

# Our Scripted Sexuality: The Development and Validation of a Measure of the Heterosexual Script and Its Relation to Television Consumption

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## Abstract

The heterosexual script describes the set of complementary but unequal roles for women and men to follow in their romantic and sexual interactions. The heterosexual script is comprised of the sexual double standard (men want sex and women set sexual limits), courtship strategies (men attract women with power and women attract men through beauty and sexiness), and commitment strategies (men avoid commitment and women prioritize relationships). Despite evidence that women and men are aware of this script, and it is prominent in the media, there is no existing measure of endorsement of the heterosexual script. In Studies 1 and 2, we develop and validate a measure of endorsement of the heterosexual script. In Study 3, we demonstrate that television consumption predicts stronger endorsement of the heterosexual script. We discuss the implications of endorsement of the heterosexual script for sexual health and provide suggestions for future research using this scale.

## Keywords

sexual scripts, sexuality, gender roles, measure development, television

Cultural scripts guide individual behaviors and expectations in romantic and sexual relationships, and these scripts vary greatly by gender. In North America, these scripts expect men to be the sexual aggressors, to objectify women, and to prioritize sex over emotion; conversely, women are expected to be sexually passive, to serve as gatekeepers, and to prioritize emotion over sex (Kim et al., 2007). Although not all romantic relationships include sex, and not all sexual relationships are romantic, norms about sex and romance are closely connected. The media frequently portray and reinforce these sexual scripts (Kim et al., 2007; Ward, 2002). The media are an important source of information about sexuality, especially for emerging adults who are entering a developmental phase in which romantic relationships become more physically and emotionally intimate and more serious than in adolescence (Arnett, 2000; Finnerty-Myers, 2011; Nabi & Clark, 2008). Drawing on Kim and colleagues' (2007) conception of gendered sexual scripts, we have constructed and tested a measure of the heterosexual script, which represents the set of complementary scripts for women and men to follow in their romantic and sexual interactions. Through three studies, we provide justification for this new measure, test its validity, and assess whether television (TV) exposure contributes to its endorsement among emerging adults.

## Content and Impact of the Heterosexual Script

Sexual script theory argues that cultural norms and expectations about sexuality inform individual behaviors and attitudes (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). There are several commonly identified sexual scripts in U.S. culture, such as relational scripts (sex fosters intimacy between partners), procreational scripts (sex is for having children), and recreational scripts (sex is for pleasure; DeLamater, 1989). However, sexual scripts do not apply equally to women and men; instead, acceptable and appropriate behavior for women is different from acceptable and appropriate behavior

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for men. More recent qualitative work with emerging adults has documented sexual discourses that differ by gender, including the “pleasing woman” (women should please their male partners) and the “pressuring man” (men initiate sex and try repeatedly to convince their female partners to have sex; Bay-Cheng & Eliseo-Arras, 2008; Dworkin & O’Sullivan, 2005). Because cultural expectations for sex differ by gender, it is important to use a gendered lens to investigate sexual scripts.

Kim and colleagues’ heterosexual script (Kim et al., 2007; Tolman, Kim, Schooler, & Sorsoli, 2007) provides a useful framework for analyzing sexual scripts that accounts for gendered power dynamics by combining scripting theory (Simon & Gagnon, 1986) with feminist theory (Rich, 1980). The heterosexual script represents the dominant script in North America that defines culturally appropriate relational and sexual behavior. Each component of the script conceptualizes the set of complementary but inherently unequal roles for women and men to follow in their romantic and sexual interactions. One component is the *sexual double standard*, which refers to the idea that men always think about sex and that having sex is a defining aspect of masculinity, whereas women are “gatekeepers” and keep their sexuality and number of sexual encounters in check. The second element describes *courtship strategies* for each gender. Men attract women with their power, through either physical prowess or material resources; they are the aggressors and initiators. Women indicate their sexual interest passively, by dressing in a sexualized way or waiting for men to ask them out. The third element of the heterosexual script describes approaches toward *commitment*. While men avoid commitment, and tease other men in monogamous relationships, women prioritize romantic relationships and make sacrifices for their partners in order to maintain these relationships. The fourth element of the script describes *same sex attraction*. While men avoid doing anything that could be construed as “gay” or feminine, women’s same-sex desire is appropriated by men for their sexual pleasure.

The heterosexual script is unique in that it highlights the interactional nature of heterosexual relationships. Tolman (2006) describes this as *gender complementarity*; “rather than being opposites, these gender constructs fit together, complementing one another, as two cogs in the machine of compulsory heterosexuality” (p. 79). The gendered parts of the heterosexual script reflect an active/passive and powerful/powerless gendered dichotomy. Men are active participants in their relationships by seeking out and initiating sex and demonstrating physical and material power; women are passive participants who must keep their sexuality in check and seek resources from men. The heterosexual script is hegemonic in that it is presented as “natural” or inevitable (Rich, 1980); women are encouraged to buy into and uphold the script, despite the fact that the script places women in positions of limited power. Even women who do *not* endorse the script are typically aware that it exists and that their behavior will be judged against it (Tolman & Porche, 2000).

Cultural guides for sexuality are especially important in emerging adulthood for several reasons. First, this developmental period is a critical time during which emerging adults are expected to explore their sexual identity, form significant

romantic relationships, and engage in sexual activity (Arnett, 2000; Halpern & Kaestle, 2014). Indeed, emerging adulthood is often the time when the sexual scripts learned throughout childhood are applied, and when youth actively experiment with these scripts in order to consolidate their personal values. Second, research indicates that gender-specific sexual norms are prominent on college campuses. Qualitative studies document frequent slut shaming for women (Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009) and pressure to uphold the “player” image for men (Epstein, Calzo, Smiler, & Ward, 2009). Empirical data demonstrate that college women’s perceived stigma for engaging in casual sex affects their sexual decision making (Conley, Ziegler, & Moors, 2013). Thus, sexual scripts are prominent and enforced during emerging adulthood.

The endorsement of traditional sexual scripts has important implications for sexual relationships across the life span. For adolescent and emerging adult women, endorsing traditional feminine gender roles is associated with less sexual assertiveness and fewer sexual protection behaviors (Curtin, Ward, Merriwether, & Caruthers, 2011; Impett, Schooler, & Tolman, 2006). Adherence to the objectification component of female sexual scripts is related to lower sexual satisfaction, sexual self-esteem, sexual self-competence, and sexual self-efficacy among college-aged and adult women (Calogero & Thompson, 2009; Ramsey & Hoyt, 2014). Among adolescent and emerging adult men, endorsement of traditional masculine gender roles is associated with a higher number of sexual partners and a greater likelihood to engage in unprotected sex (Noar, Morokoff, & Harlow, 2002; Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1993). In addition, men who more strongly endorse traditional masculine ideologies are more likely to engage in sexually aggressive behaviors and intimate partner violence (Murnen, Wright, & Kaluzny, 2002; Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, & Tritt, 2004). Thus, endorsing traditional sexual scripts appears to negatively impact women’s and men’s sexual well-being beginning in adolescence and continuing through emerging adulthood and beyond.

### *Media Portrayals and the Heterosexual Script*

Although emerging adults likely learn about traditional sexual scripts from multiple cultural informants, including parents, siblings, and peers (Simon & Gagnon, 1986), the mainstream media are a particularly rich source of information for several reasons. First, sexual content is prevalent in the media, appearing in 82% of TV programs (Fisher, Hill, Grube, & Gruber, 2004) and 85% of major motion pictures (Jamieson, More, Lee, Busse, & Romer, 2008). Second, emerging adults aged 18–24 spend between 2 and 3 hours per day watching TV and 12 hours per day with media, overall (MarketingCharts, 2009; Nielsen, 2015). Emerging adults spend even more time with media than do adolescents (Nielsen, 2015; Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010).

What messages does TV content consumed by emerging adults portray about sexuality? Kim and colleagues (2007) developed the heterosexual script in order to document prevalent sexual themes in TV content. They found that the heterosexual script is common on prime-time U.S. American

TV programs, with references to the script appearing 15.5 times per hour. Beyond prime-time TV, recent analyses of tween-oriented programs found that references to the heterosexual script occurred in 11.45% of the interactions between characters (Kirsch & Murnen, 2014). Although few studies have examined the prevalence of the heterosexual script as a whole, some have documented the presence of its component notions. For example, in her analysis of sexual themes in the programs youth watch most, Ward (1995) found the notion that masculinity is equated with having sex to be one of the most frequently occurring themes. Other analyses of prime-time programming indicate that female characters are often punished for violating the heterosexual script. Here, Aubrey (2004) discovered that female characters who deviate from the “good girl” script by initiating sexual activity frequently faced negative consequences such as social isolation or sexually transmitted infections. Together, these findings demonstrate that elements of the heterosexual script are indeed prevalent on TV and hold potential to shape viewers’ beliefs.

Findings also indicate that references to the heterosexual script vary by TV genre, both in frequency and in kind. Kim and colleagues (2007) found that situation comedies (sitcoms) contained twice as many heterosexual script messages than did prime-time dramas. Indeed, violating the heterosexual script often served as a source of humor in sitcoms, most frequently in the form of men’s struggles to maintain their masculinity (Kim et al., 2007). These messages are also common on unscripted or reality TV, which has consistently captured the majority of viewers among top prime-time programs since the 2002–2003 broadcast season (Nielsen, 2011). Further, the median viewer age is 23 for reality programs such as *Jersey Shore* and for networks that feature reality programs, such as MTV (Consoli, 2012). These numbers indicate that emerging adults are frequent viewers of reality TV. The reality TV genre encompasses a variety of subgenres, including dating (e.g., *The Bachelor*) and celebrity surveillance programs (e.g., *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*). Analyses of reality dating programs (RDPs) indicate that references to men as always looking for sex occur 3.6 times per hour and references to women as sex objects occur 5.9 times per hour (Ferris, Smith, Greenberg, & Smith, 2007). Although existing analyses have focused heavily on RDPs, we anticipate that references to the heterosexual script appear across multiple subgenres of reality TV.

Finally, the media may be a particularly salient source of information for emerging adults because evidence suggests that young people who have little relationship and sexual experience of their own may use TV as a guide for their relationships (Finnerty-Myers, 2011; Nabi & Clark, 2008). Uses and gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973) argues that viewers are drawn to media in order to meet certain needs. For emerging adults, the need for intimacy may attract them to TV content that contains information about sex and relationships (Arnett, 1995; Coyne, Padilla-Walker, & Howard, 2013). Similar to the contact hypothesis (Fujioka, 1999), which finds that viewers who have no personal relationships with people of color are more susceptible to embracing media’s racial

stereotypes, we might expect that viewers who have little sexual experience of their own may be *especially* susceptible to the sexual messages portrayed on TV. Indeed, less sexual experience predicts greater consumption of sexual TV among adolescents (Kim et al., 2006; Nabi & Clark, 2008). Thus, TV may be a particularly salient source of information about culturally appropriate behaviors and attitudes for emerging adults, especially as they enter into a developmental stage that prioritizes establishing intimate romantic and sexual relationships.

### Measuring Heterosexual Script Endorsement

Despite evidence that the heterosexual script is common on mainstream TV consumed by emerging adults, and evidence that endorsing elements of the script is linked to sexual health consequences among emerging adults, no studies have examined whether TV use is associated with endorsement of the heterosexual script. In fact, there is no existing measure of endorsement of the heterosexual script. As such, we sought to develop a measure of individuals’ endorsement of the heterosexual script. Several scales exist that measure gender role attitudes or sexual attitudes, but to our knowledge, none exist that capture the interactional nature of these constructs within heterosexual courtship. Rather than a measure that consists of subscale(s) for women’s roles and subscale(s) for men’s roles, we wanted to develop a measure that captured the interlocking and complementary roles for women and men within the heterosexual script. Although there are several existing measures of endorsement of traditional gender roles, our Heterosexual Script Scale (HSS) is unique in two important ways. First, it captures the complementary roles for women and men, rather than assessing these roles separately. For example, some of the most commonly used gender role measures, such as the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974), the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (Mahalik et al., 2003), and the Conformity to Feminine Norms Inventory (Mahalik et al., 2005), have separate scales for women and men. The HSS is unique in that it accounts for the ways in which traditional gender roles support and reinforce each other (e.g., men value women for their sex appeal and women self-sexualize) rather than measuring masculinity and femininity as separate dimensions. Although the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale (AVSB; Burt, 1980) captures the complementary roles for women and men, it focuses on the antagonistic nature of their relationships. We need a scale that is neutral and includes items that do not require an antagonistic relationship between women and men.

Second, the HSS focuses specifically on gender roles within romantic encounters. Many scales of gender role endorsement focus on women’s and men’s roles in other domains. For example, the Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents (ATWSA; Galambos, Petersen, Richards, & Gitelson, 1985) includes items focused on gender roles in school or work (e.g., “More encouragement in a family should be given to sons than daughters to go to college”) and in language use (e.g., “Swearing is worse for a girl than for a guy”). Other gender role scales focus on personality traits (e.g., The Bem Sex Role Inventory;

Bem, 1974) or behaviors (e.g., Sex Role Behavior Scale; Orlofsky, Ramsden, & Cohen, 1982) rather than ideologies. The recently published Sexual Script Scale (Sakaluk, Todd, Milhausen, Lachowsky, & URGiS, 2014) measures the heterosexual script but focuses exclusively on the sexual double standard (e.g., “Men are more easily aroused than women”) and on commitment strategies as they relate to sexual activity (e.g., “Sex is more emotional for women than men”). This scale does not capture the idea that women prioritize commitment while men avoid monogamous relationships, nor does it reflect the ways in which women and men attract partners (e.g., provocative dress vs. physical or material power). Similarly, the Endorsement of the Hookup Culture Index (Aubrey & Smith, 2013) provides a measure of the perceived utility of a specific type of sexual encounter, the casual hook up, but does not measure beliefs about gender roles within romantic relationships, more generally. Ward’s Attitudes About Dating and Relationships Measure (Ward, 2002) includes subscales focused on the idea that men are sex-driven and women are sex objects. However, the subscales do not include the notion that women should set sexual limits. Additionally, Ward’s (2002) measure was designed to be used as individual subscales and has not been validated as an entire scale that captures all component notions of the heterosexual script, together. Our HSS is unique in that it focuses specifically on attitudes toward women and men in romantic relationships and captures scripts related to sexual activity, courtship, and commitment together in one scale.

### The Current Studies

The purpose of Studies 1 and 2 was to develop and validate a measure of the heterosexual script as defined by Kim and colleagues (2007). Study 2 also tested the validity of this new scale by comparing it to theoretically related constructs. Additionally, although Kim and colleagues used the concept of the heterosexual script to measure its content on prime-time TV, we do not know whether TV consumption is linked to endorsement of the heterosexual script. Given this, we were interested in whether TV consumption was related to greater endorsement of the heterosexual script, as measured by the scale we created in Studies 1 and 2. The purpose of Study 3 was to examine whether more frequent viewing of TV overall, and of popular TV dramas, sitcoms, and reality programs was each related to greater endorsement of the heterosexual script.

Because the heterosexual script focuses on the interactions between women and men, we anticipated that the HSS would apply to both women and men. We therefore aimed via Study 1 to develop an HSS and to investigate the psychometric properties of this new scale for both genders.

## Method

### Development of the Heterosexual Script Scale

The HSS was developed from the Women are Sex Objects and Men are Sex Driven subscales of the Attitudes Toward Dating and Relationships Measure (Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999) used

in Ward (2002) and Ward and Friedman (2006). We also used themes identified in Kim and colleagues’ (2007) content analysis of the heterosexual script on prime-time TV to generate new items reflecting men’s and women’s commitment strategies, which were not reflected in Ward’s (2002) subscales. Finally, we removed items from Ward’s (2002) measure reflecting the idea that dating is a recreational sport because this notion is not reflected in the heterosexual script. A team of media and/or sexuality researchers comprised of one faculty member and 12 students (both PhD students and undergraduates) discussed and agreed on the items included in the final scale. Our scale reflects the three most common components of the script depicted on TV: the sexual double standard, gender-specific courtship strategies, and gender-specific orientations toward commitment (Kim et al., 2007). The same-sex attraction component of the script was not included in this measure because it does not reflect complementary roles for women and men in heterosexual relationships and was noted by Kim and colleagues (2007) to be the least common component of the script on TV, occurring less than once per hour of programming. Further, we were interested in gender roles *within* heterosexual relationships, which are not captured by the same-sex attraction component of the script.

Items reflecting the sexual double standard include “It is up to women to keep things from moving too fast sexually” and “Most guys don’t want to be ‘just friends’ with a girl.” Items reflecting gender-specific courtship strategies include “Girls should do whatever they need to (e.g., use make-up, buy attractive clothes, and work out) to look good enough to attract a date/partner” and “Men should be the ones to ask women out and to initiate physical contact.” Items reflecting gender-specific orientations toward commitment include “A woman should be willing to make personal sacrifices in order to satisfy her partner” and “Guys are more interested in physical relationships and girls are more interested in emotional relationships.” There were 27 items in total. Participants read the following instructions before they responded to the scale: “There are lots of beliefs about how dating and relationships work for men and women. We want to know what you think. Please rate how much YOU agree with the following statements.” Agreement with each statement is indicated on a 6-point scale from *strongly disagree* at 1 to *strongly agree* at 6.

### Participants

Participants were 555 undergraduate women and men (54.8% female) aged 17–26 ( $M = 19.31$ ) attending a large Midwestern university. Because only 32 participants (5.77%) had missing data, we opted to remove these participants from the sample rather than use imputation techniques (Brown, 1994). The majority of the sample identified as White (69.2%); another 19.3% identified as Asian/Asian American, 4.5% as Black/African American, 2.5% as Latino/Hispanic/Native American, and 2.9% as Middle Eastern. The young women and men sampled came from well-educated backgrounds. On average, their mothers had completed 16 years of education and their

fathers had completed 17 years, numbers equivalent to having obtained a bachelor's degree. Participants indicated their sexual orientation on a scale from 1 = *exclusively heterosexual* to 5 = *exclusively homosexual*; 93.9% identified as exclusively or predominantly heterosexual, 1.1% as bisexual, 1.9% as exclusively or predominantly homosexual, and 3.0% indicated they were not sure or did not indicate their sexual orientation.

### Procedure

Participants were recruited from the university's Psychology Subject Pool. Participants completed the study via paper surveys administered during in-person sessions that consisted of 8–20 participants per session. The full survey packet featured several measures that were not analyzed here, including measures assessing media use, social relationships, romantic relationships, sexual attitudes, and personal values. Administration of the full survey took approximately 45–60 min. The university's institutional review board approved all procedures and measures.

## Results

### Data Conditioning

To determine whether a factor analysis is appropriate for the data, we followed Field's (2013) and Tabachnick and Fidell's (2007) guidelines. First, we examined the data for outliers by plotting histograms, boxplots, and Q–Q plots of all items on the HSS. The data appeared normal; some items were positively skewed, but in large samples, these deviations from normality are not a problem (Field, 2013; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Next, we examined the data for linearity by examining pairwise scatterplots of the skewed variables (which would be most likely violate the assumption of linearity; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). None revealed evidence of a curvilinear relation. We then examined intercorrelations among the items on the scale; each item should be significantly correlated with other items on the scale. Two items failed to meet this criteria. Whereas other items on the scale were significantly correlated with all or all but 1 item, these 2 items were significantly correlated with only half of the items and thus were not included in the factor analysis (Field, 2013). The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is .91, well above the cutoff value of .6, and the determinant of the correlation matrix is .001, above the cutoff of .00001 (Field, 2013; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), indicating there is not a problem with extreme multicollinearity.

### Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

We conducted an EFA on the remaining 25 items, following recommendations of Costello and Osborne (2005). We used the maximum likelihood method with oblimin rotation to extract factors, and the scree test to determine how many factors to extract. Based on the scree plot and the recommendations of Costello and Osborne (2005), we tested a two-, three-, four-, and five-factor model. The four-factor model fit the data best because it had the fewest number of crossloading items (2 items), and each factor had at least 4 items that loaded at

.30 or higher (Costello & Osborne, 2005). We removed 2 items that loaded onto more than one factor at .30 or higher and 1 item that loaded onto a factor by itself. We were left with a four-factor solution with 22 items ( $\alpha = .88$ ). We provide factor loadings and individual factor reliabilities in Table 1.

## Discussion

The results of Study 1 indicate that the HSS is comprised of four factors with 22 total items. Because this was an EFA, we had no formal hypotheses about the number or content of the revealed factors. However, it is important to note that the four factors revealed by the EFA do not map directly onto the three components of the heterosexual script as defined by Kim and colleagues (2007). This is perhaps not surprising given that the script components do overlap. For example, the idea that men are primarily interested in sex is an example of both *commitment* (men avoid monogamous relationships in favor of casual hook ups) and the *sexual double standard* (men constantly pursue sex). Instead, the four factors revealed by the EFA reflect courtship and commitment (CC; Factor 1), men as powerful initiators (PI; Factor 2), men's valuing of women's appearance (WA; Factor 3), and notions that sex defines masculinity but women should set sexual limits (SM; Factor 4). Taken together, these four factors represent all components of the heterosexual script: Factor 1 encompasses *courtship strategies* and *commitment*, and Factors 2, 3, and 4 represent the *sexual double standard*.

### Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 was to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the four-factor structure of the HSS in a separate sample, to examine gender differences on the HSS, and to demonstrate that the HSS correlates with theoretically related constructs. Because the HSS contains gendered sexual roles, we anticipated that the scale correlates with other measures of gender roles. Both the heterosexual script and traditional feminine gender roles suggest similar traits for women, such as being passive and prioritizing relationships. The ATWSA (Galambos et al., 1985) measures these aspects of traditional feminine gender roles, such as the belief that men make better leaders than women and that women should prioritize family over career. Although the heterosexual script measures gender roles within romantic relationships, we expected that people who endorse the heterosexual script also endorse traditional feminine gender roles in other domains. Similarly, both the heterosexual script and traditional masculine gender roles dictate that men should be powerful and in control (except when it comes to their sex drives). The Adolescent Masculinity Ideology in Relationships Scale (AMIRS; Chu, Porche, & Tolman, 2005) measures some of these aspects, such as the idea that men should never back down from a fight and that in a healthy relationship the man always gets his way, and thus we expected to find a correlation between the HSS and this measure. Because the HSS seeks to measure the interlocking and

**Table 1.** Standardized Factor Loadings and Reliabilities for Final 22 Items Remaining of the Initial 25.

Factors	EFA <sup>a</sup>				Second-Order CFA			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Eigenvalue	7.13	1.67	1.43	1.32				
Cronbach's $\alpha$	.80	.65	.75	.67	.76	.65	.74	.67
1. The best way for a girl to attract a boyfriend is to use her body and looks.	.55	.03	.14	.13	.60			
2. There is nothing wrong with men being primarily interested in a woman's body.	.53	.09	.14	.01	.49			
3. No matter what she says, a girl isn't really happy unless she's in a relationship.	.53	.06	.04	.16	.51			
4. Girls should do whatever they need to (e.g., use make-up, buy attractive clothes, and work out) to look good enough to attract a date/partner.	.52	.06	.13	.14	.61			
5. Sometimes girls have to do things they don't want to do to keep their boyfriend happy.	.48	.16	.05	.08	.58			
6. A woman should be willing to make personal sacrifices in order to satisfy her partner.	.47	.04	.13	.05	.44			
7. Guys like to play the field and shouldn't be expected to stay with one partner for too long.	.43	.05	.04	.25	.43			
8. Women are attracted most to a man with a lot of money.	.36	.19	.17	.05	.62			
9. A man should always protect and defend his woman.	.11	.70	.07	.03		.50		
10. Men should be the ones to ask women out and initiate physical contact.	.08	.51	.10	.27		.62		
11. A woman wants a man because she wants someone to protect her.	.25	.47	.05	.04		.57		
12. Women like to admire men's bodies and are attracted most to men who are muscular and handsome.	.02	.35	.20	.01		.57		
13. Being with an attractive partner gives a guy prestige.	.08	.08	.71	.02			.76	
14. Guys who are able to date a lot of people (players) are considered cool.	.16	.15	.61	.05			.59	
15. In the dating game, guys frequently compete with each other for partners, and girls try to lure or catch partners.	.05	.12	.47	.14			.56	
16. It's only natural for a guy to make advances on someone he finds attractive.	.09	.19	.45	.13			.69	
17. It is natural for a guy to want to admire or check out other people, even if he is dating someone.	.22	.07	.35	.07			.51	
18. Guys are always ready for sex.	.01	.08	.21	.56				.68
19. Most guys don't want to be "just friends" with a girl.	.01	.10	.15	.49				.54
20. Guys are more interested in physical relationships and girls are more interested in emotional relationships.	.01	.11	.04	.47				.53
21. It is up to women to keep things from moving too fast sexually.	.24	.17	.04	.36				.50
22. Women with a lot of "experience" should expect a bad reputation.	.17	.13	.05	.31				.46

Note. EFA = exploratory factor analysis; CFA = confirmatory factor analysis.

<sup>a</sup>Factor loadings are from the EFA with original 25 items.

complementary roles for women and men, we anticipated that our scale would correlate with the AVSB (Burt, 1980), which measures the extent to which women and men are opposites and adversaries. Although the HSS does not require an antagonistic relationship between the sexes, we anticipated that people who endorse the idea that women and men are opposites also endorse the complementary roles for women and men as measured by the HSS. Finally, because the HSS measures endorsement of stereotypical sexual and relationship roles, we anticipated that our scale would correlate with a measure of stereotypes about idealized romantic relationships (e.g., true love overcomes any obstacle), as measured by the Romantic Beliefs Inventory (RBI; Sprecher & Metts, 1989).

The gendered parts of the heterosexual script reflect an active/passive and powerful/powerless gendered dichotomy. Because the theory of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980), on which the notion of the heterosexual script is based, suggests that heterosexual relationships place women in positions of limited power as compared to men, we expected the HSS to correlate with measures of sexism, especially benevolent sexism (BS). BS refers to attitudes about women that may *seem* neutral or even positive but serve to place women in stereotypical

positions and roles (Glick & Fiske, 1996). For example, "protecting" women or placing them on a pedestal may seem kind but undermines women's independence and questions their ability to take care of themselves. BS is similar to the heterosexual script in that the roles for women are seen as natural; however, the heterosexual script is unique in that it is specifically concerned with gender roles in romantic/sexual relationships.

Finally, because feminine courtship strategies in the HSS include the notion that women should use their sex appeal to attract men, we expected our scale to correlate with measures of self-objectification and self-sexualization for women. Based on this discussion, we formed the following hypotheses for Study 2:

**Hypothesis 1:** The factor structure of the HSS from Study 1 would be the same for Study 2.

**Hypothesis 2:** The factor structure of the HSS would be the same for women and men.

**Hypothesis 3:** The HSS would be positively correlated with measures of traditional gender roles and sexism for both sexes and positively correlated with self-objectification and self-sexualization for women.

**Table 2.** Intercorrelations Between Heterosexual Script Scale and Theoretically Related Concepts.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
$\alpha$ (Women)	.88	.71	.67	.73	.69	.77	.80	.76	.87	.86	.83	.88	.88	.71
$\alpha$ (Men)	.84	.68	.60	.66	.62	.80	.78	.76	.85	.87	.70	—	—	—
1. HSS (.88)														
2. CC	.88**	(.76)												
3. PI	.63**	.41**	(.65)											
4. WA	.80**	.63**	.41**	(.74)										
5. SM	.82**	.58**	.54**	.55**	(.67)									
6. ATWSA	.62**	.61**	.38**	.37**	.47**	(.82)								
7. AMIRS	.59**	.67**	.19**	.40**	.41**	.72**	(.84)							
8. AVSB	.62**	.60**	.32**	.46**	.53**	.65**	.65**	(.78)						
9. RBI	.25**	.18**	.29**	.17**	.23**	.15**	.05	.12*	(.87)					
10. HS	.60**	.55**	.47**	.40**	.51**	.55**	.46**	.57**	.23**	(.87)				
11. BS	.54**	.42**	.59**	.32**	.52**	.39**	.28**	.40**	.36**	.45**	(.79)			
12. ESS <sup>a</sup>	.43**	.34**	.37**	.43**	.32**	.12	.08	.24**	.16*	.14*	.26**	—		
13. OBC-S <sup>a</sup>	.23**	.20**	.17*	.18*	.18**	.06	-.01	.09	.09	.06	.11	.33**	—	
14. SA <sup>a</sup>	.28**	.24**	.25**	.23**	.24**	.08	-.03	.10	.13	.14*	.23**	.44**	.47**	—

Note  $N = 584$  for combined sample,  $n = 362$  for women. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliabilities are provided in parentheses for the entire sample. HSS = Heterosexual Script Scale. CC = courtship and commitment subscale; PI = men as powerful initiators subscale; WA = men value women's appearance subscale; SM = sex defines masculinity and women set sexual limits subscale; ATWSA = Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents; AMIRS = Adolescent Masculinity Ideology in Relationships Scale; AVSB = Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale; RBI = Romantic Beliefs Inventory; HS = hostile sexism; BS = benevolent sexism; ESS = Enjoyment of Sexualization Scale; OBC-S = Objectified Body Consciousness—Surveillance; SA = sexual appeal.

<sup>a</sup>Correlations and reliabilities for women only.

\* $p < .01$ . \*\* $p < .001$ .

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 625 undergraduates (62.7% female), aged 17–23 ( $M = 19.16$ ), enrolled at the same large Midwestern university as in Study 1. Similar to Study 1, 68.5% of the sample identified as White, and an additional 16.6% identified as Asian/Asian American, 6.2% as Black/African American, 3.0% as Latino/Hispanic/Native American, and 4.5% as Middle Eastern. The majority of participants (96.0%) identified as exclusively or predominantly heterosexual, 1.0% as bisexual, 1.9% as exclusively or predominantly homosexual, and 1.1% indicated they were not sure or did not indicate their sexual orientation. Participants' mothers had completed 16 years of education and their fathers had completed 17 years of education, equivalent to a bachelor's degree.

### Procedure

Participants were recruited from the university's psychology and communications subject pools. None of the participants in Study 1 were eligible to participate in Study 2. Participants completed the study via paper surveys administered during in-person sessions that consisted of 8–20 participants per session. Administration of the full survey took approximately 45–60 min. The university's institutional review board approved all procedures and measures.

### Measures

We present the internal consistencies for each measure in Table 2. For each measure, we calculated a mean score across

all items, with higher scores reflecting stronger endorsement of the scales' intended constructs.

**HSS.** The final 22 items from Study 1 were used to measure endorsement of the heterosexual script (see Table 1). Agreement with each statement is indicated on a 6-point Likert-type scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. We calculated a mean score for each of the four factors uncovered in Study 1.

**AMIRS.** The AMIRS (Chu et al., 2005) is a 12-item scale that measures participants' feelings about appropriate roles for men in social and sexual relationships. Participants rated their agreement with each statement on a 6-point Likert-type scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. A sample item is "Guys should not let it show when their feelings are hurt."

**ATWSA.** We used the ATWSA (Galambos et al., 1985) to assess participants' attitudes about women's roles in society. Participants rated their agreement with each statement on a 6-point Likert-type scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Sample items include, "Swearing is worse for a girl than for a guy" and "Girls should be more concerned with becoming good wives and mothers than desiring a professional or business career."

**AVSB.** We used the AVSB (Burt, 1980) to measure endorsement of the idea that women and men are naturally opposites and have antagonistic relationships with one another, which are common themes of traditional sexual scripts. We used a modified version of the scale appropriate for modern youth (Teten, Hall, & Pacifici, 2005). Participants rated their agreement with

each statement on a 6-point Likert-type scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Sample items include, “Most women are sly and manipulating when they are out to attract a man” and “Men are only out for one thing.”

**RBI.** The RBI (Sprecher & Metts, 1989) measures participants’ endorsement of idealized beliefs about romantic relationships, such as the belief that love finds a way, there is one true love for everybody, true love will be perfect, and love at first sight exists. Participants responded to 15 items (e.g., “I believe if another person and I love each other, we can overcome any differences and problems that may arise”) on a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored by *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree*.

**Ambivalent Sexism Inventory.** The ASI (Glick & Fiske, 1996) is a 22-item scale comprised of two subscales: hostile sexism (HS; 11 items) and BS (11 items). HS is defined as prejudice toward women that is obvious and derogatory. A sample item of HS is “Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.” BS refers to behaviors that may seem kind or helpful but serve to place women in positions of limited power. A sample BS item is “In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men” (reverse coded). Participants rate their agreement with these statements on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

**Self-objectification.** We measured self-objectification using the Surveillance subscale of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale-Youth (Lindberg, Hyde, & McKinley, 2006). The subscale contains 4 items (e.g., “During the day, I think about how I look many times”) on which participants rate their agreement on a scale anchored by *strongly disagree* at 1 and *strongly agree* at 6.

**Self-sexualization.** We measured self-sexualization in two ways. First, female participants completed the Enjoyment of Sexualization Scale (ESS; Liss, Erchull, & Ramsey, 2010), which measures the extent to which women enjoy being valued for their sexiness (e.g., “I like showing off my body”). Participants rate their agreement with 8 items using a Likert-type scale anchored by *strongly disagree* at 1 and *strongly agree* at 6. Second, female participants completed the sexual appeal (SA) subscale of the Gordon and Ward (2000) self-worth measure, which assesses the extent to which participants base their self-worth on their sex appeal. The subscale contains 7 items (e.g., “How you would feel about yourself if you were asked to be a model for a calendar featuring college students”), and participants rate the extent to which they would feel better or worse about themselves on a scale anchored by *Ugh, I would feel worthless* (−3) to *Wow! I would feel really great about myself* (+3). We calculated mean scores of absolute values, with higher mean scores indicating greater self-worth based on sex appeal.

## Results

### Data Conditioning

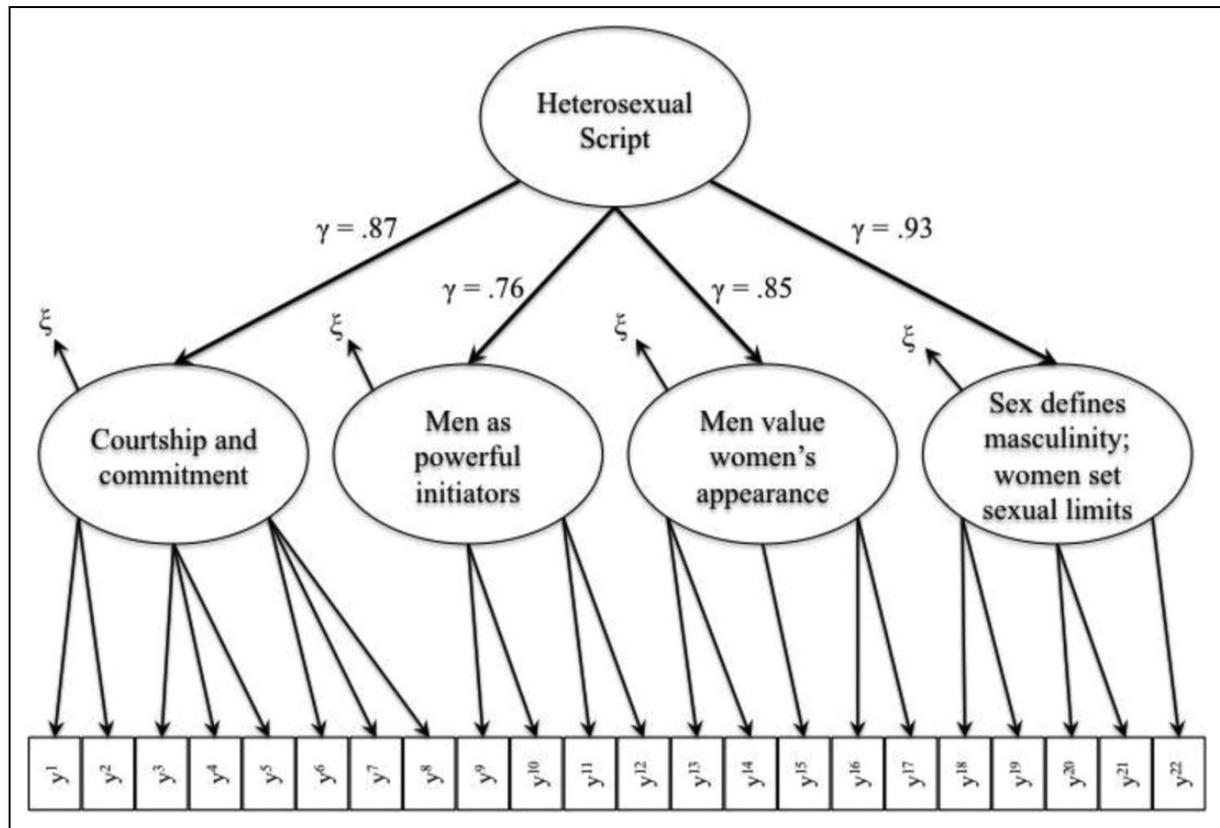
Similar to Study 1, we followed Tabachnick and Fidell’s (2007) and Field’s (2013) guidelines for preparing the data for analysis. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) recommend visual inspection for normality when the sample size is large. We used histograms, boxplots, and Q–Q plots to visually inspect outliers and normality. Visual inspection of the HSS, RBI, AVSB, HS, and BS suggest the data are normally distributed. The ATWSA and AMIRS deviated more from normality; each demonstrated some positive skew. However, given the large sample size, we were not concerned about small deviations from normality (Field, 2013).

### CFA

First, we conducted a CFA on the 22-item HSS to verify the factor structure found in Study 1 using a different sample. Because only 38 participants (6.10%) had missing data on the HSS, we opted to remove these participants from the sample rather than use imputation techniques (Brown, 1994). We analyzed the data using maximum likelihood estimation in LISREL. Hu and Bentler (1999) recommend using a combinatorial approach (i.e., more than one fit index) to evaluate model fit. Cutoff values close to .95 for the comparative fit index (CFI), .08 for the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and .06 for the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) result in acceptable Type II and Type I error rates (Hu & Bentler, 1999). More specifically, a CFI greater than or equal to .95 combined with an SRMR less than .08 indicates acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Based on these criteria, our model fit for the four-factor model was acceptable,  $\chi^2(203) = 670.938, p < .01$ ; RMSEA = .065; 90% CI for RMSEA [.060, .071]; nonnormed fit index (NNFI) = .941; CFI = .948; SRMR = .056.

In order to verify that the HSS is best captured by four factors, rather than one overall heterosexual script factor, we compared the fit of the four-factor model described above to a one-factor model. The four-factor model is “nested” under the one-factor model which allows us to use the  $\chi^2$  difference test to compare the fit of the models (Kline, 2011). The one-factor model did not provide a good fit to the data,  $\chi^2(209) = 917.657, p < .01$ ; RMSEA = .0847; 90% CI for RMSEA [.0797, .0898]; NNFI = .913; CFI = .921; SRMR = .0644. Not surprisingly, the one-factor model fit significantly worse than the four-factor model,  $\Delta\chi^2(6) = 246.719, p < .001$ . As such, we concluded the four-factor model was preferable to the one-factor model.

We then tested whether a second-order CFA provided a good fit to the data. A second-order factor is one that has a direct effect on the first-order factors (Kline, 2011). The presence of a second-order factor suggests that the four first-order factors all share one common cause: the second-order factor (i.e., the heterosexual script; Kline, 2011). The second-order CFA model provided an acceptable fit to the data,  $\chi^2(205) =$



**Figure 1.** Results of second-order confirmatory factor analysis. Loadings of indicators onto first-order factors are presented in Table 1.

695.869,  $p < .01$ ; RMSEA = .067; 90% CI for RMSEA [.062, .073]; NNFI = .938; CFI = .945; SRMR = .058. We present first-order factor loadings and reliabilities in Table 1. Each of the first-order factors loaded significantly onto the higher order factor at  $\alpha = .001$  (see Figure 1 for second-order factor loadings). This outcome suggests that although the HSS is composed of four factors, these factors all represent one underlying factor: the heterosexual script.

Next, we tested whether the second-order factor structure is the same for women and men. We followed the steps recommended by Reise, Widaman, and Pugh (1993) and Kline (2011) to test for measurement invariance. The first step in testing measurement invariance is to establish configural invariance, in which the factor structure is the same for both groups, but the parameters are allowed to vary between groups. An NNFI and CFI above .90 and an RMSEA around .08 indicate satisfactory model fit (Reise et al., 1993; van de Schoot, Lugtig, & Hox, 2012). According to these standards, our configural invariance model fit was acceptable,  $\chi^2(410) = 901.861$ ,  $p < .01$ ; RMSEA = .0663; 90% CI for RMSEA [.0606, .0720]; NNFI = .928; CFI = .936; SRMR = .0692.

Next, we tested for metric invariance by estimating a more restricted model in which the factor loadings are equal for women and men. This more restricted model is compared to the configural invariance model using the  $\chi^2$  difference test; if the more restricted model fits the data equally well as the less

restricted model (i.e., a nonsignificant  $\chi^2$ ), we conclude metric invariance (Kline, 2011; Reise et al., 1993). Our metric invariance model did not fit the data equally well as the configural model (see Table 3, Model 2).

Failure to establish complete metric invariance indicates that the magnitudes of the factor loadings are different for women and men. In order to identify which factor loadings differed between women and men, we tested for partial metric invariance using the technique outlined by Byrne, Shavelson, and Muthén (1989) in which more restricted models are compared to less restricted models using the  $\chi^2$  difference test. The models and  $\chi^2$  difference tests are detailed in Table 3. First, we set the loadings of the four first-order factors onto the second-order factor to be equal across groups; this model fit the data equally well as the configural model (see Table 3, Model 3). Next, we determined which first-order factors demonstrated metric invariance between women and men by imposing equality constraints on their indicators, one factor at a time, and comparing these models to the model in which only the higher order loadings were constrained to be equal (see Table 3, Models 4–7). Factors 2 and 4 demonstrated metric invariance for women and men (i.e., setting the loadings of Factors 2 and 4 equal between women and men did not lead to a worse-fitting model), but Factors 1 and 3 did not.

In order to determine which indicators of Factors 1 and 3 contributed to the lack of full metric invariance, we freed parameters

**Table 3.** Sequential Tests of Metric Invariance Between Women and Men for the Heterosexual Script Scale.

Competing Models	Comparison Model	$\chi^2$	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$
1. Invariant factor structure (configural invariance)	—	901.86	410	—	—
2. Invariant factor loadings (metric invariance)	M1	958.16	431	56.30***	21
3. Invariant second-order factor loadings	M1	905.13	413	3.27	3
4. Model 3 plus invariant loadings for Factor 1	M3	933.62	420	28.49***	7
5. Model 3 plus invariant loadings for Factor 2	M3	906.41	416	1.27	3
6. Model 5 plus invariant loadings for Factor 3	M5	921.88	420	15.47**	4
7. Model 5 plus invariance loadings for Factor 4	M5	915.21	420	8.80	4
8. Model 7 plus invariant loadings for Factor 1 except Item #2	M7	931.43	426	16.22*	6
9. Model 7 plus invariant loadings for Factor 1 except Items #2 and #4	M7	926.26	425	11.05	5
10. Model 9 plus invariant loadings for Factor 3 except Item #14	M9	935.79	428	9.53*	3
11. Model 9 plus invariant loadings for Items #14 and #15	M9	931.51	427	5.25	2

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

sequentially according to the magnitude of the difference of their standardized loadings between women and men (see Table 3, Models 8–11). We were able to establish partial metric invariance. Items 2 and 4 on Factor 1, and Items 14 and 15 on Factor 3, did not load equally for women and men (see Table 1 for item wording). Thus, Factors 1 and 3 may have slightly different “meanings” for women versus men. As such, we report scale reliabilities separately for women and men (see Table 2).

**Discriminant validity within the HSS.** The correlations between the HSS subscales ranged between .41 and .63, indicating the subscales are related but distinct from one another (see Table 2). These correlations, combined with the finding that the four-factor model fit the data significantly better than the one-factor model, demonstrate that the heterosexual script subscales demonstrate discriminant validity (i.e., the four factors are distinct from each other; Kline, 2011).

**Construct validity.** In order to demonstrate the construct validity of the HSS, we examined correlations between the HSS and related constructs; we present the results in Table 2. The HSS and its subscales were significantly and positively correlated with all similar constructs. Correlations ranged from .17 to .67, indicating the heterosexual script was related to, but distinct from, traditional gender role attitudes, traditional sexual scripts, sexism, self-objectification, and self-sexualization. The HSS also demonstrated discriminant validity in that it was significantly and positively correlated with idealized romantic beliefs, self-sexualization, and self-objectification, whereas the other gender role measures (ATWSA, AMIRS, and AVSB) were not. The only exceptions, here, were the AVSB, which was correlated with self-sexualization and romantic beliefs, and the ATWSA, which was correlated with romantic beliefs; in both cases, these other gender role measures were not correlated as strongly as the HSS (see Table 2).

## Discussion

The purpose of Study 2 was to replicate the factor structure found in Study 1 using a different sample, to test measurement

invariance between women and men, and to determine whether the HSS is related to similar constructs measuring traditional gender role attitudes, traditional sexual scripts, and sexism. The CFA confirmed the factor structure of the HSS. Because the four-factor model fits the data significantly better than the one-factor model, we can conclude that the HSS is made up of four related but distinct factors. Additionally, because the second-order factor structure is a good fit, it suggests that the subscales do load onto a larger construct, which is the HSS. We will therefore use a composite score across the four subscales to reflect this larger construct, as this is the goal of our studies. We note that future research could use individual factors as subscales if researchers are interested in specific components of the heterosexual script. The first factor, CC, captures traditional sexual scripts concerning committing to a heterosexual relationship and attributes that attract partners (e.g., women use their appearance to attract a partner and men avoid monogamous relationships). The second factor, PI, captures the active roles for men and passive roles for women in heterosexual relationships. The third factor, WA, captures the notion that men objectify women and use attractive women to gain status, and the fourth factor, SM, captures the sexual double standard (e.g., men are always willing to have sex; it is a woman's responsibility to keep the relationship from moving too fast sexually).

The internal reliability for the total scale is good and is higher than other previously established measures (Table 2). The internal reliabilities of the subscales are also acceptable (Table 1). Although the internal reliability of some subscales may seem low (e.g., .65 and .67 for Factors 2 and 4, respectively), it is important to note that Cronbach's  $\alpha$  increases as the number of items increases (Cortina, 1993). Thus, the lower reliability of Factors 2 and 4 is likely because they are composed of only 4 and 5 items, respectively. The HSS also demonstrates partial metric invariance between women and men. The significant and positive correlations between the HSS and measures of traditional gender attitudes, sexual scripts, and sexism confirm that the heterosexual script is related to these constructs. Although the correlations between the HSS and the other measures of traditional gender roles and sexual scripts

were moderately large, the HSS is different from these measures because it is significantly and positively correlated with idealized romantic beliefs, self-objectification, and self-sexualization, whereas the other gender role and sexual script measures are not. The HSS captures endorsement of traditional gender roles and sexual scripts (as demonstrated by its correlation with other measures of these constructs) but also captures elements of sexualization, objectification, and idealized beliefs about romantic relationships (as demonstrated by its unique predictive ability for these constructs). Thus, the HSS is a distinct measure that can offer a unique contribution to the literature on gender roles and sexual scripts.

### Study 3

With a valid and replicated scale to assess the heterosexual script, the goal of Study 3 was to assess connections between TV use and endorsement of the heterosexual script. Is there any evidence that exposure to gendered sexual scripts on TV is related to viewers' belief systems? According to cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994), heavy media consumption should lead to stronger endorsement of the scripts presented on TV, such as gendered sexual scripts. Repeated exposure via TV serves to "prime" the gendered sexual scripts in viewers' minds. Repeated exposure to this prime makes the belief system highly accessible in viewers' minds, and eventually viewers use it to make sense of what they see in the "real world," which contributes to their endorsement of the belief systems portrayed on TV.

Some studies have explored connections between regular media use and emerging adults' support of components of the heterosexual script (e.g., that men are sex-driven and women are sexual objects), although no studies have examined media connections to acceptance of the heterosexual script as a whole. Supporting premises of cultivation theory, findings indicate that more frequent exposure to TV content is associated with stronger support of these component notions (e.g., Ward & Friedman, 2006). For example, among undergraduate women, more frequent prime-time TV viewing was associated with greater endorsement of the idea that women are sex objects and men are sex-driven (Ward, 2002). Similar results have been found for reality TV programs. Surveying 334 undergraduates, Zurbriggen and Morgan (2006) found that regular consumption of RDPs was associated with endorsing several components of the heterosexual script, such as the sexual double standard, the idea that physical appearance is important (especially for women) and that men are always looking for sex. Similarly, Ferris and colleagues (2007) found that among undergraduates, frequently viewing RDPs predicted a stronger endorsement of the notions that men are sex-driven, dating is a game, and women are sex objects.

Based on our review of previous research, we formed the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 4:** More frequent consumption of TV overall, and of dramas, sitcoms, and reality programs would

each be associated with stronger endorsement of the heterosexual script for both sexes.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 750 undergraduate women and men (65.5% female) aged 17–23 ( $M = 19.12$ ) attending the same university as in Studies 1 and 2. Of these, less than 1% ( $n = 6$ ) had missing data on the variables of interest. Given the small amount of missing data, we used pairwise deletion (Brown, 1994). The majority of the sample identified as White (72.9%), and another 14.8% identified as Asian/Asian American, 3.7% as Black/African American, 3.2% as Latino/Hispanic/Native American, and 2.1% as Middle Eastern. The majority of the sample identified as heterosexual (87.8%), while 5.9% identified as bisexual, 2% identified as homosexual, and 4.4% were either "unsure" or chose not to answer. On average, participants' mothers had completed 16 years of education and their fathers had completed 17 years of education, equivalent to a bachelor's degree.

### Procedure

Participants were recruited from the university's Psychology Subject Pool. All students enrolled in introductory psychology classes could sign up for this study, which was identified by a number, only. None of the participants in Study 1 or Study 2 were eligible to participate in Study 3. Participants completed the study via paper surveys administered during in-person sessions that consisted of 8–20 participants per session. Participants were told that it was a study of media use and social relationships in the new millennium. Administration of the full survey took 45–60 min. The university's institutional review board approved all procedures and measures.

### Measures

**TV exposure levels.** We asked participants to indicate how frequently they watched mainstream TV programs (i.e., programs that air on cable or network TV, or through popular streaming services such as Hulu and Netflix) on an average weekday, Saturday, and Sunday. Response options ranged from *0 hours* to *10 or more hours*. We calculated the total number of TV hours watched per week by multiplying weekday hours by five and adding this product to the weekend hours ( $\alpha = .80$ ).

**Consumption of popular reality programs.** Participants indicated how often they watched each of 30 popular reality TV programs currently airing on both network and basic cable TV (e.g., *The Bachelor*, *Jersey Shore*, and *Keeping up with the Kardashians*). We chose these programs by viewing network and pop culture websites (e.g., *Jezebel.com*, *Esquire.com*) and choosing programs with high-profile names (for both female and male viewing audiences). Response options for each program were *never*, *sometimes* (1–4 episodes), *often* (6–10

episodes), and all of the time (most or all episodes). A mean across all 30 programs was calculated ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

**Consumption of popular sitcoms.** Participants indicated how often they watched each of 32 sitcoms that represented all sitcoms currently airing on prime-time or syndication on major networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, TNT, TBS, and CW) in the town's broadcast market. Response options were *never, sometimes (1–4 episodes), often (6–10 episodes), and all of the time (most or all episodes)*. A mean across all 32 programs was calculated ( $\alpha = .79$ ).

**Consumption of popular drama programs.** Participants were given a list of eight popular drama programs (e.g., *Breaking Bad, Entourage*) airing on prime-time or cable networks (AMC, FX, HBO, NBC, and Showtime). Similar to reality shows and sitcoms, we chose these programs by consulting pop culture websites and selecting high-profile programs. We chose programs that appeal to both genders. Response options were *never, sometimes (1–4 episodes), often (6–10 episodes), and all of the time (most or all episodes)*. Reliability was low ( $\alpha = .47$ ) likely because we only measured eight programs and reliability increases as the number of items increases.

**Heterosexual script.** The HSS as developed and validated in Studies 1 and 2 was used to assess participants' endorsement of the heterosexual script. A mean across all 22 items was calculated. Internal consistency for this scale was good ( $\alpha = .89$  for women and .89 for men).

**Preliminary Analyses**

First, we examined the data for violations of normality. Based on visual inspection of the data (boxplot, histogram, and Q–Q plot), the HSS was normally distributed without outliers. However, each of the media variables was positively skewed. In order to correct this, we used the natural log transformation on all the media variables (Field, 2013; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), which helps correct for positive skew.

We present descriptive statistics for all main variables in Table 4. We eliminated individual TV programs that were not watched by at least 10% of our sample. This left us with 23 reality programs, 22 sitcoms, and 6 drama programs. Means were calculated (as detailed in the Method section) using the remaining programs; see Table 4. Overall, participants consumed nearly 12 hours of TV each week.

In our first set of preliminary analyses, we used independent samples *t*-tests to examine gender differences in the study variables. The final column of Table 4 contains these results. Overall, men reported watching more hours of TV per week than women, and there were also gender differences by genre. Women reported watching more reality TV than men, whereas men reported watching more dramas than women. There was no gender difference in consumption of sitcoms. Consistent with previous analyses of traditional gender roles and sexual scripts (e.g., Ward, 2002), men more strongly endorsed the

**Table 4.** Descriptive Statistics for Television Use and Heterosexual Script Scale for Study 3.

Variable	Range	Sample M (SD)	M Women	M Men	t Value
TV hours/week	0–70	11.86 (10.75)	11.03	13.44	2.89**
Dramas	0–3	0.47 (0.50)	0.37	0.67	7.94***
Sitcoms	0–3	0.68 (0.41)	0.69	0.67	0.51
Reality TV programs	0–3	0.48 (0.39)	0.59	0.28	11.75***
Heterosexual Script Scale	1–6	3.35 (0.70)	3.19	3.66	9.20***

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Table 5.** Zero-Order Correlations Between HSS and Media Variables (Women Below diagonal,  $n = 488$ ; Men Above diagonal,  $n = 256$ ).

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Heterosexual Script Scale	—	.17**	.19**	.07	-.03
2. TV hours/week <sup>a</sup>	.12**	—	.28***	.21**	.23***
3. Reality programs <sup>a</sup>	.15**	.24***	—	.18**	.35***
4. Drama programs <sup>a</sup>	.05	.21***	.16**	—	.35***
5. Sitcoms <sup>a</sup>	-.01	.22***	.24***	.36***	—

Note. HSS = Heterosexual Script Scale.

<sup>a</sup>Natural log of variable.

heterosexual script than did women. Because there were significant gender differences both in consumption of TV and endorsement of the heterosexual script, we included gender as an independent variable in our regressions.

We examined zero-order correlations by gender between the heterosexual script and each of the TV variables (see Table 5). Overall TV consumption and reality TV were both associated with stronger endorsement of the heterosexual script for women and men. Additionally, each of the media variables was significantly correlated with each other. This outcome was not surprising, as we assume that participants who watch one type of TV are more likely to watch other types of TV. None of the correlations between overall TV hours and specific genres were strong enough to suggest a problem with multicollinearity.

Next, we examined whether scores on the HSS varied according to the following demographic variables: age, race, sexual orientation, and parents' education status. We used independent *t*-tests to examine differences across race (scored as 0/1 membership in each of the four ethnic minority groups) and sexual orientation (exclusively heterosexual vs. all other categories). We used correlations to examine the association between the HSS and age and parents' education. To control for Type I error among the seven tests, we used a Bonferroni correction ( $\alpha = .05/7 = .007$ ). Having more educated parents was associated with greater endorsement of the heterosexual script,  $r = .13, p < .001$ , and heterosexual participants endorsed the heterosexual script more strongly than nonheterosexual participants,  $t(719) = 3.35, p < .001$ . We controlled for these significant demographic correlates in the subsequent regression analyses.

**Table 6.** Regression Analyses of Heterosexual Script by Television Genre.

	HSS by Reality <sup>a</sup>		HSS by Drama <sup>a</sup>		HSS by Sitcom <sup>a</sup>	
	$\Delta$ Adj. $R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta$ Adj. $R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta$ Adj. $R^2$	$\beta$
Step 1	.132***		.132***		.132***	
Parent education		.10**		.10**		.10**
Sexual orientation		.10**		.10**		.10**
TV hours/week <sup>a</sup>		.14***		.14***		.14***
Gender		.29***		.29***		.29***
Step 2	.010**		-.001		.001	
Parent education		.10**		.10**		.10**
Sexual orientation		.09**		.11**		.10**
TV hours/week <sup>a</sup>		.11**		.13***		.15***
Gender		.34***		.28***		.29***
Genre		.12**		.02		-.05
Step 3	.001		-.001		-.002	
Parent education		.11**		.10**		.10**
Sexual orientation		.10**		.10**		.10**
TV hours/week <sup>a</sup>		.11**		.13***		.15***
Gender		.36***		.28***		.29***
Genre		.14**		.02		-.05
Gender $\times$ Genre		.05		.00		.00

Note. Gender was coded such that 1 = male and 0 = female. Sexual orientation was coded such that 1 = heterosexual and 0 = nonheterosexual. HSS = Heterosexual Script Scale.

<sup>a</sup>Natural log of variable.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

To examine the association between TV viewing and viewers' endorsement of the heterosexual script, we conducted hierarchical regressions for each TV genre. We controlled for demographic variables, gender, and overall hours of TV consumed per week in Step 1. In Step 2, we entered the specific TV genre variable in order to examine how each specific genre is associated with endorsement above and beyond demographic characteristics and overall TV consumption. In Step 3, we entered a Gender  $\times$  Genre interaction term in order to investigate whether there were gender differences in the extent to which TV genre is associated with HSS endorsement.

### Testing the Main Research Questions

**Hypothesis 4.** We predicted more frequent consumption of TV overall, and more frequent consumption of reality TV, dramas, and sitcoms would be associated with stronger endorsement of the heterosexual script for both women and men. We present results of the regression analyses in Table 6. Our hypothesis was partially supported. For both women and men,

watching more hours of TV per week was associated with stronger endorsement of the heterosexual script. Additionally, watching popular reality TV programs was associated with greater endorsement of the heterosexual script, even after controlling for overall TV consumption and demographic characteristics. However, neither sitcom nor drama consumption was associated with endorsement of the heterosexual script for women or men. Gender was not a significant moderator in any of the regressions, suggesting that the relation between genre and endorsement of the heterosexual script is similar for women and men.

### Discussion

This is the first study to directly test associations between TV viewing and emerging adults' endorsement of the heterosexual script. Despite the prevalence of the heterosexual script on prime-time TV (Kim et al., 2007; Ward, 1995), no one has examined relations among endorsement of this full script and TV viewing. We sought to address this limitation and found evidence that the pervasiveness of the heterosexual script on TV is, indeed, associated with young women's and men's endorsement of it. Overall, TV viewing was associated with greater support of the HSS, as was exposure to popular reality programs. Although our effect sizes are small, they should be considered in context: Women and men learn about sexuality not just from TV but also from parents, peers, and other media (Epstein & Ward, 2008; Simon & Gagnon, 1986). It is perhaps not surprising to obtain a small effect size when only considering one of many cultural informants.

Additionally, our findings demonstrate that TV genre matters. One important contribution is our investigation of reality TV, which is a popular yet understudied genre. As predicted, we found that reality TV viewing was associated with emerging adults' endorsement of the heterosexual script, even after accounting for overall TV viewing. This finding is consistent with previous research that indicates viewing RDPs is associated with endorsing elements of the heterosexual script (Ferris et al., 2007; Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006). However, our study included a variety of reality subgenres (not only dating programs). We believe that a program does not have to be exclusively about courtship (e.g., *The Bachelor*, *Millionaire Matchmaker*) to contain heterosexual script content. Such content is likely to appear on most reality programs that feature the social lives of their characters as a theme or subtheme (e.g., *Keeping up with the Kardashians*). Although consumption of this genre was higher for women than for men, our findings indicate significant associations for both genders.

Neither sitcoms nor drama programs were related to endorsement of the heterosexual script. It is perhaps not surprising that dramas were not associated because Kim and colleagues (2007) found that dramas contain significantly fewer references to this script than do sitcoms. Given the presence of the heterosexual script on prime-time sitcoms (Kim et al., 2007), we were surprised to not find a relation between sitcom viewing and script endorsement. However, sitcoms often depict strong

female characters who *are* balancing work and family life and who openly discuss sexuality (Holbert, Shah, & Kwak, 2003). Indeed, Holbert and colleagues (2003) found that watching sitcoms was associated with greater support of women's rights. Similarly, Lippman, Ward, and Seabrook (2014) found sitcom viewing predicted a *weaker* acceptance of traditional romantic myths. It appears that the current sitcom landscape may include examples of less stereotypical gender and sexual roles.

## General Discussion

In our three studies, we developed and validated a measure of the heterosexual script that can be used for emerging adults. Our heterosexual script measure is unique from other gender role measures because it focuses on several aspects of gender roles *within romantic encounters* (e.g., the sexual double standard, courtship strategies, and approaches toward commitment) and focuses on the complementary nature of women's and men's roles in these relationships. This approach is important because it highlights the ways in which women's and men's roles inform and reinforce each other; just as women learn to self-objectify and to prioritize other's needs above their own, men learn to value women as sexual objects that exist for their pleasure. We cannot make meaningful changes to these problematic attitudes without addressing the way these roles interact to affect both sexes.

We then used this measure to examine how TV viewing relates to emerging adults' endorsement of the heterosexual script. Our studies expand on Kim and colleagues' analysis of the prevalence of the heterosexual script on prime-time TV by demonstrating how this scripted TV content may affect women's and men's own sexual scripts and attitudes. Our results also highlight the importance of considering reality TV.

## Implications and Future Directions

The results of this study have important implications for several aspects of emerging adults' well-being. Sexual and violent media content often raise a red flag with parents and policy makers and have been the focus of much of the research on media. In comparison, the heterosexual script may not necessarily seem problematic. For example, the role of the man as the protector might seem harmless or even positive; the idea that men are the initiators of sex may be considered a "natural" part of being male. However, it is important to understand how these gendered messages about sexuality continually place women in positions of limited power and teach men that "being a man" and "having sex" are synonymous.

What are the consequences of buying into these traditional sexual scripts? Empirical research suggests that endorsement of traditional feminine roles is linked to diminished sexual agency, sexual assertiveness, and condom use self-efficacy among emerging adult women (e.g., Curtin et al., 2011). Additionally, objectification theory (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997) argues that when young women are valued only for their appearance, they may eventually come to objectify themselves,

which is linked to diminished well-being (for review, see Moradi & Huang, 2008). The HSS allows us to examine how gendered norms about courtship, specifically (rather than femininity, in general), relate to sexual health and may reveal more associations than measurements of femininity.

Multiple consequences have been proposed and examined concerning men's adherence to script themes promoting sexual dominance and the objectification of women. As noted earlier, empirical data link emerging adult men's endorsement of these individual components of traditional gender ideologies to greater sexual risk taking (e.g., Noar et al., 2002), and to a greater likelihood to perpetrate physical abuse and sexual aggression (e.g., Murnen et al., 2002; Stith et al., 2004). Additional consequences may stem from men's objectification of women. Evidence indicates that women depicted in sexualized ways are perceived cognitively to be less like people and more like objects and, in comparison to nonsexualized women, are rated as being lower in competence, intelligence, and morality (for review, see Ward, Reed, Trinh, & Foust, 2013). Furthermore, research demonstrates that men who implicitly associate women with objects are more likely to report sexually aggressive attitudes toward women (Rudman & Mescher, 2012). Finally, Zurbriggen, Ramsey, and Jaworski (2011) reported that men's frequent consumption of sexually objectifying media was associated with greater objectification of one's romantic partner, which itself was linked with lower relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction. These findings suggest that the objectification of women may inhibit young men from developing satisfying, intimate, relationships with actual women.

Researchers have called for more attention to sexuality within emerging adulthood, and specifically to the importance of considering gendered expectations in regard to sexual exploration, satisfaction, and health (Halpern & Kaestle, 2014; Tolman, 2006). The HSS provides a tool for measuring the gendered expectations theorized to be important predictors of sexual health.

Given the potential consequences of endorsing the heterosexual script for both sexes, future research should examine predictors of these beliefs, as these are likely sites for intervention. Media are only one contributor, and other factors such as family socialization, peer communication (Epstein & Ward, 2008), or Greek membership (Bleecker & Murnen, 2005) are likely also associated with endorsement of the heterosexual script. In order to examine predictors and consequences of this pervasive sexual script, we must have a way to measure it; the current set of studies provide one such measure.

## Limitations

Although these findings offer many unique insights into potential media effects, we also acknowledge several limitations that future research will want to address. First, because this study is correlational, we do not know whether media use affects gender ideologies, or whether women and men who endorse certain beliefs are more likely to seek out sexualized TV (or whether a third variable not measured here plays a role in the relation). We anticipate that

all three paths are likely and appropriate; TV may contribute to endorsement of the heterosexual script and may reify and strengthen already-held stereotypical ideas about heterosexual relationships. Further, we only included eight drama programs (compared to 23 reality programs and 22 sitcoms) in our survey measure. It is possible that a more complete list of drama programs popular with young women and men could have revealed a significant association between drama program consumption and endorsement of the heterosexual script.

Second, our measure of the heterosexual script did not measure attitudes toward same-sex relationships (men avoid doing anything perceived as gay and eroticize women's same-sex relationships), and therefore our conception of the script is slightly different from Kim and colleagues' (2007) conception. Because we were interested in the complementary roles for women and men, and because scripts about same-sex relationships were the least commonly identified sexual script in prime-time TV (Kim et al., 2007), we chose not to include this element of the script in our measure. Still, it would be important to examine this component of the script in future studies.

Third, our samples were mostly White, mostly heterosexual, and all were college students. As such, we must be cautious in using the scale in non-White, nonheterosexual, and nonhighly educated populations. The pervasiveness of the heterosexual script in the media suggests that most emerging adults, regardless of race or socioeconomic status, are probably aware of the script. Further, there is evidence that non-White youth consume media at a greater rate than White youth (Rideout et al., 2010). Taken together, these patterns suggest that non-White youth may have even more exposure to the heterosexual script in the media than their White counterparts. Still, it would be useful for future studies to validate this scale in more diverse populations.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, our study offers novel contributions to the measurement of traditional sexual scripts and potential linkages among sexual scripts and media usage. Our HSS is valid among multiple samples of emerging adults and is linked to related gender measures and uniquely linked to sexual and romantic script measures.

This study is the first of its kind to include the heterosexual script as a focal variable in measuring potential outcomes of both scripted and reality TV. Given evidence that endorsing these scripts is linked with negative sexual health outcomes for both men and women, future studies should continue to investigate the correlates and consequences of endorsing the heterosexual script. For example, if women believe that their male partners *need* sex or that they should prioritize their male partner's desires over their own, are they less likely to demand safe sex practices and will they have satisfying sexual relationships? Similarly, if men believe they should always want sex, are they able to prioritize emotional connections or resist sexual encounters that feel demeaning? We hope that our measure of the heterosexual script can assist in the production of these lines of research.

## Author Contribution

R. C. Seabrook contributed to conception, design, and acquisition; drafted the manuscript; critically revised the manuscript; gave final approval; and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of work ensuring integrity. L. M. Ward contributed to conception, design, and acquisition; drafted the manuscript; critically revised the manuscript; gave final approval; and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of work ensuring integrity. L. Reed contributed to acquisition, critically revised the manuscript, gave final approval, and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of work ensuring integrity. A. Manago contributed to acquisition, critically revised the manuscript, gave final approval, and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of work ensuring integrity. S. Giaccardi contributed to acquisition, critically revised the manuscript, gave final approval, and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of work ensuring integrity. J. R. Lippman contributed to acquisition, critically revised the manuscript, gave final approval, and agrees to be accountable for all aspects of work ensuring integrity.

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**Lauren Reed** is an assistant project scientist in the Center for School-Based Youth Development at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She received her PhD in Social Work and Developmental Psychology from the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on gendered youth violence prevention, evaluation of community-based intervention programs, and the role of digital media use in dating violence among youth (“digital dating abuse”).

**Adriana Manago** is an assistant professor of psychology at Western Washington University. Her research focuses on socio-cultural and developmental changes associated with modernization and the proliferation of communication technologies in the U.S. and in an indigenous Maya community in Southern Mexico.

**Soraya Giaccardi** is a PhD candidate in developmental psychology and the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on men's media use (including pornography), masculinity, and risk-taking behaviors.

**Julia R. Lippman** is a postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Michigan. She received her PhD from the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on the ways in which media contribute to or hinder the development of healthy romantic and sexual relationships.