like it is today and now entertainment makers have the power to produce content that will make people more aware of the destruction it causes. Society still has a long way to go before completely eradicating sexual violence but making entertainment that completely condemns it is a powerful message to today's world that is constantly in front of a screen.

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