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ABSTRACT
For decades, sexual violence prevention and sexual consent have been a recurrent topic on college campuses and in popular media, most recently because of the success of the #MeToo movement. As a result, institutions are deeply invested in communicating consent information. This article problematizes those institutional attempts to teach consent by comparing them to an alternative grounded in queer politics. This alternative information may provide a useful path to redesigning consent information by destabilizing categories of gender, sexuality, and even consent itself.

CCS Concepts
Social and professional topics: sexual orientation

Keywords
queer theory, design, DIY, sexual consent, tactical technical communication

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INTRODUCTION
The recent success of the #MeToo movement and the cultural response to the charges of sexual assault and harassment against Bill Cosby, Harvey Weinstein, and other celebrities have made sexual violence prevention a recurrent topic in businesses, college campuses, and in popular media. Seemingly endless stories eddy around the topic of consent: from ill-handled events on college campuses across the United States and multitudes of powerful men and women fired or facing charges for sexual harassment or assault, to the heartbreaking Steubenville rape case when the assault of an unconscious woman was documented via social media (Framke, 2018). Numerous instances could be used as an example of the need for change, including more nuanced and effective consent messaging. And while technical communicators have long been concerned with informed consent in research methods (Batova, 2010; Germaine-McDaniel, 2010; Kim, Young, Neimeyer, Baker, & Barfield, 2008; Pigozzi, 2013; Renguette, 2016; Wright, 2012), broadly, technical communicators have not yet examined the communicative practices of either institutional or tactical (Kimball, 2006) messaging on sexual consent and sexual violence prevention, though other disciplines have already done so.

Using a queer rhetorics framework, I examine design choices in institutional consent messaging and contrast them with one alternative: extra-institutional, grassroots consent artifacts informed by queer politics and affirmative consent, referred to throughout the rest of this article as "queer artifacts." These artifacts provide a foil to institutional approaches and the contrasts can help us unpack the implicit investments and rhetorical choices of sexual consent communication. When comparing the two approaches, it becomes clear that many institutional artifacts rely on an "advocacy" model that employs a "no means no" strategy, rhetoric about negative effects, and are heteronormative and exclusionary, yet queer approaches are often less polished, more inclusive, distributed very differently, acknowledge spectrums of consent, and often rely on notions of affirmative consent and rhetorics of pleasure. Further, this analysis demonstrates the many ways investment in institutional power is reflected in the normative design of the

information it distributes, and how dissimilar that information appears in artifacts with a different investment.

While this article problematizes institutional attempts to prevent assault, the queer artifacts I examine are not intended to suggest a prescription for doing so. However, this analysis does suggest novel approaches to consider when talking about consent, a subject that has largely been unassailable. In the sections below, I first contextualize sexual consent messaging and frame it within the field of technical communication, suggesting that these particular artifacts are technical, tactical, and queer. This latter point is an important addition as, to date, queer perspectives and politics have largely been absent from technical communication research, despite calls for inclusion (Cox, 2018; Jones, 2016). Second, I unpack just some of the heteronormative assumptions embedded within institutional messaging, contrasting these institutional messages with queer approaches. What this particular set of examples shows is this: de-centering heteronormative experiences and teaching affirmative consent may lead to inclusive and therefore more effective consent messaging. I demonstrate this possibility by comparing examples of heteronormative design that center normative bodies and hetero-romantic desires and experiences (Berlant & Warner, 1998)—the kind of experiences that are pre-supposed and reified within common forms of institutional consent messaging—with examples of design that do not. Finally, I conclude with implications for broadening existing sexual consent information and questions for technical communicators to consider when designing or researching consent.

Please note that this article discusses sexual violence using the preferred language recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center. Some of the sections below may upset some readers, including images that depict violence and/or nudity. Lastly, if you have been a victim of sexual violence and need someone to talk to, please reach out the National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) to speak with a trained counselor.

INTERSECTIONS OF CONSENT, QUEER, AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

In the sections below, I contextualize sexual assault prevention and sexual consent information. Then, I introduce relevant concepts out of queer theory to show how the analyzed documents rely on these concepts to distinguish their documents from institutional ones. Finally, I draw on technical communication scholarship to situate this information within the field, namely as extra-institutional communication.

U.S. Sexual Assault Prevention Movements

The U.S. anti-rape movement has a long history and is deeply connected to the experience of women of color, including American Indian women (Smith, 2015) and Black women (Greensite, 2009). For example, Black women worked to reclaim their own bodies and the lives of Black men from violence at the hands of White men.

> During slavery, the rape of enslaved women by white men was common and legal. After slavery ended, sexual and physical violence, including murder, were used to terrorize and keep the Black population from gaining political or civil rights… Perhaps the first women in the United States to break the silence around rape were those African American women who testified before Congress following the Memphis Riot of May 1866, during which a number of Black women were gang-raped by a white mob. Their brave testimony has been well recorded. (Greensite, 2009, para. 2)

The work of Ida B. Wells, Sojourner Truth, and many others on behalf of Black women and men "accelerated" with student organizing in the 1970s (Greensite, 2009). The first rape crisis centers came into existence in urban centers at this time (Greensite, 2009). As sexual assault prevention gained more legitimacy and attention, consent messaging became more visible on campuses.

One significant report drew attention to the issue of sexual assault on campuses. Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987) conducted the first national report on sexual violence on campuses. With *Ms. Magazine*, Koss conducted a large-scale undergraduate survey with startling results: "one in four female college students had an experience that met the legal definition of rape or attempted rape" (Zimmerman, 2016, para. 4). This report bolstered the grassroots anti-rape movement, which included Take Back the Night rallies and Slutwalk ("The History of Sexual Assault Awareness Month," 2016.). Campus activists and grassroots feminist groups organized for women's safety and enlarged the legal definitions of sexual assault including recognizing date rape and defeating defenses of "implied consent" ("Supreme Court decision on sexual consent," 2011). In an important move, Pineau (1989) argued for the "communicative" model (p. 235), where consent must be verbally communicated rather than implied or assumed by silence. Another important anti-rape effort was to argue, as Brownmiller did in 1993, that rape is more about controlling women's bodies than about sex, though as of late some activists and scholars have disagreed on Brownmiller's point, countering that while sexual violence may be an expression of power, it may also contain an element of sexual desire (Shpancer, 2016). Nevertheless, U.S. anti-rape movements have arguably been successful in framing the conversation around consent and sexual violence.

After increasing political and social pressure by these anti-rape movements, sexual assault prevention on college campuses became embedded in the culture, especially after having gained national attention with Antioch College's task force on sexual assault, "The Sexual Offense Prevention Policy" (or S.O.P.P.) in 1991 (see Rosman, 2018). This task force asserted consent must be verbal, mutual, and agreed upon with each new sexual contact or level of activity. This policy is often cited as one of the first institutional policies to take on consent (Bussel, 2008; Rosman, 2018).

Sexual assaults on campus and universities' handling of such cases have increasingly garnered criticism and attracted media attention (Baker, 2016; Framke, 2018; Friedrichs, 2016; Lussos & Fernandez, 2018; Mettler, 2018). Where in 2007, Beres decried the "paucity" of scholarship on consent (p. 94), recent years have seen an increase of research, including student perceptions and negotiations of consent (Baldwin-White, 2018; Glace, 2018; Jozkowski, Manning, & Hunt, 2018), bystander interventions (Hoxmeier, O'Connor, & McMahon, 2018), issues around same-sex assault (De Santis, Quidley-Rodriguez, Valdes, Alves, & Provencio-Vasquez, 2018), and anti-bias interventions (Bonomi, 2018), to name just a few. The U.S. government has also taken a keen interest in sexual assault prevention including The White House (2014), former Sen. Claire McCaskill (2014), and the U.S. Department of Education (2011)

(see Lussos & Fernandez, 2018).

Given its historical roots in campus activism, it comes as no surprise that for many readers, the most familiar sexual consent messaging are the ones found around campus health centers, gender resource centers, and campus-wide messaging after a rise in assault reports. It is also no surprise these documents share several common features. In fact, as far as I am familiar, many documents, fliers and pamphlets follow similar basic guidelines as those laid out by the anti-rape activists, S.O.P.P. and Berkowitz (2002) in his article, "Guidelines for Consent in Intimate Relationships." These guidelines are:

1. "Both participants are fully conscious" (often interpreted as sober)
2. "Both participants are equally free to act"
3. "Both parties have clearly communicated their intent"
4. "Both parties are positive sincere in their desire." (pp. 1–4)

Much of the information around sexual consent is based on these four principles. While an extended history of sexual consent information is beyond the scope of this article, I examine the application of these principles in my analysis following the literature review, especially in contradistinction to those that rely on a queer theory framework.

Queer Theory

Technical communication has not always included queer perspectives and queer theory, broadly speaking, though calls have been made for more inclusion: "unfortunately, the existence of scholarship that examines technical communication from an LGBTQ perspective or a specifically queer theoretical perspective is sparse. More is needed" (Jones, 2016, p. 356). While Jones unmistakably differentiates between LGBTQ and queer perspectives, the two can easily be conflated. To be clear, an LGBT approach to politics is based on fixed identity categories and alliances (Cohen, 1997). Describing LGBT identity politics this way is not intended to be disparaging as they have been successful in gaining many civil rights and cultural exposure, evidenced by the success of the gay marriage movement and anti-discrimination laws. Yet, it is important for this analysis to distinguish between inclusion of LGBT identities and a queer approach. That is, this article does not merely argue for including LGBT people in existing consent messaging. Rather, my point is that messaging rooted in queer politics posits completely different considerations, starting from a completely different place.

Distinct from LGBT politics, queer politics broadly arises from queer theory. Important for my analysis, "queer" challenges stable and regulated identity categories, even categories of gay and lesbian, as defined by Cohen (1997).

> Through its conception of a wide continuum of sexual possibilities, *queer theory stands in direct contrast to the normalizing tendencies of hegemonic sexuality rooted in ideas of static, stable sexual identities and behaviors…* (p. 438–439, emphasis mine)

Note that for Cohen and others, "stable sexual identities" would include homosexual or bisexual identity. Yet, queer politics is not only about challenging identity categories. Queer politics is also interested in how sexual and gender minorities produce new ethics and ways of relating in the world and to each other. Cox (2018) describe these ethics as resistance, meaning making, and survival.

> Unlike many fields (e.g., sociology, psychology, anthropology) that have thrived by offering expertise to the state, queer theory resists systematizing and settling. In this way, what queer theory teaches us about any given thing—or "x," as Berlant and Warner put it—is actually not about political ideology but about personal survival. (p. 10; see also Berlant & Warner, 1995)

In particular, queer theory has wrestled with ethics of consent for decades. Livingston (2015) in particular relies on community-based rhetorics to explore the intersection of queer and consent. Drawing on Friedman and Valenti (2008), Livingston (2015) describes consent as going "beyond pleasure and danger" (p. 1), and instead, consent "…has to do with boundaries and limits, power, desire, vulnerability, disclosure, risk, access, shame, histories" (p. 1). Ultimately, Livingston argues that all consent is rhetorical and context-based:

> Consent is what happens when we find our desires (pleasures, needs) respected and reciprocated, acknowledging that persuasion, or sexual ethos, is different than manipulation, and consciously working to know our own power and use it well. The radical potential of consent, of course, depends on one's context. (p. 5).

An understanding of consent as context-based reframes it to be more nuanced, dialogic, and flexible rather than stable and binary, i.e., simple no or yes statements. Importantly, and relevant to the queer artifacts analyzed below, while Livingston (2015) acknowledges a genealogy of scholars in queer theories and rhetorics, she especially credits community spaces, specifically LGBTQ community contexts (p. 9), for her consent theory building (p. 11). In fact, she goes on to say that for queer people, "queerness does not come from queer theory but is grounded in particular contexts (Livingston, 2015, p. 11). Queer, community-based ideas of consent necessitate a rejection of fixity and instead relies on the self-reflexive invention of new ethics arising through community contexts. Importantly, Livingston (2015) sees this reflexivity as inherently practical, emergent, and ongoing, as in the statement below.

> Queer rhetorics invite us to know consent as a collaborative, self-reflexive process, not simply a fleeting conversation about the benefits and risks of relationships that happens at the beginning of play. What I want to suggest is: consent [is] also a set of practical elements, which are part of ongoing, rhetorical negotiations where people can come to know their own power, privilege, and desires, and use them well. (Livingston, 2015, p. 11)

Consent that arises in this manner challenges conventional understandings of consent outlined above.

Technical Communication and Consent

Though there is little if any research on sexual consent in technical communication, for some time scholars have been concerned with informed consent (Batova, 2010; Germaine-McDaniel, 2010; Kim et al., 2008; Pigozzi, 2013; Renguette, 2016; Wright, 2012). TPC scholars have also been interested in the tension between litigation, ethics, and consent in end license user agreements (EULAs) and privacy policies (Beck, Crow, McKee, Reilly, Vie, Gonzales, & DeVoss, 2016; Vie, 2014). In a 2013 issue of *Communication Design*

Quarterly Review, Melonçon called for a deeper understanding of informed consent: "For example, an ethical orientation means going beyond the standard signing of informed consent, which is really a mechanism for protecting the university rather than the participants…" (p. 36).

Though technical communication has not engaged in much research around queer theory, though there has been notable scholarship around HIV/AIDS (Bowden, 2004; Grabill, 2000; Scott, 2014). Recently, however, Cox (2018) has drawn on explicitly queer frameworks, particularly queer rhetorics to offer the following statement.

> Queer rhetorics ask what are the unique approaches and strategies that queer, LGBT, and nonnormative individuals and communities have employed and are employing to make meaning within their communities and survive and advance in wider cultural and socio-political contexts." (p. 10)

As Cox notes, queer rhetorics look for the "unique approaches" nonnormative people have used to their own ends, to thrive and survive. Despite Cox's (2018) and Jones's (2016) call, few scholars draw on explicitly queer frameworks in technical communication.

Further, while at the time of writing technical communication scholars have also not yet engaged in an analysis of specifically sexual consent messaging, many related fields have been engaged in this type of research, including communication, journalism and media studies (Barnett, 2008; Lussos & Fernandez, 2018; Sandberg & Ugelvik, 2016; Worthington, 2005; Worthington, 2008a; Worthington, 2008b), law studies (Ehrlich, 2003; Finch, & Munro, 2006; Gotell, 2008; Lindsay, 2010), gender studies (Beres, 2007; Burkett, & Hamilton, 2012; Humphreys, 2007; Jozkowski, Peterson, Sanders, Dennis, & Reece, 2014), discourse studies (Ehrlich,1998), and organizational studies (Jozkowski, 2015; Martin, 2013; Williams, Giuffre, & Dellinger, 1999). Technical communication also ought to consider this type of communication as suitable and legitimate for analysis because sexual consent messaging aligns with the field's self-definition. For example, The Society for Technical Communication defines technical communication as:

> Communicating about technical or specialized topics, such as computer applications, medical procedures, or environmental regulations; Communicating by using technology, such as web pages, help files, or social media sites; Providing instructions about how to do something, regardless of how technical the task is or even if technology is used to create or distribute that communication. ("Defining Technical Communication")

Regardless of their origins as either institutional or queer messaging, sexual consent artifacts meet at least two of these criteria: the creators use technology to provide instructions and clarification on a specific task (i.e. preventing sexual assault and/or asking and giving consent).

In the last few decades, scholars have made room in the field for consideration of user-produced artifacts, recognizing the rich complexity of extra-institutional technical communication (Carradini, 2018; Edenfield, 2018), especially in light of what Kimball (2006) calls "tactical technical communication" (see also Colton, Holmes, & Walwema, 2017; Ding, 2009; Kimball, 2017; Pflugfelder, 2017; Sarat-St. Peter, 2017). Kimball (2006, 2017) and others have applied concepts from de Certeau's (1984) framework of strategies versus tactics. Kimball (2006) defines strategies as "systems, plans of actions, narratives, and designs created by institutions to influence, guide, and at worst manipulate human society" (p. 71, see also de Certeau, 1984). In contrast, tactics are the employment of institutional strategies in resistance to those institutions and their authority (Kimball, 2006). Tactics may best be understood as "an art of the weak," (Kimball, 2006, p. 71; de Certeau, 1984, p. 37) and of "making do" (Farmer, 2013, p. 30; de Certeau, 1984). Kimball (2006) notes that tactical technical communication can move writers from viewing consumers as passive user-readers of documents to user-producers, marking tactical technical communication an apt starting point for consideration of grassroots queer consent documents.

In line with Kimball's "user-producer" paradigm, queer approaches to consent fit the tactical, technical communication definition in more ways than one. For example, some of the artifacts take the form of "zines," a tactical genre described by Duncombe (1997) as "noncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines that their creators produce, publish, and distribute themselves" (pp. 10–11; see also Duncombe, 2014; Farmer, 2013; Guzzetti & Gamboa, 2004; Knobel & Lankshear, 2002; Piepmeier, 2009; Robbins, 1999; Schilt & Zobl, 2008; Spencer, 2008). As Livingston (2015) described above and as I demonstrate later, as an "art of the weak," the queer artifacts are forms through which marginalized communities create, communicate, and educate each other about consent, especially true in the case of groups who are invisible from institutional forms of consent documentation.

COLLECTING AND ANALYZING ARTIFACTS

This project originally began several years ago when I accidentally encountered consent information design that ran counter to the messaging circulating on my university campus [name redacted]. This observation led to roughly two months of gathering and comparing numerous online and physical artifacts from both institutions and queer artifacts. I collected approximately ten institutional artifacts and ten queer artifacts.

To be considered for collection, artifacts from institutions—primarily universities and health care clinics—needed to be distributed as official communication from the institution. To be considered for analysis, a queer artifact needed to be distributed by some means other than an institution. I gathered these artifacts online and from infoshops, zine distros, sex toy stores, community centers, activist organizers, and other sites around the city [name redacted]. Whether institutional or queer, in order to be considered for analysis, artifacts needed to include topics regarding sexual assault or consent, including rape, date rape, consent, sexual violence, or content otherwise related to sexual violence prevention. I only considered artifacts that had a clear purpose of either preventing sexual violence or teaching consent. Using a queer approach building on feminist work in sexual assault prevention and consent, my analysis was qualitative in nature as I analyzed content for similarities and contrasts (Keith & Lundberg 2008; Miles and Huberman, 1994; White & Marsh, 2006). Specifically, I considered visuals, discourse, layout, and overall design. I also considered distribution points, that is, considering the spaces where intended audiences encounter these artifacts.

THE ADVOCACY MODEL: "NO MEANS NO!"

While there are several frameworks for communicating sexual assault prevention strategies and information, perhaps the most prevalent approach employs a model of advocacy, that is, acting or speaking "on behalf of" victims (actual or potential), particularly (in most cases) the female victims of male perpetrators. In this sense, consent is framed as a "woman's issue." For example, readers may be familiar with the refrain of "no means no," a ubiquitous motto that signifies an expression of non-consent or withdrawal of consent. In a sense, the phrase is consonant with implied consent, that if/when the *initiator* hears a "no" from the *recipient* of sexual advances, then the initiator must stop the activity. In this way, "no means no" does the work of establishing a binary between "either rape or not rape" (Mettler, 2018). In other words, "no" serves as a border marker between consensual and non-consensual sexual contact. Contained within this phrase are uncomplicated categories of receiver/potential victim, initiator/potential perpetrator, and definitive boundaries of sexual pleasure/sexual assault.

One implication of using "no means no" as a stand-in for that boundary is that people may become habituated to "proceed until apprehended" (i.e., relying on implied consent or silence as consent). As one person said during early conversations around this project, "Until I hear no, it's all a-go." And there is nothing packed within this concise phrase to suggest otherwise.

This focus on negative behavior points to the primary purpose of such information: to raise awareness of what exactly constitutes sexual assault for potential victims and perpetrators, and it does so by relying on legal definitions of sexual assault. For example, one pamphlet I examined stated, "If you rape you will go to prison." In one anti-rape campaign, the United Kingdom's Home Office distributed an image with a nearly nude woman juxtaposed with the words, "Have sex with someone who hasn't said yes to it, and the next place you enter could be prison." An international "no" symbol appears on her underwear (U.K. Home Office, n.d.).

Despite the popularity of this phrase, relying on it alone to prevent sexual assault is problematic. For one, relying on legal definitions and the threat of legal action for violating consent is difficult because, according to a Bureau of Justice Statistics 2016 report, sexual assault is one of the least likely crimes to be reported to police (22.9%) and even less likely to result in arrest or charges. In fact, the under-reporting, -prosecution, and -conviction of sexual assault is a pervasive problem (Morgan & Kena, 2016), particularly on college campuses (Khan, Hirsch, Wambold, & Mellins, 2018; see also Cantor, Fisher, Chibnall, Townsend, Lee, Bruce, & Thomas, 2015; Mellins, Walsh, Sarvet, Wall, Gilbert, Santelli, Thompson, Wilson, Khan, Benson, Bah, Kaufman, Reardon, & Hirsh, 2017).

Said another way, many sexual assaults go unreported, and of those that are reported even fewer result in an arrest, and those that *do* result in arrest rarely bring about prosecution or conviction, facts that call into question the persistent reliance on legal threats. While circulating information broadcasting legal consequences in many ways protects the institution, doing so alone may not be enough to deter sexual violence. Again, I am not arguing against relying on these legal consequences or a binary of consent, I am simply saying it may not be enough, as we saw with the meager sentence of Brock Turner who received a controversially light sentence for a sexual assault conviction (Miller, 2016).

One (albeit cynical) interpretation of the continued and singular use of legal definitions of sexual assault is that it is a strategy (in the de Certeauian sense) of protecting and defining an institution's relationship with the bodies of those it is responsible for. This strategy is exactly the early point of Melonçon's (2013) critique of the relationship between informed consent and institutions as "a mechanism for protecting the university rather than the participants…" (p. 36).

This act of protecting oneself is perhaps a reasonable strategy given the scandals over the last decade or so around institutional responses to sexual assault, yet it is debatable over whether or not this strategy has been effective. And, situated next to the features of queer artifacts that rely on different (tactical) methods of teaching consent, this historic reliance perhaps becomes even more problematic, especially in Title IX and other forms of anti-rape and response training. When discussing an early draft of this manuscript, colleagues from a range of universities commented on the vacuous nature of training for faculty and staff, the toothless- and too-late responses to campus sexual violence, administrative preoccupations on honor code and/or drinking violations in relation to sexual assault, and the overall absence of meaningful dialogue around the issue.

Design and Institutional Consent

Upon examination, the collected institutional artifacts often share several features. To begin, the sites of distribution establish the link between the information and the institution. Common sites include college campuses, health centers, resource centers, departments of health or human resources, and other intuitional offices. Many of the campus documents collected for this project are distributed in tri-fold pamphlets, posters, or flyer form.

The large publisher Journeyworks is just one company that specializes in mass-produced health information pamphlets for a range of topics. The website sells pamphlets in bulk for topics ranging from tobacco use to violence prevention, describing themselves as "Low cost. Easy to read. Multicultural." Taking Journeyworks as one example, many of the pamphlets use the same design and the same layout for all their pamphlets, whether that pamphlet discusses getting a vaccination or sexual violence. Journeyworks pamphlets on sexual consent are located in a section under "Violence Prevention/Dating Violence." The pamphlets under the topic of sexual assault—along with other types of fliers and consent documents distributed through colleges—fail the user in several significant ways. First, the design looks like what it is: one of thousands of pamphlets with the same look and feel, same layout, same color scheme, same typeface. Second, and most importantly, the language assumes, recreates, and relies upon the advocacy model, a male-as-initiator/woman-as-gatekeeper paradigm. One pamphlet from Journeyworks reveals these advocacy model dynamics as a woman and man are both relaxed, slouching and inviting, and on another panel titled "If you are getting pressured…", a woman puts her hands up in a defensive position ("Sex, Communication and Respect", n.d.).

The "greenlight until she says no" language suggests the advocacy model underlying these documents. The information is presented as a checklist to be followed. These and other documents reinforce a woman-as-gatekeeper paradigm in several ways. First, in some fliers I looked at for this project, the language is specifically addressed to men.

- "Boys often don't understand that when a girl says, 'I don't feel like it,' that means NO."
- "Getting a person drunk or high in order to have sex with her is also unacceptable."
- "Some boys think that being drunk or high on drugs is an excuse for rape."

Another flyer was printed on bright red paper with a red octagon at the top with the words "NO!" printed in it the octagon instead of stop. One example from a children's book (Figure 1) is titled *No Means No!* and is intended to teach young girls about consent. It deploys similar body language: hands up in defense, stopping the perpetrator. Though the back cover proclaims its stated purpose as an "An empowering book for children of all ages!" the focus of the book is a little girl. In personal correspondence, a spokesperson for the publisher clarified their decision, saying that other books Educated2Empower publishes do include gender neutral children, without a pronoun and ambiguously drawn, to intentionally show safety and boundaries are a concern for all children (M. Sanders, personal communication, February 13, 2019). Sanders clarified the author's position in *No Means No!* as 1) no book can cover everything, and 2) adults may have a difficult time understanding a child's body autonomy, a disquieting fact that is particularly true for girls.

Figure 1: Educate2Empower, *No Means No!* back cover

To be clear, I am not stating a strong focus on women should be done away with. Like *No Means No!*, these documents are important tools to inform the public about body boundaries and to keep people safe from predators. I am saying that a singular focus on this strategy has limitations and that we need to broaden conversations to include more than the advocacy model of consent.

Though in the Journeyworks pamphlets both men and women are addressed, it does so without attending to power, privilege, coercion, or intimidation. And, even if issues of power or privilege are addressed, these issues are not so easily prosecutable. Attempting to address these issues may require disrupting the clear "no means no" binary.

One example of this subtle reinforcement is the back cover of a pamphlet (similar to that displayed above) which has a woman with her hands up in a "stop" position and the heading says, "If you are getting pressured…" followed by a checklist of how a disempowered person could successfully defend herself, ending with a statement of "…if you are forced to do something you don't want to do, it's not your fault!" It does not address how not to commit sexual assault or what positive and affirmative sexual consent looks like.

A further review of several pamphlets and fliers also shows a hetero-romantic focus, not surprising given the prevalence of female victims by male partners. According to a 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey conducted by the CDC, "more than one-third of women in the United States (35.6% or approximately 42.4 million) have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime" (Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, Merrick, Chen, & Stevens, 2011, p. 39). A press release from the CDC summarizes key findings of this national report, stating, "The majority of women who reported experiencing sexual violence, regardless of their sexual orientation, reported that they were victimized by male perpetrators," and that "of the bisexual women who experienced [intimate partner violence], approximately 90 percent reported having only male perpetrators" (Centers for Disease Control, para. 1). So, while it is not surprising that much of the literature focuses on women and girls as the victim of violence at the hands of male perpetrators, nevertheless a singular focus on this dynamic excludes a number of communities.

Exclusions

In institutional consent information, alcohol and drugs are framed as categorically negating consent. In many states, having sex with a person who is incapacitated and unable to consent is criminal sexual conduct. Again, while I am not criticizing that point, I want to call attention to the obvious omission here: the real possibility of sexual contact under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Relying on consent as a binary may situate those who have sexual contact while intoxicated in a gray zone. In some instances, the intoxicated person unmistakably cannot consent. According to her open letter read to the court during the trial of Brock Turner, the survivor states she was unconscious and unable to give consent because of alcohol (Baker, 2016). However, a recent court case demonstrates Livingston's (2015) point about consent being context-based, because, when alcohol and drugs are involved, the ability to consent can become much messier. In this court case, a student accused another of sexual assault because they were drinking, resulting in expulsion. The accused sued the university and won (Friedrichs, 2016). Friedrichs writes,

> But whether or not this student felt he had a fair trial, what both parties described of the incident was a clear reminder that many people simply don't understand consent and the role alcohol plays in it: She said she was too intoxicated to consent; he said he had attended the university's trainings on alcohol awareness and sexual

> misconduct and was very aware of the need to make sure that any sex was consensual. (2016, para. 9)

While ambiguity is avoided by unequivocally stating, as Berkowitz does, that consent is "sober," it informs little when both parties are intoxicated, or when consent is given some acts but not others, or in situations where one regrets what happened, to name just a few scenarios.

Beyond drugs and alcohol, other serious exclusions remain as well. Most consent information does not address BDSM (bondage, domination, sadism, masochism), kink culture, polyamory, "hookups" and casual encounters, sex workers, as well as trans or (dis)abled bodies, to identify a few nonnormative bodies and practices that are excluded. Sexual consent information distributed by institutions simply does not cover what consent might look like in those situations. Though they are excluded from these documents, consent is still a very real concern. Additionally, many (though not all) documents also exclude same-sex relations.

In short, these documents strongly reinforce normative bodies and heteronormative relationships, and—even with the inclusion of same-sex partners—rely on narrowly defined identity categories, including *what constitutes sexual assault in the first place*. Contrasting this information with broader and more inclusive queer consent documents, in the next section I examine queer artifacts and demonstrate the possibilities of their messaging: messy, inclusive, and contextual.

QUEERING CONSENT

Now that I have analyzed some aspects of institutional sexual consent information, I turn to how these documents can be expanded and improved upon by contrasting them with artifacts impacted by queer theory and affirmative consent, a contrast that highlights the categorical and normative aspects of most sexual consent information design and the advocacy model.

For my analysis, like Livingston (2015), I draw on the work of Friedman and Valenti (2008), who popularized the notion of affirmative consent, an idea condensed to the phrase "yes means yes." This approach stands in stark contrast to "no means no" commonly found in the institutional artifacts. In a recent article on affirmative consent and Friedman's influence on the #MeToo movement, Friedman commented:

> Part of what makes 'yes means yes' such an appealing proposition is that a.) it's clarifying, and that b.) most people want to do what it says anyway…I would say that all decent people want to have sex with people that are into it… (Mettler, 2018)

With roots in radical feminism, HIV/AIDS activism, BDSM leather communities, queer activism, and radical movements, a growing body of examples of sexual consent information is quite dissimilar from the information distributed by colleges and organizations. In contrast to relying on negative consequences, this information frames affirmative consent information as part of healthy sexuality, essential for getting and giving pleasure for both/all people. This information frames consent as a contextual within a community, as an ethical issue, and is decidedly pro-sex and pro-pleasure, as Livingston (2015) commented. Rather than negative rhetoric of prison or legal troubles, it uses instead positive reinforcement of having sex "with people who are into it," and earning the respect of the person you are with and your peers.

In many of these documents and in line with Cox's (2018) quotation of Berlant and Warner (1995) on queer politics as a tactic rooted in survival, there is little to no concern with institutions and legal action, an absence not surprising given that this information targets communities historically troubled by law enforcement. These populations include lesbian, gay and bisexual people, BDSM and other kinksters, sex workers (on the street and off), drag performers, crossdressers, transgender/transsexual people, and many others who historically have had—and continue to have—negative or even violent encounters with law enforcement. Instead of threats of legal consequences, the focus is on being a good person within their community and having pleasurable experiences (Mettler, 2018), or being "good, giving, and game," to repeat a phrase popularized by columnist Dan Savage (Herbenick, 2016; Muise, 2012). Rather than litigation, these artifacts use the threat of retaliation and being treated as a "boundary breaking" pariah within your community and violating community norms.

Design and DIY Consent

As discussed earlier, this consent information often employs a zine aesthetic (Farmer, 2013; Fortune, 2017). The collage-style visuals include a range of genders, body types, ethnicities, and sexualities—blurring boundaries, categories, and identities. The information is designed to look and feel peer-to-peer (rather than top-down) and are markedly unpolished. The image of the inside of one popular book compiled by Cindy Crabb (n.d.), *Learning Good Consent*, displays this hand-drawn, collage-style layout (Figure 2).

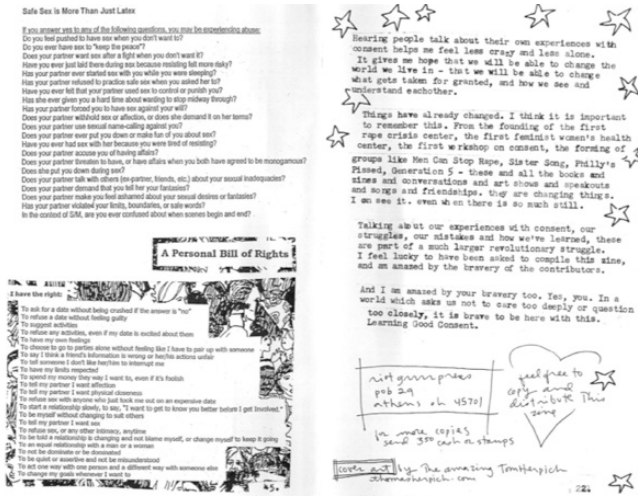

Figure 2: Inside *Learning Good Consent*

This type of consent information reflects queer ways of doing and being. That is, rather than primarily heteronormative content, these consent artifacts not only include LGBTQ+ identities but also ultimately reject stable categories all together (Cohen, 1997). Nonnormative and/or ambiguously gendered images are often used, not only including a range of identities and body types, but also subverting heteronormativity and the advocacy model altogether. Here are two examples of ambiguous images designed to be inclusive to queer communities, but also exclude more normative identities—i.e., "stable categories." The "Safer Sex Tips"flyer below (Figure 3) shows a trans masculine body and uses ambiguous terms to talk about bodies, in line with what Livingston (2015) points out as a community norm, i.e., "respecting self-definition" (p. 15). The flyer uses terms like "phallic woman," "receptive partners," and "use a condom on yourself."

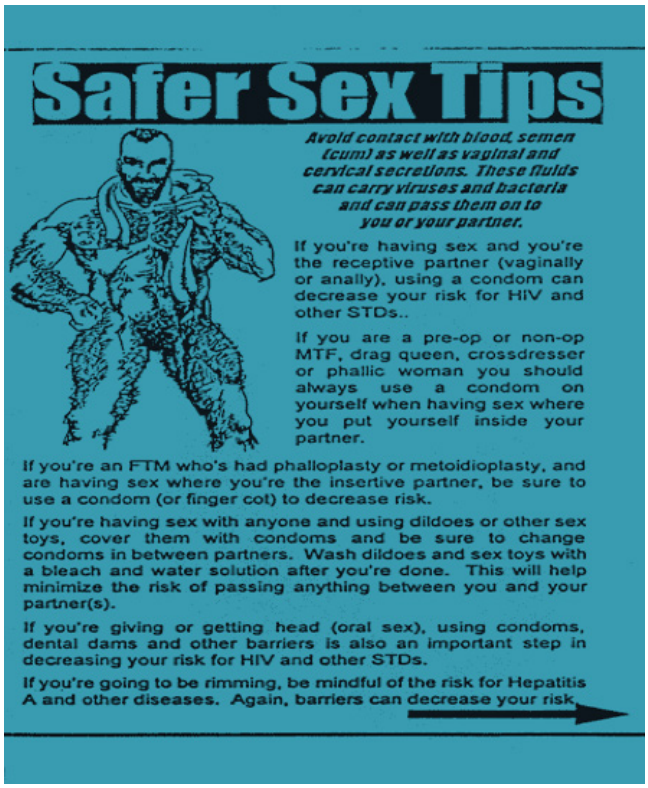

Figure 3: Safer Sex Tips

Figure 4: Front cover of *Learning Good Consent* by Tom Herpich

The cover of *Learning Good Consent* (Figure 4) similarly does not distinguish between masculine and feminine bodies, but instead uses ambiguous, hand drawn characters whose body language shows receptivity toward each other (and not a defensive posture).

These representative documents demonstrate a tactic from queer artifacts: blurring bodies and experiences. Transgender and gender-variant bodies are included, images noticeably absent from the institutional documents above.

Strikingly different from institutional documents, the vocabulary is casual and far from clinical. Some of the consent information I examined used slang and sometimes appropriations of pejoratives. Authors shared experiences with sexual violence, but they also shared descriptions of consensual experiences of different types. The authors use gender-, queer-, and trans-inclusive language and images and non-gender specific language. Authors of the various articles, lists, questionnaires, or other content are inclusive of different kinds of "plumbing" and the many different ways of thinking about and talking about bodies. For example, *Learning Good Consent* includes a section called "Queer Kissing and Accountability," with sections divided into sections titled, "If you know them well" and "If you don't know them well."

Some exceptions to this practice of inclusive language and experiences are texts directed toward specific communities, like street-level sex workers or LGBT communities or hookup partners who might create documents more targeted to that specific group. In the case of transgender people, according to Drabble, Keatley, and Marcelle (2003), a large study indicated:

> …that HIV education, media and referral information are often ineffective because they are "not factually or culturally appropriate for the transgender community" and tend to use images that do not reflect the body or self-image of FTM or MTF individuals. (p. 9; see also Clements, Wilkinson, Kitano, and Marx, 1999)

This specificity is important because, as my earlier analysis showed, these communities are often excluded from other, more conventional consent messaging.

Controversially, some literature explicitly included stories by past rapists. Authors and interviewees of all genders discussed violating consent and their process of being confronted and/or changing their behavior. For example, in one section about how to initiate conversations with a "hookup," an anonymous author in *Learning Good Consent* suggests:

> I think consent is hot and important. I want you to know that I'm working on respecting peoples' boundaries and bodies and I have a history of struggling with that. I'm open to talking about that now or some other time, but I want you to know that. (p. 41)

While including this material may make some uncomfortable and is unimaginable in institutional information, the strategy clearly addresses a reader who might have that same behavior. According to one anonymous author:

> Talking about your history with perpetuating sexual assault is important for many reasons. Being accountable to your actions and your community means owning your mistakes and working hard to restore trust. This trust goes beyond partners or potential dates. It exists among friends, housemates, comrades, and folks with whom you do organizing work and activism. (p. 38)

This inclusion is strikingly different from mass-produced and distributed documents discussed earlier.

The key takeaway is that the queered zines often present consent as messy and situational within a more contextualized, harm-

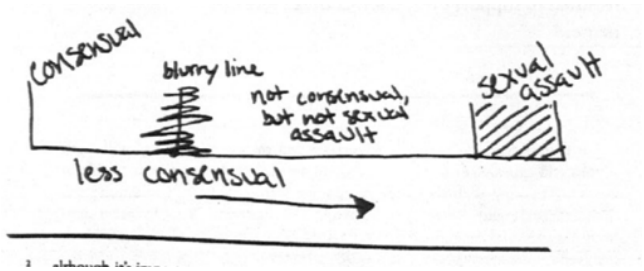

Figure 5: Spectrum of Consent, *Let's Talk About Consent Baby*

reductionist framework (Rekart, 2005)—that is, seeking to eliminate or reduce "boundary breaking" behavior. One of the biggest challenges to institutional approaches is to push against the legal definition of rape and instead rely upon a spectrum of consensual behavior. This drawing from *Let's Talk About Consent Baby* from Down There Health Collective depicts such a spectrum (Figure 5).

A close look at this spectrum should dispel any notion that these queer artifacts are somehow about identity politics of inclusion. This spectrum acknowledges a gray zone between "rape and not rape" (Mettler, 2018), "the contentious sexual gray area between enthusiastic consent and resigned acceptance" (Framke, 2018), acknowledging the problem of sexual contact with assumed intentions that were not shared, yet not sexual assault. Putting forth a model of consent as a spectrum clearly resonates with Livingston's (2015) point about consent as rhetorical and as contextual. Using this spectrum to define consensual and nonconsensual sexual conduct upends Berkowitz's tenets by recognizing "intimidation and contextual power dynamics" at play (Framke, 2018). This spectrum of consent is not as easily prosecutable or enforceable of what could be called "the Aziz situation"—referring to Aziz Ansari and his date "Grace," where she came to see her date with the comedian as sexual assault, but he saw it as consensual if awkward (Framke, 2018)—but, keep in mind, legal action and police enforcement are never the point. What this spectrum succeeds at, instead, is demonstrating the ways coercion and power can lead people to give up and do things they do not wish to do.

In fact, in the very early stages of this project, one of my research collaborators in her mid-30s said she did not realize how many of her own sexual experiences were, as she described, not rape yet not consensual until learning more about shades of consent and assault through this project (name redacted, personal correspondence). One person quoted in *Learning Good Consent* frames these shades of interactions, while emphasizing "not demonizing people" and making space for dialogue:

> These are the moments when accountability feels muddled. I believe the guys I was having sexual interactions with were doing the best they could. I believe that they wanted to have mutually pleasurable sex and that they wished the best for me. For me it doesn't feel like an answer to say that they were all jerks or "evil perpetrators" that I then get to demonize. I believe that the men I was being sexy with had some pretty shitty skills and fucked up expectations and they didn't know how to do it better, which doesn't mean that they shouldn't be accountable for their actions, but they also shouldn't be demonized for them either. When we make people evil it dehumanizes everyone. (p. 7)

This author clearly approaches consent and sexual assault from a spectrum rather than a binary. Further, approaching consent as a spectrum also may make space for conversations around drugs and alcohol, though I refrain from speculating on how that might play out in documentation.

Like the spectrum, design elements such as visuals and layout, and the points of distribution of these documents further distance them from institutional sites. Common sites of distribution include infoshops, sex toy stores, free health clinics, bars, and needle exchanges. Additionally, many of the zines and informational fliers can be downloaded online.

Unlike their mainstream counterparts, one can usually find a disclaimer allowing for free copying and distribution of the information (Figure 6).

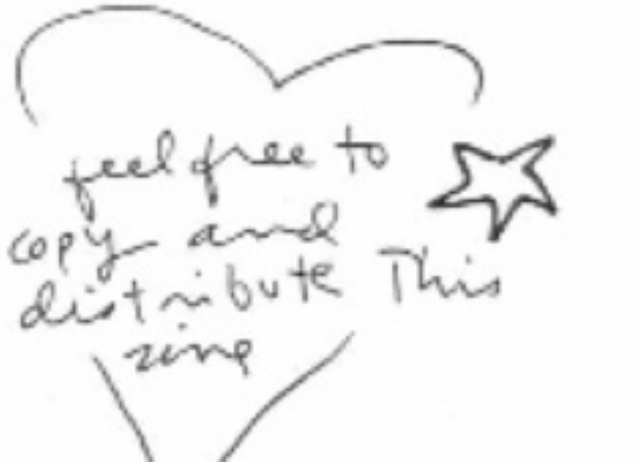

Figure 6: Anti-copyright notice inside *Learning Good Consent* by Cindy Crabb

Example: Consent Information and Sex Workers

One extremely important example of tactical, contextual consent and the prevention of sexual violence is the Bad Date List. The Bad Date List includes safety and "bad date" tips (information on dangerous people or behavior) for street-level sex workers. The one I examined was designed to fit in a back pocket or a purse. Please note that the particular document I examined is distributed under a different title, but to anonymize it I call it the Bad Date List, which exists in several large cities and includes information relevant to workers in that particular city.

The organizer of this particular Bad Date List—who I also keep anonymous here for their protection—collects tips through a network of word-of-mouth, text messages, and anonymous phone calls. Published seasonally, the Bad Date List is distributed through needle exchanges, community clinics, and social media. In developing the tip network, the founder recruited a range of people including those at community centers, homeless shelters, street ministry teams, low-income health clinics, and drop-in centers, but, most importantly, sex workers themselves. In 2010, via personal correspondence, they noted how the project was designed from the start to run with almost no budget besides the cost of printing paper.

It is important to state that despite their invisibility from almost all institutional consent information, sexual assault is a serious concern for sex workers—and it is naïve to believe that sex work is absent from universities (Petter, 2018; Sagar, Jones, Symons, Bowring, &

Roberts, 2015; Sanders & Hardy, 2015). Students are engaged in sex work (including web camming) to pay tuition, feed themselves, pay rent, and buy books. And, right now, there is no productive conversation about consent and safety around that work, a clear gap in institutional consent campaigns—especially at universities.

It is also a misconception to believe that because an individual is a sex worker, consent is not an issue—as if consenting to one thing means consenting to everything, or perhaps because sex is agreed to in exchange for goods that there are no limits. Yet, consent is a very serious safety concern for men and women engaged in sex work, particularly at the street level and particularly for transwomen and women of color. For example, in personal correspondence with the organizer of the Bad Date List, I learned that the impetus for its creation was, in part, the arrest of a serial murderer who had cruised and murdered sex workers with impunity for over two decades.

In sum, these artifacts are extremely important to communities who are left out of institutional documentation. And the power of these artifacts is in these conversations around consent: destabilizing categories of gender, sexuality, and even consent itself, as it broadens the audience and dialogue to include conversations on power and coercion.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The larger goal of this article is to suggest that consent messaging is a legitimate concern for technical communication researchers and that our examination should include the social assumptions that are embedded in those artifacts, especially in light of recent calls for social justice (Agboka, 2013; Colton & Holmes, 2018; Haas, 2012; Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2016; Leydens, 2012; Walton & Jones, 2013). This brief comparison shows important contrast between the institutional and queered approaches. While institutional artifacts rest on an "advocacy" model that employs a "no means no" strategy, rhetoric about negative effects, and are heteronormative and exclusionary, queer approaches are often less polished, more inclusive, distributed very differently, recognize spectrums of consent, and rest on notions of affirmative consent and rhetorics of pleasure.

No doubt there is a broad set of scholarly and organizational concerns when redesigning sexual consent information, much of it beyond the scope of this article. Rather, this work is only an early step toward engaging with this body of work and it is my hope that future research will go much further. What this limited comparison of two different approaches to sexual consent information does show is how investment in institutional power is reflected in the normative design of the information it distributes, and how that information contrasts with artifacts with a different investment, i.e., broadening the conversation and dismantling normative categories.

There are several implications for technical communicators' interest in sexual consent and sexual violence information messaging. First, in addition to unveiling power investments in sexual consent, technical communication scholars can learn from these queer consent artifacts because they bring something new to the field, made possible by recent work in extra-institutional and tactical technical communication. Legitimizing consent information as an area of study may challenge technical communication's notions of justice, consonant with the social justice interventions currently influencing technical communication scholarship today (Agboka, 2013; Colton & Holmes, 2018; Haas, 2012; Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2016; Leydens, 2012; Walton & Jones, 2013). As my analysis demonstrates, comparing and contrasting these institutional and queer approaches shows us what happens to design when different/other users are centered (Rose, Edenfield, Walton, Gonzales, Shivers McNair, Zhvotovska, Jones, Garcia de Mueller, & Moore, 2018). Identifying what the queer artifacts do well shows us how different types of users are excluded from institutional designs and challenges the assertions of those designs.

Second, a queer approach to teaching consent could have several implications in the design of the information itself: including more experiences and encouraging good behavior for both/all parties. However, a queered approach could make it more difficult to prosecute (but that is less of a concern for some communities). More research needs to be conducted to determine if this is the case. A focus group, perception, or memorability study could show whether or not a queered approach at an institutional level could make a difference in how sexual consent information is applied.

The examination above shows that these two types of consent informational documents do overlap in significant ways. First, designers of both types of information use Berkowitz's Guidelines and Antioch's S.O.P.P. as foundational texts to define consent. Second, the ultimate goal of designers of both types of information is reducing sexual violence. The designers of the queer information show a nuanced understanding of their audience and acknowledge the role of contextual power dynamics, positionality, privilege, and coercion in sexual contact. Additionally, many of the design choices in the zines are portable and meet some of the goals of consent information outlined by Berkowitz and the S.O.P.P. including:

- Mustering peer-to-peer relations, peer pressure, and a sense of belonging to a community as incentive for seeking affirmative consent
- Distribution to include places where people socialize and hookup
- Using slang and street language to talk about sex and related concerns
- Including a look at privilege and power in consent
- Including different and nonnormative bodies, including trans and (dis)abled bodies
- Including sex work in consent messaging

Employing the design techniques of the queer artifacts could produce more effective and appealing consent information for a mainstream audience, however, more research is needed to identify and implement the changes needed.

In sum, queering consent could have the effect of broader inclusion of behavior, bodies, genders, sexualities, and sexual behavior. And while a queered approach could make it more difficult to prosecute, queering consent could have the effect of encouraging good behavior for all parties.

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NOTE

All images published with permission where required (see in-text notes on anti-copyright).

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