

Hispanic College Men's Perceptions of Appropriate Strategies for Initiating Sexual Intercourse with Women

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Abstract Research on heterosexual college students' sexual activity finds that men are typically the initiators of sexual intercourse. However, few studies examining college students' sexual experiences have focused on racial/ethnic minority populations. The present study uses sexual scripting frameworks and qualitative methods to provide an in-depth examination of the sexual initiation perceptions of 45 Hispanic college men who have sex with women. Two broad themes were uncovered: (a) men's perceptions about when sexual intercourse should first be initiated and (b) the kinds of behaviors men saw as appropriate for initiating sexual intimacy. Hispanic college men reported that the status of the relationship and partners' mutual desire most strongly influenced their decisions about when to initiate sex. Few men ascribed to a normative time frame for initiating sexual intercourse. The most commonly reported approach used to initiate sex was non-verbal communication, followed by indirect verbal communication, direct verbal communication, and waiting for the woman to initiate. Although machismo beliefs were acknowledged as part of men's cultural reference for masculinity, they felt they were not central to their own sexual initiation experiences or beliefs. Our findings advance our knowledge of the processes contributing to college men's personal desires and beliefs about engaging in sexual activity, which has important implications for developing effective campus-based efforts addressing the communication of sexual consent.

Keywords Hispanic · Sexuality · Masculinity · Sexual script · Consent

Research examining U.S. college students' sexual initiation has gained attention recently as universities nationwide are increasingly implementing policies that require each partner to give clear consent prior to any sexual activity (Chappell 2014; Eisenstadt 2015; Jozkowski and Peterson 2013). Most research has focused on men's perceptions of sexual initiation because the majority of heterosexual sexual encounters on campuses are instigated by men (Dworkin and O'Sullivan 2005; Higgins et al. 2010; Sakaluk et al. 2014; Schleicher and Gilbert 2005). This can be explained in part by the fact that traditional schemas for appropriate and expected sexual behavior (i.e., sexual scripts) portray women as sexual gatekeepers to men who are constantly desirous of sex (Dworkin and O'Sullivan 2005, 2007; Eaton and Rose 2011). Further, sexual scripts assert that college men should control and take the lead in decision-making for sexual situations (Sanchez et al. 2012; Stephens and Eaton 2014).

The influence of sexual scripts on college men's sexual initiation processes can contribute to researchers' and practitioners' ability to educate students about positive sexual health skills and to address issues related to sexual consent on campuses nationwide. However, most studies of sexual initiation focus on White college students' experiences; few specifically examine Hispanic college men's beliefs about when and how it is appropriate to initiate sexual intercourse (e.g., Stephens and Eaton 2014). (Because the interviews for the present study were conducted in an urban center where the majority of residents (Hurtado and Gurin 2004; Taylor et al. 2012)—including the study participants—primarily self-identify as Hispanic rather than Latino or other ethnic group categorizing labels, we use this term in the present paper.) This is particularly

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concerning in light of prior research showing that college contexts have normalized sexually risky behaviors for men, including hypersexuality and multiple partnerships (Bartoli and Clark 2006; Dworkin and O'Sullivan 2005; Jozkowski et al. 2014; Stephens and Eaton 2014). Further, colleges have increasingly been pressured to ensure students secure overt consent when initiating sexual activities, increasing the need for gender-appropriate educational materials about these issues (Chappell 2014; Jozkowski et al. 2014).

Although there is a large body of research examining Hispanic college men's sexual risk-taking behaviors (Gurman and Borzekowski 2004; Eaton and Rose 2012; Eaton et al. 2015), and general sexual health attitudes (Dantzer and Eisenman 2003; Eisenman and Dantzer 2006; Stephens and Eaton 2014; Stephens and Thomas 2011), studies focusing specifically on their beliefs about sexual initiation strategies are non-existent. Further, few studies have explored the ways in which Hispanic college men's perceptions of cultural frameworks around sexuality or masculinity may inform these behaviors (Hurtado and Sinha 2016a, 2016b; Stephens and Eaton 2014). Given that enrollment of Hispanic men in college has more than tripled since 1993 (Krogstad 2015) and now surpasses college enrollment of White high school graduates (Fry and Taylor 2013), there is a clear need for culturally-specific knowledge about Hispanic college men's sexual initiation strategy beliefs. In response to this need, we use a qualitative approach in the present study to better understand the subjective perceptions of when sexual intercourse should be initiated, as well as the gendered and cultural values that challenge or reinforce these perceptions.

College students today have greater freedom to engage in sexual intimacy in dating relationships than in previous generations (Higgins et al. 2010; Schleicher and Gilbert 2005). Most students who do not have sexual intercourse in high school are likely to have their first experience with sex during college. In fact, by their senior year, the vast majority of college students in the United States (86%) have had sexual intercourse (Patrick et al. 2007). Unfortunately, the initiation of these sexual encounters are often fraught with problems, including miscommunications about consent (Humphreys 2007), signaling of intent (Vannier and O'Sullivan 2011), and the negotiation of actual versus perceptions of culturally-prescribed sexual desires (Dworkin and O'Sullivan 2005). Importantly, issues such as consent and desire have differing meanings and impacts for men and women, as well as different implications based on individuals' culture and race/ethnicity.

Sexual Scripting and Gender

One framework that has proven useful for examining gender roles within romantic and sexual encounters is sexual scripting

theory. Sexual scripting theory helps explain how meanings about sexual behaviors are shaped by cultural values and other interpersonal influences. Developed by Simon and Gagnon (1984, 1986, 1987), sexual scripting theory is a framework that conceives of and analyzes sexual behaviors and beliefs as schemas. Individuals use these schemas to guide their decision-making, emotions, and behaviors and to categorize and interpret the behavior of their partner, including when and how sexual behaviors should be implemented (e.g., Bowleg et al. 2015). However, it is important to recognize that sexual scripts are not perfectly static; rather, they change across time, contexts, and cultures.

Perhaps the most central theme in the construction, use, and maintenance of sexual scripts is gender. Although heterosexual gender-role expectations for women and men are becoming more equal, traditional gender values continue to influence sexual scripts expectations, and in turn, intimacy interactions (Bartoli and Clark 2006; Eaton and Rose 2011; Sanchez et al. 2012). Heterosexual first date, hookup, and hangout scripts for both Hispanic and White college students all involve traditional gender roles to some extent, with men initiating more actions and activities than women do (Eaton and Rose 2012; Eaton et al. 2015). In terms of sexual activity and motivation, men are expected to dominate women sexually and to have an exceptionally strong and biologically driven desire and need for sex (Eaton and Matamala 2014). Women, on the other hand, are seen as having relatively weak and emotionally-driven desires for physical intimacy (Bartoli and Clark 2006; Dworkin and O'Sullivan 2005, 2007). When considering sexual initiation specifically, research has shown that college students continue to overwhelmingly believe it is the man's responsibility to instigate sexual intimacy (Jozkowski and Peterson 2013; Sakaluk et al. 2014).

Sexual Scripting and Culture

In addition to gender, another factor found to inform sexual scripting frameworks is racial/ethnic experiences and identity (Stephens and Eaton 2014; Stephens and Thomas 2011). Research examining sexual and romantic experiences and norms in Hispanic communities has examined the influence of the culturally-specific male gender role norms of machismo and caballerismo. The machismo ideology asserts that Hispanic men "prove" their masculinity through their sexuality and sexual performance (Glass and Owen 2010; Stephens and Eaton 2014). Characterized by physical prowess, aggression, toughness, and being in charge, intimate relationship behaviors associated with machismo include having multiple partners, infidelity, controlling one's partners by any means necessary, and sexual risk-taking (Stephens and Eaton 2014).

Researchers caution, however, that there is a need to move beyond framing these beliefs as exclusive to Latino/Hispanic

cultures because these expectations are similar to masculinity frameworks in sexual scripts from other populations (Dworkin and O'Sullivan 2007; Eaton et al. 2015; Stephens and Eaton 2014). In addition, multiple research efforts have successfully challenged prevailing notions of unidimensional Latino machismo (Hurtado and Sinha 2008, 2016a; Torres et al. 2002). Latinos' definitions and experiences of manhood can include positive aspects, such as ethical characteristics and strong relational engagements (Hurtado and Sinha 2016b). Research has also found that some Latino American male college students today reject hegemonic standards for masculinity, such as restrictive emotionality (Lu and Wong 2014), and the sexist dimensions of machismo, such as the domination of women (Hurtado and Sinha 2016b).

Among the positive forms of Hispanic masculinity that are often overlooked is the framework of *caballerismo* (Arciniega et al. 2008). Behaviors consistent with this male gender role norm include being chivalrous, proper, and respectful (Arciniega et al. 2008) as well as loyal, tender, and open in relationships (Estrada and Arciniega 2015). Unlike benevolent sexism, which is a subjectively positive form of gender prejudice that portrays women as needing paternalistic protection and being suited for nurturing roles (Barreto and Ellemers 2005; Viki et al. 2003), *caballerismo* opposes traditional gender stereotypes by encouraging men to be emotionally expressive and interpersonally oriented (Lu and Wong 2014).

It is important that sexual scripting research explore this framework because men who endorse *caballerismo* rated higher than machismo men on social connectedness scales, value family relationships, and are more in touch with their feelings and the feelings of others (Arciniega et al. 2008; Torres et al. 2002). This prosocial aspect of masculinity is also positively associated with Hispanic men's life satisfaction and their satisfaction with the social support in their lives (Estrada and Arciniega 2015). Additionally, whereas the endorsement of benevolent sexism is positively associated with attitudes that promote interpersonal violence (Abrams et al. 2003; Glick et al. 2002; Masser et al. 2010), women who endorse *caballerismo* are less likely to have a partner who is psychologically abusive (Oramas et al. 2015).

Finally, Latino masculinities are highly contextual and influenced by education, class, age, sexuality, religion, nationality, etc. (Glass and Owen 2010; Hurtado and Gurin 2004; Mirandé 1997; Stephens and Eaton 2014). For example, attending a university and taking classes on Latino/a history can alter how Hispanics understand their ethnicity and culture (Hurtado and Gurin 2004). The notion that individuals occupy multiple interlocking identities is known as intersectionality (Cole 2009; Shields 2008). Ample research on identity intersections has

found that multiple identities produce emergent personal and social realities that cannot be understood in isolation or by assuming that identities have merely additive effects on experience (Bowleg 2013; Warner 2008).

Thus, although research has shown that gender-based sexual scripts are influential in shaping sexual encounters and beliefs and that sexual scripts differ across cultural contexts, there is a void in research in terms of examining the unique intersecting processes informing Hispanic college men's sexual initiation beliefs and behaviors. Recognizing this need, we address this gap with the current study by identifying Hispanic college men's subjective perceptions of, and experiences with, initiating first sexual intercourse with a female partner.

Method

The data for our study were drawn from a larger research project exploring college students' dating attitudes and perceptions of sexual behaviors in intimate relationships. The data used in the present study specifically drew from the qualitative questions examining men's beliefs about, and experiences with, consensual sexual initiation. We chose to focus on these data because qualitative methods are ideal for extracting detailed behavioral beliefs and the subjective meanings people ascribe to them. Ascertaining these are particularly important when there is no known research examining these phenomena within this population. Further, the identification of subjective meanings and beliefs has proven to provide rich foundational information about behaviors and customs in traditionally marginalized populations, especially regarding topics that are viewed as sensitive (Few et al. 2003).

Participants

A total of 45 men were recruited for our study via a psychology research pool at large Hispanic-serving U.S. University. Individuals interested in participating were screened for eligibility based on their ethnicity, age, and gender. Inclusion screening criteria included self-identifying as male, Hispanic, having had sexual intercourse with a woman, and being between 18 and 25 years of age. The mean age of the participants was 20.4 years ($SD = 1.95$). Participants identified their first familial national origins as Cuban ($n = 13$), Nicaraguan ($n = 5$), American ($n = 5$), Argentinean ($n = 4$), Columbian ($n = 4$), Venezuelan ($n = 4$), and other nationalities including Dominican, Ecuadorian, Mexican, Peruvian, and Puerto Rican. When considering years living in the United States, only seven had lived 10 or more years in another country; six had live 5 or more years abroad. All but one man self-

identified as heterosexual; he identified as bisexual. A majority of the men were in a relationship at the time of the interview ($n = 33$; 73%); 10 of these men did not view these relationships as monogamous.

Interview Methods

Four self-identified Hispanic women undergraduate research assistants conducted the in-person individual interviews in a private conference room on campus. Interview questions were developed to assess participants' subjective beliefs about heterosexual sexual intercourse. A questioning route was developed using sexual scripting theory constructs (see Simon and Gagnon 1984, 1986, 1987); sexual scripting frameworks that focus on engendered sexual behaviors and belief schemas were utilized in the development of the questions used in our study. This route also included semi-structured flexible questions examining perceptions about sexual scripting cues including the roles of gender, masculinity/femininity, and culture in shaping perceptions of sexual experiences.

To build rapport, initial questions focused on participants' relationship ideals and non-sexual activities in which they engage with dating partners. Then hypothetical questions were asked to determine perceptions of sexual intercourse initiation relevant to the present study, which included: "When is it acceptable to have sexual intercourse between two people?," "How would you let your partner know you wanted to have sex?," "How would you want your partner to let you know they wanted to have sex?," and "What have you heard that men do when they want to have sex with a woman?" Interviews were audiotaped, and lasted 18–64 min. Interviewers also took brief notes during and after the interview to document their thoughts, note issues that needed further clarification during the interview, and highlight points raised by the participants.

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis proceeded simultaneously, using a modified version of content analysis methodologies to identify patterns of meanings used by these men when making sexual initiation strategy decisions (Vaismoradi et al. 2013). The content analysis approach allowed us to systematically identify sexual initiation strategies utilized by this understudied population. Its ability to guide the classification of open-ended interview responses is suitable for this kind of study which aims to interpret foundational information about the common and core themes within the data (Green and Thorogood 2004; Vaismoradi et al. 2013). The data are analyzed through

the process of open coding and creating categories. This then leads to the grouping of codes under higher order headings and the formulation of a general description of the research topic through generating categories and subcategories.

Four different undergraduate research assistants transcribed the interviews; the principal investigator (PI) and two additional undergraduate research assistants verified the completeness of the transcripts, accuracy of the discussion content, and the quality of transcription. A preliminary coding framework, using the first ten transcribed interviews, was constructed by drawing on engendered sexual behavior expectation constructs and gender-role belief schemas identified in prior sexual scripting theory research.

The PI and two undergraduate research assistants, who had not conducted the interviews, reviewed each transcript line-by-line and coded using open-coding techniques. Codes were compared to the previous codes as they were identified during subsequent reviews. Initial codes were then reviewed and organized into groups or themes in the second stage of analysis. Beginning with the first interview transcript to each subsequent interview transcript, codes and categories were compared between all interviews. This method of analysis connected developing categories with emerging relationships between categories. This approach to examining the data was performed throughout the entire analysis process. A total of two meetings were held to ensure that all research team members were in agreement with the two broad themes that emerged from the data.

Given the subjective nature of qualitative data collection and analysis, we also integrated strategies to increase trustworthiness, ensure rigor, and enhance credibility. The transcripts were first read through prior to any analysis by two undergraduate research assistants not involved in the interviewing and transcribing process; their task was to identify discrepancies in comments within an interview (Leung 2015). We had regular research team meetings to question analyses critically and to consider alternative perspectives throughout the research process (Marshall and Rossman 2011). Validity was also ensured when the PI and two undergraduate research assistants (not involved in the interviewing and transcribing process) summarized, reviewed the first ten transcribed interviews, and identified the key themes through shared discussion. The triangulation of the data, interviewers' notes, and interviewers' post-reflections notes also contributed to our ability to address validity concerns (Leung 2015). These interview notes and post-reflection notes, as documents that captured and documented interviewers immediate insights and thoughts regarding the interview sessions, provided important information used by research team members in the one case when discrepancies arose (Leung 2015). Together, these processes enhance our ability to ensure the validity of the data

coding, detect data variations, and resolve interpretation variances in the analysis process.

Results

Two broad themes relevant to Hispanic college men's perceptions of, and experiences with, consensual sexual intimacy initiation emerged from the analysis: (a) factors influencing decisions about when sexual intercourse should be initiated with a partner for the first time (see Table 1a), and (2) strategies perceived as appropriate to initiate sexual intercourse (see Table 1b). These, along with the relevant subthemes identified within each of these two categories, are discussed in the following.

When to Initiate Sexual Intercourse

In response to questions about the perception of when it would be appropriate to initiate sexual intercourse ("When is it acceptable to have sexual intercourse between two people?" and "When do you know you are ready to be intimate with a woman?"), three subthemes emerged from these men's responses: (a) perceptions of the relationship, (b) consensual desire, and (c) measurable time frames. Each subtheme articulated a cue on which the men relied to determine when to initiate sexual activity.

Perceptions of the Relationship

The most common response to the question about when sexual intercourse should be initiated for the first time referenced the nature and status of the relationship. These responses were further coded into the two categories of (a) mutual comfort with each other (e.g., familiarity, sense of trust), and (b) wanting to make a greater commitment (e.g., a means of solidifying relationship). Specifically, six participants were categorized as wanting to make a greater commitment because their statements supported assertions that sexual initiation was appropriate when two people want to solidify or move their relationship to the next level. Comments related to both individuals being in love and wanting to strengthen their bond by engaging in an intimate act. "Just when [a couple] are together, ready to make that next step. When we actually want to know each other better" (Participant 10, age 22).

The most common reason given, however, was mutual comfort with each other. Over half the men described this as occurring when both parties have developed trust or respect, and they are comfortable enough with one another to engage in this level of intimacy. This was not associated with the relationship status, a way to strengthen a union, or expectations of any sort. Rather, this mutual comfort reflected a consensual desire to have

sex with someone with whom they felt secure. Sexual initiation was viewed as acceptable at any stage of the relationship or even outside a formal relationship; the important point was that both partners were in agreement that they were comfortable with each other. "If you both feel it, you feel it. Like I don't know if it's wrong to have it like sooner than later. I don't know. It's up to the [monogamous] couple, I guess" (Participant 34, age 18). "No, it's just whenever the time is right, whenever it's most comfortable and in the right situation for the relationship" (Participant 12, age 20).

When we feel that we can trust one another sufficiently. When we think it won't be harmful to their relationship... or when we don't think the whole relationship will be based on it... it should be when both partners are ready." (Participant 22, age 18)

Consensual Desire

Personal desire, outside the context of a relationship, was reported by over one third of the men as an important cue to determining when it was appropriate to when to initiate sexual activity. For eight of these men, their own individual desire was considered; the woman's beliefs about the relationship or about her partner were not a consideration in their responses. All participants noted that this was an appropriate perspective for men. As some men noted: "Depending on the person... Some guys don't care [about the partner's opinion] and some guys want it to be with when they're ready. I just think it's about how I feel at the time" (Participant 26, age 20). "But, when it comes to having sex, as a guy... like some guys expect it right off the bat. So it's about what a guy wants... what I want then" (Participant 25, age 21).

A total of nine participants explained that cues about mutual consensual desire framed their beliefs about when it is appropriate to initiate first intercourse with a woman. These participants asserted that initiating first sex was appropriate when both parties indicated that they were desirous for this level of intimacy with each other without regard to the relationship status. "When you both feel it... you know when you both feel it's the right time. And we both decide it is time" (Participant 2, age 19). "I think like when both of us consent . . . Not necessarily like a certain time just like if both people want it and we agree, then yeah" (Participant 44, age 19).

Timeframes

The least reported sexual scripting cue to frame beliefs about appropriateness to initiate sex was length of time

Table 1 Theme definitions and sub-categories

Coding Category	Sub-category	Description	Example Quote	<i>n</i>	%
(a) When to Initiate Sexual Intercourse					
Relationship status					
	Mutual comfort	Both parties trust, respect, or comfortable enough with one another in a relationship; not associated with being monogamous but is more than just sexual or “hooking up”	“When we both know we want to do it. I may not be like we are fully there, but it’s not just sex either. But we have started a connection and want to do it and there won’t be any drama.”	24	53.3%
	Making greater commitment	Both individuals care about each other and wanting to strengthen their bond; a means of solidifying the relationship	“You know this is going to be something so this is like part of doing something special between the two of you. It’s time to take it there.”	6	13.3%
Consensual Sexual Desire					
	Individual personal desire	A man’s own personal desire to have sex; “just ready for it”, “being turned on”	“You are just ready for it. I don’t rape or pressure her. But you just want it and figure she’ll go for it.”	8	17.7%
	Mutual consensual desire	Both parties indicated that they were desirous for this level of intimacy with each other without regard to the relationship status; non- monogamous or “hooking up”	“Just let her know... just let her know what you want. Or how you feel. And see if she feels that way too.”	9	20%
	Timeframes	Provide actual appropriate length of time individuals should know each other before initiating sexual intercourse	“I mean, I guess if we really love each other, then a month or so.”	6	13.3%
(b) Sexual Intercourse Initiation Strategies					
	Non-verbal communications	Body language cues including moving physically closer to the woman, deeply kissing her, or “just letting it happen”	“I would never say it for one! I think that’s all body language, you know? I don’t think I’d ever have a conversation as far as being ready to have sex because it’d be uncomfortable to me.”	37	82.2%
	Indirect verbal communications	Verbal teasing, flirting, or humorously “dropping hints” about wanting to initiate sex. Bringing up sexual topics in conversation as a means to gauge if she is willing to have sex	“Not really take the lead... but like maybe bring [sex related topics] up. Just see where it goes.”	22	48.8%
	Direct verbal communications	Discussing desire for sexual initiation in advance	“You feel the energy and you know it’s going to happen any moment. But you have to check in... talk about it to make sure there is no miscommunication before you start.”	19	42.2%
	Woman Initiates Sex	Waiting for the woman to take the lead in initiating sex verbally or through nonverbal cues	“I want her to let me know either by physical cues or... I think it would probably be better if [women] verbalized it.”	11	24.4%
(c) Cultural Sexual Initiation Messages					
	Machismo	Engaging in sexual initiation strategies that embrace values of men always want to initiate sex and should take control over sexual initiation	“Well my culture is pretty machista [hypermasculine in Spanish]. Men get the message they decide what happens [in sexual situations].”	18	40%
	Caballerismo	Engaging in sexual initiation strategies that embrace values of chivalry, nurturing and respect	“So majority of the time, really, my relationships were just based off of intimacy. Like, not physical intimacy. But just like getting to know the individual. That’s what I was told to do.”	17	37.7%

the individuals knew each other. Few participants reported an actual length of time individuals should know each other before initiating sexual intercourse. Only six participants asserted that there was a measureable period,

whereas 29 stated that timeframes were unnecessary. Of the six who gave time frames, a month or more was viewed as an acceptable amount of time to wait before initiating sex. “It would be better maybe like two, three

months, four months -around there. May be some time around there 'cause then you get closer with the person" (Participant 11, age 24).

Uh, like let's assume that you're going to be talking to an individual romantically for at least a month, and you're talking to that person like on a daily basis and getting to know them gradually more and more each day. Then I guess, like, after a month would be reasonable. (Participant 25, age 21)

Sexual Intercourse Initiation Strategies

Men were asked to report all approaches they view as appropriate for initiating sex for the first time with a woman. These participants each shared an average of 2.7 distinct approaches that they viewed as appropriate.

Non-Verbal Communications

Among this group of men, non-verbal signals were the most commonly reported approach for initiating sex with a new partner. This strategy involved using body language cues such as moving physically closer to the woman, deeply kissing her, caressing her body intimately, or grabbing her close against them. It is important to note the comment that "just letting it happen" was coded as belonging in this category; the men who specifically reported they would "just let it happen" were probed about how this process occurred, these same body language behaviors were described. "Mmm. I don't think there's certain need of say 'Okay I'm ready.' It's just like, it happens naturally, I don't know" (Participant 7, age 19). "Well hardly anyone would just tell you to have sex with them. So I think it's more like if you started kissing them and it got more passionate. And they are like, touching back and kissing back" (Participant 45, age 23). "Um...I don't know. If, um, if I act more physically to her she is going to respond right?" (Participant 23, age 20). "Umm mainly through physical actions I guess. Umm, it depends. Like, I would guess something to get her in the mood and, uh, just caressing her and touching her face, stuff like that" (Participant 28, age 18).

As a male I just you know usually I just whisper something in her ear something. Or you know just grab them hard by the arm just some sort of you know sexual tension you know? You just put her in the environment, you than get a reaction yeah. (Participant 4, age 19)

Indirect Verbal Communications

Almost half of the participants perceived indirect verbal communications as an appropriate method for initiating sex with a woman. Of these, ten men stated indirect verbal communications, like flirting or humorously "dropping hints" about they wanted to do, would be an acceptable tactic. Flirtatious wit or verbal teasing was also perceived as a suitable and safe way to initiate sex. "Just make jokes about things. Get her to laugh and become comfortable with you. Then it just goes that way" (Participant 31, age 18). Another 12 men perceived "talking around" it—bringing up sexual topics in conversation as a means to gauge if she is willing to have sex—as another acceptable method. "When you get into like, more... if they are more open about it... start referring to [sex] more, talking about [sex] more. That will give you the sign" (Participant 9, age 21).

Direct Verbal Communications

Only 19 participants reported that explicitly stating their desire was an appropriate way to initiate sexual intercourse the first time with a woman. Of these, 13 men said having a conversation to discuss this intention some time prior to any sort of intimate moment beginning would be an ideal approach. "I guess I would tell her. Yeah, I would have a conversation about that. I think that's the best way" (Participant 10, age 22). "I guess just... just talking about it. I say 'If we're ready and you think it'd be a good idea to move on to the next step'. Yeah, have a conversation about it" (Participant 11, age 24). "I, um, talked to her about it. Depending, like, if I feel like um if we got to a certain level where we can openly talk about things. It's not really a big deal" (Participant 19, age 19).

The remaining six believed that telling a woman when "things began to heat up" or just before they wanted to start having sex was best. "I guess if I was actually going to... actually wanna have [sex]... I'd kinda be like 'Hey, is it a good time for a condom' or something like that." (Participant 25, age 21).

I tend to be romantic but... and also very honest. So I would tell her. Not like "oh lets go have sex," but I would be very blunt in my interest and I would ask her how she feels and if she feels ready at that moment. I would never try to push her into it or force her into anything. (Participant 46, age 21)

Women's Initiation

The final approach viewed as acceptable was waiting for the woman to take the lead in initiating sex. Of these, five men explained that this involved waiting until a woman directly

requested that they have sex before engaging in intercourse. “Well, if they wanted to have sex, I guess, [woman] could be straight up forward. So I guess a woman just let me know” (Participant 48, age 24). “I think if [a woman] would just bring it up like ‘Hey [his name] I trust you enough, I feel like uh... I think I’m ready, I trust you enough to be intimate with you’. Or something like that” (Participant 29, age 19). “Just ask me... I will yes (laughter)” (Participant 30, age 21).

The remaining six said they would wait for what they perceived as appropriate nonverbal signals given by the woman that she wanted them to initiate sex. These included having her walk them into a bedroom, touching/stroking their genitals, or giving them “sex eyes.” However, it is important to note that, in each of these cases, the men also stated that they would also like to be asked—directly or indirectly—by a woman. “[The woman] can be more physical, coming close to me or something...or just tell me” (Participant 24, age 20). “Maybe she could say it... like... but not in a direct way. Maybe an indirect way, or maybe... Eh, touch me or something like that” (Participant 33, age 22). “I really have no preference. Whether she says it or whether she does her subtle things, you know?” (Participant 43, age 22).

Cultural Sexual Initiation Messages

Only when directly asked the question “Do you think that your culture has certain messages about initiating sex?” did participants acknowledge cultural values’ influence on their perceptions of sexual initiation. Just over one third of the men shared that they had received cultural messages about machismo related to sexual activity. Sexual initiation behaviors associated with machismo included an expectation that men should always want to initiate sex and that men should take control over sexual initiation.

I think the Hispanic culture, at least among like, within families, household families, uh, it’s alright for the uh males [to initiate sex]. Like you know once they reach the right age it’s alright for the male to go out and have sex. But the females are kind of like no you can’t do that, you’re not supposed to do that (Participant 32, age 20)

However, nearly one quarter of the participants noted that machismo values are not unique to Hispanic men. Rather, these men noted that the machismo expectations associated with Hispanic culture mirrored hypermasculinity scripts that exist cross-culturally. “Probably, like, dominate [is a Hispanic cultural message about initiating sex], but I think that’s everywhere” (Participant 29, age 19). “Um, no, like it... [Hispanic cultural messages about masculinity] would translate to being the same as, like, anything in society” (Participant 8, age 21). Similarly, over half of the men who reported hearing about machismo values noted that these

attitudes and individuals’ acceptance of these attitudes are changing.

You know well things is back in the day they were really machista, I don’t know. You know... it changes ‘cause now those machistas had daughter are growing older and are changing their ways, you know? And their realizing you know you have to respect woman even more and men you know. (Participant 2, age 19)

In addition to machismo values, 17 participants noted that they supported and enacted behaviors they learned in their culture that are associated with *caballerismo*. Notably, behaviors that would be seen as nurturing, honest, emotionally intimate, and respectful when initiating sex were viewed by these men as culturally appropriate. “As far as [cultural messages that men should always want to initiate sex], some guys don’t care either and follow other messages [in Hispanic culture]. They are waiting for... when the girl is ready and they have respect for that woman and won’t try to force anything” (Participant 19, age 19).

I guess it all depends on [the man] and how they were raised. I mean my first girlfriend was very religious and she believed in until like marriage. And then my second girlfriend was just a matter of when she was ready and she felt ready after half, like 6 months. And I respect it, if she wanted to wait longer I would have waited. After 6 months she said she felt ready and we have been together for 2 years now (Participant 40, age 19)

Discussion

The present study explored Hispanic college men’s perceptions of appropriate cues for sexual initiation and approaches toward a woman when wanting to initiate first-time sex. Specifically, we identified the sexual scripting frameworks influencing this sample’s perceptions about the appropriate timing of and strategies for initiating sexual intercourse. Overall, the status of the relationship and partners’ mutual desire most strongly influenced participants’ decision-making around the timing of sexual initiation. Non-verbal communication cues were the most commonly reported approach used to initiate sex, followed by indirect verbal communication, direct verbal communication, and waiting for the woman to initiate. Interestingly, although Hispanic cultural values regarding male sexuality were known by some participants, they were not viewed as significantly influential or representative of their own attitudes.

When to Initiate Sexual Intercourse

Perception of the Relationship

The most frequently reported cue used to determine when to initiate first sexual intercourse was the man's perception of the relationship. One assertion was that once the couple had a shared sense of comfort and emotional commitment to the relationship then it was appropriate to engage in sexual intimacy. Although some may argue these values do not fit with broader frameworks of men's sexual scripts, these attitudes may be reflective of *caballerismo* frameworks of masculinity. As a framework grounded in traditional Spanish chivalry, *caballerismo* values respect and honor women's wishes, needs, and contributions (Arciniega et al. 2008). *Caballerismo* beliefs are reflected in these men's considerations of their partners' desires and opinions when they are initiating sex. Specifically, their valuing and awareness of their partners' feelings and the relationship reinforce this compassionate and respectful culturally-specific framework of male sexuality (Arciniega et al. 2008). Because an equivalent framework for masculinity does not exist within Westernized sexual scripting frameworks, it would be useful for future research to identify the degree to which these beliefs reflect a specific Hispanic cultural socialization process for men or if there is a need to apply *caballerismo* frameworks cross-culturally.

The fact that eight of these men did not mention their partner's perceptions or comfort in determining when it was appropriate to initiate sexual activity is consistent with traditional sexual scripting frameworks for men. Among Hispanic and White college students, men are seen as being responsible for initiating and controlling more activities on traditional dates, hookups, and hangouts than women are (Eaton and Rose 2012; Eaton et al. 2015). Mutual decision-making is more common in newer forms of sexual scripts, but the onus for initiating most activities still lies with the man. Given that men are seen as the more active partners in early relationships (Eaton et al. 2015), and in light of heteronormative beliefs about men's perpetual sexual readiness and desire (Eaton and Matamala 2014), it is not surprising that some men considered only their own desires when asked about the timing of sexual initiation.

Mutual Consensual Desire

The presence of mutual consensual desire was the second most reported indicator for initiating first sexual intercourse. Generally, research defines mutual consent as occurring when both people agree to have intercourse, with either being free to decide at any time that they no longer consent and want to stop the activity (Humphreys 2007; Jozkowski and Peterson 2013; Warren et al. 2015).

However, traditional sexual scripts do not directly integrate mutual consent in their definitions because it is assumed that men are always interested in having sex and it is up to the woman to resist (Bartoli and Clark 2006; Dworkin and O'Sullivan 2005, 2007). Further, our study did not specifically explore how consent is confirmed between partners; this is an important consideration because research has shown that definitions and beliefs about what constitute consent differ greatly between men and women (Jozkowski and Peterson 2013; Stephens and Eaton 2014; Warren et al. 2015).

More research is needed to explore the reasons for this finding because the policy trends on campuses today regarding assault and accountability hinge on definitions of consent. Specifically, current campus sexual assault prevention efforts have centered on educating students about what consent is and ensuring that it is mutually and clearly obtained before engaging in any sexual activity (Jozkowski and Peterson 2013; Jozkowski et al. 2014; Warren et al. 2015). Thus, future research on this phenomenon must include in-depth examination of what constitutes consent within college population of both Hispanic men and women, with consideration of the sexual scripting frameworks that move beyond traditional masculinity beliefs to include *caballerismo*.

Timeframes

The majority of our participants did not perceive a need for a specific time frame for determining when to initiate sex. This may be partly explained by the variety of sexual scripts and relationship types available to college students, including hookups, friends with benefits, and traditional dates. The timing of sexual intercourse and the likelihood of sexual intercourse occurring varies across these scripts (Bradshaw et al. 2010; Eaton et al. 2015; Laner and Ventrone 2000). Thus, asking participants about the appropriate timing for sexual intercourse without specifying the nature of their relationship or the sexual script being followed naturally lead participants to give conditional answers.

Recent work on heterosexual Hispanic college students also finds that they are more likely to engage in traditional dating than hooking up for the initial romantic and sexual encounters, as well as less likely to hookup than samples of White college students (Eaton and Rose 2012; Eaton et al. 2015). However, the exact reasons for these differences in sexual script frequencies are not yet known, and they may be related to religious, cultural, or residential factors, among others. Clearly, there is a need to continue to identify the reasons that sexual scripting differs cross-culturally, including why members of some social groups may attempt to delay or initiate sexual intimacy with a new partner.

Sexual Intercourse Initiation Strategies

Non-Verbal Communications

Overall, the use of non-verbal communication was the most common approach used to initiate sex for the first time with a woman. This supports prior research showing that non-verbal cues play a major role in signaling the desire for sexual intercourse among college students. When asked to generate a script for a casual sex encounter, Edgar and Fitzpatrick (1993) found that both men and women included the use of non-verbal cues to indicate sexual attraction and interest. La France (2010) has also found that college students interpret the presence of certain non-verbal cues in sexual scripts as increasing the likelihood that sex will occur. For example, when a woman embraces a man in a private setting, when the partners lie on a bed, or when a man begins to undress, for example, college students believe the likelihood of sex occurring increases (La France 2010).

Prior research has noted the behavioral implications of sexual scripting beliefs for college students' use of non-verbal behaviors in sexual situations (Dworkin and O'Sullivan 2007; Humphreys 2007; Jozkowski and Peterson 2013; Jozkowski et al. 2014; Vannier and O'Sullivan 2011). Jozkowski et al. (2014) found that college students most frequently utilized nonverbal cues (e.g., partner's eye contact, body movement, engagement in kissing/making out) to interpret a partner's willingness to have sex. College men in particular were more likely to rely on nonverbal cues whereas women preferred explicit verbal communication (Jozkowski et al. 2014). However, important gender differences in the communication of consent were found in this work (see Jozkowski and Peterson 2013; Jozkowski et al. 2014); specifically, men were more likely than women were to indicate their consent via nonverbal cues, and women were more likely than men were to indicate consent verbally in response to being asked if they wanted to engage in sexual activity.

Together these findings highlight the necessity of continuing to explore sexual scripts' influence on men's and women's interpretations of nonverbal cues as indicators of sexual consent. Research has already shown that nonverbal cue interpretations often differ between men and women (Humphreys 2007; Vannier and O'Sullivan 2011). Because men are more likely to endorse the notion that women put up only token resistance to sexual overtures, even when women utilize verbal and nonverbal approaches to indicating "no" (Humphreys 2007; Jozkowski et al. 2014; Vannier and O'Sullivan 2011), college students' reliance on nonverbal forms of communication for consent opens the door for confusion in heterosexual consent communications.

Indirect Communications

Similarly, indirect communications were perceived by over one-third of the men in our study as an acceptable tactic. Most of these men reporting engaging in flirting or humorously "dropping hints" about their desires as the most appropriate approach. To understand the meaning of this in the context of the larger body of research, it is important to examine research on flirting and sexual teasing. Considered a common type of sexual communication that serves as a form of bonding and early flirting among college students (Aronson et al. 2007; Meston and O'Sullivan 2007), sexual teasing involves presenting the possibility of sex via teasing, innuendos, or humor, then withdrawing the perceived invitation (Aronson et al. 2007; Stephenson et al. 2007). Flirting similarly implies the real possibility of a sexual relationship, but is assumed to be coming from a position of sincerity (Stephenson et al. 2007). Although sexual scripts and norms generally eschew the direct expression of sexual interest early in a relationship, they condone early flirting and sexually suggestive behavior (Helm 2016). Eaton et al. (2015), for example, found that most White and Hispanic college men and women mentioned flirting as a component of their most recent first dates, first hookups, and first hangouts.

However, it is important to recognize that both flirting and sexual teasing utilize indirect and ambiguous communication messages about sexual desires and intentions. This ambiguity has potentially dangerous consequences, especially because meta-analyses find gender differences in perceptions of flirtation wherein men are more likely to perceive a woman's behavior as flirtatious and seductive than are women (La France et al. 2009). Research also finds that both men and women are not very accurate in detecting flirting in same- or other-gender targets when it occurs, scoring at or below chance (Hall et al. 2015). Inaccuracies in the detection and interpretation of flirting may help explain certain forms of relationship conflict and non-consensual sexual behavior (Lindgren et al. 2008).

Ultimately, interpretations of indirect communications like flirting and sexual teasing depend upon multiple indicators, including the recipients' gender, their relationship to the initiator, the perceived intent of the teasing, the context in which it occurs, and each individual's prior experience with sexual teasing and/or flirting (Aronson et al. 2007; Meston and O'Sullivan 2007; Stephens and Eaton 2014; Stephenson et al. 2007). Importantly, these strategies become less necessary as a relationship progresses (Vannier and O'Sullivan 2011). Thus, indirect communications may decrease in use as partners become more comfortable and familiar with each other.

Direct Communications

Participants' responses reinforce prior findings that college students are more likely to use indirect communication strategies over direct communication strategies to initiate sex (Jozkowski et al. 2014; Lindgren et al. 2009; Vannier and O'Sullivan 2011). In fact, less than a quarter of the participants reported using direct communications to initiate first-time sexual intercourse with a partner. This is a particularly important finding because men tend to use direct communication strategies less often than women do in sexual situations (Jozkowski et al. 2014; Vannier and O'Sullivan 2011). The reasons so few men in our study reported clearly communicating their desire to initiate sex may reflect an attempt to maintain one's status and power within traditional sexual scripting frameworks. For example, Foubert et al. (2006) found college men preferred indirect sexual communication strategies in part due to fears of being clearly rejected if direct communications are used. Similarly, Vannier and O'Sullivan (2011) found that direct verbal communication was used by college students as a last resort; they enacted this approach only if the other person did not pick up on repeated, indirect cues of disinterest. These are legitimate concerns given that traditional sexual scripting for men assumes that they are astute, confident, and sexually successful at each attempt. Using direct communications would reinforce these expectations, but also opens the door for clear rejection—a real possibility given that women's sexual scripts normalize resisting and delaying sexual initiation as long as possible (Eaton and Rose 2011).

These contradictory concerns must be addressed in future research. As noted previously, men's use of direct communication about their desire for sex could decrease miscommunications about intent and address ambiguities around consent. Given that college men perceive, expect, and desire more sex earlier in a romantic relationship (Bartoli and Clark 2006; Farris et al. 2008; Lindgren et al. 2008; Lindgren et al. 2009), there is a need to ensure that they communicate these desires clearly to partners, especially because misinterpretations between partners is a common precursor to sexual assault. The most direct way to ensure a partner is consenting to participate in sexual acts is simply asking, eliminating the uncertainty of guessing and trying to interpret signals. Thus, it is imperative that researchers identify barriers to men directly communicating their desire to initiate sex with a new partner and that they find ways to increase the acceptance of scripting behaviors that normalize open discussions about initiating sexual intercourse in heterosexual relationships.

Women's Initiation

The finding that 23% of men waited for their woman partner to fully initiate sex contributes to research showing that frameworks of appropriate women's sexual assertion have shifted

in some populations to include dating behaviors and traits associated with masculinity scripts (Dworkin and O'Sullivan 2005; Stephens and Eaton 2014). Dworkin and O'Sullivan (2005) found that this shift would be a welcome way for women to share the emotional labor of sexual instigation. The men in their study also asserted that, by having women take the lead in initiated sex, it would help alleviate the pressure and responsibility that sexual scripts traditionally place on men in these contexts. Recent research does indicate that it is increasingly socially acceptable for women to initiate dates (Eaton and Rose 2011) and to express sexual desires (Jozkowski et al. 2014), although in practice these behaviors are still more closely tied to the male than to the female gender role.

In a practical sense, women's initiation would help address concerns of men clearly obtaining consent from partners in heterosexual interactions. However, we cannot ignore the fact that traditional scripts still dominate sexual interactions, particularly early in relationships when first sexual intercourse would be taking place. The reality is that women continue to face potential negative social consequences when they take the lead in instigating of sex. Unlike men, there are numerous ways in which women are critiqued for being sexually assertive, including, being labeled as promiscuous, which is often assumed to justify a woman being deserving of sexual assault (Jozkowski et al. 2014; Schleicher and Gilbert 2005). Other studies have shown that sexually assertive women are perceived as only a sexual partner and not as a long-term relationship partner (Bradshaw et al. 2010; Sanchez et al. 2012; Schleicher and Gilbert 2005). Hispanic women have further reported that the negatives consequences extend beyond potential partners' reactions because familial, religious, and general ethnic group values about sexuality and gender-role norms influence their perceptions of sexual permissiveness (Eisenman and Dantzker 2006; Stephens and Thomas 2011). These influences have been associated with the consistent finding that Hispanic college women are more likely to be non-permissive about sex than are Hispanic men (Dantzker and Eisenman 2003; Eisenman and Dantzker 2006; Stephens and Thomas 2011).

Cultural Sexual Initiation Messages

There is a large body of sexuality research that has explored the influence of the machismo beliefs on male sexual decision making and attitudes (Hurtado and Sinha 2016a, 2016b; Marin 2003; Sternberg 2000; Torres et al. 2002). However, the men in this study did not perceive this culturally-specific masculinity framework a directly influencing their perceptions of appropriate sexual initiation strategies. This was first made evident by the fact that these men only acknowledged this framework after being directly asked to discuss messages about sexuality specific to men in Hispanic communities.

It is important to note that prior to the question that specifically asked about Hispanic cultural values about sexuality, there was no specific mention of machismo beliefs by any of the participants. Furthermore, whereas over one third of the men did acknowledge the presence of this script in messages about Hispanic male sexuality, about a quarter reported that it did not accurately represent or encompass their personal beliefs or attitudes toward sexual initiation strategies. These results reinforce the recent call for researchers to expand their focus on racial/ ethnic minorities' cultural values and to explore within-group variability in beliefs that both contribute to and protect individuals from negative sexual health outcomes (e.g., traditional machismo *and* caballerismo; Abreau et al. 2000; Eaton and Rose 2012; Marin 2003; Stephens and Eaton 2014; Torres et al. 2002).

This shift toward more egalitarian frameworks may be explained in part by participants' age, national identity, acculturation, and education level (Abreau et al. 2000; Marin 2003; Stephens and Eaton 2014; Sternberg 2000; Torres et al. 2002). Ours was a highly acculturated sample; almost all had lived at least 85% of their lives in the United States. Further, all participants had completed high school, were attending college, and were in the young adult stage of the lifespan. These factors have been associated with greater acceptance of liberal sexual health attitudes and supportive of equal rights for men and women (Abreau et al. 2000; Ahrold and Meston 2010; Glass and Owen 2010; Torres et al. 2002). In fact, Ahrold and Meston (2010) found that higher acculturation within Hispanic college populations predicted greater similarity in sexual attitudes to those held by White college populations.

Also, as asserted by nearly a quarter of the men in our study, some elements of machismo are similar to traditional hypermasculinity frameworks identified in research examining men in Westernized cultures. Stephens and Eaton (2014) similarly found that Hispanic college men did not see machismo norms and scripts as unique to Hispanic culture. Rather, the men in their study asserted that machismo frameworks were the same as those hypermasculinity beliefs with which their White American friends were raised. These findings support current research exploring the ways in which machismo expectations duplicate and deviate from hypermasculinity scripts and contribute to our ability to address the influence of culture (see Arciniega et al. 2008; Estrada and Arciniega 2015; Hurtado and Gurin 2004; Hurtado and Sinha 2016a, 2016b).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The current study presents rich and novel information from an understudied and rapidly growing population on the topic of sexual initiation—an issue of high practical and theoretical

concern. There are, however, several limitations that need to be discussed. The use of a qualitative approach prevents standardized comparisons, hypothesis testing, and variance accountability. Thus, these findings are not generalizable to a wider population because they represent only a small group of Hispanic college men's beliefs regarding sexual initiation with a female partner for the first time. Despite research indicating differences between interviewers and participants can add another degree of openness and strengthen the overall interview experience (Few et al. 2003), the fact that the interviewers were all women may have influenced participants' honesty or, alternatively, increased the probability of answering with responses deemed as socially appropriate (Marshall and Rossman 2011).

Results may not be pertinent to those who attend a college with a different demographic profile or geographic location. Our participants attended a Hispanic-serving institution where more than half (60%) the population self-identifies as Hispanic. Similarly, the results may have been different if the sample included a larger number of participants or more diversity on dimensions such as region or institution type. These identity and demographic limitations must be considered when seeking to generalize these findings to other groups of Hispanic college men.

Limitations aside, our study provides foundational insights into the experiences of Hispanic college men and their beliefs and behaviors regarding sexual initiation. The investigation adds to our relatively limited knowledge on Hispanic college men's dating and sexual health practices. It also provides information for future analysis of traditional Hispanic men's roles; clearly the traditional usage of machismo frameworks to analyze this populations' experience can no longer be used as the norm. Rather, there is a clear need for researchers to examine within-group variability that will account for differing perceptions of sexual scripting frameworks and contexts. Further, future studies should examine the communication cues and indicators influencing sexual initiation decision-making.

Practice Implications

This need for research focused on sexual initiation is particularly timely given the focus on sexual assault and dating violence among college students in both popular culture and academic spaces (Chappell 2014; Dworkin and O'Sullivan 2007; Eisenstadt 2015; Foubert et al. 2006; Helm 2016; Higgins et al. 2010; Jozkowski et al. 2014; Lindgren et al. 2009). The U.S. White House reinforced their prioritization of addressing campus sexual assault through the "It's On Us Campaign" which seeks to increase awareness among both men and women about the importance of consent when engaging in sexual activity on campuses (The White House Office of the Press Secretary 2015).

Researchers can play a critical role in this process by extending our understandings of how sexual initiation strategies shape consent and relationship outcomes in real-world settings. Our results highlight how connections among sexual health, individual identity (e.g., gender role expectations, ethnic identities), and interrelated social and contextual factors (e.g., college sexuality norms, Hispanic cultural messages, sexuality stereotypes) must be integrated into research. Specifically, our findings highlight the importance of improving our approaches towards and measures of “Hispanic identities” so that we better capture the nationality, acculturation, and generational diversity of ethnic groups’ attitudes and beliefs (Taylor et al. 2012). Similarly, improving our ability to assess shifting gender-role beliefs in intimate relationships will ensure researchers can better provide information about this population’s sexual health status and needs.

With this in mind, campus sexuality education professionals and health service practitioners can begin to conceptualize service delivery and resources that meet the needs and experiences of Hispanic men and their institutions. These findings can contribute to the development of empirically-based education curricula that accurately reflect college men’s beliefs about sexual initiation strategies. Understanding how this population’s sexual values and beliefs influence decision-making may yield a richer understanding of the importance of providing culturally diverse and appropriate service. Sexual education efforts that empower and integrate intimate relationship beliefs reflective of Hispanic college men’s sexual and gender-role values are likely to succeed because of their ability to integrate relevant knowledge, according to cultural competency-focused sexual health research (Hoban and Ward 2003; Jozkowski et al. 2014; Stephens and Thomas 2011). Integrating understandings of sexual scripts relevant to men’s sexual initiation can contribute to improved sexual and relationship satisfaction, physical safety, and overall psychological well-being, not only for Hispanic college men but also for their partners. Further, campus educators’ ability to partner these efforts with social networks influencing this population’s sexual initiation (e.g., male peers and family members; Estrada and Arciniega 2015; Hurtado and Sinha 2016b; Stephens and Eaton 2014) will be key to ensuring the long-term effectiveness and support of these initiatives.

Conclusion

Although not a definitive study on Hispanic college men’s sexual initiation strategies, the present findings provide an important first step toward adding to our limited knowledge about this population’s sexual health and relationship behaviors in college contexts. The results suggest that Hispanic college men initiate sexual intimacy using both indirect and direct communication factors. Further, the stereotypical machismo framework often utilized to examine this population’s

sexual values was not seen by participants as broadly applicable to their own experiences or belief systems. Rather, these men embraced more egalitarian and mutually supportive attitudes toward sexual initiation expectations more closely associated with caballerismo.

Our findings reinforce cautions raised by researchers utilizing sexual scripting frameworks; it is important to recognize that scripts are dynamic and change over time and context (Bartoli and Clark 2006; Bowleg 2013; Dworkin and O’Sullivan 2005; Stephens and Eaton 2014). The fluidity of culture; the intersectionality of race, gender, class and other identities; cohort; and other factors are continuously changing the meanings and values given to scripts upon which individuals rely to guide sexual initiation. Using the traditional lens of sexual scripting which frames women primarily as gatekeepers and men as hypersexual does not fully capture the perceived and desired sexual initiation experiences of diverse college students today. Thus, our study provides new insights by moving from a focus on strict scripting frameworks to the validation and identification of Hispanic men’s sexual behavior attitudes and experiences on college campuses. This knowledge will, in turn, improve our ability to address broader physical and psychosocial sexual health issues among diverse student populations across the United States.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards I certify that I have complied with the APA ethical principles regarding research with human participants and/or care and use of animals in the conduct of the research presented in this manuscript. Further, this research was conducted after receiving approval from the Florida International University Institutional Review Board, and followed all protocols and requirements outlined in that application.

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