

**Exploring Emerging Adults' Sexual Possible Selves, Development, and Pathways to Sexual
Goal Attainment: A Three Part Examination**

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ABSTRACT

Recent sexuality research has examined internalized sexual expectations and fears for one's sexuality (i.e., sexual possible selves; Anders, Olmstead, & Johnson, in press) during the developmental period of emerging adulthood (EA). This dissertation extends the possible selves literature by examining the sexual possible selves (SPS) of EAs using three methodological approaches. Study 1 used a large national sample ($N = 800$) to compare sexual expectations, fears, and associated behavioral strategies between college-attending ($n = 400$) and non-college attending ($n = 400$) EAs. We used qualitative content analysis to examine prominent SPS themes across these two groups. Themes included *abstinence*, *interpersonal relationship*, *sexual health/well-being*, *quantity*, *quality*, *explore/experiment*, *sex specific*, *maintain*, *sexual assault/coercion*, *self-focus*, *partner focus*, *increased sexual risk*, and *no expectations/fears*. Responses were compared between groups to examine mean differences across categories. Differences were found for three expected SPS categories (*abstinence*, *interpersonal relationship*, and *maintain*). Sex differences were also found for several categories.

Study 2 used a short-term longitudinal design to examine continuity and change in SPS using a sample first semester college men and women. Data was collected at two time points in fall 2016 (T1 = first 4 weeks, $N = 78$; T2 = last 4 weeks, $N = 40$). Qualitative content analysis revealed similar emergent categories at both time points (e.g., *abstinence*); however, students' expectations and fears did change across the semester. Further, behavioral strategies students use to attain their future oriented selves were dynamic and changed across time points.

For Study 3, semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine developmental influences on first semester students' ($N = 35$) SPS. Interviews were conducted during the first

four weeks of the fall 2016 semester and analyzed using Applied Thematic Analysis (ATA). Prominent expected SPS themes included *sex and commitment, relationship focus, delaying sex, taking a passive approach, abstinence, and plans for sex*. Feared SPS themes included *sexual assault/coercion, reputation, sexual health, non-committed sexual avoidance, and identity loss*. Central influences on participants' SPS included family, peers, religion, media, college culture, alcohol and parties, and past experiences. Implications for EA sexuality research, sexual education and intervention programs are discussed across these studies.

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CHAPTER 1:

Introduction

The period of emerging adulthood (ages 18-25) is considered a time of identity development, wherein individuals are afforded a moratorium from adult responsibilities to explore various facets of their current and future selves prior to adulthood (Arnett, 2015). During this period, emerging adults often experience multiple transitions including from their familial home and into postsecondary education (i.e., college) where they are required to become more independent, autonomous individuals. The transition to college can be an influential period as students become integrated into various college cultures and subcultures (Kenyon & Koerner, 2009), and are experiencing identity development (Arnett, 2015). Identity development during transitional periods, such as emerging adulthood, are often influenced by perceptions of others' behaviors (i.e., social norms; Berkowitz, 2004) and perceptions of ones' future self (i.e., possible selves; Markus & Nurius, 1986).

One perspective for examining emerging adults' identity development is through their possible selves. Possible selves considers an individual's future oriented self he or she hopes to become (i.e., expectation) or hopes to avoid becoming (i.e., fear) in the proximal future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves are thought to be representative of salient goals or fears that are important to future identity development (Oyserman & James, 2009), and can serve as pathways to attaining or avoiding future identities (Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004). Examining the specific behavioral plans individuals use to obtain or avoid these future possible selves (i.e., strategies) can provide insight into barriers to goal attainment. Possible selves are also thought to be representative of developmental milestones (Oyserman & James, 2009). Overall, possible selves tend to be representative of where individuals see themselves in the

proximal future (i.e., typically one year out) and are influenced by their current life stage (e.g., emerging adulthood).

Sexual possible selves (SPS; Anders, Olmstead, & Johnson, in press) is a narrowing of the possible selves theory to focus on the sexual expectations and fears individuals hold for themselves in the proximal future. These sexual goals hold important implications for which aspects of sexuality are most salient and can serve as guidelines or paths to achieving individuals' future idealized sexual selves. SPS may also be reflective of developmentally salient sexual goals or identities, particularly based on current life stage. Examining SPS can provide insight into salient sexual themes within those current life stages (e.g., emerging adulthood), along with providing insight into the developmental process of sexual identity exploration and achievement. However, to date, only one study has examined the SPS of emerging adults through an exploratory study (Anders et al., in press) and is limited in the extension and generalizability of these findings in three ways: (a) need for examinations among developmentally diverse emerging adults, (b) methodological limitations in understanding of continuity and change of SPS, and (c) qualitative necessity to examine developmental influences on SPS development and variance.

The findings from Anders and colleagues' (in press) study indicated a need for further examinations of SPS among diverse populations, as research suggests that sexuality is not a "one size fits all" phenomenon (Walcott, Meyers, & Landau, 2007), and their sample was limited to first semester college men and women ($N = 282$). The first manuscript in this dissertation addressed this limitation by examining and comparing the sexual expectations, fears, and strategies between a sample of college attending ($N = 400$) and non-college attending emerging

adults ($N = 400$). This manuscript focused on these two subsets of emerging adults as research has shown these groups differ in sexual engagement (Bailey et al., 2008), perceptions of sexual norms (e.g., hooking up; Twenge et al., 2015), and perceptions of their experiences as an “emerging adult” (Hendry & Kloep, 2007). Examining differences between college attending and non-college attending emerging adults’ SPS would advance the literature regarding salient sexual themes and gaps in behavioral pathways that may be crucial for more developmentally appropriate sexual education/interventions for each population, rather than a “one size fits all emerging adults” approach.

Sexual possible selves research is also limited in its methodological approach for understanding internalized sexual expectations and fears. Previous SPS examinations have only been conducted using cross sectional, online surveys (i.e., first semester students). Possible selves have been found to be dynamic and grounded in an individual’s current life stage (Oyserman & James, 2009). These selves are representative of the identities individuals consider important in the proximal future and can change as individuals develop (Frazier, Hooker, Johnson, & Kaus, 2000). The focus of Anders and colleagues (in press) previous study was on the expectations and fears of first semester students as they transitioned into college, as this transition is considered influential on emerging adults’ sexuality (Fielder & Carey, 2010); however, this study did not examine how first semester students’ expectations and fears may change as they develop and become integrated into various campus cultures and subcultures (e.g., “hookup culture”; Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012). Our second manuscript addressed this limitation by using a short-term longitudinal design to examine continuity and

change in first semester college students' ($N = 78$) sexual expectations, fears, and strategies over their first semester in college.

Last, SPS research has focused primarily on *what* are emerging adults' expectations and fears (i.e., the content), and has yet to examine *how* these sexual possible self goals are developed (e.g., through previous experience) or *why* their articulated selves are important to their sexual identities (e.g., religious values). Examining the development of emerging adults' sexual expectations and fears would provide insight into specific influences that shape their future oriented sexual identities and likely hold important implications for influential areas in which to implement sexual education. The methodological drawback of cross-sectional survey methods has limited the information collected regarding salient sexual themes, particularly in our understanding of the developmental processes in how sexual expectations and fears form. Given these limitations, our third manuscript extended the SPS literature by using semi-structured interviews to examine how college men and women ($N = 35$) develop the sexual selves they expect to become and hope to avoid becoming during their first semester at college.

CHAPTER 2:

Comparing the Sexual Possible Selves and Strategies of College Attending versus Non-college

Attending Emerging Adults

Abstract

Limited attention has been devoted to examining internalized sexual expectations and fears (i.e., sexual possible selves; Anders, Olmstead, & Johnson, in press) during emerging adulthood. The purpose of this study was to replicate and extend research on sexual possible selves (SPS) and strategies using a large, diverse sample of emerging adults (ages 18-25; $N = 800$). The period of emerging adulthood can be experienced differently based on attending postsecondary education, leading to differences in sexual expectations and goals. Our study examined and compared sexual expectations, fears, and behavioral strategies of college attending ($n = 400$) and non-college attending ($n = 400$) emerging adults. Open-ended responses on internalized sexual expectations and fears were collected in summer 2016 through an online survey (Amazon Mechanical Turk). Qualitative content analysis of each groups' responses revealed 11 emergent expected SPS themes, with the majority focused on *abstinence*, *interpersonal relationships*, *quantity*, *quality*, *explore/experiment*, and *sexual health/well-being* SPS. Emergent themes of feared SPS overlapped the expected SPS on six categories (e.g., *sexual health/well-being*); however, we also found fears related to *sexual assault/coercion*, *self-focus*, *partner focus*, and *increased sexual risk*. Mean comparisons using independent samples t-tests of these themes based on college attendance showed differences in expectations for *abstinence*, *interpersonal relationships*, and *maintain*. Further, differences in these future oriented selves were examined based on sex (i.e., male versus female), and found to vary in multiple expected and feared SPS. Implications for sexual education and sexual possible selves research are discussed.

Introduction

Emerging adulthood (ages 18-25) is considered a developmental period that includes increased exploration of possible life directions, experimentation, and transitions (for most) while attending higher education and deferring adult roles (Arnett, 2015). During this period, individuals explore various facets of their identities such as occupation, romantic relationships, and sexuality; however, some scholars argued that these exploratory experiences may not be afforded to those who do not attend postsecondary education settings such as colleges or universities (Hendry & Kloep, 2007). Instead, non-college individuals are often expected to assume and establish adult roles during this period, and do not fit within the life period theorized as emerging adulthood (Cote, 2014). For example, non-college individuals may not be afforded the opportunity to explore their sexuality, as they typically marry younger (Arnett, 2015; Goldstein & Kenney, 2001) and start a family earlier (Kloep & Hendry, 2011) than their college attending peers. Some scholars (Hendry & Kloep, 2010; Reifman, Arnett, & Colwell, 2007; Zaluski, 2012) have compared college attending and non-college attending populations (ages 18-25) and found differences in perceptions of identity establishment and deferment of adult roles; however, few studies have compared these groups in the realm of sexuality and sexual expectations.

Studies that have compared these populations (college attending vs. non-college attending) have identified differences in sexual engagement including intercourse experience, casual sex, and sexual risk behaviors (Bailey, Fleming, Henson, Catalano, & Haggerty, 2008). Despite evidence that suggests that an individual's expectations about sexuality may be influential on some of these forms of sexual engagement (e.g., casual sex, Barriger & Velez-

Blasini, 2013), to date, no studies were found that compared the sexual expectations of college attending and non-college attending individuals. Sexual expectations (i.e., expectations of future sexuality) are important to address during this developmental period as these expectations are often guided by broad perceptions of normative behaviors of peers and societal cultures (Stinson, 2010). Expectations likely vary based on individuals' inclusion and/or progression in a developmental period, such as opportunities for exploration and experimentation in areas of sex and sexuality.

Sexual expectations in emerging adulthood may be further understood by examining and comparing college attending versus non-college attending individuals' possible selves. Possible selves are internalized expectations or fears for the upcoming year (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and are associated with future behaviors and outcomes including identity development and goal attainment, and can be influential during transitional periods such as emerging adulthood (Oyserman & James, 2009). The concept of possible selves increases knowledge and understanding of sexual expression during emerging adulthood, particularly when examining sexuality across college attending and non-college attending individuals. Such comparisons can promote the integration of developmentally appropriate possible selves-based education or interventions that focus on sexual selves, fears, and strategies unique to each of these groups.

Despite its potential utility, previous research is limited in examining the content of emerging adults' future perceptions of their sexual selves (see Anders, Olmstead, & Johnson, in press) and has yet to examine sexual possible selves differences between college attending and non-college attending individuals, despite differences in sexual behaviors and sexual cultures. The purpose of this study was to examine the sexual possible selves (SPS) of a sample of college

attending emerging adults and a sample of non-college attending emerging adults to determine if differences exist in their salient SPS themes. Specifically, we were interested in identifying and examining: (a) prominent categories of SPS and fears within each group, (b) associated strategies for achieving and avoiding these possible selves and fears within each group, and (c) group differences in the emergence of categories based on sex.

The Developmental Period of Emerging adulthood

Emerging adulthood (ages 18-25) is a time of identity exploration and experimentation (Arnett, 2015). Individuals in this developmental period typically experience relative independence from normative social expectations, the deferment of “adult roles” (e.g., marriage), and an acceptance of an experimental nature of young individuals (Arnett, 2015). This period is thought to be distinct from other life stages based on demographic factors, subjective perceptions, and the role of identity exploration (Arnett, 2015; Nelson & Barry, 2005). Recent scholars have focused on capturing the distinctions of emerging adulthood from adolescence and adulthood (Arnett, 1997; Nelson & Barry, 2005; Reifman et al., 2007). Distinguishing factors of this period were found in five specific aspects of development: (a) *an age of identity exploration*, (b) *age of instability*, (c) *age of self-focus*, (d) *age of feeling in-between*, and (e) *age of possibilities* (i.e., Reifman et al., 2007). Specifically, emerging adulthood is unique as those in this period often report feeling “in-between” adolescence and adulthood (Nelson & Barry, 2005), and when asked whether they have reached adulthood often respond “in some respects yes, in some respects no” (Arnett, 1997, p. 9).

Although shifts in current societal and economic trends have allowed some individuals to take these “time outs” from adult roles to pursue identity explorations, these moratoriums are not

afforded to all young people (Hendry & Kloep, 2007). Some scholars (Cote, 2014; Hendry & Kloep, 2007) argued that emerging adulthood may only represent a portion of developmentally specific individuals. For example, study results indicate that emerging adulthood may only be observed among those attending college (Arnett, 1997; Hendry & Kloep, 2007), specific industrialized cultures such as the United States (Arnett, 2015; Cote, 2014; Kloep & Hendry, 2011), and those in the middle- to upper-class (Arnett, 2004; Bynner, 2005; Cote & Bynner, 2008). Although presented as a universal life course stage, demographic variability may influence how, or even if, young individuals experience the five dimensions considered distinct for this period (e.g., age of self-focus; Bynner, 2007).

The developmental perspective of emerging adulthood is thought to occur predominately among individuals who opt to attend postsecondary education settings such as colleges or universities (Hendry & Kloep, 2007). In contrast, young people from lower social class origins who are unable to attend college are highly unlikely to be afforded the opportunity to experience various facets of emerging adulthood, including deferring responsibilities and adult roles (e.g., age of identity exploration). Instead, these individuals will often enter the workforce to help financially support themselves or family members and ultimately experience this developmental period differently from college attending emerging adults. Due to these experiences and perceptions, some have emphasized the need to examine these individuals through a different perspective or lens (Cote, 2014). Despite these differences, few studies on emerging adulthood have been conducted using samples outside of the postsecondary education system (for exceptions, see Hendry & Kloep, 2010; Reifman et al., 2007; Zaluski, 2012). Those not enrolled in postsecondary education are often referred to as the “forgotten half” in emerging adulthood

literature (Arnett, 2015). This disproportion may be due to the convenience of data collection from a college sample (Arnett, 2015), but a lack of empirical evidence brings into question how this developmental period applies to those who may not follow what is considered the college norm (Cote, 2014).

Recent studies have reported evidence that college-attending and non-college individuals vary in their perceptions of adulthood (Hendry & Kloep, 2010; Reifman et al., 2007; Zaluski, 2012) and expectations about their current developmental stage (Nelson & Barry, 2005). College-attending emerging adults typically experience greater freedom to explore various lifestyles and make mistakes than do their non-college-attending peers (Lam & Lefkowitz, 2013). College students are considered free from adult roles and norms and often explore their identities, including sexuality, while deferring decisions with long-term implications. For example, whereas college students are provided this adult role moratorium, expectations for non-college attending individuals may differ as they are expected to assume and establish patterns of adult roles and behaviors. These individuals will, on average, marry younger (Arnett, 2015; Goldstein & Kenney, 2001), start a family sooner (Kloep & Hendry, 2011), and indicated earlier subjective feelings of adulthood (Nelson & Barry, 2005). These adult roles may influence the expectations that individuals hold for themselves. For example, emerging adults who entered the workforce reported a lower endorsements of the five dimensions of emerging adulthood, including fewer future opportunities, being less self-focused, and engaging in less exploration (Hendry & Kloep, 2010; Reifman et al., 2007; Zaluski, 2012).

The majority of research on emerging adults' sexuality has focused on college attending populations, often due to convenience sampling (Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Heldman &

Wade, 2010). Despite limited research comparing college attending and non-college attending individuals' sexuality, recent evidence suggests that differences between these two populations do exist (Bailey et al., 2008; Goldstein & Kenney, 2001). For example, Bailey, Fleming, Henson, Catalano, and Haggerty (2008) examined the six-month sexual risk trajectories of a large high school graduate cohort and found variances in sexual engagement based on college enrollment (i.e., emerging adults in two- or four-year universities versus non-college emerging adults). Specifically, non-college attending emerging adults were found to have higher rates of sexual intercourse, casual sex, and high risk sexual engagement, including inconsistent condom use, compared to their college-attending peers. Further, research has consistently shown that hooking up has become a prevalent sexual script on college campuses (Glenn & Marquardt, 2001) and "that hooking up is a hallmark of the college experience" (Bogle, 2007, p. 776), but may not necessarily be as prevalent of a script for non-college students (Bogle, 2008). Lastly, although sexual education program exposure beyond secondary education settings is limited for the majority of individuals, college students may have more opportunities than their non-college attending peers to seek or access on campus resources (Eisenberg, Lechner, Frerich, Lust, & Garcia, 2012). Examples of these resources could include sexual health centers, curriculum-based education (e.g., human sexuality course), or seminars/workshops (e.g., consent programs).

Recent evidence suggests that societal norms towards casual sex behaviors or hooking up have shifted towards more social acceptance, particularly during the period of emerging adulthood (Twenge, Sherman, & Wells, 2015). Although little research has examined the direct effects of non-college attending individuals and hookup acceptance, one study found a moderation effect based on postsecondary education status. Twenge, Sherman, and Wells (2015)

found that the increased acceptance of casual sex behaviors, along with *perceptions* of societal acceptance, were found to vary by college attendance, with decreased acceptance by those who do not enter postsecondary education settings. These findings, along with continued criticisms by scholars (e.g., Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Heldman & Wade, 2010), emphasize the need for continued research on non-college samples focusing on concepts such as casual sex relationships (Grello, Welsh, & Harper, 2006; Fielder, Walsh, Carey, & Carey, 2013; Heldman & Wade, 2010), romantic relationships (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001), and sexual expectations (Anders et al., in press; Cohen & Shotland, 1996; Stinson, 2010). Specifically, future research would benefit from direct comparisons of college attending versus non-college attending individuals as this could emphasize divergences between these two groups on behaviors, knowledge, and resources, particularly in the realm of potential risk engagement such as sexuality. By treating college attending and non-college attending individuals as a homogeneous group rather than weighing the developmentally different experiences of the emerging adulthood period, research misses crucial variability in the sexual pathways of these two groups. The emergence of sexual variability between these populations highlights the continued need for developmentally appropriate sexual education that integrates individuals' experiences of adulthood, perceptions of cultural norms, and individualized expectations for sexuality.

Sexual Expectations

College attending emerging adults' expectations about sexuality may differ from their non-college attending peers. Sexual expectations encompass the individual's perceptions of and expectations for normative sexual behaviors, including those of their peers (Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003; Stinson, 2010). These expectations focus on either current external behaviors or

social norms, or may include future expectations. For example, individuals who were not sexually active indicated that they expected college to be a time to engage in sexual behaviors, and was a time for initiating sexual intercourse within relationships (Cohen & Shotland, 1996; Stinson, 2010). Studies have examined these expectations among college attending emerging adults and found that individuals consistently overestimate their peers' engagement in various sexual behaviors (e.g., hooking up), and overestimate peer acceptance of casual sex behaviors, otherwise referred to as "pluralistic ignorance" (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Lambert et al., 2003). In contrast, evidence suggests that non-college attending individuals may be less susceptible to these overestimations, as their perceptions of casual sex acceptance were lower than their college attending peers (Twenge et al., 2015). Overall, these expectations are important as they often influence establishing patterns of behavior and identity formation during the period of emerging adulthood (Barriger & Velez-Blasini, 2013; Fielder & Carey, 2010); yet, few studies have examined expectations, particularly sexual expectations, among non-college attending populations.

The Theory of Possible Selves

One perspective for examining emerging adults' expectations is through their possible selves. Possible selves considers an individual's future oriented self he or she hopes to become (i.e., expectation) or hopes to avoid becoming (i.e., fear) in the proximal future (Markus & Hazel, 1986). Possible selves are thought to be representative of salient goals or fears that are important to future identity development (Oyserman & James, 2009), and can serve as pathways to attaining or avoiding future identities (Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004). Examining the specific behavioral plans individuals use to obtain or avoid these future possible

selves (i.e., strategies) can provide insight into barriers to goal attainment. For example, one study found that students who articulated goals for academic achievement, yet were unable to articulate specific strategies to attaining these goal were less likely to achieve their future oriented academic self (Oyserman et al., 2004). Possible selves are also thought to be representative of developmental milestones (Oyserman & James, 2009). For example, a possible self reported by an adolescent may focus on academic goals, whereas a possible self for a middle-aged individual would likely be more family-related. Overall, possible selves tend to be representative of where individuals see themselves in the proximal future (i.e., typically one year out) and are influenced by their current life stage (e.g., emerging adulthood).

Sexual Possible Selves

SPS is a narrowing of the possible selves theory (see Anders et al., in press) to focus on the sexual expectations and fears individuals hold for themselves in the proximal future. These sexual goals hold important implications for which aspects of sexuality are most salient and can serve as guidelines or paths to achieving individuals' future idealized sexual selves. SPS may also be reflective of developmentally salient sexual goals or identities, particularly based on current life stage.

A thorough review of the literature indicated just one study that examined the SPS of emerging adults, which used a mixed-methods approach (see Anders et al., in press). This study examined the sexual expectations, fears, and strategies of first semester college students ($N = 282$). They found that students varied in their SPS and fears. Themes that emerged included abstinence, physical/sexual health, sexual exploration, and interpersonal relationships. Further, this study revealed a discrepancy between reporting of SPS and the articulation of specific

strategies to obtaining these future oriented selves. For example, although some students reported fears of negative physical/sexual health selves in the future, most were unable to articulate realistic and specific strategies they were using to avoid these feared selves. The authors also found differences based on sample demographics, including participant sex, intercourse experience, being in a romantic relationship, and religiosity.

Sex differences (i.e., male versus female) in expected SPS, feared SPS, and strategies were an important finding of Anders and colleagues (in press). Specifically, sex differences for themes related to explore/experiment, reputation, and rape/assault hold important implications for sexuality research. Men were found to report expectations around exploring or experimenting during their first semester in college, including expectations for non-committed sexual behaviors (e.g., hooking up). Although not inherently risky, sexual explorations outside of committed relationships can increase the potential for sexual risk, yet men from this study also reported less physical/sexual health strategies for avoiding poor sexual health outcomes (Anders et al., in press). Further, women were found to report more feared SPS focused on getting a negative reputation in college and being sexually assaulted or raped during the first semester than men. This fear is unsurprising as between 20-25% of women are sexually assaulted during their college career (Exner & Cummings, 2011). Continued research examining sex differences in expected and feared SPS is needed, particularly as limited research has examined these sex differences among a non-college emerging adult sample (for exception see Zweig et al., 1997).

The differences found in Anders and colleagues' (in press) study indicated a need for further examinations of SPS among diverse populations, as research suggests that sexuality is not a "one size fits all" phenomenon (Walcott, Meyers, & Landau, 2007), and their sample was

limited to first semester college students. Specifically, research focused on SPS would benefit from examining expectations, fears, and strategies among those who opt out of postsecondary education as these individuals are found to differ in sexual engagement (Bailey et al., 2008), perceptions of sexual norms (e.g., hooking up; Twenge et al., 2015), and perceptions of their experiences as an “emerging adult” (Hendry & Kloep, 2007). Examining differences between college attending and non-college attending emerging adults’ SPS would advance our understandings of salient sexual themes and gaps in behavioral pathways that may be crucial for more developmentally appropriate sexual education/interventions for each population, rather than a “one size fits all emerging adults” approach.

Current Study

This study extends the possible selves literature and previous SPS research by examining and comparing expected and feared SPS using a large sample of college attending emerging adults and a large sample of non-college attending emerging adults. In addition, we examine and compare the strategies (or lack thereof) these groups articulate to achieving or avoiding their SPS. Our study will enhance current understandings of similarities or differences in how these groups experience and/or hold expectations for sexuality during the developmental period of emerging adulthood. Further, findings likely hold important implications for sexual education and/or intervention for those in non-postsecondary education settings, along with continued sexual health and wellbeing promotion for college attending emerging adults. Our study was guided by four research questions developed from theory (life course theory and possible selves) and the extant literature on SPS and sexuality in emerging adulthood:

RQ1: How do college attending and non-college attending emerging adults describe their (a) expected and (b) feared sexual possible selves?

RQ2: What are college attending and non-college attending emerging adults' strategies associated with their (a) expected and (b) feared sexual possible selves?

RQ3: Do college attending and non-college attending emerging adults vary in their (a) expected and (b) feared sexual possible selves? If so, how do they vary in these possible selves realms?

RQ4: Do emerging adult men and women vary in their (a) expected and (b) feared sexual possible selves? If so, how do they vary in these possible selves realms?

Methods

Participants

Participants were 800 college attending ($n = 400$) and non-college attending ($n = 400$) emerging adult men and women (*age range* = 18-25).

College attending sample. The majority were women (67.1%). Most (68.3%) identified their race/ethnicity as White, non-Hispanic followed by Black/African American (10.0%), Latino/a or Hispanic (8.8%), Asian American/Pacific Islander (8.8%), Native American/American Indian (1.8%), or “Other” (2.5%; e.g., multiracial). The majority (70.3%) identified as heterosexual; however, 18.0% identified as bisexual, 5.8% as gay/lesbian, 3.3% as unsure, and 2.8% as “Other” (e.g., pansexual or asexual). The majority of participants (47.0%) were in an exclusive romantic relationship, followed by no romantic relationship (31.5%), non-exclusive romantic relationship (18.8%), and “Other” (2.8%; e.g., “It’s complicated”). The sample reported being moderately religious with an average religious intensity of 7.38 ($SD =$

6.79; *range* = 0-20). The largest proportion (31.3%) of the college-attending participants were Sophomores, followed by Juniors (28.3%), Seniors (26.8%), Freshmen (11.0%), and “Other” (2.8%; e.g., 5th year).

Non-college attending sample. The majority were women (58.9%). Most (71.4%) identified their race/ethnicity as White, non-Hispanic followed by Black/African American (13.3%), Latino/a or Hispanic (8.8%), Asian American/Pacific Islander (3.5%), Native American/American Indian (1.0%), or “Other” (2.0%). The majority (73.9%) identified as heterosexual; however, 16.0% identified as bisexual, 5.0% as gay/lesbian, 2.0% as unsure, or “Other” (3.0%). The majority of participants (50.4%) were in an exclusive romantic relationship, followed by non-exclusive romantic relationship (24.3%), no romantic relationship (23.3%), and “Other” (2.0%). The sample reported being moderately religious with an average religious intensity of 7.16 (*SD* = 6.95; *range* = 0-20).

Procedures

Upon approval from the university’s institutional review board (IRB), individuals were recruited through advertised “tasks” on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) during summer 2016. MTurk is an Amazon Inc. based crowdsourcing system used for various “Human Intelligence Tasks” and data collection, and has become prevalent among experimental and survey based social science researchers, as it increases the likelihood of obtaining individuals from non-college settings (Ipeirotis, 2010). Two separate surveys were posted on the site to collect data for each of the two populations (i.e., college attending versus non-college attending). Potential participants first participated in a brief eligibility questionnaire to see whether or not they met the inclusion criteria for one of the two separate surveys. The inclusion criteria for *non-college*

attending individuals included only those who were: (a) between the ages of 18 to 25 (i.e., emerging adulthood), (b) not currently enrolled in postsecondary education (i.e., college or trade school), and (c) have never attended or received a degree from a postsecondary education setting, including two- or four-year institutions. Additional *exclusion* criteria included individuals who have taken *some* college/university courses but are no longer enrolled, as they have been introduced to the college cultures and may hold biased responses. Inclusion criteria for *college attending* individuals included: (a) between the ages of 18 to 25, (b) currently enrolled in postsecondary education (i.e., college), and (c) have never received a degree from a postsecondary education setting, including two- or four-year institutions. Both populations were also required to currently live in the United States and their primary language be English.

Participants who met the inclusion criteria received access to a restricted-use online survey (i.e., Qualtrics), and were presented with an informed consent page that described the goal of the survey, the risks and benefits of the study, their ability to withdraw at any point, and described how their responses will remain anonymous. Participants who provided consent were given access to the survey. The survey included a series of open-ended questions, demographic items, and survey measures. Participants who completed the survey received a small monetary compensation (i.e., \$1.01). Once 400 surveys for each population were completed, the recruitment was removed from the site. This study focused on participants' responses to the sexual possible selves questionnaire and various demographic measures, which occurred right after the demographic items to avoid a priming effect (Creswell, 2007) from the other measures in the study.

Measures

Sexual possible selves. Participants' SPS and strategies were measured using an adaptation of the standard open-ended format of the possible self and strategy measure (Anders et al., in press). This measure focused on participants' SPS expectations and strategies to attaining the associated expectations, and SPS fears and strategies to avoiding the associated fears. The questionnaire was formatted to be neutral to participation or non-participation in postsecondary education and focused on the upcoming year.

Participants were first asked to write what they expected to become and what they expect to be doing next year (Oyserman et al., 2004). Specifically, expected SPS were collected from participants by providing the following:

Who will you be next year? Each of us has some image or picture of what we will be like and what we want to avoid being like in the future. Think about next year -- imagine what you expect to occur regarding your sexuality and sexual practices. In the lines below, write what you expect your upcoming year will be like when addressing sex.

The following prompt was then given to participants: "Regarding sex, this year I am expecting..." followed by providing the individual with four options to list expected sexual selves.

Sexual possible selves strategies. Participants then indicated whether or not they are doing something to achieve these possible selves by listing any specific behavioral strategies they are using. To examine the SPS strategies associated with participants' expected SPS, the following prompt was provided:

In the space next to each expectation, mark NO (X) if you are not currently doing something about that expectation and mark YES (X) if you are currently doing something to get to that expectation. For each expectation that you marked YES, use the space to the right to write what you are doing this year to attain that goal. Use the first space for the first expectation, the second space for the second expectation and so on.

The participants were then provided four options to list strategies they are using to obtain these future oriented sexual selves.

Feared Sexual Possible Selves. The second part of this measure assessed feared possible selves by asking participants to think of concerns or images of what they hoped to avoid within the upcoming year (i.e. what they do not want to do or want to avoid being). Participants were then asked to list selves that they would like to avoid becoming in the upcoming year and to indicate what strategies they are using to avoid these feared selves. Feared SPS were collected by providing the following prompt:

In addition to expectations and expected goals, we all have images or pictures of what we don't want to be like regarding our sexuality; what we don't want to do or want to avoid being. First, think a minute about ways you would not like to be this upcoming year -- things you are concerned about or want to avoid being like. Write those concerns or sexual selves to-be-avoided in the lines below.

Participants were then asked: "Regarding sex, this year I hope to avoid..." and allowed four options to list feared sexual selves.

Feared Sexual Possible Selves Strategies. Similarly to expected SPS, feared SPS strategies were collected by providing the following prompt:

In the space next to each concern or to-be-avoided self, mark NO (X) if you are not currently working on avoiding that concern or to-be-avoided self and mark YES (X) if you are currently doing something so this will not happen this year. For each sexual concern or to-be-avoided sexual self that you marked YES, use the space at the end of each line to write what you are doing this year to reduce the chances that this will describe you during the upcoming year. Use the first space for the first concern, the second space for the second concern and so on.

Participants were then provided four options to list the strategies they were using to obtain these feared sexual selves.

College Attendance Status. Participants were grouped based on (1) *college attending emerging adult* and (2) *non-college attending emerging adult*.

Sex. Participants reported their sex as (1) *Male*, (2) *Female*, or (3) *Other*, please specify. The majority of participants from our sample reported their sex as either male or female ($n = 796$), however, four participants responded as *other* (e.g., transgender male). Due to this small sample size of participants who identified as other than male and female, we did not include their responses in the quantitative comparisons for this measure.

Analyses

Open-ended response coding. Participants' open-ended responses of their expected SPS, feared SPS, and associated behavioral strategies were examined using qualitative content analysis (RQ1 and RQ2; Krippendorff, 2013). First, responses were carefully examined by three trained coders for recurring topics or themes across responses, and keywords (i.e., units; Krippendorff, 2013) were created as the basis for developing coding categories. Category

definitions were created to help emphasize differences in themes and strengthen coding of the responses. Using these identified coding categories, a coding of the SPS responses was then conducted to categorize each individual's responses. To minimize biases, coders were blind to sex and college attendance status of the participants throughout coding (Creswell, 2007). Further, one coder was blind to previous examinations of SPS (i.e., Anders et al., in press), therefore limiting priming biases and allowing categories to emerge naturally rather than referencing previous SPS categories. Additionally, coding was conducted as a group until acceptable inter-coder reliability was met (i.e., > 80%). Coding checks were then conducted throughout to continue calculating reliability, therefore allowing us to discuss any discrepancies in coding until agreement was met. Inter-coder reliability was high at 94.2% for expected SPS, 92.5% for expected SPS strategies, 94.2% for feared SPS, and 94.4% for feared SPS strategies.

Quantitative analyses. Comparisons between college attending and non-college attending sexual possible selves categories were conducted in two ways. First, after open-ended responses were categorized, frequencies of each of the identified categories were examined. Additionally, salience scores were then calculated for each category to examine which categories were most salient. Salience scores differ from frequency scores, as salience scores provide insight into the importance of each articulated SPS for the individual (Oyserman et al., 2004). For example, one category can be the most frequently reported, as the majority of the sample indicated that SPS at least once; yet, a different category may be more salient, as individuals who reported this SPS reported multiple expectations around this category, thus making it a more salient expectation. Salience scores were also compared between college attending and non-college attending emerging adults (RQ3).

Second, variability in expected SPS and feared SPS was examined using a series of independent sample t-tests. Specifically, mean comparisons of each SPS category (i.e., continuous variable) were conducted based on *college attendance status* (RQ3) and *sex* (RQ4). Mean comparisons allowed us to examine whether how frequently an individual expressed a specific expectation or fear varied by group membership (e.g., men versus women). Group comparisons can be indicative of differences in the experiences between groups, particularly in their expectations and fears about sexuality.

Results

Sexual Possible Selves

Our qualitative content analysis indicated a large variance in participants' sexual expectations, fears, and associated behavioral strategies, regardless of college attendance status. Overall, 11 categories were found for expected SPS, 10 categories for expected SPS strategies, 11 categories for feared SPS, and 10 categories for feared SPS strategies. SPS categories were coded on a continuous scale with zero indicating that no SPS was reported for that category and each one point increase representing a SPS for that category. Although participants were limited to four open-ended response options, multiple SPS could be reported and coded in each box.

Expected SPS. Emergent categories for participants' expected SPS focused on who they hoped to be sexually within the upcoming year (Table 1). On average, participants reported 2.16 expectations ($SD = 1.25$; $range = 0-5$). Eleven categories emerged for expected SPS including *abstinence* (e.g., "to not have sex"), *explore/experiment* (e.g., "To experiment new thing and sensations"), *quantity* (e.g., more partners), *quality* (e.g., "To enjoy it more"), *sex specific* (e.g., "Anal"), *interpersonal relationship* (e.g., "To find a long-term partner), *sexual health/well-being*

(e.g., “To have safe sex”), *maintain* (e.g., “Nothing to change”), *family formation* (e.g., “To have a baby”), *decreasing/avoidance* (e.g., “To not use condoms”), and *no expectations* (e.g., “Nothing”). Frequency comparisons were conducted for participants who reported *at least one* expected SPS. The most frequently reported category was *quantity* with 34.9% of the sample reporting at least one quantity related goal (*range* = 0-4). The least frequently reported category was *decreasing/avoidance* expectations (1.8%; *range* = 0-1).

Expected SPS strategies. Associated behavioral strategies were examined for each reported SPS. Expected SPS strategies focused on behaviors in which participants were actively engaging to meet their expectations for the year (Table 1). Participants reported an average of 2.17 strategies (*SD* = 1.55; *range* = 0-8). Ten categories emerged for expected SPS strategies, including *abstinence* (e.g., “Not engaging in it”), *interpersonal relationship* (e.g., “Communicating with my partner”), *dating* (e.g., “I joined a few dating sites”), *making opportunities* (e.g., “Going to clubs and meeting guys”), *self-improvement* (e.g., “Exercising to improve physical appearance”), *sexual health/well-being* (e.g., “Always use protection”), *expanding boundaries* (e.g., “Trying new things in bed”), *restricting boundaries* (e.g., “Avoiding women”), *sex specific* (e.g., “We are having sex”), and *no strategy* (e.g., “No”). Frequency comparisons were conducted for participants who reported *at least one* expected SPS strategy. The most frequently reported strategy category was *making opportunities* with 30.8% of the sample reporting at least one strategy that makes an opportunity to reach their expected SPS (*range* = 0-7). The least frequently reported strategy participants were actively utilizing to attain their expected SPS was *abstinence* strategies (2.4%; *range* = 0-2).

Feared SPS. Following the research of Anders and colleagues (in press), participants' feared or hope-to-be avoided selves were examined to understand sexual motivations or goal development (Table 2). On average, participants reported 2.03 feared SPS ($SD = 1.18$; $range = 0-5$). Emergent categories included: *abstinence* (e.g., "Engaging in sexual activities"), *interpersonal relationship* (e.g., "Being cheated on"), *quantity* (e.g., "Having less sex"), *quality* (e.g., "Bad sexual experiences"), *self-focus* (e.g., "Feeling bad about my body"), *partner-focus* (e.g., "Partners who are no good for me"), *sexual health/well-being* (e.g., "STIs and getting pregnant"), *increased sexual risk* (e.g., "Drunk sex"), *sexual assault/coercion* (e.g., "Being pressured into unwanted sexual situations"), *sex specific* (e.g., "Oral"), and *no fear* (e.g., "Not really anything"). In contrast to participants' expected SPS, less variance was found in participants' hope to be avoid selves. Frequency comparisons indicated the most frequently reported feared category was *sexual health/well-being* with 47.0% of the sample reporting at least one fear focused on their sexual health ($range = 0-4$). The least frequently reported category was *no fear* with only 4.4% of participants indicating they did not have a feared SPS for the upcoming year ($range = 0-1$).

Feared SPS strategies. The associated behavioral strategies in which participants indicated they were actively engaging to avoid their future feared selves were examined (Table 2). Reported strategies ranged in specificity, with some strategies being detailed and well-articulated whereas others were vague and were not effective behavioral plans for goal attainment. Feared SPS strategies were reported on average of 2.08 ($SD = 1.53$; $range = 0-9$). Ten themes within the strategies emerged and included: *abstinence* (e.g., "Dating others that share my belief of no sex before marriage"), *interpersonal relationship* (e.g., "Staying faithful"),

sexual health/well-being (e.g., “Getting a better birth control option”), *self-assertion/protection* (e.g., “Being more assertive”), *restricting boundaries* (e.g., “Staying clear of certain types of people”), *expanding boundaries* (e.g., “Stepping out of my sexual comfort zone”), *thoughtful/informed decisions* (e.g., “By making smart choices”), *making opportunities* (e.g., “Socializing more”), *self-improvement* (e.g., “Allowing myself to think that I am beautiful, regardless of societal standards of beauty”), and *no strategy* (e.g., “No”). Frequency comparisons were conducted for participants who reported *at least one* feared SPS strategy. The most frequently reported strategy category was *sexual health/well-being* with 41.6% of the sample reporting at least one strategy to avoiding poor sexual health selves (*range* = 0-6). Similarly to expected SPS strategies, the least frequently reported feared strategy was *abstinence* strategies (6.4%; *range* = 0-3) indicating that participants who had goals around abstinent behaviors had the least strategies to attaining these abstinent future selves.

Salience scores. Salience scores were calculated for each identified SPS category, as salience scores can be better indicators of importance of their SPS (Oyserman et al., 2011). For example, a salience score of 50% abstinence and 50% interpersonal relationship would indicate that sexual selves focused on abstinence and interpersonal relationships are equally important. Examinations of the salience scores for the entire sample indicated that *quantity* related selves were the most salient for expected SPS ($M = 21.0\%$; *range* = 0-100%). The least salient expected SPS category was *maintain* ($M = 4.6\%$; *range* = 0-100%). For feared SPS, *sexual health/well-being* was the most salient fear ($M = 32.8\%$; *range* = 0-100%). In contrast, *sex specific* fears were the least salient category ($M = 2.9\%$; *range* = 0-100%).

Salience score comparisons based on college attendance status found differences in which categories were most and least salient for each group. The categories of *decreasing/avoidance* and *family formation* were not examined due to small response rate. For expected SPS, the most salient category for both samples was *quantity*, with college attending participants reporting 22.8% salient (*range* = 0-100%) and non-college attending participants reporting 19.3% salient (*range* = 0-100%); however, differences in the least salient category emerged. The category of *maintain* was least salient for college attending participants ($M = 3.5\%$; *range* = 0-100%), whereas the category of *abstinence* was the least salient for non-college attending participants ($M = 4.1\%$; *range* = 0-100%). In contrast, salience scores of the feared SPS did not differ based on college attendance status (Table 3).

Quantitative Comparisons

Demographic comparisons were conducted to examine developmental differences in expected SPS, feared SPS, and the associated behavioral strategies. Specifically, demographic differences based on *college attendance status* and *sex* were examined through a series of independent sample t-tests. These tests allowed us to examine mean differences in the mean score of reported SPS for each category, along with examining differences in articulation of behavioral strategies for attaining or avoiding these future selves. Due to limited expected SPS responses within the categories of *family formation* ($n = 15$; 1.9%) and *decreasing/avoidance* ($n = 14$; 1.8%), these categories were not included in our quantitative analyses.

College attendance status. We first examined how expected SPS, feared SPS, and behavioral strategies varied by *college attendance status* (i.e., college attending versus non-college attending) to compare for differences in these facets of sexuality based on differences in

developmental pathways. To examine these differences, we conducted a series of independent sample t-tests for each SPS category.

Three expected SPS categories were found to vary by college attendance (Table 4). Differences in *abstinence* SPS were found between college attending and non-college attending emerging adults. Specifically, college attending emerging adults reported significantly more *abstinence* goals ($M = .10, SD = .34$) than non-college attending emerging adults ($M = .06, SD = .25$), $t(696.18) = -2.01, p = .045$. Differences in expected SPS focused on *interpersonal relationship* were also found. College attending participants reported significantly more *interpersonal relationship* goals ($M = .28, SD = .49$) than non-college attending participants ($M = .17, SD = .38$), $t(726.75) = -3.43, p = .001$. Lastly, differences in expected SPS focused on maintaining their current sexual selves (i.e., *maintain* SPS) were found based on college attendance status. Non-college attending emerging adults reported significantly more *maintain* goals ($M = .12, SD = .45$) than college attending emerging adults ($M = .06, SD = .26$), $t(610.98) = 2.03, p = .043$. No differences were found for expected SPS strategies, feared SPS, or feared SPS strategies based on college attendance status.

Sex. Next, we examined how expected SPS, feared SPS, and the associated behavioral strategies varied by sex (i.e., men versus women). Four expected SPS categories were found to vary by sex (Tables 4 & 5). Specifically, differences in the *quantity* SPS category indicated that men reported more quantity related goals ($M = .53, SD = .67$) than women ($M = .32, SD = .55$), $t(501.92) = 4.36, p \leq .001$. Further, differences in *sex specific* expectations were found. Men reported more expectations around sex specific behaviors ($M = .17, SD = .43$) than women ($M = .08, SD = .30$), $t(440.32) = 3.06, p = .002$. In contrast, differences in reports of *quality* SPS goals

were found for sex, wherein women reported more quality related sexual goals ($M = .41$, $SD = .74$) than men ($M = .20$, $SD = .51$), $t(736.95) = -4.72$, $p \leq .001$. Additionally, differences in expectations of *sexual health/well-being* were found. Specifically, women reported more expectations for positive sexual health behaviors and well-being ($M = .28$, $SD = .60$) than men ($M = .14$, $SD = .42$), $t(731.40) = -3.53$, $p \leq .001$.

Five expected SPS strategy categories were found to differ by *sex*. First, despite no differences in the expected SPS category of *interpersonal relationships* by sex, differences were found in the articulation of *interpersonal relationship* related strategies. Women reported more strategies related to attaining relationship goals or maintenance ($M = .31$, $SD = .58$) than men ($M = .19$, $SD = .50$), $t(688.22) = -3.04$, $p = .002$. Additionally, differences were found for expected SPS strategies related to *expanding boundaries*. Women reported more strategies related to trying new sexual engagements to attain their expected goals ($M = .28$, $SD = .65$) than men ($M = .14$, $SD = .45$), $t(767.81) = -3.71$, $p \leq .001$. Articulation of strategies related to *restricting boundaries* was also found to differ by sex, wherein women reported engaging in more strategies of restrictive or avoidant behaviors to attain their expected SPS ($M = .13$, $SD = .42$) than men ($M = .07$, $SD = .30$), $t(765.00) = -2.21$, $p = .027$. *Sexual health/well-being* strategies were also found to differ by *sex*. Women reported more strategies to attain positive sexual health selves in the upcoming year ($M = .25$, $SD = .65$) than men ($M = .11$, $SD = .37$), $t(792.89) = -3.92$, $p \leq .001$. In contrast, expected SPS strategies related to *making opportunities* to attain future sexual selves differed by sex, wherein men reported more strategies that created opportunities ($M = .55$, $SD = .93$) than women ($M = .40$, $SD = .76$), $t(521.73) = 2.37$, $p = .018$.

Feared SPS and strategies were also examined for differences based on *sex*. First, three feared SPS categories were found to vary by *sex*. Differences in the feared category of *quantity* were found, wherein men reported more fears related to limited or no sex within the upcoming year ($M = .11, SD = .31$) than women ($M = .06, SD = .25$), $t(432.88) = 2.26, p = .024$. In contrast, fears related to *sexual assault/coercion* were found to differ by *sex*, wherein women reported more sexual selves related to being sexually assaulted or pressured ($M = .16, SD = .41$) than men ($M = .06, SD = .24$), $t(697.13) = -3.90, p \leq .001$. Lastly, whether or not a participant articulated a feared SPS differed by *sex* (i.e., *no fear*). Men reported not having a feared SPS more ($M = .07, SD = .26$) than women ($M = .03, SD = .17$), $t(372.60) = 2.35, p = .019$.

Two feared SPS strategy categories were found to differ by *sex*. Differences for the articulation of *self-assertion/protection* strategies were significant. Women reported more strategies related to *assertive or self-protective* behaviors to avoid their feared SPS ($M = .31, SD = .67$) than men ($M = .13, SD = .43$), $t(682.96) = -4.43, p \leq .001$. In contrast, men reported more *making opportunities* strategies ($M = .16, SD = .42$) than women ($M = .06, SD = .28$), $t(368.91) = 3.27, p = .001$.

Discussion

This study sought to explore and compare sexuality related expectations and fears based on differences in developmental pathways during the life course period of emerging adulthood. As emerging adulthood is a period of increased exploration and identity development, while deferring traditional adult roles (e.g., having children; Arnett, 2015), differences in developmental pathways may lead to variance in identity development during this period. Due to this moratorium from adult roles, sexual identity development is thought to occur during the

period of emerging adulthood. Our study extended Anders and colleagues' (in press) examination of sexual possible selves among a sample of first semester college students. Differences in sexuality have been found based on whether an emerging adult attends college (Bailey et al., 2008); however, sexual possible selves have only been examined among college students. Findings from our study allowed us to determine whether differences in sexual expectations, fears, and behavioral strategies existed. Further, findings from this study help to inform sexual education and intervention programs for developmental appropriateness based on differences in developmental pathways.

Sexual Possible Selves and Strategies

To address our first research question, we replicated and extended previous SPS research (Anders et al., in press) by examining expected and feared SPS themes within a large sample of both college attending and non-college attending emerging adults. Variations in SPS categories were found in both the qualitative examination and frequencies within these categories. Whereas Anders and colleagues (in press) only found six expected SPS categories, 11 expected SPS categories emerged from our large, diverse sample. Consistent with previous research, the categories of *abstinence*, *interpersonal relationship*, *sexual health/well-being*, and *explore/experiment* were found; however, our findings also indicated expectations focused on *quantity* of sexual engagement, *quality* of sexual engagement, *sex specific* behaviors, choosing to *maintain* their current sexual self in the upcoming year, *family formation*, and *decreasing/avoidance* sexual behaviors.

Additionally, variance in emergent feared SPS were found between our study and Anders and colleagues' (in press) study. Although several categories were found in both studies (i.e.,

abstinence, sexual health/well-being, sexual assault/coercion, interpersonal relationship), new emergent themes were also found. Specifically, participants' SPS revealed fears around decreased quantity of sexual engagement (i.e., *quantity*), fears around poor quality sexual experiences (i.e., *quality*), internalized fears focused on their own sexuality (i.e., *self-focused*), externalized fears focused on partner characteristics (i.e., *partner focused*), fears of engaging in sex specific behaviors (i.e., *sex specific*), and fears regarding behaviors that could increase their sexual risk (i.e., *increased sexual risk*).

We addressed a limitation of previous SPS research by coding behavioral strategies separately from their associated expected and feared SPS. For example, Anders and colleagues (in press) found if a strategy for attaining a future abstinent expectation was reported, then the strategy would also be coded as "abstinence." Our study allowed themes with the strategies to emerge naturally and be coded separately from their associated SPS, (e.g., *making opportunities*). Our study did find some strategies matched their associated SPS, including *abstinence, interpersonal relationship, sexual health/well-being, and sex specific*; however, our qualitative analyses also indicated that individuals were engaging in strategies that increased opportunities for goal attainment (i.e., *making opportunities*), strategies of trying new activities or expanding their sexual boundaries (i.e., *expanding boundaries*), strategies focused on avoidant or restrictive behaviors (i.e., *restricting boundaries*), strategies focused on dating behaviors (i.e., *dating*), and strategies on improving facets of an individual's internalized self (i.e., *self-improvement*).

A surprising finding from our study was that individuals were often enacting the same type of behavioral strategies (e.g., *restricting boundaries*) regardless of whether the individuals

are articulating an expected or feared SPS. This finding indicates that behavioral strategies serve the dual purpose of both helping them to attain their future expected SPS and avoid their future feared SPS. These findings may support the idea of *balance* (i.e., having both an expectation and fear in the same category) of possible selves (Oyserman et al., 2004). Previous possible selves literature has shown that having balanced expected and feared possible selves, and strategies, can increase the likelihood of goal attainment (Oyserman & Markus, 1990b). Future research should directly examine the overlap between participants' expected and feared strategies to test for balance and future goal attainment.

College Attendance Differences

Our second research question extended SPS research to examine the expectations and fears of emerging adults who do not seek postsecondary education (i.e., college). College attending and non-college attending emerging adults have been found to differ in their perceptions and experiences of this developmental period (Hendry & Kloep, 2010). These divergent experiences may be reflected in the possible selves participants expect for themselves, as possible selves are thought to be reflective of one's current developmental stage (Frazier, Hooker, Johnson, & Kaus, 2000). To date, no study has examined these developmental differences in expected and feared SPS. Our study indicated that similar sexual selves are salient for both groups regardless of college attendance, as the majority of their expected and feared SPS were reported equally. However, we did find differences in expected SPS for three categories.

Differences were found between these two groups on expectations around *interpersonal relationship* SPS for the upcoming year. Specifically, college students reported more expectations for sexuality in interpersonal and romantic relationships than did non-college

emerging adults. Many of these participants articulated expectations around entering a romantic relationship or engaging in sexuality within a romantic relationship. This interpersonal relationship focus may be reflective of a relationship trend among emerging adults, in which young adults engage in a series of brief, committed relationships (i.e., *serial monogamy*; Regnerus & Uecker, 2011). As these relationships are more transient than long-term committed relationships (Regnerus & Uecker, 2011), access to potential partners may play a role on the likelihood for romantic relationship formation. Specifically college students may have access to more potential partners in the college environment and may be afforded more time for focusing on entering romantic relationships and navigating sexuality in romantic relationships than their non-college attending peers. In contrast, non-college attending emerging adults may be more focused on non-committed sexual engagements, such as casual sex (Bailey et al., 2008).

Although college is often referenced as a place for sexual exploration and engagement (e.g., high rates of hooking up; Fielder & Carey, 2010), casual sex engagement has been found to be more frequent among non-college attending individuals (Bailey et al., 2008). Additionally, our sample of non-college attending emerging adults reported being in more non-exclusive romantic relationships than their college attending peers. Non-college attending emerging adults may be more focused on sexual engagements outside of committed relationships, thus leading to fewer expectations about interpersonal relationships.

Mean comparisons also indicated that non-college attending emerging adults reported significantly more sexual identity maintenance related expected SPS than college attending emerging adults. This finding may be indicative of differences in the participants' experiences of their current life stage (i.e., emerging adulthood). Emerging adults are afforded the opportunity

to try different selves before establishing themselves in traditional adult roles (Arnett, 2015); however, our findings may indicate that identity exploration during this period is only afforded to individuals who opt into higher education settings rather than entering the work force. Non-college attending emerging adults may instead feel earlier pressure to establish and maintain a sexual self. Future research would benefit from a comparative study of differences in expected and feared selves based on perceptions of being in the stage of emerging adulthood (i.e., IDEA scale).

Sex Differences

To address our fourth research question, we examined differences in expected and feared SPS, along with the associated behavioral strategies, by sex. Differences based on sex (often referred to as gender) have been prevalent in sexuality research (Peterson & Hyde, 2010) and can be influential on a numerous facets of sexuality, including sexual identity development (Worthington et al., 2002), hooking up (Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010), or SPS (Anders et al., in press). Similar to Anders and colleagues (in press), differences based on sex were found for multiple expected and feared SPS.

An interesting gender difference from our study focused on the categories of *quantity* and *quality*. Specifically, men reported more *quantity* SPS overall (both expected and feared) than women. Our findings may be explained by examining differences in motivations to have sex for emerging adult men and women, as these motivations may shape their sexual selves. Previous research has examined motivations for sexual intercourse (e.g., Leigh, 1989) and found differences between men and women on their reasons for having sex (Patrick, Maggs, & Abar, 2007). Specifically, sex comparisons have shown that men often reference self-focused goals

such as sexual opportunism and sexual goals as motivators for having sex (Eyre & Millstein, 1999; Patrick et al., 2007), whereas women indicate sexual intimacy and partner focus as a motivation for sex (Patrick et al., 2007). Quantity focused selves may be indicative of placing importance on attaining a specific sexual goal for their sexual identity. In contrast, women may place more emphasis on quality or intimate experiences for their sexual identity.

Similar to Anders and colleagues (in press), sex differences were found for the category of *sexual assault/coercion*. In our study, women were found to more frequently report feared SPS focused on avoiding rape or sexual pressure in the upcoming year. Fears within this category focused on both explicit fears around being sexually assaulted or raped, and fears of social or partner pressure to engage in acts in which they are not comfortable (e.g., “Having forced sex through pressure”). Of the sample, 14.3% of women indicated fears around these sexual assault or coercive behaviors, and these fears were reported similarly between college attending and non-college attending emerging adults. Sexual assault is prevalent for both college attending women (e.g., 25% of college women; Exner & Cummings, 2011) and non-college attending women (e.g., 1.2x that of college women; Sinozich & Langton, 2014). Due to these high prevalence rates, women are often exposed to and educated on sexual assault scripts and prevalence in sexual education and media. Salient possible selves, including SPS, are often shaped by social norms or prevalent social scripts to which an individual is exposed (Oyserman & Markus, 1990b). This emphasis of sexual assault among women may be socializing women to adopt these feared sexual selves. In contrast, discussions of sexual assault among men are less frequent and underemphasized in sexual education and media (Zweig, Barber, & Eccles, 1997).

This lack of discussion may lead to a lesser focus on this form of sexual aggression for their sexual selves, and help to explain the lower salience of sexual assault SPS fears for men.

Further, research has found higher prevalence rates of sexual assault among non-college attending emerging adults (32%) than their college attending peers (20%; Sinozich & Langton, 2014). Specifically, one study found that around 11.5% of non-college attending emerging adults reported experiencing sexual aggression in the past year, as compared to 10.3% of their college attending peers (Buddie & Testa, 2005). Additionally, research has found that several types of sexual aggression may be higher among non-college attending emerging adults than their college attending peers, including rape (16% versus 10%) and sexual abuse (19% versus 11%; Zweig et al., 1997). These findings, along with prevalence rates of sexual assault in general (39% of women; Zweig et al., 1997), emphasize how sexual assault is a real fear for emerging adult women, and a prevalent problem regardless of college attendance status.

Limitations

Despite the importance of our findings, this study had several limitations. Our sample was not randomly sampled, as we required several inclusion/exclusion criteria to be met for each sample. Although utilizing online crowdsourcing recruitment sites such as MTurk allows for increased access to wider samples as participants can be drawn from across the 50 United States, there are limitations with this form of data collection. Although the demographics of the MTurk sample pool have been shown to allow greater access to heterogeneous populations, particularly compared to college samples (Ipeirotis, 2010), evidence suggests that the majority are typically male, White non-Hispanic, and middle- to upper-class individuals (see Ipeirotis, 2010). Although closer to being a representative sample, our sample was fairly homogeneous in several

demographic measures (e.g., *race/ethnicity*). Future SPS research would benefit from examining expectations and fears among minority individuals, including sexual minorities, as differences in emergent SPS and strategies may be indicative of variance in salient sexual selves.

Participants' responses were collected using an online cross-sectional survey on a crowdsourcing site. This form of data collection can limit exposure to a variety of participants as recruitment was limited to the MTurk site and individuals must be registered as a "worker" for MTurk to be able to participate in the survey. Further, multiple measure surveys can create priming effects due to survey/question order leading to primed responses (i.e., biased responses). To account for this priming effect, our survey first collected participants' responses to the *Sexual Possible Selves Measure* before presenting the participants with other survey measures to limit biased responses. Additionally, due to site error, data was only collected on participants' age range and not collected on participants' exact age; this error limits our ability to present findings on the mean age of the sample. Lastly, online surveys limit our ability to ask follow-up questions and clarification of participants' responses. Mixed-method analyses, such as content analysis, benefit from utilization of member checking (Creswell, 2007) which allows researchers to ask for participants' confirmation of emergent themes.

Implications

Our findings address several limitations within SPS research and hold important implications for future sexuality research. Specifically, as SPS research is relatively new, there is limited research examining expected and feared SPS among samples outside of higher education settings. Findings from our study addressed this limitation by showing a similarity between these two samples on the majority of sexual expectations and fears during the period of emerging

adulthood. As SPS may be influenced by current developmental stage (Frazier et al., 2000), future research would benefit from extending beyond college attendance status as an indicator of developmental differences. Instead, examining SPS in relation to individuals' experience or stage of sexual identity development (e.g., sexual identity commitment) may be indicative of differences in developmental life stage. Specifically, themes within individuals' salient expected SPS and feared SPS may be indicative of their current stage of sexual identity development, and may help to explain the heterogeneity in sexual selves during this developmental period. Future research would also benefit from examining the developmental influences on SPS using qualitative methods, which would provide insight as to *why* individuals hold various expectations and fears regarding their sexuality. A qualitative examination of these influences would provide greater insight into beneficial areas of education or interventions (e.g., family exposure), along with utilization of these influences within sexual education (e.g., addressing pluralistic ignorance of peers).

Our study holds implications for sexual education within emerging adult populations. Fears around sexual assault continue to be prevalent during this developmental period, including among non-college individuals; however, our sample also emphasized fears for both explicit acts of sexual assault (e.g., rape) and implicit acts (i.e., sexual coercion). Research has shown that sexual coercion education is often limited within education programs (Jozkowski, Peterson, Sanders, Dennis, & Reece, 2014). These findings emphasize the continued need for consent education focused on teaching protective and negotiation skills (e.g., sexual negotiations) that may improve emerging adults' efficacy against sexual pressure. Further, research indicates limited consent education programs outside of higher education settings (Jozkowski et al., 2014);

therefore, community settings would benefit from the development and implementation of sexual consent programs to reach emerging adults who opt out of college or continued education. These programs could integrate *sexual possible selves* interventions, as this affords opportunities for facilitators to develop specific and individualized education based on the participants' sexual goals and individualized sexual development.

CHAPTER 3:

Short-term Longitudinal Examination of Sexual Possible Selves and Strategies of First Semester College Students

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to replicate and extend research on first semester college students' ($N = 78$) sexual possible selves and strategies (Anders, Olmstead, & Johnson, in press) using a short-term longitudinal design. We sought to examine potential continuity and change in sexual expectations, fears, and behavioral strategies across the first semester of college. Open-ended responses on internalized sexual expectations and fears were collected at two time points in the fall 2016 semester (T1 = first 4 weeks, $N = 78$; T2 = last 4 weeks, $N = 40$). Qualitative content analysis of students' responses at T1 revealed emergent expectations and fears focused on *abstinence*, *interpersonal relationships*, *quantity*, *conditional sex*, *decreasing/avoidant* and fears of *sexual health/well-being*, *sexual assault/coercion*, *self-focus*, and *increased sexual risk*. We then examined a subsample of participants ($N = 40$) who also responded at T2 and found similar emergent themes; however, two new themes emerged, including a category of *maintain* expected SPS and *partner-focus* feared SPS. Behavioral strategies students use to attain their future oriented selves focused on *abstinence*, *making opportunities*, *restricting boundaries*, *sexual health/well-being*, *thoughtful/informed decisions*, and *self assertion/protection* at T1 and T2. Frequency comparisons of participants' SPS indicated changes in salient expectations and fears, along with behavioral strategies, across the first semester. Implications for sexual education and sexual possible selves research are discussed.

Introduction

Emerging adulthood (ages 18-25) is considered a time of identity exploration and experimentation prior to assuming adult roles (Arnett, 2015). Emerging adults experience a series of transitions during this period, including transitioning from familial households and

entering postsecondary education settings (i.e., college). This role deference (i.e., moratorium) allows emerging adults to explore various facets of their identity, including in the realm of sexuality (Arnett, 2015). The transition to college can be an influential period as students become integrated into various college cultures and subcultures (Kenyon & Koerner, 2009), and are experiencing identity development (Arnett, 2015). Identity development during transitional periods such as emerging adulthood is often influenced by both perceptions of others' behaviors (i.e., social norms; Berkowitz, 2004) and perceptions of ones' future self (i.e., possible selves; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves encompass various expectations and fears individuals holds for themselves in the proximal future (Markus & Nurius, 1986), and serve as a specific pathway or guide to becoming the ideal self one would like to become in the future (Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004). Possible selves are often representative of an individual's current life stage and can provide insight into continuity and change within identity development (Frazier, Hooker, Johnson, & Kaus, 2000).

Little attention has been devoted to how an individual's expectations and fears of sexuality *for themselves* can influence their own future engagement in sexual behaviors (i.e., sexual possible selves; Anders, Olmstead, & Johnson, in press). To date, no study was found that examined how emerging adults' sexual possible selves (SPS) potentially change and develop as they transition into and experience their first semester of college. The current study addresses this limitation in previous research using a short-term longitudinal examination of first semester students' SPS and strategies as they transition to college. We consider changes in SPS and strategies, along with addressing the reflection of this continuity and change on identity development, from the beginning to the end of the first semester.

First Semester College Student Sexuality

The period of emerging adulthood (ages 18-25) is thought to serve as a moratorium for certain groups of individuals as they transition from the regulated period of adolescence to the responsibility driven period of adulthood (Arnett, 2015). Emerging adulthood is considered a period wherein individuals are able to experiment outside their familial homes and explore various facets of their identity (Kenyan & Koerner, 2009). Identity development is thought to predominately occur during this life course period and these explorations often contribute to emerging adults' identity achievement (Arnett, 2015). One facet of identity development occurring during this period is in the realm of sexuality (Worthington, Savoy, Dillon, & Vernaglia, 2002). These explorations occur predominately for individuals in postsecondary education settings (Hendry & Kloep, 2007), and often during the first year in college (Roberson, Olmstead, & Fincham, 2015). The first year in college is unique as emerging adults are transitioning into college with various sets of ideals or beliefs regarding sexuality. Scholars (e.g., Fielder & Carey, 2010) often emphasize this transitional period as optimal for exploratory research on sexuality and implementation of sexual education and interventions prior to becoming exposed and integrated into a variety of campus cultures and subcultures (e.g., "hookup culture"; Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012).

Further, this transitional period allows researchers to further examine continuity and change in first year students' sexuality as they make this transition and integration into college. One study by Fielder, Walsh, Carey, and Carey (2013) longitudinally examined casual sex engagement over the first year in college and found a significant increase of casual sex behaviors as individuals are transitioning into the first semester. Although casual sex or hooking up is a

prevalent trend among first semester emerging adults (Owen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Fincham, 2010), other research has emphasized that sex in committed relationships may be a more prevalent script for first semester college students (Olmstead, Anders, & Conrad, in press). Further, this study examined changes in this script across the first semester and found that the majority of first semester students held the same meanings for sex and commitment at the end of the first semester. Overall, changes in sexual beliefs or behaviors may be reflective of environmental or norm influences, or shifts in sexual identity development. First year students may be particularly vulnerable to changing ideals and experience learning as they explore, experiment, and make decisions about involvement in various sexual relationships (Allen, Husser, Stone, & Jordal, 2008) and cultures (Wade & Heldman, 2012); however, limited research has examined this relationship with emerging adults' internalized sexual development.

The Theory of Possible Selves

As emerging adults are actively exploring and experimenting with various facets of their identity that may be influential to future outcomes, one useful theory in which to examine this form of identity development is the possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves encompass the selves that individuals hope to become, expect to become, or hope to avoid becoming in the proximal future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Individuals can possess multiple expected and feared possible selves, and often have possible selves that change and develop as they reach developmental transitions (Oyserman & James, 2009), such as in the period of emerging adulthood. As individuals develop, their possible selves also develop in domains relevant to their life stage, or developmental tasks, and are typically linked with their social roles

and identities (Cross & Markus, 1994; Oyserman & James, 2009). Possible selves may be seen as reference points upon which more general self-impressions and evaluations are formed.

Possible selves also provide simulated actions and behavioral strategies for organizing, forming, reaching, and avoiding future oriented selves (Cross & Markus, 1991; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Yang & Noels, 2013). Possible selves have been shown to guide and regulate behavior as it provides a roadmap from present goals to future behaviors (Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004). Oyserman and Markus (1990a) suggested that possible selves can be “viewed as motivational resources that provide individuals with some control over their own behavior” (p. 113). Goal-focused individuals are more consistent in ignoring conflicting information that may impede goal attainment and may help them resist engaging in perceived normative risk behaviors (Oyserman et al., 2004). This specialized view may allow for an extensive investigation into the relationship between expectations and what strategies individuals opt to utilize for goal attainment.

Investigations of the relationship between possible selves and future outcomes has shown that possible selves are critical for motivating action and achieving future identities (Higgins, 1996; Oyserman & Markus, 1990; Oyserman, Johnson, & James, 2011; Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002; Stauman & Higgins, 1987). Despite the potential for examining possible selves in relation to future behavioral outcomes or goal attainment, the majority of possible selves examinations have used cross-sectional, correlational designs (for exceptions see Frazier, Hooker, Johnson, & Kaus, 2000; Oyserman et al., 2002). Further, recent research has found that possible selves are often dynamic and can change based on developmental stages and salient domains (Frazier et al., 2000). For example, using a longitudinal approach, Frazier, Hooker,

Johnson, and Kaus (2000) examined continuity or change in possible selves using a life course perspective focused on aging adults. Findings indicated both continuity and change within the salient possible selves themes in this population, and emphasized how possible selves may be reflective of individuals' changing expectations, goals, and fears (Frazier et al., 2000). Continued research on how possible selves develop and change over time, and the influence that these changes may have on future behavioral outcomes is imperative. Specifically, this may be particularly true in the realm of sexuality, as goals about sexuality are thought to be dynamic and dependent on current developmental stage, such as sexual explorations in emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2015); however, to date there have been no examinations of how an individual's sexuality focused possible selves may change over time and potentially influence future sexual behavior.

Sexual Possible Selves

Recent research (see Anders et al., in press) has expanded upon the sexual expectation literature using a life course perspective by examining emerging adults' sexuality in conjunction with the possible selves theory (i.e., sexual possible selves). Sexual possible selves (SPS) attends to the expectations and fears that individuals hold for their future sexual selves, including the specific behavioral strategies used to attain or avoid these future selves (Anders et al., in press). Similar to possible selves, SPS emphasizes salient sexual themes for emerging adults and may be enhanced by considering one's current developmental period.

Using a mixed-methods approach, Anders and colleagues (in press) examined SPS among a sample of first semester college men and women ($N = 282$) making the transition into college (see Anders et al., in press). Findings indicated that participants reported salient SPS

around abstinence, sexual exploration, and interpersonal relationships, as well as salient fears about physical/sexual health outcomes. Further, this study examined whether students were able to articulate specific behavioral strategies being used to attain or avoid these future SPS, and if so, what were these specific strategies. Overall, approximately 22.3% of the sample did not articulate explicit behavioral strategies for their associated SPS attainment or avoidance. Despite the importance of this finding, this study was cross sectional in nature and requires additional research to confirm or contrast the emergent themes. Also, a focus of this developmental examination was on the expectations and fears of first semester students as they transition into college, as this is an influential period for emerging adults' sexuality (Fielder & Carey, 2010); however, Anders and colleagues (in press) did not examine how first semester students' expectations and fears may change as they develop and become integrated into various cultures and subcultures on campus. To address these limitations, the current study included a short-term longitudinal design and examined how SPS and feared sexual selves and strategies changed over time.

Current Study

The current study contributes to the SPS research by examining the expectations, fears, and strategies of first semester college students using a short-term longitudinal approach. Specifically, this study examined the salient themes of first semester students' SPS and strategies as they transition into college (T1) and potential continuity or changes in these salient themes at the end of their first semester (T2). Findings from this study hold important implications for sexual education and/or intervention, including an emphasis on more individualized and continued sexual health and wellbeing education for college attending emerging adults

throughout their college career. Our study was guided by three research questions developed from theory (life course and possible selves) and the extant literature on emerging adult sexuality:

RQ1: What are first semester students' (a) expected and (b) feared sexual possible selves at the beginning of their first semester (T1) and end of their first semester (T2)?

RQ2: What are first semester students' associated (a) expected and (b) feared behavioral strategies at the beginning of their first semester (T1) and end of their first semester (T2)?

RQ3: Do first semester students' (a) expected and (b) feared sexual possible selves and strategies change from the beginning of their first semester (T1) to the end of their first semester (T2)?

Methods

Data collection

Upon IRB approval, participants were recruited during the first four weeks of the fall 2016 semester from an undergraduate psychology research pool at a large Southeastern university. Participants were recruited from introductory psychology courses (e.g., Psych 110) and occurred through the university's SONA system, a system used for student participation in various research, experimental studies, or research papers in exchange for required psychology course credit. With this system, individuals were able to actively choose the research projects in which they wished to participate and self-selected into this study. Those who chose to participate were offered course credit as compensation for participation. Due to the longitudinal nature of the study, participants were offered credit at both T1 (beginning of semester) and T2 (end of semester). Although participation in both time points is encouraged, participants could choose to

not participate in the second time point; thus, participation credits were given for completion of each survey time point individually (i.e., one credit for T1 and one credit for T2).

The survey was administered through online access of the Department of Psychology's SONA system through a private student login. Individuals interested in participating in the study first read a brief paragraph explaining the nature of the study (i.e., purpose of study), along with required criteria for participation. Inclusion criteria for this study included: (a) between the ages of 18-25, (b) registered as a freshman, and (c) in their first semester of coursework at the university. If individuals met the criteria and were interested in study participation, they were provided the opportunity to sign up for the online study and received instructions for study completion. Participants first received an electronic copy of the Informed Consent Form and were informed that by continuing with the study (i.e., clicking "Next") they were providing consent and met the study criteria. After informed consent was given, participants were designated a study identification consisting of random numbers to link and compare their T1 and T2 responses while maintaining student confidentiality. The second round of data collection (i.e., T2) was collected during the last four weeks of the fall 2016 semester, and participants' responses were linked by their assigned identification.

All participants were given the same survey measures at both time points. As the main focus of this study was on emerging adults' sexual possible selves and strategies, both surveys began by collecting responses to the sexual possible selves survey (detailed below in measures). This form of data collection helps limit priming effects within the responses that may occur when exposed to other measures included in surveys (e.g., hooking up measure may prime an articulation of hooking up SPS; Davies, Zhu, & Brantley, 2007). Following the SPS measures,

both time points collected demographic information, along with measures of sexual behavior and sexual health, and measures were adapted for each time point to obtain the appropriate information (e.g., intercourse experience at beginning of semester versus at the end of semester).

Participants

A sample of 80 first semester students consented to participate in our study; however, we removed two participants due to incomplete responses, leaving a final sample of 78 participants for T1. The majority of participants (82.1%) were women and were on average 18.09 years old ($SD = .330$, $range = 18-20$). Participants mostly identified as White/non-Hispanic (79.5%), followed by Black/African American (9.0%), Asian American/Pacific Islander (6.4%), Latino/a or Hispanic (1.3%), Native American/American Indian (1.3%), and “Other” (2.6%; e.g., “multiracial”). The majority of participants identified as heterosexual (92.3%), followed by bisexual (2.6%), gay/lesbian (1.3%), and “Other” (3.8%; e.g. “pansexual”). Participants largely reported not being in a romantic relationship (55.1%); however, 23.1% of participants were in an exclusive romantic relationship (e.g., “dating exclusively”) and 20.5% were in a non-exclusive romantic relationship (e.g., “dating non-exclusively”). On average, the participants reported holding moderately intense religious beliefs (i.e., 0-20 scale; $M = 10.63$; $SD = 5.81$). The majority of participants (66.7%) reported having sexual intercourse experience prior to their first semester. Participants largely reported receiving some form of sexual education prior to college (92.3%).

Of the 78 participants, 40 consented to participate in our second wave of data collection at the end of their first semester (i.e., T2). Within this subsample, the majority of participants (90.0%) were women, and were on average 18.3 years of age ($SD = .49$, $range = 18-20$).

Participants largely reported race/ethnicity as White/non-Hispanic (90.0%), followed by Asian American/Pacific Islander (7.5%) and Black/African American (2.5%). The majority of participants (92.5%) identified as heterosexual, followed by bisexual (5.0%) and unsure (2.5%). Similarly to T1, participants were generally not in a romantic relationship (55.0%), however, 27.5% reported being in an exclusive relationship and 17.5% reported being in a non-exclusive relationship. On average, the participants reported holding moderately intense religious beliefs (i.e., 0-20 scale; $M = 10.51$; $SD = 5.86$). The majority of participants (65.0%) reported having sexual intercourse experience during their first semester. Participants largely reported receiving some form of sexual education prior to the second survey (i.e., potential exposure during first semester; 95.0%).

Due to the large attrition between T1 and T2, comparative analyses were conducted to test whether there were demographic differences between those who dropped out (48.7%) versus those who opted to participate in both time points (51.3%). We ran comparisons based on *age*, *sex*, *race/ethnicity*, *sexual orientation*, *relationship status*, *relationship type*, *sexual intercourse experience*, and *religiosity* (i.e., intensity of religious beliefs). No statistically significant differences were found between the two groups for any of these demographic variables (analyses not shown; see first author for results of this set of analyses).

Measures

Sexual possible selves. First semester students' SPS and strategies were collected through the adaptation of the standard open-ended format of the possible self and strategy measure (see Oyserman et al., 2004 for original measure; see Anders et al., in press for revised measure). Originally, this measure was designed to assess an individual's overall possible selves

by asking the individual to list expected and feared goals for the upcoming year. This questionnaire is divided into two parts, and begins by asking the participants to imagine who they would like to be in the future (i.e., expected possible selves). Participants are then asked to write what they expect to become and what they expect to be doing next year (Oyserman et al., 2004). Participants then indicate whether or not they are doing something to achieve these possible selves, and to list any specific strategies they are using. Strategies for possible selves have been associated with behavioral outcomes and are considered influential in an individual's future self-regulation (Oyserman et al., 2004; Oyserman et al., 2011). Specifically, previous studies indicated that behavioral strategies that relate to the accompanying future self are associated with future goal attainment (Oyserman et al., 2004). Whether individuals are able to articulate a specific behavioral strategy they are using to attain or avoid these future oriented selves may be indicative of future behavioral outcomes including sexual behavioral engagement (e.g., hookup behaviors).

The second part of this measure assesses feared possible selves by asking participants to think of concerns or images of what they hoped to avoid within the upcoming year (i.e. what they do not want to do or want to avoid being). Participants are then asked to list selves that they would like to avoid becoming in the upcoming year and to indicate what strategies they are using to avoid these feared selves (Oyserman et al., 2004). Adaptation of the possible selves questionnaire to measure sex and sexuality for this current study is described below.

Sexual possible selves (T1). Participants' SPS were collected at the beginning of their first semester in college (T1) and focused on the upcoming semester (fall 2016). This measure

was adapted to focus on their SPS during the first semester of their freshman year. Specifically, expected SPS was collected from participants by providing the following:

Who will you be this upcoming semester? Each of us has some image or picture of what we will be like and what we want to avoid being like in the future. Think about your upcoming semester-- imagine what you expect to occur regarding your sexuality and sexual practices. In the lines below, write what you expect your first semester of freshman year will be like when addressing sex.

A prompt was then given to the participant that states: “Regarding sex, this year I am expecting...” followed by providing the individual with four options to list expected sexual selves.

Similarly, feared SPS was collected by providing the following:

In addition to expectations and expected goals, we all have images or pictures of what we don’t want to be like regarding our sexuality; what we don’t want to do or want to avoid being. First, think a minute about ways you would not like to be this upcoming semester- - things you are concerned about or want to avoid being like. Write those concerns or sexual selves to-be-avoided in the lines below.

Participants were then asked: “Regarding sex, this semester I hope to avoid...” and provided four options to list feared sexual selves.

Sexual possible selves strategies (T1). In addition to a participant’s SPS, strategies that the participant is using to reach or avoid these future selves were collected. Expected SPS strategies were collected by asking the following:

In the space next to each expectation, mark NO (X) if you are not currently doing something about that expectation and mark YES (X) if you are currently doing something to get to that expectation. For each expectation that you marked YES, use the space to the right to write what you are doing this semester to attain that goal. Use the first space for the first expectation, the second space for the second expectation and so on.

Participants were then provided four options to list strategies they are using to obtain these future oriented sexual selves.

Additionally, associated feared SPS strategies were collected by asking the following:

In the space next to each concern or to-be-avoided self, mark NO (X) if you are not currently working on avoiding that concern or to-be-avoided self and mark YES (X) if you are currently doing something so this will not happen this semester. For each sexual concern or to-be-avoided sexual self that you marked YES, use the space at the end of each line to write what you are doing this semester to reduce the chances that this will describe you during your freshman year. Use the first space for the first concern, the second space for the second concern and so on.

Participants were then provided four options to list the strategies they will be using to obtain these feared sexual selves.

Sexual possible selves (T2). Participants' SPS and strategies were collected again at the end of their first semester (T2) to examine changes in salient SPS expectations and fears using the same SPS measure as T1; however the prompt was adjusted to focus on the next upcoming semester (i.e., Spring 2017).

Analyses

Open-ended response coding. Our study aimed to examine and code participants' open-ended responses of their expected and feared SPS, along with the associated behavioral strategies, at the beginning of the fall 2016 semester (T1) and end of fall 2016 semester (T2). Our coding was guided by previous SPS examinations (Anders et al., in press) and the qualitative methodology of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). First, two independent coders (i.e., Co-PIs of this study) carefully examined participants' T1 responses for recurring topics or themes. From these identified themes, keywords (i.e., units; Krippendorff, 2013) were created as the basis for developing coding categories of the participants' responses (e.g., sexual health) for expected SPS, feared SPS, and associated behavioral strategies. Upon agreement of category saturation by the two coders, definitions were created and referenced for future coding. Using these identified coding categories, the two coders separately coded participants' responses (beginning with expected SPS) and then met to compare responses. Any disagreements were discussed until agreement on the appropriate category was reached. T1 coder reliability was high at 97.0%. Upon completion of T1 coding, the coders examined participants' responses at T2 following the same coding technique and allowing category variance between T1 and T2 to emerge (e.g., one additional feared SPS category emerged at T2). Coder reliability at T2 was high at 94.5%. For both T1 and T2, common qualitative research techniques were utilized throughout the analyses to help avoid biases and to reach saturation (Creswell, 2007). These techniques included: memoing, use of multiple coders, and calculating inter-coder reliability (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative analyses. To address our third research question (RQ3), comparisons between the participants' SPS categories at the beginning of the semester (T1) and at the end of the semester (T2) were examined. Frequency examinations of the specific categories were analyzed to examine differences between which sexual themes were prevalent at T1 versus T2, per participants' responses. Descriptive statistics regarding the frequency of participants that changed their expectations and fears was conducted, along with comparisons of which categories were most salient for this population at each time point. Significant differences in salient themes between these two time points could be indicative of the fluidity of sexuality goals or fears during this developmental transition.

Results

Sexual Possible Selves

Our qualitative content analysis revealed variations in participants' sexual expectations, fears, and associated behavioral strategies at both T1 and T2. At T1, eight categories were found for expected SPS, five categories for expected SPS strategies, six categories for feared SPS, and six categories for feared SPS strategies. At T2, nine categories were found for expected SPS, five categories for expected SPS strategies, seven categories for feared SPS, and six categories for feared SPS strategies. SPS categories were reported on a continuous scale with zero indicating that no SPS was reported for that category and each one point increase representing a SPS for that category. Although participants were limited to four open-ended response options, multiple SPS could be reported and coded in each box.

Expected SPS. We first examined participants' responses to expected SPS at T1 (Table 6). SPS at T1 focused on expectations for the fall 2016 semester (i.e., their first semester in

college). On average, participants reported 1.77 expectations ($SD = 1.17$; $range = 0-5$). Eight categories emerged for expected SPS including *abstinence* (e.g., “Not to have sexual intercourse”), *explore/experiment* (e.g., “To have sex, with both guys and girls”), *quantity* (e.g., “To have more sex”), *interpersonal relationship* (e.g., “To meet someone with my values”), *sexual health/well-being* (e.g., “To be safe and cautious”), *decreasing/avoidant* (e.g., “Not to have meaningless hookups”), *conditional sex* (e.g., “To have sex after I get settled in my classes”) and *no expectations* (e.g., “Not much”).

We then examined responses from our subsample of participants who completed T2. SPS at T2 focused on participants’ expectations for the spring 2017 semester (i.e., their second semester in college). Emergent categories were not based on previous coding at T1 and instead were allowed to emerge naturally to limit priming biases. Emergent themes were fairly stable as all of the expected SPS categories from T1 were also found at T2. On average, participants reported 1.53 expectations ($SD = 1.03$; $range = 1-5$). Nine expected SPS categories emerged at T2 including *abstinence* (e.g., “To not have sex”), *explore/experiment* (e.g., “To get to know more about my sexuality”), *quantity* (e.g., “To get laid”), *interpersonal relationship* (e.g., “I am expecting to have one committed partner”), *sexual health/well-being* (e.g., “To be careful about when I have sex and who with”), *decreasing/avoidant* (e.g., “Decrease how many sexual partners I have”), *conditional sex* (e.g., “To still do it if I meet someone I like and find attractive”), and *no expectations* (e.g., “None”). An additional category at T2 was found and focused on participants maintaining their current sexual self over the spring 2017 semester (i.e., *maintain*, e.g., “It to be the same as this semester”).

Feared SPS Categories. We next examined participants' responses to sexual selves they were hoping to avoid (i.e., feared SPS) during the fall 2016 semester (i.e., T1; TABLE 8). On average, participants reported 1.83 feared SPS ($SD = 1.16$, $range = 0-5$). Six feared SPS were found at T1 including *abstinence* (e.g., "Losing my virginity"), *sexual health/well-being* (e.g., "Unwanted diseases or pregnancy"), *sexual assault/coercion* (e.g., "Being taken advantage of when intoxicated"), *self-focus* (e.g., "Being known as a slut"), *increased sexual risk* (e.g., "Having a one night stand"), and *no fears* (e.g., "No"). Overall, our study indicated less variance in participants' sexual fears with many participants focusing on sexual health related fears during their first semester.

Following coding of T1 feared SPS, we then examined feared SPS within the subsample of participants who responded at T2. Participants' responses continued to show variance when reporting fears for the upcoming spring 2017 semester. Similar to expected SPS, participants reported the same feared selves during the second data collection as T1, with one additional category emerging. Overall, seven feared SPS categories emerged at T2 including *abstinence* (e.g., "Being sexually active"), *sexual health/well-being* (e.g., "HIV/AIDs"), *sexual assault/coercion* (e.g., "To avoid being talked into sex by a boy"), *self-focus* (e.g., "Regretting being with someone"), *increased sexual risk* (e.g., "Sex with unfamiliar people"), and *no fears* (e.g., "Nothing else comes to mind"). An additional category emerged at T2 and focused on specific partner characteristics participants were hoping to avoid in the future (i.e., *partner focus*; e.g., "Drunk guys").

Expected strategies. Participants were also asked to report whether or not they were actively engaging in specific behaviors or strategies to attain their expected and avoid their

feared SPS in the fall 2016 semester (T1) and spring 2017 semester (T2). Responses for T1 varied in specificity and plausibility for attainment of associated SPS (Table 7). On average, participants reported 2.03 expected SPS strategies ($SD = 1.48$; $range = 0-8$). Five themes within the strategies at T1 emerged and included: *abstinence* (e.g., “Avoiding compromising or tempting situations”), *sexual health/well-being* (e.g., “Using condoms and taking birth control”), *making opportunities* (e.g., “Going on Tinder”), *restricting boundaries* (e.g., “Not messing around as much”), and *no strategy* (e.g., “Nothing special”).

We then examined participants’ responses at T2 using the subsample that responded at both time points. Participants reported an average of 1.58 expected SPS strategies ($SD = 1.02$; $range = 1-5$) at T2. The same five themes within the strategies at T1 emerged at T2 including: *abstinence* (e.g., “Not engage in sexual activity”), *sexual health/well-being* (e.g., “Using condoms more”), *making opportunities* (e.g., “Found a guy to have regular sex with”), *restricting boundaries* (e.g., “Slowing down sexual activity”), and *no strategy* (e.g., “Absolutely nothing”).

Feared strategies. Participants’ responses to whether or not they were actively engaging in any strategies to avoid their feared SPS were examined at T1 and T2 (TABLE 9). On average, participants reported 1.95 feared SPS strategies ($SD = 1.65$; $range = 0-8$) for fall 2016. Six themes within the feared SPS strategies emerged and included: *abstinence* (e.g., “Not putting myself in situations where something could lead to sex”), *sexual health/well-being* (e.g., “I use protection”), *thoughtful/informed decisions* (e.g., “Make smart choices”), *self-assertion/protection* (e.g., “Be aware of how much I drink and make sure I am not alone with a guy I just met”), *restricting boundaries* (e.g., “Not trying to flirt with a bunch of people”), and *no strategy* (e.g., “No”).

Participants' responses at T2 were then examined and an average 2.22 feared SPS strategies ($SD = 1.27$; $range = 0-5$) were reported. Six themes within the feared SPS strategies emerged at T2 and included: *abstinence* (e.g., "I am practicing abstinence"), *sexual health/well-being* (e.g., "Protection and talking with my partner beforehand"), *thoughtful/informed decisions* (e.g., "I am considering sex to be a serious thing and do not just have it freely"), *self-assertion/protection* (e.g., "Practicing standing my guard"), *restricting boundaries* (e.g., "Not drinking"), and *no strategy* (e.g., "Nothing right now")

Changes in SPS Across Semester

Frequency comparisons of reported categories showed that participants' expected SPS and feared SPS changed in frequency over their first semester in college. Specifically, changes in the most and least frequent categories occurred for expected SPS, expected SPS strategies, and feared SPS strategies (Table 10).

Expected SPS. When examining expected SPS categories, *abstinence* was the most frequently reported category at both time points (26.3%; 20.0%, respectively); however, the *decreasing/avoidant* expectation was also the most frequently category reported at T2 (20.0%). In contrast, the category of *decreasing/avoidant* expectations was the least frequently reported at T1 (10.5%), as was *interpersonal relationship* (10.5%). At T2, the least frequently reported category was *explore/experiment* (7.5%). Expected SPS strategies remained fairly stable, with *no expected strategy* being the most frequently reported category for both T1 (46.7%) and T2 (35.0%). Additionally, *sexual health/well-being* strategies was the least frequently reported at both time points (21.7%; 15.0%, respectively); however, whereas *restricting boundaries* was

also the least frequently reported category at T1 (21.7%), this was no longer the case at T2 (25.0%).

Additionally this study sought to examine within person changes in expectations and fears as a participant transitioned into college and at the end of their first semester in college (RQ4). To address RQ3, we examined changes in participants' SPS across their first semester of college among the sample who reported at both T1 and T2 ($N = 40$; Table 10). Participants responses were dichotomized to (a) 0 = *No SPS in this category* and (b) 1 = *SPS in this category*, as the purpose was to examine whether or not they reported the same expectations and fears at both time points. Frequencies of changes were then examined based on number of participants who reported each SPS at (a) *T1 only* (i.e., SPS did not remain at T2), (b) *T2 only* (i.e., SPS developed at T2), and (c) *both T1 and T2* (i.e., SPS remained stable). Differences and percentages were only compared for those who reported at both time points.

The majority of participants (75%) had variations in at least one of their expected SPS across the first semester. For the category of *abstinence* four participants (10.0%) reported these expectations at T1 only, three participants (7.5%) reported these at T2 only, and five participants (12.5%) reported these at both T1 and T2. For the category of *explore/experiment*, six participants (15.0%) reported these expectations at T1, two participants (5.0%) at T2 only, and only one participant (2.5%) reported this expectation for both T1 and T2. For the category of *quantity*, four participants (10%) reported this expectation at T1 only, five participants (12.5%) at T2 only, and no participants reported quantity expectations at both time points. For the category of *interpersonal relationship*, four participants (10.0%) reported this expectation at T1, four participants (10.0%) at T2 and no participants reported relationship expectations at both

time points. For the category of *sexual health/well-being*, five participants (12.5%) reported these expectations at T1 only, two participants (5.0%) at T2 only, and four participants (10.0%) reported sexual health expectations at both time points. For the category of *decreasing/avoidant*, two participants (5.0%) reported this expectation at T1 only, five participants (12.5%) at T2 only, and three participants (7.5%) reported expectations to decrease or avoid sexual behaviors at both time points. For the category of *conditional sex*, nine participants (22.5%) reported these expectations at T1 only, two participants (5.0%) at T2 only, and two participants (5.0%) reported expectations for conditions around sex for both time points. For the category of *no expectations*, four participants (10.0%) reported not having expectations at T1 only, no participants reported this at T2 only, and two participants (5.0%) reported no expectations at both time points.

Feared SPS

Overall frequency comparisons of the categories indicated that feared SPS also remained fairly stable with *sexual health/well-being* fears being the most frequently reported at T1 (38.6%) and T2 (40.0%). Further, *no fears* category was the least frequently reported for both time points (4.0%; 5.0%, respectively). Feared SPS strategies remained stable with *sexual health/well-being* strategies being the most frequently reported at both T1 (36.0%) and T2 (40.0%). In contrast, *thoughtful/informed decision* was the least frequently reported strategy at T1 (13.3%), whereas *abstinence* strategies were the least frequently reported at T2 (15.0%).

Similar to expected SPS comparisons, this study sought to examine within person changes in feared SPS as participants transitioned into college and at the end of their first semester in college (RQ3; Table 10). Participants responses were again dichotomized to (a) 0 = *No SPS in this category* and (b) 1 = *SPS in this category*. Frequencies of changes were then

examined based on number of participants who reported each SPS at (a) *T1 only* (i.e., SPS did not remain at T2), (b) *T2 only* (i.e., SPS developed at T2), and (c) *both T1 and T2* (i.e., SPS remained stable).

Consistent with expected SPS, both continuity and change in feared SPS across the first semester were found; however, feared SPS appeared to be more stable than expected SPS as (62.0%) of participants had variations in at least one of their feared SPS. For the category of *abstinence*, no participants reported these fears at T1 only, two participants (5.0%) reported these fears at T2 only, and five participants (12.5%) reported fears around abstinence at T1 and T2. For the category of *sexual health/well-being*, four participants (10.0%) reported these fears at T1 only, four participants (10.0%) reported these fears at T2 only, and 12 participants (30.0%) reported fears around sexual health at both time points. For the category of *sexual assault/coercion*, 10 participants (25.0%) reported these fears at T1, two participants (5.0%) at T2, and five participants (12.5%) reported sexual assault fears at both time points. For the category of *self-focus*, five participants (12.5%) reported these fears at T1, two participants (5.0%) at T2, and three participants (7.5%) reported self-focused fears at both time points. For the category of *increased sexual risk*, six participants (15.0%) reported these fears at T1 only, seven participants (17.5%) at T2 only, and three participants (7.5%) reported fears around increased sexual risk at both time points. For the category of *no fears*, one participant (2.5%) reported not having fears at T1 only, two participants (5.0%) at T2 only, and no participants reported not having any fears at both time points (Table 10).

Discussion

This study extended previous SPS research by examining changes in a sample of college students' expectations and fears across the first semester of college. First semester college students are transitioning into the life course period of emerging adulthood (ages 18-25). Emerging adulthood is a time of exploration wherein changes in identity development, including sexual identity development, may frequently occur (Arnett, 2015). Sexual identity development is defined as the individual and social processes in which individuals acknowledge and define their sexual preferences, needs, and values (Worthington et al., 2002). One way in which to examine changes in sexual development is by considering an individual's SPS (Anders et al., in press). SPS is a narrowing of the theory of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) to focus on facets of sexuality. SPS encompass individuals' expectations for and fears of sexual selves they see for themselves in the proximal future (Anders et al., in press). As SPS examine expectations and fears in the proximal future (i.e., typically a year out) and can be indicative of salient themes during that specific time point, utilizing this approach to examining sexuality during developmental periods such as emerging adulthood may be beneficial in understanding trends in sexual expectations and development over time. Research has examined trends in sexual engagement across college (e.g., Fielder et al., 2013; Roberson, Olmstead, & Fincham, 2015) and expectations of peers' sexual engagement (e.g., Barriger & Velez-Blasini, 2013; Fielder & Carey, 2010); however, limited research has examined changes in expectations around internalized sexuality (e.g., SPS) and sexual engagement over time. Our study contributed to this research by replicating and extending previous SPS studies by examining changes in SPS over the first semester in college.

Sexual Possible Selves

To address our first and second research questions (RQ1 & RQ2), we examined emergent themes within emerging adults' expected SPS, feared SPS, and behavioral strategies for their first semester in college. As SPS research is fairly limited and exploratory, our study served as a follow up examination to Anders and colleagues' (in press) exploration of first semester students' SPS. Specifically, our study considered similarities and differences in emergent expected and feared themes from a different sample of first semester students. Findings from our study confirmed several shared categories, including *abstinence*, *interpersonal relationship*, *sexual health/well-being*, *explore/experiment*, *increased sexual risk*, *self-focus* (i.e., reputation), and *sexual assault/coercion*. Frequency comparison findings were also the same as Anders and colleagues (in press), with *abstinence* related expectations and *sexual health* related fears being the most salient for our sample.

Similar to Anders and colleagues (in press), abstinence related expectations were the most frequently reported category in this sample at both T1 and T2. Abstinence focused research among college student samples is limited (Sprecher & Tregar, 2015), as many researchers emphasize and study the behavioral trends and increased sexual risk associated with non-committed sexual behaviors (e.g., Fielder & Carey, 2010; Roberson et al., 2015). However, one study by Sprecher and Treagar (2015) examined college student's decisions for practicing abstinence in college over a 23-year longitudinal study. This study identified that the most frequently reported reasons for practicing abstinence focused on either lack of a long-term romantic relationship or fears of negative sexual health outcomes (e.g., fear of pregnancy; Sprecher & Treagar, 2015). Findings from our study are consistent with this study and extend

SPS research through the emergence of the *conditional sex* category (e.g., “Not to have any unless I am in a committed relationship”). Future research would benefit from a qualitative examination of the reasoning behind expected and feared SPS, including abstinence, as it may provide insight into variations in abstinent related expectations. Further, abstinence related strategies were found to decrease at T2. This decrease may be reflective of either: (a) changes in students who adopted this abstinence related identity not having strategies to attain these goals, or (b) navigating abstinence during their first semester has allowed students to refine their behavioral strategies to fewer but more effective strategies (i.e., plausible strategies; Oyserman et al., 2011).

Further, paralleling Anders and colleagues (in press), *sexual health/well-being* feared SPS were the most frequently reported fear for this sample. These sexual health fears mainly focused on negative sexual health outcomes, such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancy, and fears of engaging in negative sexual health behaviors (e.g., “unprotected sex”). Fears about negative sexual health outcomes may be salient for multiple reasons. First, the physiological manifestations of sexual health consequences (e.g., STIs) are often emphasized within comprehensive sexual education (McCave, 2007). While pregnancy rates during adolescence and emerging adulthood have continued to decrease, STI rates among college attending emerging adults continue to remain prevalent (Manlove, Welte, Wildsmith, & Barry, 2014).

Although similarities between most frequently reported expected SPS and feared SPS categories were found between these two studies, we also found differences in the importance of other categories within our study. For example, a greater proportion of students reported fears

around sexual assault than the previous SPS study (12.1% versus 39.7% for our sample), and the emergence of a sexual coercion theme was not found (Anders et al., in press). Overall, our study indicated that *sexual assault/coercion* was a common concern for students during their first semester in college. This finding is not surprising given the continued prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses (e.g., 20-25% of women; Exner & Cummings, 2011) and recent media exposure (e.g., “People v. Turner”) is emphasizing sexual assault as an important topic to be addressed within college student populations. An interesting finding from our study in addition to concerns about sexual assault or rape, they also discussed concerns around explicit or implicit sexual coercion (e.g., “being pressured”). Often these participants reported fears around pressure by peers to engage in behaviors in which they are not comfortable (e.g., “feeling pressured into it by someone I really like”). Various forms of sexual coercion (e.g., verbal coercion) have been reported as highly prevalent among college students (Jozkowski, Peterson, Sanders, Dennis, & Reece, 2014); however, discussions of sexual coercion are less likely to be highlighted in media exposure (e.g., news) or sexual education (Jozkowski et al., 2014). Education programs focused on rape prevention may miss these coercive forms of sexual aggression, particularly within romantic relationships, as they can be considered consensual (Jozkowski et al., 2014). Education programs directly address this form of sexual aggression, and should continue teaching skills related to sexual negotiations (e.g., condom efficacy) to help protect against sexual coercion and emphasizing sexual consent education.

Changes Over Time

We addressed our third research question (RQ3) by examining changes in students’ expected and feared SPS across the first semester in college. Previous research has shown that

individuals' sexual behaviors (Roberson et al., 2015) and expectations (Stinson, 2010) may change throughout college, particularly during the first semester (Fielder & Carey, 2010). College is a period of transitions and identity exploration for emerging adults (Arnett, 2015). Specifically, emerging adults often experience a series of new life course changes (e.g., transitioning into college) and exposure to new environments or norms (e.g., college sex culture). During the first semester, individuals become exposed to and integrated into various cultures on campus that may influence or solidify the perceptions and meanings that they hold (e.g., Olmstead, Anders, & Conrad, in press). These changes help shape the internalized sexual selves that are most prominent for the individual and can be reflective of their current life stage. One's sense of self, including sexual selves, is thought to encompass both continuity and change wherein self and identity can both change and remain stable over time (Frazier et al., 2000).

Despite the importance of examining sexuality across time, the majority of sexual behavior research has been conducted through cross-sectional designs (see Zimmer-Gembeck & Helfand, 2008 for exceptions), and limited attention has been given to sexual identity development during emerging adulthood using a longitudinal design. Specifically, previous SPS literature is limited as it has only examined first semester college students' expectations and fears using a cross-sectional approach (see Anders et al., in press). Our study addresses this gap by examining SPS using a short-term longitudinal design. Findings from our study indicated both continuity and change in students' sexual expectations and fears across their first semester in college. Specifically, our study found that although the emergence of the majority of SPS categories remained the same across the semester (with the exception of two new categories at

T2), the frequencies of many these themes changed from the beginning to the end of the first semester.

Following recent trends in the sexual behaviors of emerging adults, participants reported expectations for exploring and experimenting during the first semester of college. The developmental period of emerging adulthood provides a period of moratorium, wherein individuals are afforded opportunities for exploration and experimentation prior to taking on adult roles (Arnett, 2015). The first year of college has been shown to have the highest rates of hooking up (Roberson et al., 2015), particularly as students transition and get settled into college life (Fielder et al., 2013). Reports of *explore/experiment* related SPS from our sample may be reflective of either an opportunity to explore sexual preferences (i.e., sexual identity development) or expectations guided by perceptions of socially normative behaviors on college campuses (i.e., Social Norms Theory; Berkowitz, 2004). Research examining descriptive norms (i.e., perceptions of behavior) and injunctive norms (i.e., perceptions of social acceptance; Barriger & Velez-Blasini, 2013) on college campuses has shown an overestimation of these norms by emerging adults (i.e., pluralistic ignorance; Lambert et al., 2003). Further, these misperceptions can be influential on college students' own behaviors and attitudes (Fielder & Carey, 2010). However, our findings also indicated that expectations for *explore/experiment* SPS decreased over the first semester. Possible selves are often grounded or influenced by one's social environments, wherein others, such as peers, may serve as models or guides for normative possible selves (Oyserman & Markus, 1990b). These changes in exploration expectations may be reflective of students' integration and exposure to *actual* college norms (e.g., lower estimations

of exploring; Fielder & Carey, 2010) and new peer models rather than *perceived* norms and models.

Expectations around interpersonal relationships were a salient theme reported by students at both time points; however, our study indicated developmental changes in these expectations, as the *same* participants did not articulate these SPS across the two time points (i.e., no participants reported interpersonal relationship SPS at T1 and T2). This finding may be reflective of the current romantic relationship trend of *serial monogamy* occurring among emerging adults (Renerus & Uecker, 2011). Serial monogamy refers to individuals engaging in a series of brief and unstable, yet committed romantic relationships (Renerus & Uecker, 2011). These brief romantic relationships may be important to emerging adults' SPS as they provide an opportunity to explore sexual and romantic preferences before getting into long-term committed relationships (e.g., marriage).

These changes in *interpersonal relationship* SPS may also be explained by the lack of behavioral strategies articulated by participants at both time points. Although simply having an expectation around a future oriented self (i.e., possible self) can increase the likelihood of goal attainment (Markus & Nurius, 1986), the articulation of an associated behavioral pathway for attaining this future oriented self may be a better indicator of successful self achievement (Oyserman et al., 2004). The lack of behavioral strategies by our students' may be associated with changes in interpersonal relationship expectations at T2 (i.e., the same students not articulating this expected SPS) or even changes in interpersonal relationship status. As emerging adults are experiencing these series of committed relationships and emphasizing the importance of romantic relationships on their sexual selves, sexual education programs would benefit from

teaching first semester students specific strategies for navigating sexuality within romantic relationships. These education programs could focus on both relationship strengthening and sexual health behaviors (e.g., condom negotiation in relationships). Overall, findings from our study indicated that first semester college students' sexual expectations and fears are continuous and developmentally changing.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of our study. First, attrition for our longitudinal study was substantial, as approximately 48.7% of our sample at T1 did not respond to our survey at T2. Although no significant demographic differences were found between those who dropped out and those who did not, variations in frequency comparisons between T1 and T2 may be reflective of this attrition. Additionally, the smaller sample size may have limited claims of saturation in T2 categories. Our sample was also not randomly sampled and was fairly homogeneous. Participants identified predominately as White/non-Hispanic, female, and heterosexual. This homogeneity limits the generalizability of findings, including relevance of emergent themes for sexual minority emerging adults. Further, our sample focused solely on first semester college students; thus, our findings may not be applicable to individuals who are in their later years in college, as well as emerging adults who do not attend college. Future research should collect a more heterogeneous sample to increase the generalizability of findings regarding the variance of expected and feared SPS. Additionally,

Second, due to the online nature of our study, we were unable to employ common qualitative techniques such as “member checking” (i.e., clarification of participants' responses with participant; Creswell, 2007), which may constrain our interpretations of the participants'

SPS. Further, participants were recruited from a specific behavioral sciences program (i.e., Psychology) at a single, large public university in the Southeastern U.S. Our study was likely affected by sampling bias due to limited recruitment of those from a more religious region and self-selection into the study. Future research would benefit from reducing sampling bias by using random sampling, recruiting participants from an array of introductory level courses across colleges, and recruiting participants from multiple regions across the U.S.

Implications

Findings from our study address several limitations in previous SPS research and hold important implications for future sexuality research and sexual education programs. The longitudinal design of our study allowed us to examine changes in salient SPS themes across the first semester rather than simply examining SPS at one time point. Possible selves are believed to be both dynamic and stable, wherein changes in expected and feared selves are reflective of contextual exposure, but continuous selves may be reflective of stable identity values (Frazier et al., 2000). By examining more than one time point, our study allowed us to observe continuity of sexual selves across the first semester while also identifying new, relevant categories such as *maintain*. This examination allows us to better understand how internalized expectations and fears change as emerging adults become integrated into various college cultures on campus; however, future research on SPS should continue examining continuity and change in sexual expectations and fears. SPS research would benefit from a longitudinal examination of changes in SPS across college (i.e., each college year). Previous research has indicated changes in sexual behaviors in each year of college (e.g., hooking up; Roberson et al., 2015), thus examining SPS each year in college may help to explain differences in these behavioral patterns. For example,

decreases in the frequency of reported *explore/experiment* SPS as students get older may be indicative of beginning to achieve sexual identity commitment. Further, sexual identity development often occurs during the stages of adolescence and emerging adulthood (Worthington et al., 2002; Arnett, 2015). Future research would benefit from longitudinally examining the relationship between sexual identity development and salient themes within sexual possible selves, particularly during the period of emerging adulthood.

Extensions and explorations of SPS using alternative samples and methodologies would also be beneficial for sexuality research during the period of emerging adulthood. As emerging adulthood is considered a period of exploration prior to adopting adult roles (e.g., career; Arnett, 2015), scholars (e.g., Cote, 2014; Hendry & Kloep, 2007) have questioned the universal nature of emerging adulthood, particularly for individuals outside of post-secondary institutions. Non-college attending emerging adults may not be afforded the same moratorium as college attending emerging adults. Research has shown differences in perceptions of identity development and role deferment between these samples (Hendry & Kloep, 2010; Reifman, Arnett, & Colwell, 2007); however, limited research has examined sexual expectations and avoidance differences between these groups. Future research should utilize a comparative study to examine differences in salient sexual selves among a group of college attending versus non-college attending emerging adults. Implications from this research may help to inform community based sexual education programs or exposure for emerging adults outside of post-secondary institutions. Further, future research would benefit from examining the developmental influences on SPS using qualitative methods, which would provide insight as to *why* individuals hold various expectations and fears regarding their sexuality. A qualitative examination of these influences would provide greater insight into

beneficial areas of education or interventions (e.g., family exposure), along with utilization of these influences within sexual health education (e.g., addressing pluralistic ignorance of peers).

Our study also holds implications for sexual education among emerging adult populations. Sexuality research often examines the association between emerging adults' sexuality and behavioral outcomes (e.g., Fielder & Carey, 2010); however, this form of research is limited in examining the association between individualized sexual expectations and the behavioral pathways used to attain these expectations (i.e., strategies). Our findings emphasized gaps in participants' utilization of behavioral strategies for specific expected and feared SPS categories. Specifically, our findings showed that many participants did not have behavioral strategies to help them attain goals around sexuality in relationships, decreasing or avoiding specific sexual behaviors, and decreasing negative reputation outcomes. These gaps were most evident at the end of their first semester (T2). College campuses would benefit from implementing sexual education programs that are available throughout the college experience. Multi-part programs, such as utilizing a sexual possible selves approach, would account for developmental changes in sexual expectations and fears, rather than treating sexuality as a stable developmental experience. This approach allows educators to specifically address individual gaps in strategies that may emerge based on developmental changes, and increase the likelihood of an individual attaining their future sexual selves (Oyserman et al., 2002).

CHAPTER 4:

In-depth Qualitative Examination of Sexual Possible Selves and Strategies of First Semester College Students: How Sexual Possible Selves are Developed During the Transition to College

Abstract

Emerging adulthood is a time of identity exploration and experimentation (Arnett, 2015); however, little attention has been given to examining developmental influences on internalized sexual expectations and fears (i.e., sexual possible selves; Anders, Olmstead, & Johnson, in press) during emerging adulthood. Further, these examinations have been limited to data collection through online surveys. The purpose of this study was to replicate and extend sexual possible selves research (SPS) using a sample of first semester college attending emerging adults ($N = 35$) using semi-structured qualitative interviews. Our study examined the developmental influences on expected and feared SPS to better understand why various internalized expectations develop. Interviews were conducted during the first four weeks of the fall 2016 semester and were analyzed using Applied Thematic Analysis (ATA). Major themes within expected SPS included *sex and commitment, relationship focus, delaying sexual engagement, taking a passive approach to sex, abstinence, and plans for sexual engagement*. Themes within feared SPS included *sexual assault/coercion, reputation, sexual health, engaging in hooking up, and identity loss*. Major influences on participants' SPS included family, peers, religion, media, college culture, alcohol and parties, and past experiences. Participants also expressed expectations for and engagement in sexual identity exploration during their first semester. Implications for emerging adult sexuality research, sexual education and intervention programs are discussed.

Introduction

The period of adolescence is considered a time of identity development, wherein adolescents are afforded a moratorium to explore various facets of their current and future selves

prior to adulthood (Erikson, 1950; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006); however, due to recent economic and educational shifts, some scholars argue that this moratorium has continued into early adulthood, and has since been referred to as emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2015). Emerging adulthood (ages 18-25) is a period of relative freedom from responsibilities associated with adulthood (e.g., having a family) wherein individuals are able to explore aspects of their identity, typically in a higher education setting (e.g., college; Arnett, 2015). During this period, emerging adults often transition from their familial home and parental influences to settings where they are required to become more independent, autonomous individuals; however, this period is also thought to be a time wherein emerging adults are influenced by their perceptions of cultural norms and peer behaviors in college environments (i.e., pluralistic ignorance; Fielder & Carey, 2010; Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003). Evidence suggests that these perceptions may influence involvement in various cultures and behaviors in college, including in the realm of sexuality (Barriger & Velez-Blasini, 2013; Fielder & Carey, 2010).

Recent trends in sexuality research have focused on how expectations of sexual norms or peers' behaviors shape college students' casual sex behaviors during the period of emerging adulthood (e.g., hooking up; Fielder & Carey, 2010; Stinson, 2010). The expectations of normative sexual behaviors within society, and specifically of peers, have been referred to as sexual expectations (Stinson, 2010); however, recent research has expanded upon this expectation literature by focusing away from external sexual motivators (e.g., expectations of peer behaviors), and instead focusing on how expectations of oneself may serve as motivation to engage in or avoid specific sexual outcomes (i.e., sexual possible selves; Anders, Olmstead, & Johnson, in press). Sexual possible selves (SPS) attend to the sexual selves an individual expects

to become or hopes to avoid becoming in the proximal future (i.e., typically in the next year).

These types of selves are considered to be motivators for behavioral change (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006) and are typically representative of one's current developmental stage (Oyserman, Bybee, Terry, & Hart-Johnson, 2004). Recent evidence suggested that examining the content of SPS can provide insight into important themes within college students' sexual development, particularly as emerging adults make the transition into the college environment (Anders et al., in press).

Despite these important contributions, the research examining SPS has focused primarily on *what* are emerging adults' expectations and fears (i.e., the content), and has yet to examine *how* these SPS identities are developed (e.g., through previous experience) or *why* their articulated selves are important to their sexuality (e.g., religious values). Examining the development of emerging adults' SPS would provide insight into specific influences that shape their future oriented sexual beliefs and likely hold important implications for influential areas in which to implement sexual education. To date, SPS have only been examined through cross-sectional survey methods, which may limit the information collected regarding salient sexual themes, particularly when trying to understand the developmental processes of how sexual expectations and fears form. Given these limitations, the purpose of this study was to extend SPS research by examining how college men and women develop the sexual selves they expect to become and hope to avoid becoming during their first semester at college through in-depth semi-structured interviews. Specifically, we were interested in identifying and examining: (a) prominent categories of SPS and fears, (b) associated strategies for achieving and avoiding these SPS and fears within each group, and (c) emergent themes in the development of SPS.

The Life Course Period of Emerging Adulthood

Recent shifts in economic and social trends, including increases in postsecondary education attendance, have led to the identification of the period between the ages of 18 to 25 where individuals have the opportunity to defer adult roles (e.g., marriage) to continue exploring facets of their identity (e.g., love, work, and sexuality; Arnett, 2015). During the period of emerging adulthood, individuals typically experience relative independence from normative social expectations and embrace opportunities for experimentation (Arnett, 2015). Emerging adults are thought to be distinct from adolescents as they typically transition from their familial home, often to higher education settings (about 70%; Arnett, 2015), and will become more autonomous from their parents. In particular, the transition to college has been shown to be an influential time on emerging adults' development, as this transition has been associated with increased engagement in risk behaviors such as alcohol use and risky sexual behavior (e.g., Fielder, Walsh, Carey, & Carey, 2013). During this transition, many emerging adults will experience shifts in their ideals, beliefs, and behaviors as they are exposed to various cultures and subcultures on college campuses, including shifts in sexual beliefs and behaviors (Kenyon & Koerner, 2009). Recent evidence suggested that first year students have the highest hookup rates compared to those more advanced in college (Roberson, Olmstead, & Fincham, 2015).

Sexuality in Emerging Adulthood

The period of emerging adulthood is thought to be a time of exploration and experimentation in a variety of areas, including the realm of sexuality (Arnett, 2015). Much attention has been given to sexual exploration and experimentation that occurs on college campuses (e.g., hooking up; Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012). Although

adolescents engage in sexual behaviors prior to college (Fielder & Carey, 2010), the transition to college and integration into the various sexual cultures (e.g., hookup culture; Garcia et al., 2012) on campus may be an influential time in establishing patterns of sexual or health related behaviors (Fielder & Carey, 2010; Olmstead, Roberson, Pasley, & Fincham, 2013). Emerging adult sexuality research has consistently showed that college is a time wherein individuals consider it socially normative to engage in a series of non-committed sexual encounters or a series of brief, committed romantic relationships (i.e., serial monogamy; Regnerus & Uecker, 2011). These relationships provide opportunities to explore various facets of sexuality prior to becoming involved in more long-term, committed relationships such as marriage.

Sexual expectations. One influence on the trends in emerging adults' sexual behavior is through their perceptions or expectations of "socially normative" sexuality on college campuses. Recent evidence suggested that emerging adults tend to overestimate many sexual norms in college, including how often their peers engage in sexual behaviors (i.e., descriptive norms) and the level of peer acceptance of various sexual behaviors (i.e., injunctive norms; Fielder & Carey, 2010; Lambert et al., 2003). Further, these overestimations have been associated with an increase in acceptance of and actual engagement in casual sex behavior (Barriger & Velez-Blasini, 2013; Fielder & Carey, 2010; Napper, Kenney, & LaBrie, 2015). These findings suggest that an individual's sexual motivation may be affected by external influences, such as peers or social norms; however, less is known about how internalized sexual motivations may influence one's sexual behavioral.

The Theory of Possible Selves

One way to examine emerging adults' internalized motivations, including in the realm of sexuality, is using the theory of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman et al., 2004). Possible selves are internalized expectations or fears for oneself in the future and focus on the selves one hopes to become, expects to become, or hopes to avoid becoming (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves are associated with future behaviors and outcomes including identity development and goal attainment, and are thought to be reflective of one's current developmental life stage (Oyserman & James, 2009). From an early age individuals develop awareness of their current identity or facets of their selves (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). During childhood, an individual's selves are often simplistic and *presently* focused, or may be future oriented but fairly implausible (e.g., becoming an astronaut); however, as children develop into adolescents, they begin to focus on and develop ideations of their *future*, plausible identities or selves (e.g., become a college graduate; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). Further, research suggested an individual's possible selves are often developed through previous experiences, past behaviors, and current skills (Markus & Nurius, 1986) or are rooted in one's own ideals, aspirations, and values (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006).

Although possible selves are seen as individualized and self-motivated, construction of these future selves has been found to be inherently social in nature, as individuals often look to others as models for the development of their future selves (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006). Specifically, important others (e.g., parents) and social contexts play an important role in the creation and maintenance of possible selves, often helping or hindering attainment of these future oriented selves (Oyserman et al., 2004; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Oyserman, Johnson, &

James, 2011). Overall, it appears that the development of one's possible selves, including the motivations behind and influences on, may hold important implications for future attainment of these selves (Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006).

Sexual Possible Selves

Recent research has focused on narrowing the sexual expectation and possible selves literature by examining internalized motivations or identities in the realm of sexuality. This concept, referred to as SPS (Anders et al., in press), attends to the expected and feared sexual selves that individuals holds for themselves in the proximal future (i.e., typically a year out), along with specific behavioral strategies that individuals utilizes to attain or avoid these future oriented selves. Similar to previous studies, SPS may be reflective of current developmental period (e.g., emerging adulthood) and may hold important implications for which aspects of sexuality are most salient (Anders et al., in press). These sexual expectations and fears can serve as motivation to attaining future selves by providing goals or acting as guidelines that have been shown to increase likelihood of goal attainment (Oyserman et al., 2004). Despite the potential utility of SPS, particularly as a prospective enhancement for sexual education and intervention programs, there has been limited research on this topic.

A thorough review of the literature indicated just one study that examined the SPS of emerging adults (see Anders et al., in press). This study used a mixed-methods approach to examine the sexual expectations, fears, and strategies of a sample of first semester college men and women ($N = 282$). Anders and colleagues (in press) discovered the emergence of SPS themes including abstinence, physical/sexual health, sexual exploration, and interpersonal relationships. They also examined whether participants identified specific behavioral strategies

they were utilizing to attain (or avoid) these future selves. Although several of their participants reported expectations or fears for their future sexual self, a proportion (22.3%) were unable to provide a detailed strategy they would utilize to attain or avoid these selves. They also found differences based on sample demographics, including participant gender, intercourse experience, being in a romantic relationship, and religiosity.

Although this study provided insight into important themes within emerging adults' SPS, and highlighted the variations that exist in SPS based on demographic factors, it was limited in several ways. First, this study did not examine the motivations behind participants' SPS, and thus they were unable to explain *why* emerging adults are focusing on these specific expectations and fears. Second, although previous studies highlights the importance of social contexts and peer influences on the development of these selves, this study did not examine *how* emerging adults developed their future oriented expectations, including potential influences on goal development. Third, the SPS research would benefit from an in-depth examination (i.e., use of qualitative methods) of emerging adults' SPS, which would allow participants to expand upon and provide a detailed articulation of what specific expectations and fears they may hold for their future sexuality.

Current Study

The current study contributes to SPS research by examining the development of first year students' expected and feared SPS through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Specifically, we examined emergent themes within first year students' SPS and fears, and the accompanying strategies (or lack thereof) these groups articulate to achieving or avoiding their SPS. As previous research has focused solely on *what* are emerging adults' SPS, our study will extend our

current understandings of SPS by focusing on *why* and *how* these future oriented selves are developed among transitioning emerging adults. The findings from this study are likely reflective of important influences on sexual development. Further, findings regarding the development of first year students' SPS may hold important implications for key developmental or social contexts in which implementation of sexual interventions and/or education may be most beneficial. Our study was guided by two research questions developed from theory (life course theory and possible selves), previous research on SPS and sexuality in emerging adulthood, and a qualitative methodological approach:

RQ1: What themes emerged regarding first semester students' (a) expected sexual possible selves and strategies and (b) feared sexual possible selves and strategies?

RQ2: What did first semester students describe as influences on the development or construction of their (a) expected and (b) feared sexual possible selves?

Methods

Participants

Participants were 35 first semester college students recruited and interviewed from a large Southeastern university during the first four weeks of the fall 2016 (i.e., as they transitioned into college). The majority (80.6%) were women and on average 18.0 years of age ($SD = .23$; $range = 18-19$). Participants largely reported their race/ethnicity as White, non-Hispanic (72.2%), followed by Black/African American (13.9%), Asian American/Pacific Islander (11.1%), and Latino/a or Hispanic (2.8%). The majority of the sample (83.3%) identified as Heterosexual, followed by Bisexual (8.3%), and Gay/Lesbian (5.6%) and "Other" (2.8%; non-specified). Seventy five percent of participants reported as not being in a romantic relationship at

the time of the study, whereas 25% were in exclusive relationships. The sample was moderately religious with an average religious intensity score of 11.36 ($SD = 6.45$; 0-20 scale). The majority of the sample (66.7%) identified as holding Christian religious beliefs, followed by Agnostic (13.9%), Hindu (11.1%), and Jewish (0.03%)/Atheism (0.03%)/non-religious (0.03%).

Procedures

Upon institutional review board (IRB) approval, interviews were conducted during the first four weeks of the fall 2016 semester. Participants were recruited from introductory psychology courses (e.g., Psych 110) through the university's Department of Psychology's SONA system. Participation was voluntary, as students self-selected into this study, however they were offered course credit for participation. Participants were required to meet several inclusion criteria including: (a) between the ages of 18 and 25, (b) enrolled as a full-time undergraduate student (i.e., 12 hours), (c) registered as a student at the large, Southeastern university, and (d) in their first semester of coursework.

Upon arrival to the designated interview location (i.e., private conference room), participants were informed about the study's purpose and use of audio recording for transcription purposes. Participants were then presented with an informed consent form to read and sign. To maintain confidentiality, participants were asked to not use their name or name of others during the interview; however, if a name was used, then it was erased from the transcription. Data was collected through (a) an in-depth qualitative interviews and (b) a collection of demographic measures (offered at the end of the interview session to prevent potential priming effects of the participants' qualitative responses; Davies, Zhu, & Brantley, 2007). The qualitative interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview technique, allowing us to ask follow-up

questions throughout to elicit more detailed information from participants. These follow up and clarification questions addressed a limitation of previous SPS survey research (see Anders et al., in press). Further, we utilized other qualitative techniques such as a single interviewer (i.e., PI of this study), memoing, brief observations, and member checking throughout the interview to improve reliability of our study (Creswell, 2007). Interviews ranged in length from 13:24 to 54:24 minutes ($M = 31.4$ minutes). Responses to the demographic measures were collected immediately following the interviews.

Measure

Qualitative SPS interview. The SPS interview was conducted through an adaptation of the standard open-ended SPS questionnaire (see Anders et al., in press; originally adapted from Oyserman et al., 2004) to obtain detailed descriptions of participants' expected and feared SPS. Participants were asked a series of questions focused on eliciting information on (a) expected SPS, (b) feared SPS, (c) associated behavioral strategies, and (d) influences on sexual expectations and fears. Participants were first provided prompts of each question, given time to think about their response, and were asked about their SPS in an iterative back and forth discussion. Interviews first focused on participants' expected SPS by asking "Regarding sex, what do you expect to occur your first semester in college?" An open dialogue regarding the participant's expectation then occurred, including clarification questions or questions meant to elicit more detail until a detailed, saturated answer had occurred (i.e., participant does not provide any new information regarding the expectation and/or is determined by asking the participant if there is anything else they would like to say regarding this expectation; Creswell, 2007). Participants were then asked to discuss to describe if and what behavioral strategies they

were utilizing to attain this future self. Lastly, to better address and examine the developmental influences on participants' SPS, we asked the following: "Why do you think this is an expectation you hold for yourself? In other words, what do you think has led or influenced you to have this expected goal?" This process was then repeated to measure participants' feared SPS. Again, each question was discussed until saturation of the responses appeared complete.

Applied Thematic Analysis

Participants' interviews were first transcribed and then analyzed using applied thematic analysis (ATA; Guest et al., 2012). ATA is a form of exploratory analysis used to identify and examine themes within textual data and is thought to stem from a combination of several qualitative methods (e.g., grounded theory and phenomenology). This analytic approach has been found to be useful in capturing the complexities of participants' meanings through implicit and explicit themes within data, can be quantifiable (although is thought to move beyond word or frequency counts), and often uses emergent themes for an applied purpose such as solving practical problems (Guest et al., 2012). Additionally, ATA is exploratory in nature as it is often guided by research questions rather than hypotheses (e.g., as compared to content analysis); however, findings from the analyses can be used to create an *explanatory* model or as a guide for future research by generating specific hypotheses for future studies. The major facets of this form of analysis thought to differentiate it from other qualitative methodology (see Guest et al., 2012 for full comparison) include the following: (a) themes within the findings are content driven (e.g., What are your sexual expectations?), (b) specific codes/analytic categories are not predetermined prior to exploring the data, thus the codes and themes are derived from the data, (c) the data is often generated through more structured forms of data collection (e.g., semi-

structured interviews) and will often utilize purposive sampling (e.g., focus on first year college students), and (d) these analyses may be used for practical or applied research (e.g., creating SPS intervention programs).

Coding. Using ATA as a guide (Guest et al., 2012), interpretation of our in-depth interviews will be approached through the following steps. First, two researchers (i.e., first author and one faculty) read through the verbatim transcripts to become familiar with the overall subject matter throughout the participant's response. Second, we utilized an iterative process (i.e., reading text in batches and modifying as new information emerges) of examining the participant's response to identify major features or themes throughout the participant's interview. Specifically this was done through identifying repetitive concepts occurring within and/or between transcripts. As we utilized a semi-structured interview form of data collection, emergence of themes was identified in the explicit pre-conceived questions asked during the interview (e.g., what are your fears). This thematic approach can be referred to as text segmentation (Guest et al., 2012).

Within the text segments, the identified question helped guide theme emergence through developing a set of structural codes. These codes are a means to systematically sorting the observed meaning of the participants' responses into categories or identifications of relationships. Throughout this process, coders will refer back to the member checking that occurred during the interviews (i.e., discussion of correctly identified themes with the participant) to help develop these coding categories. Further, the two coders met weekly to discuss the emergence of themes and the creation of coding categories, until agreement was achieved. Coding categories were created for (a) expected SPS, (b) feared SPS, (c) influential

themes with the construction or development of the SPS, and (d) developmental lens. Using the identified coding categories, a coding of the SPS responses was then conducted to categorize each individual's responses and report sample size of each theme. These codes serve to examine commonalities, differences, and relationships within the responses, thus leading to an explanatory model of the findings. Common qualitative techniques were used to enhance the credibility and dependability (i.e., reliability) of the findings. We implemented structured reliability techniques guided by Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) including: (a) using multiple coders, (b) examining inter-coder agreement, (c) memoing of analytic steps and any changes made during the iterative processing of the data, and (d) using direct quotes from the analyses to support the researcher's interpretations and presentation of results in the manuscript.

Results

Expected SPS and Strategies

Sex and commitment. The vast majority of individuals ($n = 28$) expressed expectations of engaging in sex or sexual behaviors (i.e., often self defined and variant) only after establishing a committed, emotional connection. For example, Ashley K. stated, "But for me personally, I take sex as more of a...Not a religious experience per se, but more of a spiritual thing where you get connected to a person. And so, for me it's not worth it to just do it, and then move on." Although the main emphasis of these expectations was on establishing a meaningful connection, many participants described this connection establishing in the form of a romantic relationship. These participants often discussed restrictions around sexual intercourse engagement wherein sex should only occur after entering into a committed relationship. For example, Rachel B. stated, "I guess I just really expect to respect myself and to wait until I'm in a relationship to

have sex.” Further, Mary L. stated, “I was never one to just hook up with someone and be okay the next day going off my own way. It would always be an emotional connection with the other person. So it’s better to have someone who’s also committed than have someone who’s not committed.” Participants also emphasized the importance of figuring out your sexual self within the context of a relationship rather than casual sex behaviors. For example, Liz C. described the importance of exploring sexuality within an emotionally connected partner by saying “Most of it leads back to having emotional connection before sexual ‘cause I imagine that knowing what I want emotionally will also show what I want as far as my sexuality is what kind of preferences I have, things along those lines.”

Variances in what the individuals described as a romantic relationship (e.g., dating a few months versus marriage) did occur. For example, Emily W. stated, “You’ve probably been dating for a good bit. A couple months at least. That’s not always how it works out...”; however, the overarching expectation appeared to be a focus on establishing an emotional bond or connection before sexual intercourse would be even considered. Additionally, we also examined participants’ strategies they articulated they were using to attain these *sex and commitment* expected SPS. The majority of the strategies focused on restrictive behaviors (e.g., avoiding being alone with a guy) as a way of avoiding compromising their belief systems or values. For example, Sara J. implied she was using a restrictive strategy by stating, “I think a big thing is not hanging out with them alone. I think if I don’t want to pursue that kind of relationship, it would be better to be in group settings and stuff, and just making it clear that there’s nothing else I would want out of it.”

Relationship focused. Expectations around romantic relationship formation or continuation were often discussed by the participants ($n = 17$). In contrast to those who expressed plans to delay relationship formation until after the first semester, some participants discussed wanting to meet a partner and establish a committed relationship. Sally Q. stated, “But a first kiss would be nice, or a first boyfriend. So that would be cool.” Cassie M. described this hoped for expectation as, “I was maybe hoping a little bit to...if something develops with a guy that I meet, that would be nice, as I have not been in a relationship in a while. A steady pace would be a good thing for me.” However, when participants were asked whether or not they were actively engaging in behaviors to find a romantic partner, the majority indicated that they were not actively doing anything. Instead, the students discussed how they were just waiting until they met a partner who met specific relationship or partner characteristics. Participants often discussed not actively engaging in any strategies to find a relationship, but instead reported relationship formation after first establishing a friendship with an individual. For example, when asked about her expectations, Ashley K. expressed, “I’m more of the fate kind of person, so instead of actively looking, I like to think that everything’s in God’s hands. He’s gonna put somebody in my life that’ll be there and will be able to fill that.” Sara J. expressed “I wouldn’t be opposed to starting a relationship with someone if I had gotten to know them really well...I wouldn’t want to rush anything or rush into a relationship before I felt like I knew that person really well.”

Further, a quarter of the participants ($n = 9$) reported being in a romantic relationship at the time of the study. These participants often expressed expectations around continuing their

relationship during their first semester. For example, Mary L. reported, “During my first semester in college I expect to, hope to, stay in my committed relationship.”

Delaying sex. A proportion of the participants ($n = 12$) expressed expectations around delaying sexual engagement of any kind until later into the semester or after their first semester in college. For example, Megan T. stated, “Yeah, this semester I just wanna hold back and I'm sure things will pop up once I stay here for a while, but for my first semester I wanna make sure I just avoid the opportunity to do it.” Participants expressed wanting to wait until after their first semester so they could focus on the transition into school. Strategies for delaying sexual engagement often focused on restricting one-on-one interactions with potential partners and focusing on hanging out in group settings.

The participants frequently expressed expectations of delaying relationship formation, particularly for the first semester in college. Rachel B. described her reasoning for wanting to delay getting into a serious relationship as the following, “Cause it's new and we're meeting so many people. And, I don't know, I just feel like I don't wanna tie myself down. I wanna get to know...I just wanna keep my options open. I don't want to settle within the first year.” Themes within other participants reasoning for wanting to delay romantic relationship formation included taking the time to get to know themselves first and recently ending a previous romantic relationship. The majority of participants reported that they were not actively engaging in any strategies for delaying relationship formation.

Taking a passive approach. Several of the participants ($n = 14$) described having passive expectations towards sexual engagement for their first semester. Often participants emphasized that although they were not opposed to sexual engagement if the opportunity were to

arise, they were not actively seeking it and referenced the phrase, “If it happens, it happens”. For example, Jill D. when discussing her expectations around sex, she stated, “But I don't plan to go chasing for it. If it happens it happens but I'm not searching for someone to do that with.”

Additionally, Valerie G. stated, “I don't wanna spend all my energy into focusing on like, ‘Oh, I have to experience certain things.’ Just kinda go with the flow I guess and like, if something's gonna happen, kinda let it happen...” These passive expectations were also held towards relationship formation and sexual engagement in general. Ted N. described:

Maybe sometime in the spring semester, if I meet somebody during this first semester. I might pursue a further relationship with them. But sex, really, isn't something that's on my mind right now. If I were to get a girlfriend, that will be great, but if it just doesn't happen, it doesn't happen. I'm completely fine with that.

Additionally, several of the female participants described passive feelings towards engaging in sex in general. Descriptions of not being a “sexual” person were discussed. Kelly R. describes the feeling as “I've never had the desire to have sex, let's put it that way. I've never been sitting in class and been like, ‘When I get out of here, I'm gonna find my boyfriend. We're gonna have sex.’ I never want that...I think I'm probably one of the only people that's like that, but I just don't have the urge.” Additionally, Maddie S. describes it as “I feel like I don't worry about it [sex] or think about it as much as some people. It's not...I don't know, I guess I'm just really not a very sexual person...” The majority of participants reported not actively engaging in any strategies for taking a passive approach to sex, relationships, or sexual desire.

Plans for sex.. A smaller proportion of our sample ($n = 12$) expressed sexual expectations for engaging in a variety of sexual behaviors that fit the traditional hook up pattern

(Fielder & Carey, 2010; Roberson, Olmstead, & Fincham, 2015), and the emerging adulthood script (Arnett, 2015). For example, Tara A. stated, “But I expect there to be casual, random hookups.” Further Emily W. expressed:

So when I was in high school, a senior in high school about to graduate, I expected, "Oh, college is gonna be so crazy. I'm gonna have probably a lot of sex. Hopefully protected sex, I don't know. There's gonna be a lot of drinking and just partying." And I still maybe expect that to come in the following months and stuff, but so far it hasn't really happened. Haven't been any crazy parties or anything like that. But I'm expecting it to happen...

James O. also expressed this sentiment by stating, “But, I do expect to have at least a few sexual experiences. Once again, I’m not actively searching one out, but, I’m fine not really looking to have sex, really.” Strategies for engaging in sexual behaviors their first semester were focused on making opportunities for social interactions, including attending parties and finding someone they felt comfortable to potentially pursue a sexual relationship.

Similar to previous research on hooking up definitions (Olmstead, Conrad, & Anders, in press) definitional variances of what constituted casual sex or hooking up was prevalent; however, the majority implied that although they were planning to engage in casual sex behaviors, they explicitly stated they did not plan to have sexual intercourse in casual sex manners. Instead, Tara A. described the difference as, “Obviously, I’m gonna try to avoid that casual sex. Not the casual hookup, the casual sex...I definitely think there’s a difference between hooking up and having sex.” Further, Valerie G. described plans to engage in non-committed sex behaviors within a “friends with benefits” relationship in which she described as, “I guess more

of one person that you're not really emotionally tied to, but just kind of try stuff out with, I guess more like. So, you can trust them, but not have to be chained to them, I guess.”

Abstinence. The smallest group of participants ($n = 10$) expressed expectations for remaining abstinent during the first semester, and often until marriage. Sally Q. explicitly stated, “I expect, no sex in the equation. I heavily believe in no sex before marriage. So on that note, yeah none before, none in this semester unless I get married, but I don’t think that’s happening.” Another participant, Ruth Y., described expectations around remaining abstinent as, “I will be as pure as I am now by the end...I will not lose my virginity until I get married.” Participants discussed not only religious influences for wanting to remain abstinent, but also hoping to avoid the consequences associated with sexual engagement. For example, when discussing why he has this goal, Brian R. stated, “There are consequences, not even emotionally, but physically involved.” Strategies for attaining these abstinent future selves were focused on surrounding themselves with people that hold the same values as them to keep them on track, along with avoiding individuals of the opposite gender. These findings contrast previous SPS research that reported abstinence related SPS as the most frequently expressed goal for first semester participants (Anders et al., in press).

Feared SPS and strategies

Sexual assault/coercion. Similarly to previous SPS research (Anders et al., in press), themes around sexual assault/coercion were emergent. Specifically, a large proportion of the sample (both male and female) reported fears around being sexually assaulted or experiencing sexual coercion during their first semester ($n = 18$). Fears of sexual assault revolved around being raped, groped, or engaging in non-consensual sex. The majority of participants reported

this fear occurring within social settings such as parties, where alcohol was present. For example, Ted N. reported, “Well in case I ever do go out partying, I don’t ever wanna get to the point where I get blackout drunk, and then something happens to me while I’m sleeping, be it from a female or another male.” Many of the participants discussed alcohol as an avenue in which individuals act differently. Strategies often focused on monitoring or limiting alcohol consumption, avoidance of or restrictions around types of parties they would attend, and utilizing a “buddy system” (i.e., always having a trusted peer with them). Mary L. summed up the buddy system as, “If I were to go to a party, maybe not engage in drinking or if you were just to be safe about it, have a buddy with you. Let your buddy know like, ‘Hey, please help me avoid doing this.’...The buddy system’s a good way to avoid that.”

Discussions of consent were explicit throughout responses. Participants often referred to consent practices and the importance of giving and receiving consent before engaging in activities. Many discussed consent in relation to alcohol use and how that is not fully giving consent. Additionally, alcohol led to the potential of giving consent at the time, but then realizing that it was something they did not want to engage in when they had a clearer state of mind. James O. described this as, “And I guess I don’t wanna be the next case on campus that said, ‘We were drunk and we both thought that we both wanted sex, but we did not.’” Additionally, alcohol could create misperceptions of consent. For example, Liz C. stated, “Well my number one thing is I wanna avoid having sex when I’m not fully coherent. I always wanna be sober, and I always wanna be engaged and I want to be...I’ll make sure that there is consent between myself and my partner. And also want my partner to be sober and now engaged.”

Fears around sexual coercion were also commonly reported by this sample of first semester students. Participants indicated that sexual coercion could occur in various ways (e.g., within relationships or hook up encounters); however, the focus appeared to be feeling coerced or feeling pressure to engage in behaviors in which they are not comfortable. Emily W. discussed how females often feel this pressure from males by stating, “It’s really hard for a lot of girls to say, ‘No, I don’t wanna do that.’ Because they feel really pressured and just like they have to and they’re kinda scared a little bit.” Further, Adrian B. described coercion occurring within relationships as, “Sometimes I get this feeling, like this vibe from him that it’s like, ‘Oh well, we’re in a relationship, you have to have sex with me.’ Sometimes I get that feeling...But it’s like sometimes, I feel like he just expects me to just take my clothes off, and lay there.”

Participants’ strategies for avoiding sexual assault/coercion included avoidant behaviors (e.g., no parties), restrictive behaviors (e.g., limiting alcohol consumption), and self-assertive behaviors (e.g., setting clear boundaries). Many of the participants emphasized that these strategies were not always easy to enact, particularly when the situation arose; however, they were important for avoiding these future outcomes.

Reputation. The emergence of fears related to an individuals’ reputation was a prominent theme among our sample of first year students ($n = 18$). Many of the participants described how their reputation was an important part of their sexual selves, including Ruth B. who stated, “I hold my reputation close 'cause you only have one name, you don't wanna ruin it. Been told that my whole life.” Although students’ often discussed college being a time of more social acceptance and/or invisibility due to population size, many held fears about developing a negative sexual reputation on campus. For example, Kelly R. described how easy it is to get a

reputation by stating, “You hook up with one person maybe you’re like, ‘Okay, I never did this thing. Let’s keep it a secret between us. This is just a one time thing.’ And then all of a sudden the whole campus knows about it and everybody’s like, ‘Oh, you hooked up with so and so.’” Often these reputations stemmed from casual sex engagement and focused on women being portrayed as slutty or “that girl”. Tara A. described being “that girl” as, “I’m not gonna become ‘that girl’, she sleeps around, parties too much.” Strategies for avoiding poor reputations focused on avoidance of casual sex behaviors or actively creating a positive reputation as a self-protective behavior.

Non-committed sexual avoidance. The vast majority of the participants ($n = 24$) expressed hoping to avoid engaging in non-committed sexual behaviors (e.g., casual sex or hooking up) during their first semester in college. Participants frequently reported a main reason for why they wanted to avoid hook up or casual sex behaviors would be feelings of regret later down the road. For example, Jill D. stated:

I never wanna have a drunken hook up or anything, like I met him the same night and we hooked up the same night. And hook up to me is like sex or oral sex. Kissing I'm like, "Okay that's one thing", but anything more than that would be a hook up in my eyes. And so, I never want it to be like I regret it. That's never something I want.

Further, many of the participants expressed concerns about the emotional consequences of hooking up or casual sex, and that these concerns served as a motivation for them to not want to engage in these behaviors. For example, Regina L. expressed, “Like I said, emotionally, it's really harmful. And it was like whenever I did that kind of stuff, it just made me feel so worthless a lot of the time, and I'm really trying to make sure I don't feel like that.”

Similarly to expected SPS, definitions of casual sex and hooking up were often variant between participants. Some participants described hooking up as “only sexual intercourse” related whereas others described it as a range of behaviors. Ashley K. summed up variations in casual sex definitions with the following definition: “I would probably define it as knowing somebody for awhile, having sex, and then not feeling the need to pursue the relationship. Or meeting somebody off a dating app, hooking up, and then, just moving on. It could also be multiple times, but I don’t know.” A different student, Kelly R. described hooking up as, “Well, a hook up to me isn’t necessarily just making out somewhere. It’s actually engaging in intercourse.” Overall, the majority of participants held negative views of hooking up or casual sex behaviors when referencing sexual intercourse, but held more permissive behaviors regarding non-penetrative sex. Strategies for this feared self focused on alcohol restriction, avoiding parties, and internalized beliefs.

Identity loss. A small number of participants ($n = 10$) also discussed fears around losing their sense of identity during the first semester in college. This loss of identity could manifest in a multiple ways including through loss of sexual morals or stifling one’s identity to appear socially normative. Participants described feeling influenced by peers and perceptions of college cultures. Sara J. expressed this by saying, “I have written down 'forgetting who I am', but I don't really know how to relate that. I guess I wanna avoid not getting pulled into what a lot of people think or just trying to fit in, I guess, with that crowd.” Additionally, Valerie G. expressed, “Well, I guess just to stay true to who I am to, don't let it mess up how I feel I should act or be as a person...”

Participants also discussed losing their sense of identity in relation to their sexual orientation due to concerns about social acceptance. For example, Lydia H. described it as, “Well I wrote down that I don't wanna be someone, to stifle myself. I do wanna open up. I don't wanna stay closed down. I kind of fear that I will be too scared to open all the way up, and I don't wanna give up opportunities with other people just because I'm scared.” Further, Brian R. described “I do not wanna be wishy-washy. I want to be able to make a definite choice on my sexuality and say, ‘You know what? This is it. No running back. This is it, I'm grounded. I'm sticking here.’” Strategies to avoid identity loss focused on peers and support groups. Participants often expressed surrounding themselves with people who support their beliefs or hold the same beliefs as them as a way to avoid this feared SPS.

Sexual health. Participants ($n = 15$) expressed fears of negative sexual health outcomes during the first semester. The majority of these feared SPS focused on avoiding pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Hillary A. stated, “I don't want to get pregnant, so that's of them. That's a fear”. Additionally, Kelly R. stated, “I'd wanna avoid unprotected sex, 'cause that kind of goes into the having a baby and STDs. I still don't wanna have a baby and I still don't want STDs.” Further, several female participants described how avoiding pregnancy was an important sexual self for them as pregnancy could interfere with their future goals they hold for themselves. For example, Tracey W. stated, “I don't feel like I should put myself in that predicament, when I have things going for myself. I feel like I should be able to be financially, emotionally and things like that, stable, and even married, before I even try to take this step into adulthood.” Although less expressed than fears around pregnancy, STIs were also a concern for these first year students. Regina G. expressed, “Or STDs or whatever. I would absolutely die if I

had to call my dad and be like, ‘Hi, Dad. I have herpes. So what are we gonna do?’” Strategies to avoid these sexual health fears were straight forward and focused on condom use, contraceptive use (i.e., birth control), and avoiding unprotected sex.

Developmental Influences

Family. Family was often referenced as a major influence on the participants’ sexual expectations and fears ($n = 25$). Participants discussed parents explicitly guiding them in behavioral choices (e.g., safe sex behaviors) and establishing morals or values (e.g., sex should not be given away). For example, when Megan T. what influenced her not want to go wild her first semester, she stated, “I just know my parents have high hopes for me and they're important to me so I wanna make sure I succeed.” Further, Valerie G. described her parents explicitly telling her things she should do by stating, “Well, my dad is pretty religious, so he's like, "Don't go to bars." No tattoos, even, nothing like that.”

However, parents were also referenced as implicit behavioral guides for what the participant expected of their sexual selves in the future. Specifically, many students discussed how their parents’ marital relationship has been a guide for how they see themselves in the future. For example, Jill D. stated, “Well my parents, this is totally random, but my parents were high school sweethearts and they’ve been married for like 30 years now. And so their relationship is a really good guide for me and my brother and my sister...and their relationship was a really good goal. I wanna be 30 years married one day.” In contrast, some participants referenced their parents’ relationship when discussing who they hope to avoid or were afraid of becoming in the future. Robert M. described this by stating, “My family, its’ [cheating] happened to my family a couple of times. Like my grandmother did it to my grandfather and then she ran

off with a guy, I don't wanna be like that. And then my dad did it at one point, I wouldn't wanna be like that either. So I have multiple examples of what I don't wanna be."

Religion. Religion was described as an important influence on a large number of the participants in this study ($n = 12$). Specifically, religious values were described as an important behavioral guide for the sexual selves they expected for themselves in the future. Ashley K. described this behavioral guide by stating the following, "Well, it sounds kind of harsh, but I have a six-month rule. Because I am Christian, and I don't believe... Well, I don't believe in just sex, or whatever like that." Ruth B. described this influence when discussing her choice to stay abstinent by stating, "Well I'm a Christian and I've grown up in church all my life, and my families were religious and it's just you save yourself for marriage as a Christian, and I feel like if I'm a Christian then I'm gonna save myself for marriage, and I don't want to be a hypocrite by not saving myself." Further, other participants described how religious congregations (e.g., church) acted as a support system for them to attain their future sexual selves. Brian R. stated, "For the whole sexuality thing, I saw the church as my refuge because I was bullied a lot regardless, not even regarding that. And so, when I went to church, I was like, 'Okay, well, this feels like a home. They're welcoming me, they're comforting me.'" Additionally, church served as an opportunity to meet individuals in college who share the same values as the participants and offer an opportunity to find a sexual partner with the same values. When asked about strategies Sally Q. was using to meet a future relationship partner, she stated, "I did find a Christian group and so I think that's really nice, 'cause people that are, technically, hypothetically supposed to have the same ideals as you do, so I think that already puts one foot in the door".

Alcohol and parties. A major theme that emerged from this sample was the relationship between alcohol, parties, and sexuality. When discussing sexual expectations and fears, the vast majority of participants ($n = 23$) discussed how sexuality is tied into alcohol use and attending parties on campus. Liz C. describes the role of alcohol and parties on sexuality by stating:

There is almost always alcohol. I know there's not supposed to be, but almost always.

Everybody is hyped up. You're in the moment between like the music and the lighting.

And there's tons of people around that you may find sexually, physically attractive. And a lot of times when you're hyped up, and you're drunk or something, you don't think about the responsibilities. You don't think about the consequences.

Specifically, participants often discussed how alcohol increased the potential for engaging in casual sex behaviors. For example, Sally Q. stated, "I think people have more courage when they're intoxicated, so then they're just not thinking clearly, and I think you should always be thinking clearly when you're making those kind of decisions." Further, Tara A. emphasized this relationship by stating, "You don't just walk around campus and find someone, hook up with them. It's like the party scene where that usually happens."

The majority of the participants discussed alcohol restriction as a strategy for both attaining and avoiding their future sexual selves. These participants often discussed limiting the amount they drink as a way to protect themselves from various outcomes, including casual sex behaviors or sexual assault. Participants described how alcohol could change you and make you engage in behaviors that you normally would not find acceptable. Ted N. stated, "I feel like it'll make you more of a risk-taker. When I think about blackout drunk, I think it's like being completely detached from who you actually are, and it's like your drunken persona, when you

become.” Additionally, participants also discussed avoiding parties as a strategy for attaining their future selves. Regina L. stated, “I just know that if I went to a huge party where people are drinking or doing drugs, and I would just feel really uncomfortable. So I just haven't really put myself there, which has worked out well so far.”

Media. Participants ($n = 11$) discussed how perceptions of college influenced their expectations and fears for the upcoming year. Many of the students referenced media as a source of information about college, and a major influence on the students' perceptions of college. For example, Lydia H. stated, “Movies glamorize it. Magazines glamorize it. TV shows glamorize it. Just kind of some big idea that everyone has.” The students' discussed awareness of media representation often being wrong, including portrayals of casual sex behaviors and sexual assault; however, they still felt implicit pressure to engage in these behaviors due to this portrayal. Ted N. described this as:

Yeah, like movies and stuff, I got a great example, James Bond or whatever, he's like the coolest guy in the universe, he can get any woman that he wants.... It's like you're expected as a guy to be that alpha male, you've gotta be the one in front of everybody.

Although television shows, movies, and the news were the most referenced forms of media exposure, several of the students also discussed the role the Internet had on their sexuality. Lydia H., who self-identified as bisexual, expressed:

I guess the first time I ever realized that I wasn't straight was because someone described it on the Internet and I was like, ‘Hey, that fits me’... So, I wasn't exposed to that really as a kid, but when I started getting on the internet, I saw a bunch of other people on

YouTube, on forums, wherever, just describing the same things that I felt and kind of awakened me, I guess.

Overall, participants expressed how media exposure often served as both a negative and positive guide for creating expected and feared SPS during the transition to college.

Past experiences. Participants' previous experiences served as an important motivation for their current expected and feared sexual selves. The majority of the participants ($n = 19$) referenced experiences around previous romantic relationships and casual sex engagements as predominant guides. Participants often referenced previous romantic relationships as guides for what they wanted for their future relationship SPS. For example, Ashley K. discussed learning getting involved in past relationships too quickly and described how it was influential by expressing:

Looking back on that, I definitely should've taken it slower, 'cause I didn't know him that well, I didn't know his values or anything like that. So, yeah. Things to avoid is just getting into a relationship with somebody without fully knowing who they are and what they want, and that takes time.

Further, Emily W. described how a past relationship was a positive experience for her sexual identity and beliefs by stating, "And I dated this one guy and he was like, 'You are a girl and you can be taken advantage of and you need to...You should get to know somebody. You're really special. You shouldn't just let anybody do that to you.' And that really changed me."

Additionally, previous non-committed sexual engagement served as a guide for participants' feared SPS. For example, Cassie M. described her previous hook up experiences as influential by stating, "Well, I think it was junior year of high school up until when I graduated, I

never really tried to focus in on gaining personal relationships with guys, I just went for the one night stand type of situation. So I think that's the biggest thing for me..." Participants often described having regrets around engaging in these experiences as they got older, and that they don't want to have those feelings again in the future.

Peers/Friends. Friends were a frequent influence for the participants ($n = 23$). Specifically, friends guided participants' expectations and fears in two ways: (a) support systems and (b) behavioral references. Participants often discussed surrounding themselves with friends that hold the same values and goals as themselves. Having friends with similar values served as a support system for their sexual selves, including help keeping them on track and encouraging them to be comfortable in their sexuality. For example, Priya stated, "Just surrounding yourself with the right type of people and just staying away from the people that you think would influence you." In contrast, participants implied that surrounding yourself with non-supportive friends may get you off track for attaining your future selves. For example, Shauna P. stated, "If you're around people that think that's okay and wanna do that then I feel like you're more likely to hop on that bandwagon, just 'cause everybody else is doing it, even if it's not necessarily something you want."

Friends and peers also held an important role of acting as an implicit guide for behaviors the individual did or did not want to engage in during their first semester. Participants often discussed seeing peers act in a certain way and observing the consequences of their actions. These observations allowed them to make decisions about specific sexual selves they hope to avoid in the future. Ruth B. described this by stating, "By watching one of my friends, and by

watching the track that she's went down, I couldn't imagine what it would be like to have slept with so many people before marriage.”

College culture. Participants ($n = 15$) also discussed perceptions of the college culture and how these perceptions allow for and/or influence behavior. James O. summed up this college stereotype as, “Well, you know the stereotype...that’s not the right word. But the stereotype for college is you’re gonna have sex all the time and stuff like that, and I guess that made me kind of nervous ‘cause I’m like “I don’t really want to do that.” Several students discussed how it is easy to get caught up in these cultures even if it is something you are trying to avoid. For example, Allison described the college culture in the following way: “Yeah and its’ college, they’re drinking, they’re doing...trying different things, and parties. You just kind of get caught up in a lot of stuff that you sometimes need to step back from.” Additionally, participants described feeling implicit pressure from these perceptions of peers and the sex culture on campus. Guys particularly feel this pressure to be the stereotypical guy who “compare dicks”, as Ted N. described it, based on the number of sexual encounters. Ted N. also described this implicit pressure by stating, “Being a teenage boy, it’s kinda expected, you know yourself like you’re expected to be a real manly type of dude and to like to go after as many girls as you can, it’s kind of like a societal expectation of you.”

Sexual identity development. Paralleling the definition of emerging adulthood (Arnett 2015), several participants ($n = 9$) described the first semester as an opportunity to explore their sexual identity. This identity exploration was described as occurring in multiple ways including, experimenting with new sexual opportunities or exploring their sexual orientation.

A group of participants expressed wanting to actively explore their sexual selves in their first semester in college. For example, Valerie G. expressed, “Well, I think that I kinda want to, not really let loose, but just kinda explore I guess, because I feel this is the certain time to let that happen before you get tied down in your life, and so, you’re just kinda young.” Emily W. also stated, “I’m not really trying to find a relationship right away, because it’s your first semester, you just wanna explore and make all these friends.”

Several of the participants identified as sexual minorities (16.7%; e.g., Bisexual). Of these participants, every one described wanting to utilize their first semester in college to continue exploring and getting to know more about their sexual orientation. For example, Lydia H. described, “And so, I think that joining [university’s sexual minority program] here will help me expand myself, not necessarily experimentally or anything like that, ‘cause I’m not sure about that, but I do expect myself to be more open with who I am and open with other people about who I am, and just kinda push myself to really explore that.” Further, several of the participants described expectations around “coming out” their first semester in college, including Brian R. who stated, “So, up to this point, I haven’t really been truthfully honest with everybody, so I’m hoping that this year, I will hopefully gain some insight of what I want as far as my happiness versus what everybody else thinks I should be.”

Changes in expectations. Many of the participants ($n = 16$) emphasized that they expect their expected and feared selves to change after their first semester or first year, especially as they become more integrated into college. These participants discussed how the first year of college is unique because of these transitions, freedom, and identity exploration. Sally Q. remarked “People, the first semester of college, they change so much.” However, variances in

these changes were found between participants. Some participants described the first semester as a time to engage in these exploratory behaviors. For example, when asked about the first semester specifically, Tara A. stated, “It’s just about experimenting and not having any authority over what you’re doing. Obviously, it’ll calm down second semester, you’ll get it out of your system, whatever. I definitely think that first semester is a place where you just do anything you want and obviously, within reason.” Further, Lacy P. also supported this idea by stating: I feel like things calm down after your freshman year. Like, everybody’s crazy freshman year, like “oh my gosh! No mom and dad!” and then it’s like “okay hey, like freshman year really took a toll on me. I need to calm down.”

In contrast, other participants emphasized transitioning and becoming integrated into college cultures, and then enacting certain behaviors. Emily W. described this as, “I feel like it’s probably all throughout your freshman year, at least for the most part. Maybe not really your first semester because you’re just getting into the swing of things and you’re not as out there.” However, the vast majority described that after the first year of college, individuals begin to mature and that typically students engage in less sexual hookups after their first year. Emily W. described this as, “My friends that are sophomore and juniors right now are just more calm than they were their freshman year...But I think the older you get, the more mature you get and you realize you don’t want to catch anything or anything bad happen.”

Discussion

This study sought to extend research examinations of emerging adults’ sexual expectations, fears, and strategies (i.e. sexual possible selves; Anders et al., in press) as they transition into post secondary education settings (i.e., college). Emerging adulthood is a time of

identity exploration and experimentation while experiencing a variety of life course transitions and deferring adult roles (Arnett, 2015). Emerging adulthood has been identified as period of moratorium wherein individuals are afforded an opportunity to explore facets of their identity, including sexual identity. The period of emerging adulthood in which individuals transition into college is unique as it offers an opportunity to explore expectations and fears that first semester emerging adults may hold for their first year in college. The sexual expectations, fears, and associated behavioral strategies may be reflective of developmental influences on first semester students' sexuality prior to students being exposed to or integrated into the college cultures on campus.

Previous SPS research has focused on examining variations in individual's perceptions of the sexual selves they hope to be or hope to avoid being in the proximal future, and how these future selves can serve as motivational tools for behavioral outcomes (Anders et al., in press). As this is a fairly new approach to sexuality research, SPS research is exploratory in nature and is currently limited in several facets. Our study addressed several gaps in this research including methodological approach and extension of the examination to address developmental influences. Specifically, our study utilized an in-depth qualitative examination of first semester students' expected and feared SPS during the transition into a large university. Our findings provided a more detailed examination of developmental influences on emerging adults sexuality that may lead to variances in the expectations and fears they hold for their sexuality in the proximal future, along with the associated behavioral strategies for attaining or avoiding these future selves.

Expected and Feared SPS

Findings from our study addressed our first research question (RQ1) focused on examining emergent themes within the SPS of an emerging adult sample. Specifically, our study extended Anders and colleagues' (in press) mixed methods, online survey by examining the expectations and fears of first semester college students utilizing a semi-structured interview. Unique findings from our study emphasized several emergent themes within these expectations and fears.

Sexuality research among emerging adults often focuses on non-committed sexual engagement (e.g., casual sex or hooking up; e.g., Barriger & Velez-Blasini, 2013; Fielder & Carey, 2010; Fielder, Carey, & Carey, 2013) as this form of sexual engagement is often thought to be the prevalent script among college students; however our findings are contradictory of these scripts in two ways. First, a unique finding of themes within first semester students' expected SPS emphasized the importance of sex and commitment for emerging adults' sexual selves. Specifically, this theme stressed participants' expectations for establishing an emotional connection prior to sexual engagement with a partner. Although previous SPS research discussed an emergence of an "interpersonal relationship" focus of first year students (Anders et al., in press), these findings were secondary to an emphasis of abstinence related expectations by their sample. Instead, our findings emphasized that this was a primary expectation for first semester students' sexual selves and introduced an important connection between emotional commitment and sexual engagement.

Meanings that first semester college students ascribe to the connection between sex and commitment has been previous examined through mixed methods analyses (i.e., qualitative

coding and quantitative comparisons; Olmstead, Anders, & Conrad, in press). Findings from this study emphasized a prevalent script of sex occurring within the realm of an exclusive romantic relationship. Our findings extend this understanding by emphasizing the importance of not just the romantic relationship aspect, but an importance on feeling emotionally connected or bonded to their partner. Further, our findings extend our understanding of interpersonal relationship expectations and the importance of this connection on emerging adults' sexual identity.

Second, a large proportion of the first semester students described fears around hooking up or casual sex during their first semester. They often discussed how it was important to the perceptions of their sexual selves and values to not engage in sexual behaviors with a non-committed partner. However, previous research has shown that hooking up is a common behavior among first year college women (Fielder & Carey, 2010) and men (Olmstead, Roberson, Pasley, & Fincham, 2015), and rates of hooking up increase over the first academic year (i.e., freshman year) before decreasing there forward (Roberson, Olmstead, & Fincham, 2015). The emergence and prevalence of this non-committed sex feared SPS may be indicative of participants attaining "balance" of their sexual selves. Previous possible selves literature emphasizes the importance of "balance" (i.e., expressing both an expected and feared in the same realm) of an individuals' future selves (Oyserman & Markus, 1990b). Having a balanced self has been shown to be more indicative of successful goal attainment (Oyserman & Markus, 1990b) as it serves to provide more motivational resources for both enacting a specific behavior and avoiding a specific behavior. Balance in this realm was prevalent for the majority of participants who reported expectations for only engaging in sexual behaviors within a committed (i.e.,

emotional or exclusive) relationship, as they also reported a non-committed sex related feared SPS.

Additionally, previous findings from Anders and colleagues (in press) on the emergence of sexual assault and reputation feared SPS for the first semester in college also emerged within our study; however, prevalence of these feared selves were significantly higher within our sample than previous SPS research. The occurrence of sexual assault is very prevalent on college campuses, with between 20 to 25% of women experiencing a reported sexual assault during their college career (Exner & Cummings, 2011). Further, the emergence of this emphasis on sexual coercion (e.g., peer pressure) in addition to sexual assault extends our understanding of the influence implicit sexual pressure through perceptions of peers can have on future oriented sexual selves. Although sexual norms of emerging adulthood focus on opportunities to explore one's sexual identity (Arnett, 2015), this behavior may be heavily overestimated by emerging adults (Fielder & Carey, 2010). These overestimations can be influential on perceptions of socially normative behaviors of their peers and may place implicit pressure on individuals to engage in sexual behaviors to be normative (Barriger & Velez-Blasini, 2013; Lambert, Kahn & Apple, 2003); however, less is known about the relationship between these perceptions of peer or cultural norms and feelings of coercion, particularly during the transitional and influential period of the first semester in college. Findings from our study highlight the role of these norms on implicit pressure; however, future research should directly address the impact of social norms on sexual coercion (e.g., rates of actual engagement due to perceived pressure).

Developmental Influences on SPS

Previous SPS have emphasized variances in first semester students' expected and feared SPS (Anders et al., in press); however, little is known about the developmental influences on this variance in students' sexual selves. Our study expanded previous SPS literature by extending this research to focus on *how* first semester students develop the sexual selves they see for their future. Specifically, we were able to explore emergent themes within the developmental influences behind the variance in emerging adults' expected and feared sexual selves during the transition into college. Our findings provided insight into the role of implicit (e.g., peer behaviors and college cultures) and explicit (e.g., past experiences) developmental influences.

Although participants reported several themes within their developmental influences, a focus on the relationship between alcohol use, partying, and sexuality was the most prevalent developmental script of this sample. Underage drinking within post-secondary settings continues to be a public health concern (NSDUH, 2014), particularly as first year students often engage in binge drinking behaviors (Reckdenwald, Ford, & Murray, 2016; White, Kraus, & Swartzwelder, 2006). Casual sex behaviors and alcohol consumption has been a frequently researched topic among emerging adults (e.g., Fielder & Carey, 2010; White et al., 2006). However, previous SPS research has been limited in identifying the link between emerging adults' expected and feared SPS and the role alcohol use in college. The qualitative nature of this study allowed a more in-depth look into how alcohol and parties on college campuses may influence or impede first semester students' sexual selves.

Our findings indicated that alcohol use and partying played a direct and indirect role on the sexual selves that individuals develop for their first semester in college. Previous research on

first semester students' alcohol use has indicated that a greater internalization of a perceived drinking script in college and increased perceptions of peer drinking behavior is associated with an increased likelihood of several alcohol related behaviors (e.g., partying; Jun, Agley, Huang, & Gassman, 2016; Moser, Pearson, Hustad, & Borsari, 2014). Findings from our sample indicated a similar script as participants reported they were planning to engage in alcohol consumption during their first semester in college as it was perceived as a socially normative behavior; however, many of these same participants discussed concerns about alcohol leading them to engage in behaviors or outcomes they hope to avoid during the first semester. Discussions of placing restrictions around alcohol consumption as a strategy to avoid impairing their future oriented selves were prevalent; however, previous research has shown that young adults often underestimate the amount of alcohol they have consumed, particularly in social settings (Hultgren, Cleveland, Turrisi, & Mallet, 2014). Possible selves literature emphasizes the importance of having "plausible" strategies (i.e., strategies that are actually effective behavioral plans) for goal attainment of future selves (Oyserman et al., 2004). Future research should examine the effectiveness of students' alcohol restriction strategy in relation to their SPS attainment, particularly when holding misperceptions of drinking cultures on college campuses.

Implicit influences from peers and perceptions of the college culture also played an influential role on the first semester students' expected and feared SPS for the first semester. Although parents often serve as the first form of sexual socialization for children, and have shown to be influential on attitudes that they hold for specific behaviors (Epstein & Ward, 2009), adolescents often look to their peers as behavioral guides for socially normative behaviors (Barriger & Velez-Blasini, 2013). Emerging adults may also be susceptible to these perceptions

as they are experiencing several major life transitions and may be referencing peers as guides for exploratory behaviors (Arnett, 2015). This finding appeared consistent among our sample, as many referenced feeling implicit pressure from perceptions of peer attitudes (i.e., injunctive norms) toward sexual engagement in college. Social norms theory (Berkowitz, 2004) has found this discrepancy between this *perceived norm* (i.e., perceived peer casual sex behaviors) and *actual norm* (i.e., actual peer casual sex behaviors) can be influential in impeding successful goal attainment or avoidance of students' sexual selves. These findings provide insight into a variety of important developmental influences for emerging adults' sexual expectations, fears, and behavioral strategies as they transition into their first semester of college.

Limitations

This study should be considered in light of several limitations. First, generalizability of our findings may be limited due to the non-random and homogeneous nature of our sample. Specifically, the majority of our sample identified as female, White/non-Hispanic, heterosexual, and religious. Additionally, our sample was focused solely on first semester emerging adults. This homogeneity may limit the relevance of emergent themes for several non-reflected populations including males, sexual minority emerging adults, and individuals who are farther along in their college career. Additionally, the applicability of these findings to emerging adults who are non-college attending may be limited. SPS research would benefit from utilizing a more heterogeneous sample, as this would help to increase the generalizability of findings.

Second, the use of semi-structured interviews could potentially influence the findings of this study. Interviews can increase the likelihood of participants responding in a socially desirable manner, particularly when discussing sensitive topics such as sexuality (Meston,

Heiman, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 1998). Specifically, sexual engagement outside of committed relationships may be seen as taboo, particularly among women (i.e., sexual double standard; Bordini & Sperb, 2013). This bias may help explain our fairly conservative findings, as the majority of the participants discussed how sex should occur within a committed relationship. Further, although the utilization of semi-structured interviews provides opportunities to ask follow up and clarification questions during data collection, this technique may allow for an increased risk of interviewer bias (Creswell, 2007). Specifically, although steps were taken to help limit this bias such as member checking of participants' responses, the interviewers can introduce their own biases during the interviews. For example, interviewers' responses to the participants may be leading and/or elicit responses that confirm their preconceived ideas that affected the findings. Future research may benefit from utilizing interviewers who are blind to previous SPS research. Additionally, this study was exploratory, as previous SPS research has been collected through an online survey only, continued research utilizing qualitative methodologies may help to confirm the emergent findings from these studies.

Last, our sample was recruited from a large Southeastern university, wherein participants self selected into the study from introductory behavioral sciences courses (i.e., Psychology). Variance in participants' fears of non-committed sexual behaviors (e.g., casual sex) may be reflective of the limited regional homogeneity of our sample, particularly among a conservation region, and may have led to increased sampling bias of our findings. Further, students in these behavioral science courses were presented with a variety of studies to participate in for course credit. Those who opted into our study may be variant from those who opted into different studies. Participants who opt into postsecondary education may be uniquely different from the

general population. Future research would benefit from recruiting participants from college and community samples across the university or from multiple regions across the U.S.

Implications

Despite these limitations, our findings hold important implications for sexuality based research and programs for emerging adults. The emergent themes within participants' expectations and fears helped identify salient goals first year students may hold as they transition into college. These salient themes can help highlight areas of sexuality based selves that may be important for incoming students, along with identifying specific strategies (or gaps in strategies) that may be important to address among this group of emerging adults.

As our qualitative examination had unique findings from previous SPS research (Anders et al., in press), future research would benefit from continued examinations of expected and feared SPS among emerging adults. Specifically, previous research has indicated differences in sexual expectations (Twenge, Sherman, & Wells, 2015) and behavioral engagement (Bailey et al., 2008) between emerging adults who seek higher education (e.g., college) and emerging adults who opt to enter the work force. As our study allowed for an in-depth examination of the developmental influences on variances in first semester students' SPS, a comparative study of these populations may provide insight into the developmental influences on non-college attending emerging adults. These differences may highlight the need for developmentally appropriate sexual education within community programs. Further, the majority of participants reported expectations around developmental changes in their sexual goals and fears as they progress in their college career. Future research would benefit from implementing a qualitative longitudinal examination of emerging adults' SPS across their first year in college, or even

across their college career. This examination would allow us to more closely examine parallels in individuals' sexual selves and trends in sexual behaviors (e.g., increased hooking up across first year; Roberson et al., 2015). Changes in their expected and feared selves may be indicative of integration into college cultures and developmental changes that are occurring during the life course period of emerging adulthood.

Our findings hold important implications for sexual education or intervention programs during the period of emerging adulthood. Specifically, our study allowed us to better understand various levels of developmental exposure that may be most influential on the expectations and fears that adolescents and emerging adults hold for their sexuality. Parents were often identified as the first source of socialization and modeling for first semester students' sexual expectations. Early education or intervention programs focused on teaching parents effective communication with their children about sexual identity development may be beneficial in creating a strong foundation for emerging adults' sexuality. These programs could afford opportunities to teach both parents and emerging adults effective strategies for attaining or avoiding these future oriented sexual selves. Specifically, communities and universities may benefit from implementing sexual education programs for the parents of students. Further, misperceptions of peer sexual engagement and college cultures were prevalent among this sample, indicating the continued need to address pluralistic ignorance (Lambert et al., 2003) around casual sex behaviors of college students. Specifically, our study found emergent themes around implicit pressure to engage in casual sex behaviors due to these misperceptions. These findings emphasize the need for sexual education programs to explicitly address these misperceptions as students transition into college (e.g., orientation).

CHAPTER 5:

Conclusion

Emerging adulthood is a period of exploration wherein changes in identity development, including sexual development, may frequently occur (Arnett, 2015). One way in which to examine frequent changes in sexual development is by examining an individual's sexual possible selves (SPS; Anders et al., in press). SPS is an adapted focus of the theory of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) to specifically address facets of sexuality. SPS encompass individuals' expectations for and fears of sexual selves they see for themselves in the proximal future (Anders et al., in press). As SPS examine expectations and fears in the proximal future (i.e., typically a year out) and can be indicative of salient themes during that specific time point, utilizing this approach to examining sexuality during developmental periods such as emerging adulthood may be beneficial in understanding trends in sexual expectations and development over time. Despite this importance, limited research has examined expected and feared SPS during the life course stage of emerging adulthood. This three part dissertation served as a replication and extension of this literature in three ways: (a) a comparative study of SPS using a diverse sample of emerging adults (college and non-college), (b) a short-term longitudinal examination of continuity and change in SPS over the first semester in college, and (c) a qualitative examination of developmental influences on SPS during the transition to college.

The first manuscript addressed limitations in SPS research by extending the examination of expected and feared SPS, along with behavioral strategies, to a diverse sample of emerging adults. Specifically, this manuscript examined thematic and frequency differences in the articulation of SPS themes between a sample of college attending and non-college attending emerging adults. The period of emerging adulthood is thought to be experienced differently by individuals outside of postsecondary education settings than their college attending peers

(Hendry & Kloep, 2007). Individuals in this period may hold developmentally different expectations for identity development, including internalized sexual expected and hoped to be avoided selves. Overall, our comparisons indicated that despite research indicating differences in sexual engagement (Bailey et al., 2008), few differences in SPS were found based on college attendance status. Emergent SPS themes were the same for these two samples, along with similar frequencies in which each of the identified themes were articulated. These findings indicate that these two samples appear to value similar future sexual selves, including the selves they hope to avoid in the future; however, differences were found for expectations on *abstinence*, *interpersonal relationship*, and *maintain* in the upcoming year.

College attending emerging adults were found to place more emphasis on remaining abstinent or to engage in sexuality within the context of an interpersonal relationship. Although these findings contradict the perceived cultural norm of hooking up in college (Garcia et al., 2012), these findings parallel recent research showing higher rates of casual sex within non-college attending samples than their college attending peers (Bailey et al., 2012). College attending emerging adults may be more focused on brief, committed romantic relationships (i.e., serial monogamy; Regnerus & Uecker, 2011) as important for their sexual selves. Additionally, sex differences was a consistent predictor of variance in sexual expectations and fears during emerging adulthood. Future research would benefit from utilizing a more nuanced approach to examining developmental differences than college attendance status, and may instead focus on emerging adults' experiences of emerging adulthood (e.g., opportunity to explore).

The second manuscript addressed limitations in understanding continuity and change of expected and feared SPS during emerging adulthood. Sexual development is not stagnant, but

instead, can change as individuals become exposed to various cultures and experiences (Fielder, Walsh, Carey, & Carey, 2013). Previous research on SPS has only examined emerging adults' expectations and fears for their sexual selves at one time point (i.e., transitioning into the first semester). Although this transition is important, as it can be representative of sexual selves individuals hold prior to becoming integrated into college cultures, it limits our understanding of how integration into college can shift individuals' sexual selves. Our study examined this transition using a short-term longitudinal examination of college students' SPS over the first semester in college. Findings from our study indicated that the majority of first semester students (75.0% for expected SPS; 62.5% for feared SPS) shifted in at least one facet of their sexual selves. Particularly, many of the students entered college with expectations for exploring their sexuality, yet did not expect these explorations at the end of their first semester. Further, expectations for interpersonal relationships were prevalent during the transition to college and at the end of the first semester; however, none of the same participants reported these expectations at *both* time points. Despite these changes, continuity in participants' feared sexual selves were also identified. For example, the majority of participants who reported sexual health fears as they transitioned into college also reported these fears at the end of their first semester. Our findings highlight and emphasize how rapidly emerging adults' sexuality may shift in relation to their current life stage and that changes in sexual selves may be reflective of shifts in developmental influences (e.g., romantic relationship or perceptions of peer norms). Future research should address rapid changes in sexuality during emerging adulthood by examining patterns in sexual engagement and identity development across college rather than making inferences from one time point.

The third manuscript extended SPS research by providing an in-depth examination of how emerging adults' salient sexual selves emerged and developmental influences on these selves. Again, previous studies (Anders et al., in press) only employed online survey methods to collect data on SPS, limiting our understanding of SPS to the brief responses participants provide. Although this technique is important for allowing us to examine salient themes in expectations and fears across large samples, our third study study provided qualitative insight into the construction of salient selves, particularly during the transition to college. Our findings indicated that first semester students vary in the developmental influences (e.g., religion or media) they believe to be most important on their sexual selves. The majority of the participants emphasized multiple sources of influence, with the most prevalent being alcohol and parties, family, peers, religion, and past experiences. Our findings highlighted the importance of examining implicit forms of sexual influence, as perceptions of peers and the role of alcohol were shown to pressure participants to engage in behaviors that conflict their idealized SPS.

In conclusion, examinations of SPS to date have been exploratory and limited in their generalizability. This three-part manuscript helped to address some of these limitations and highlight important areas of research that should be considered. First, each of these studies provided insight into salient expectations and fears in emerging adult sexuality. These studies showed that regardless of college attendance, integration into college, or methodological approach, sexual health and sexual assault were prominent concerns for emerging adults. These feared selves play an important role on emerging adults' internalized sexuality, including on behavioral engagement and avoidance behaviors. Second, our studies emphasized that sexuality is not "one size fits all," but instead is dynamic and changes based on idealized goals held for

one's selves. Variance in these hoped for or expected selves was highlighted in each of these studies, including differences by college attendance, sex, and by developmental influences. These studies indicated that perceptions of peers and social norms may be developmentally influential on emerging adults' sexual selves, including through implicit pressure of misperceived social normativity in sexual behavior.

Lastly, these three manuscripts hold important implications for future research and sexual education programs. Future research on SPS would benefit from examining these future oriented selves during adolescence. Many individuals become sexually active during the period of adolescence (Fielder & Carey, 2010) and can shape behavioral patterns and identity development during college. Examining this construct during the period of adolescence would provide insight into common sexual selves and identify gaps in strategies for attaining or avoiding these selves. Further, behavioral research on sexuality would benefit from including SPS measures for understanding sexual motivations. Expectations for and fears around one's internalized sexual selves provide insight into motivational factors and behavioral plans for differences in sexual engagement (Anders et al., in press; Oyserman et al., 2004).

Findings across these three studies also point to implications for sexual education or community programs focused on facets of sexuality. Specifically, all of our studies emphasized the role of implicit pressure (i.e., sexual coercion) to engage in sexuality that may be inconsistent with their idealized selves. Research has shown that few sexual education and intervention programs explicitly address sexual coercion (Jozkowski, Peterson, Sanders, Dennis, & Reece, 2014). Addressing misperceived norms and integration of positive self-efficacy education (e.g., condom efficacy) into both college and community education programs may help to combat and

protect against these implicit forms of sexual pressure for emerging adults. Despite the importance of our findings, there are still gaps in previous research examining expected and feared SPS. Overall, continued examinations of expected and feared SPS, associated behavioral strategies, and developmental influences during emerging adulthood would strengthen our understandings of sexuality and identity development for this population.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. *Expected SPS and Strategies Categories with Descriptives (N = 800)*

Expected SPS	Mean (SD)	Range	Example	Strategies	Mean (SD)	Range	Example
<i>Abstinence</i>	.08 (.30)	0-3	“To not have sex until marriage” “To be chaste”	<i>Abstinence</i>	.03 (.16)	0-2	“Reading literature on chastity” “Waiting ‘til marriage”
<i>Explore/ Experiment</i>	.36 (.63)	0-3	“To expand on the ways I have sex” “To be more adventurous”	<i>Interpersonal Relationship</i>	.27 (.56)	0-5	“Staying true to my fiancé” “Maintaining my exclusive relationship”
<i>Quantity</i>	.40 (.61)	0-4	“To regularly engage in sexual activities” “Lots of sex”	<i>Dating</i>	.10 (.38)	0-6	“Signed up for dating sites” “Active on Tinder” “Dating lots of cute/sexy girls”
<i>Quality</i>	.33 (.67)	0-4	“To make it more pleasurable” “To enhance my girlfriends sexual experiences”	<i>Making Opportunities</i>	.45 (.83)	0-7	“I’m chatting up girls” “Getting out and meeting people” “Actively seek partners”
<i>Sex Specific</i>	.11 (.36)	0-3	“To masturbate” “To have anal”	<i>Self- improvement</i>	.23 (.57)	0-4	“I am also working out to improve my looks” “Learning to love myself a bit more”
<i>Interpersonal Relationship</i>	.23 (.44)	0-2	“To only participate within a committed relationship” “To have a long term relationship”	<i>Sexual Health/Well- being</i>	.20 (.57)	0-5	“Always use protection” “Starting birth control” “Getting tested regularly”
<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	.23 (.55)	0-3	“To be as safe and careful as I can be” “To remain healthy and active” “Not to get someone pregnant”	<i>Expanding Boundaries</i>	.23 (.59)	0-5	“Exploring avenues of sexual comfortability” “Trying to change it up in the bedroom” “Being open with my sexuality”
<i>Maintain</i>	.09 (.37)	0-4	“Things will remain much the same” “The same as the past year”	<i>Restricting Boundaries</i>	.11 (.39)	0-3	“Not going to bars” “Slowing down the dating process”
<i>Decreasing/ Avoidance</i>	.02 (.13)	0-1	“To stop having so much” “To not have to use condoms”	<i>Sex Specific</i>	.09 (.33)	0-3	“Hooking up” “More foreplay”
<i>Family Formation</i>	.02 (.15)	0-2	“To get my partner pregnant” “To have a baby after marriage”	<i>No strategy</i>	.32 (.63)	0-4	“No” “Nothing”
<i>No Expectation</i>	.09 (.40)	0-4	“Nothing” “I really don’t know”				

Table 2. *Feared SPS and Strategies Categories with Descriptives (N = 800)*

Feared SPS	Mean (SD)	Range	Example	Strategies	Mean (SD)	Range	Example
<i>Abstinence</i>	.05 (.23)	0-2	“Having sex” “Trying to avoid it all together”	<i>Abstinence</i>	.08 (.31)	0-3	“Avoiding sexual contact” “Abstaining from relationships”
<i>Interpersonal Relationship</i>	.10 (.30)	0-1	“Infidelity” “It being the basis of my relationship” “Being cheated on”	<i>Interpersonal Relationship</i>	.18 (.45)	0-3	“Being loyal to my partner” “Trying to discuss how to improve our relationships sex”
<i>Quantity</i>	.07 (.27)	0-2	“Slipping into a no sex slump” “To not have sex often”	<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	.69 (.99)	0-6	“Taking my birth control regularly” “Using protection w/ same partner”
<i>Quality</i>	.24 (.51)	0-3	“Painful sex” “Being bored and not having fun”	<i>Making Opportunities</i>	.10 (.34)	0-3	“Saying yes more often” “Trying to date a lot of people”
<i>Self-focus</i>	.22 (.53)	0-4	“Embarrassing myself during sex” “Being seen as a slut”	<i>Self-improvement</i>	.14 (.43)	0-3	“Trying to lose weight” “Working through issues in therapy”
<i>Partner-focus</i>	.18 (.47)	0-3	“Close-minded girls” “Sex with transgender” “Wrong men”	<i>Self-assertion/ Protection</i>	.24 (.60)	0-4	“Not going out alone after dark” “Being open with my partner about my own needs”
<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	.68 (.82)	0-4	“Getting pregnant” “STDs or HIV”	<i>Expanding Boundaries</i>	.10 (.36)	0-3	“Trying more creative ideas” “Being more open to what I am willing to do”
<i>Increased Sexual Risk</i>	.17 (.43)	0-3	“Being promiscuous” “One night stands”	<i>Restricting Boundaries</i>	.24 (.55)	0-4	“Never trying it again” “Not being as aggressive as I want to be”
<i>Sexual Assault/ Coercion</i>	.13 (.36)	0-2	“Being raped/assaulted” “Doing things I am not willing to” “Being pressured into unwanted sex”	<i>Thoughtful/ Informed Decisions</i>	.11 (.35)	0-2	“I am careful who I trust and what I do” “By making smart choices” “Being logical in my decisions”
<i>Sex Specific</i>	.07 (.29)	0-2	“Anal” “Bondage”	<i>No strategy</i>	.30 (.60)	0-4	“Nothing” “No”
<i>No Fear</i>	.04 (.21)	0-1	“Nothing” “Nothing else”				

Table 3. *Salience Scores of Expected and Feared SPS, Overall (N = 800) and by College attendance (n = 400) and Non-college attendance (n = 400)*

Expected SPS	Salience Score	College Salience Score	Non-college Salience Score	Feared SPS	Salience Score	College Salience Score	Non-college Salience Score
<i>Abstinence</i>	5.9%	7.7%	4.1%	<i>Abstinence</i>	3.6%	3.8%	3.5%
<i>Explore/ Experiment</i>	14.9%	14.6%	15.2%	<i>Interpersonal Relationship</i>	5.1%	4.9%	5.3%
<i>Quantity</i>	21.0%	19.2%	22.8%	<i>Quantity</i>	4.3%	3.8%	4.9%
<i>Quality</i>	12.2%	12.1%	12.4%	<i>Quality</i>	11.6%	11.2%	12.0%
<i>Sex Specific</i>	5.7%	6.1%	5.2%	<i>Self-focus</i>	9.7%	10.4%	9.0%
<i>Interpersonal Relationship</i>	11.6%	13.6%	9.6%	<i>Partner-focus</i>	8.3%	7.3%	9.3%
<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	8.7%	7.8%	9.5%	<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	32.8%	33.0%	32.7%
<i>Maintain</i>	4.6%	3.5%	5.6%	<i>Increased Sexual Risk</i>	9.3%	9.9%	8.7%
<i>Decreasing/ Avoidance</i>	0.7%	0.7%	0.9%	<i>Sexual Assault/ Coercion</i>	5.9%	6.4%	5.4%
<i>Family Formation</i>	0.8%	0.7%	1.2%	<i>Sex Specific</i>	2.9%	2.4%	3.3%
<i>No Expectation</i>	5.8%	7.0%	4.7%	<i>No Fear</i>	3.7%	4.0%	3.3%

Table 4. *Mean comparisons for Expected SPS based on College Attendance (N = 800) and Sex (N = 796)*

Category	College Attendance Status			Gender		
Expected SPS ^a	College <i>M (SD)</i>	Non-college <i>M (SD)</i>	t score	Male <i>M (SD)</i>	Female <i>M (SD)</i>	t score
Abstinence	.10 (.34)	.06 (.25)	-2.01*	.07 (.27)	.09 (.31)	-.784
Explore/Experiment	.36 (.63)	.36 (.64)	.124	.35 (.62)	.37 (.64)	-.26
Quantity	.39 (.59)	.41 (.62)	.381	.53 (.67)	.32 (.55)	4.36***
Quality	.35 (.71)	.31 (.63)	-.650	.20 (.51)	.41 (.74)	-4.72***
Sex Specific	.13 (.39)	.09 (.32)	-1.56	.17 (.43)	.08 (.30)	3.06*
Interpersonal Relationship	.28 (.49)	.17 (.38)	-3.43***	.19 (.42)	.25 (.46)	-1.86
Sexual Health/Well-being	.23 (.59)	.22 (.53)	-.18	.14 (.42)	.28 (.60)	-3.53***
Maintain	.06 (.26)	.12 (.45)	2.03*	.08 (.32)	.09 (.39)	-.42
No Expectations	.08 (.27)	.11 (.50)	.86	.13 (.48)	.07 (.35)	1.71
Expected SPS Strategies	College	Non-college	t score	Male	Female	t score
Abstinence	.03 (.18)	.02 (.15)	-1.29	.02 (.14)	.03 (.17)	-.47
Interpersonal Relationship	.30 (.57)	.24 (.54)	-1.46	.19 (.50)	.31 (.58)	-3.04*
Dating	.10 (.32)	.11 (.44)	.46	.12 (.35)	.10 (.41)	.63
Making Opportunities	.48 (.79)	.42 (.87)	-.98	.55 (.93)	.40 (.76)	2.37*
Self-improvement	.24 (.58)	.23 (.56)	-.31	.24 (.55)	.23 (.59)	.33
Sexual Health/Well-being	.20 (.57)	.19 (.57)	-.37	.11 (.39)	.25 (.65)	-3.92***
Expanding Boundaries	.22 (.57)	.24 (.60)	.36	.14 (.45)	.28 (.65)	-3.71***
Restricting Boundaries	.14 (.41)	.09 (.36)	-1.65	.07 (.30)	.13 (.42)	-2.21*
Sex Specific	.09 (.32)	.10 (.34)	.54	.08 (.32)	.10 (.34)	-.67
No Strategy	.32 (.58)	.32 (.67)	-.17	.32 (.68)	.32 (.60)	.80

Table 5. Mean comparisons for Feared SPS based on College Attendance ($N = 800$) and Sex ($N = 796$)

Category	College Attendance Status ^a			Sex ^b		
Feared SPS	College <i>M (SD)</i>	Non-college <i>M (SD)</i>	t score	Male <i>M (SD)</i>	Female <i>M (SD)</i>	t score
<i>Abstinence</i>	.05 (.24)	.05 (.23)	-.167	.03 (.18)	.06 (.25)	-1.61
<i>Interpersonal Relationship</i>	.10 (.30)	.09 (.29)	-.276	.10 (.30)	.10 (.29)	.15
<i>Quantity</i>	.07 (.26)	.08 (.28)	.471	.11 (.31)	.06 (.25)	2.26*
<i>Quality</i>	.26 (.53)	.22 (.47)	-.929	.20 (.47)	.26 (.53)	-1.57
<i>Self-focus</i>	.25 (.58)	.18 (.47)	-1.796	.19 (.52)	.24 (.54)	-.99
<i>Partner-focus</i>	.17 (.47)	.19 (.47)	.432	.22 (.56)	.16 (.41)	1.65
<i>Sexual Health/Well-being</i>	.68 (.82)	.68 (.83)	-.004	.68 (.83)	.68 (.82)	.02
<i>Increased Sexual Risk</i>	.18 (.43)	.15 (.43)	-.772	.16 (.42)	.17 (.44)	-.38
<i>Sexual Assault/Coercion</i>	.14 (.39)	.11 (.34)	-1.306	.06 (.24)	.16 (.41)	-3.90***
<i>Sex Specific</i>	.06 (.30)	.07 (.28)	.298	.08 (.29)	.06 (.28)	.58
<i>No Fears</i>	.05 (.22)	.04 (.19)	-.76	.07 (.26)	.03 (.17)	2.35*
Feared SPS Strategies	College	Non-college	t score	Male	Female	t score
<i>Abstinence</i>	.09 (.35)	.06 (.25)	-1.639	.05 (.23)	.09 (.34)	-1.83
<i>Interpersonal Relationship</i>	.17 (.44)	.19 (.46)	.767	.15 (.43)	.20 (.46)	-1.42
<i>Sexual Health/Well-being</i>	.71 (1.04)	.64 (.93)	-.812	.64 (.89)	.74 (1.04)	-.96
<i>Self-assertion/Protection</i>	.28 (.66)	.20 (.53)	-1.795	.13 (.43)	.31 (.67)	-4.43***
<i>Restricting Boundaries</i>	.26 (.58)	.23 (.51)	-.719	.29 (.62)	.21 (.50)	1.57
<i>Expanding Boundaries</i>	.10 (.38)	.10 (.34)	-.280	.07 (.36)	.12 (.36)	-1.55
<i>Thoughtful/Informed Decisions</i>	.13 (.38)	.09 (.31)	-1.562	.11 (.33)	.11 (.36)	-.07
<i>Making Opportunities</i>	.09 (.34)	.11 (.34)	.809	.16 (.42)	.06 (.28)	3.27***
<i>Self-improvement</i>	.14 (.46)	.13 (.40)	-.334	.16 (.44)	.13 (.43)	.85
<i>No Strategy</i>	.31 (.59)	.28 (.61)	-.635	.32 (.60)	.29 (.60)	.75

Table 6. *Expected SPS with Descriptives at T1 (N = 78) and T2 (N = 40)*

T1 Expected SPS	Mean (SD)	Range	Example	T2 Expected SPS	Mean (SD)	Range	Example
<i>Abstinence</i>	.30 (.57)	0-3	“To not have sex” “To not participate in it”	<i>Abstinence</i>	.11 (.31)	0-1	“To not have sex” “Virginity”
<i>Interpersonal Relationship</i>	.12 (.36)	0-2	“To have a girlfriend” “To have sex with one, long term partner”	<i>Interpersonal Relationship</i>	.05 (.23)	0-1	“I am expecting to have one committed partner” “Possibly a relationship”
<i>Quantity</i>	.12 (.33)	0-1	“To have more sex” “To have it every now and then”	<i>Quantity</i>	.07 (.25)	0-1	“To get laid” “To have sex with one person”
<i>Explore/ Experiment</i>	.26 (.60)	0-3	“A few partners with no commitment needed” “To have sex with both guys and girls”	<i>Explore/ Experiment</i>	.08 (.43)	0-3	“To get to know more about my sexuality” “To meet more guys”
<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	.29 (.67)	0-3	“To be safe” “Not to be taken advantage of”	<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	.12 (.47)	0-3	“To have safe sex” “Stay STD free”
<i>Decreasing/ Avoidant</i>	.16 (.49)	0-2	“Not have as much” “Not hook up a lot”	<i>Decreasing/ Avoidant</i>	.14 (.42)	0-2	“To not sleep around” “To have sex with less people”
<i>Conditional Sex</i>	.20 (.40)	0-1	“To have sex after I get settled in my classes” “To make a connection before having sex”	<i>Conditional Sex</i>	.07 (.30)	0-2	“To not do it until I meet someone I really like” “To not have sex with a guy until I am dating him”
<i>No Expectation</i>	.18 (.39)	0-1	“No” “Nothing”	<i>No Expectation</i>	.03 (.16)	0-1	“Nothing” “No”
				<i>Maintain</i>	.07 (.25)	0-1	“Remain the same” “It to be the same as this semester”

Table 7. Expected SPS Strategies with Descriptives at T1 ($N = 78$) and T2 ($N = 40$)

T1 Expected SPS Strats	Mean (SD)	Range	Example	T2 Expected SPS Strats	Mean (SD)	Range	Example
<i>Abstinence</i>	.41 (.79)	0-4	“Avoiding compromising or tempting situations” “I have clearly explained to my boyfriend that sex is not something that I want.”	<i>Abstinence</i>	.14 (.38)	0-2	“Not have sex” “Not engage in sexual activity”
<i>Making Opportunities</i>	.34 (.53)	0-2	“Planning it with my boyfriend” “trying to get to know new people and find nice guys”	<i>Making Opportunities</i>	.15 (.52)	0-3	“Meeting new people” “Being social”
<i>Restricting Boundaries</i>	.26 (.53)	0-2	“limiting my interactions with the opposite sex in a sexual way” “I am avoiding random hookups”	<i>Restricting Boundaries</i>	.15 (.39)	0-2	“Slowing down sexual activity” “Trying to eliminate people from my life that are unhealthy for me”
<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	.38 (.87)	0-5	“I am on birth control” “Using protection and talking with my partner”	<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	.11 (.39)	0-2	“Using protection” “Using condoms more”
<i>No Strategy</i>	.64 (.79)	0-3	“Nothing”	<i>No Strategy</i>	.23 (.51)	0-2	“Absolutely nothing”

Table 8. *Feared SPS with Descriptives at T1 (N = 78) and T2 (N = 40)*

T1 Feared SPS	Mean (SD)	Range	Example	T2 Feared SPS	Mean (SD)	Range	Example
<i>Abstinence</i>	.19 (.39)	0-1	“Doing it” “I am hoping to avoid sex completely”	<i>Abstinence</i>	.14 (.53)	0-4	“Not having sex” “Being sexually active”
<i>Sexual Assault/ Coercion</i>	.47 (.68)	0-3	“Having sex that I did not give consent for” “Being raped”	<i>Sexual Assault/ Coercion</i>	.09 (.29)	0-1	“To avoid being talked into sex by a boy” “Being taken advantage of”
<i>Self-focus</i>	.19 (.48)	0-2	“Regretting having sex in the morning” “Being known as a slut”	<i>Self-focus</i>	.09 (.34)	0-2	“Bad reputation” “Regretting being with someone”
<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	.67 (.91)	0-3	“STDS!” “Getting pregnant”	<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	.34 (.69)	0-2	“HIV/AIDs” “Pregnancy”
<i>Increased Sexual Risk</i>	.27 (.50)	0-2	“sleeping with someone that I have no interest in other than sexually” “Having multiple sex partners”	<i>Increased Sexual Risk</i>	.18 (.49)	0-2	“One night stands” “Hook ups”
<i>No Fears</i>	.04 (.20)	0-1	“Nothing”	<i>No Fears</i>	.03 (.16)	0-1	“None”
				<i>Partner-focus</i>	.05 (.23)	0-1	“Messing with people that know each other” “Basic bitches”

Table 9. *Feared SPS Strategies with Descriptives at T1 (N = 78) and T2 (N = 40)*

T1 Feared SPS Strats	Mean (SD)	Range	Example	T2 Feared SPS Strats	Mean (SD)	Range	Example
<i>Abstinence</i>	.27 (.55)	0-2	“Not becoming sexual involved” “Not be alone with a significant other for a long amount of time	<i>Abstinence</i>	.12 (.43)	0-2	“Not engaging in sexual activity” “Not allowing myself in situations to have sex”
<i>Self-assertion/ Protection</i>	.59 (1.10)	0-6	“I am not around those who would peer pressure me” “Not going to parties alone”	<i>Self-assertion/ Protection</i>	.16 (.47)	0-2	“Being cautious of my surroundings and the people I am with” “Being more aware”
<i>Thoughtful/ Informed Decision</i>	..16 (.47)	0-3	“Meet the right guy” “Being very careful not to”	<i>Thoughtful/ Informed Decision</i>	.11 (.35)	0-2	“I am considering sex to be a serious thing and do not just have it freely” “Finding genuine women”
<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	.61 (.97)	0-4	“Using condoms” “Keeping protection”	<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	.42 (.88)	0-4	“Use protection and talk with my partner about safety” “condoms”
<i>Restricting Boundaries</i>	.36 (.58)	0-2	“Not getting drunk” “I don't have several sexual partners which lowers my risk of disease”	<i>Restricting Boundaries</i>	.09 (.29)	0-1	“Not getting extremely drunk with people I don't know” “Staying away”
<i>No Expectation</i>	.23 (.48)	0-2	“Nothing”	<i>No Expectation</i>	.18 (.49)	0-2	“Nothing right now”

Table 10. *Changes in Expected and Feared SPS at T1 & T2 and frequency comparisons (N = 40)*

Category	T1 only	T2 only	T1 & T2	T1 Total Frequency (N = 78)	T2 Total Frequency (N = 40)
Expected SPS					
<i>Abstinence</i>	4 (10.0%)	3 (7.5%)	5 (12.5%)	20 (26.3%)	8 (20.0%)
<i>Explore/ Experiment</i>	6 (15.0%)	2 (5.0%)	1 (2.5%)	15 (19.7%)	3 (7.5%)
<i>Quantity</i>	4 (10.0%)	5 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (11.8%)	5 (12.5%)
<i>Interpersonal Relationship</i>	4 (10.0%)	4 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (10.5%)	4 (10.0%)
<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	5 (12.5%)	2 (5.0%)	4 (10.0%)	15 (19.7%)	6 (15.0%)
<i>Decreasing/ Avoidant</i>	2 (5.0%)	5 (12.5%)	3 (7.5%)	8 (10.5%)	8 (20.0%)
<i>Conditional Sex</i>	9 (22.5%)	2 (5.0%)	2 (5.0%)	15 (19.7%)	4 (10.0%)
<i>No Expectations</i>	4 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.0%)	14 (18.4%)	2 (5.0%)
<i>Maintain</i>	N/A	5 (12.5%)	N/A	N/A	5 (12.5%)
Feared SPS					
<i>Abstinence</i>	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.0%)	5 (12.5%)	14 (18.7%)	7 (17.5%)
<i>Sexual Health/ Well-being</i>	4 (10.0%)	4 (10.0%)	12 (30.0%)	29 (38.6%)	16 (40.0%)
<i>Sexual Assault/ Coercion</i>	10 (25.0%)	2 (5.0%)	5 (12.5%)	28 (37.3%)	7 (17.5%)
<i>Self-Focus</i>	5 (12.5%)	2 (5.0%)	3 (7.5%)	11 (14.7%)	5 (12.5%)
<i>Increased Sexual Risk</i>	6 (15.0%)	7 (17.5%)	3 (7.5%)	18 (24.0%)	10 (25.0%)
<i>No Fears</i>	1 (2.5%)	2 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (4.0%)	2 (5.0%)
<i>Partner Focus</i>	N/A	4 (10.0%)	N/A	N/A	4 (10.0%)

Table 11. *Participants' Pseudonyms, Demographics, and Relationship Status (N = 35)*

Participant	Age	Sex	Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Relationship Status
Robert M.	18	M	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Ted N.	18	M	Black/African American	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Sara J.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Sally Q.	18	F	Black/African American	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Tara A.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Will F.	18	M	White/non-Hispanic	Gay/Lesbian	Exclusive Relationship
Andrew V.	18	M	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Ashley K.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Lydia H.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Bisexual	Exclusive Relationship
Brian R.	18	M	Black/African American	Bisexual	No Relationship
Emily W.	19	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Mary L.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	Exclusive Relationship
Priya	18	F	Asian American	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Alexandrea F.	18	F	Asian American	Other	Exclusive Relationship
James O.	18	M	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Maddie S.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	Exclusive Relationship
Liz C.	19	F	Latino/a or Hispanic	Bisexual	No Relationship
Rachel B.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Kelly R.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	Exclusive Relationship
Megan T.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Ruth B.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Adrian B.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	Exclusive Relationship
Jill D.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Hillary A.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	Exclusive Relationship
Allison C.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	Exclusive Relationship
Cassie M.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Grace G.	18	F	Asian American	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Lacy P.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Valerie G.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Shauna P.	18	F	Asian American	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Melissa V.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Tracey W.	18	F	Black/African American	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Casey M.	18	F	Black/African American	Heterosexual	No Relationship
Regina L.	18	F	White/non-Hispanic	Heterosexual	No Relationship

Table 12. Emergent themes of Expected and Feared SPS, and Developmental Influences (N = 35)

Theme: Expected and Strategies			
Theme 1	<i>Sex and Commitment</i> (n = 28)	"I take sex as more of a...more of a spiritual thing where you get connected to a person...I wanna have that relationship with a person"-- <i>female</i>	"I think you can tell whenever you have a real connection with somebody and you're in a relationship and that's the type of thing when you should actually have sex...not just casual"-- <i>female</i>
Theme 2	<i>Relationship focus</i> (n = 17)	"I was maybe hoping a little bit to...if something develops with a guy that I meet, that would be nice, as I have not been in a relationship in a while. A steady pace would be a good thing for me."-- <i>female</i>	"I wouldn't be opposed to starting a relationship with someone if I had gotten to know them really well...I wouldn't want to rush anything or rush into a relationship before I felt like I knew that person really well."-- <i>female</i>
Theme 3	<i>Delaying sex</i> (n = 12)	"Only 'cause school just started, but maybe once I get my schedule figured out or whatever, maybe I'll have more of a plan"-- <i>female</i>	"Maybe not really your first semester because you're just getting into the swing of things and you're not as out there...but maybe as the year goes on...then it would be easier to have sex with more people"-- <i>female</i>
Theme 4	<i>Taking a passive approach</i> (n = 14)	"If it happens, it happens; if it doesn't, it doesn't...I'm not actively searching at all or anything"-- <i>male</i>	"I'm more of the fate kind of person, so instead of actively looking, I like to think that everything's in God's hands"-- <i>female</i>
Theme 5	<i>Plans for sex</i> (n = 12)	"But, I do expect to have at least a few sexual experiences. Once again, I'm not actively searching one out, but, I'm fine not really looking to have sex, really."-- <i>male</i>	"But I expect there to be casual, random hookups."-- <i>female</i>
Theme 6	<i>Abstinence</i> (n = 10)	"I expect, no sex in the equation. I heavily believe in no sex before marriage. So on that note, yeah none before, none in this semester unless I get married, but I don't think that's happening."-- <i>female</i>	"I will be as pure as I am now by the end...I will not lose my virginity until I get married."-- <i>female</i>
Theme: Feared SPS and Strategies			
Theme 7	<i>Non-committed sexual avoidance</i> (n = 24)	"Like I said, emotionally, it's really harmful. And it was like whenever I did that kind of stuff, it just made me feel so worthless a lot of the time, and I'm really trying to make sure I don't feel like that."-- <i>female</i>	"I never wanna have a drunken hook up or anything, like I met him the same night and we hooked up the same night...And so, I never want it to be like I regret it. That's never something I want."-- <i>female</i>
Theme 8	<i>Sexual assault/coercion</i> (n = 18)	"I don't ever wanna get to the point where I get blackout drunk, and then something happens to me while I'm sleeping, be it from a female or another male"-- <i>male</i>	"I would also be a little scared that they would be like, 'Well I don't have a condom, but we're gonna have sex anyway...like that's rape...but [girls] are a lot smaller. It's a lot more scary for them"-- <i>female</i>

Table 12. Continued...

Theme 9	<i>Reputation</i> (n = 18)	“You hook up with one person maybe you’re like, ‘Okay, I never did this thing. Let’s keep it a secret between us. This is just a one time thing.’ And then all of a sudden the whole campus knows about it and everybody’s like, ‘Oh, you hooked up with so and so.’”— <i>female</i>	“I’m not gonna become ‘that girl’, she sleeps around, parties too much.”— <i>female</i>
Theme 10	<i>Identity loss</i> (n = 10)	“Well, I guess just to stay true to who I am to, don’t let it mess up how I feel I should act or be as a person...”-- <i>female</i>	“Well I wrote down that I don’t wanna be someone, to stifle myself. I do wanna open up. I don’t wanna stay closed down. I kind of fear that I will be too scared to open all the way up, and I don’t wanna give up opportunities with other people just because I’m scared.”— <i>female</i>
Theme 11	<i>Sexual Health</i> (n = 15)	“I’d wanna avoid unprotected sex, ‘cause that kind of goes into the having a baby and STDs. I still don’t wanna have a baby and I still don’t want STDs.”— <i>female</i>	“Or STDs or whatever. I would absolutely die if I had to call my dad and be like, ‘Hi, Dad. I have herpes. So what are we gonna do?’”-- <i>female</i>
Theme: Developmental Influences			
Theme 12	<i>Religiosity</i> (n = 12)	“But I have a six-month rule. Because I am Christian, and I don’t believe in just sex, or whatever like that.”-- <i>female</i>	“I was born and raised in the church, and I was raised to believe, ‘Hey, that’s not good’...I wanna keep my values, my Christian values, but at the same time, I’m not gonna try to negotiate that side of me”— <i>male</i>
Theme 13	<i>Family</i> (n = 25)	“Your parents could be super lenient or your parents can be super strict. It really depends on your parents, I feel like, how you were brought up, how you were taught, what you know, your morals. If you know right from wrong, basically”— <i>female</i>	“My parents have pumped that into me forever to be careful...and they just expressed all those things like, ‘Don’t drink out of an opened drink.’”— <i>female</i>
Theme 14	<i>Alcohol and Parties</i> (n = 23)	“And a lot of times when you’re hyped up, and you’re drunk or something, you don’t think about the responsibilities. You don’t think about the consequences.-- <i>female</i>	“I feel like it’ll make you more of a risk-taker. When I think about blackout drunk, I think it’s like being completely detached from who you actually are, and it’s like your drunken persona, when you become.”-- <i>male</i>
Theme 15	<i>Peers/Friends</i> (n = 23)	“You get better friends who have the same values...it’s easier to have the same sexual possibility values and stuff like that when you’re surrounded by people that have the same values”— <i>female</i>	“I have a lot of friends like that. And I’m like, ‘Okay yeah, you think that way. But I just don’t really think that way.’”— <i>female</i>

Table 12. Continued...

Theme 16	<i>Past experiences</i> (n = 19)	"I had a couple of encounters with guys that were really meaningless, and they just kind made me feel bad about myself...so I know that that's not what I want for myself"— <i>female</i>	"I think it's just mostly my past relationship is what influenced it the most...and also myself because I've had a one-night stand before and I didn't...I was like, 'Wow this kind of sucks'. It's just past things ..."— <i>female</i>
Theme 17	<i>Media</i> (n = 11)	"Someone described it on the internet and I was like, 'Hey, that fits me. Maybe I'm not like everyone else thinks that I am...when I started getting on the internet, I saw a bunch of other people on forums, wherever, just describing the same things that I felt and [it] kind of awakened me"— <i>female</i>	"Movies glamorize it. Magazines glamorize it. TV shows glamorize it. Just kind of some big idea that everyone has."-- <i>female</i>
Theme 18	<i>College culture</i> (n = 15)	"Just kinda like, 'let's get drunk, let's go to a party. Let's go home and do stuff together like, it's whatever, it's college' ...so you feel like you should 'cause it's college"-- <i>female</i>	"[As] a senior in high school, I expected, 'Oh college is gonna be so crazy, I'm gonna have probably a lot of sex...just the idea of college"-- <i>female</i>
Theme: Developmental lens			
Theme 19	<i>Sexual identity development</i> (n = 9)	"It's just experimenting, seeing where you're comfortable, what you wanna do with your life. It's just kind of just figuring yourself out"-- <i>female</i>	"I kind of feel like most do have an established sexuality, but some are still trying to figure it out...it's different for everyone"-- <i>female</i>
Theme 20	<i>Changes in expectations</i> (n = 16)	"So, I kind of feel like first semester is definitely a place where it happens the most. It'll happen throughout college, it'll be less frequent, but I feel like first semester might be a time when it happens the most,"-- <i>male</i>	Obviously, it'll calm down second semester, you'll get it out of your system, whatever. I definitely think that first semester is a place where you just do anything you want"-- <i>female</i>

VITA

Kristin Michelle Anders earned her Bachelor's degree in Psychology at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville in 2011 and her Master's degree in Child and Family Studies at the University of Tennessee in 2014. Upon approval of this dissertation, Kristin will receive her Doctorate of Philosophy in Child and Family Studies at the University of Tennessee in May 2017. Kristin's research focuses on sexual identity development, risk engagement, and effective education programs during adolescence and emerging adulthood.