Dominant Heterosexual Sexual Scripts in Emerging Adulthood: Conceptualization and Measurement

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Sexual script research (Simon & Gagnon 1969, 1986) bourgeoned following Simon and Gagnon's groundbreaking work. Empirical measurement of sexual script adherence has been limited, however, as no measures exist that have undergone rigorous development and validation. We conducted three studies to examine current dominant sexual scripts of heterosexual adults and to develop a measure of endorsement of these scripts. In Study 1, we conducted three focus groups of men (n = 19) and four of women (n = 20) to discuss the current scripts governing sexual behavior. Results supported scripts for sex drive, physical and emotional sex, sexual performance, initiation and gatekeeping, and evaluation of sexual others. In Study 2, we used these qualitative findings to develop a measure of script endorsement, the Sexual Script Scale. Factor analysis of data from 721 participants revealed six interrelated factors demonstrating initial construct validity. In Study 3, confirmatory factor analysis of a separate sample of 289 participants supported the model from Study 2, and evidence of factorial invariance and test-retest reliability was obtained. This article presents the results of these studies, documenting the process of scale development from formative research through to confirmatory testing, and suggests future directions for the continued development of sexual scripting theory.

More than 40 years ago, William Simon and John H. Gagnon (1969, 1971) proposed script theory to explain psychosexual development into adulthood. This theory has since become a prominent constructionist perspective on sexual conduct, now often referred to as sexual scripting theory, or simply sexual scripts (Carpenter, 2010; Gagnon & Simon, 1973/2005; Irvine, 2003; Simon & Gagnon, 1986, 2003; Wiederman, 2005). Simon and Gagnon (1969) argued that sexuality and sexual behavior are social processes, challenging established beliefs of other researchers who described sexual behavior as a biological imperative (Gagnon & Simon, 1973/2005; Irvine,

2003; Simon & Gagnon, 1986, 2003). Simon and Gagnon (1971), acknowledging that "sexuality is rooted in biological processes, capacities, and possibly even needs" (p. 68), argued that—particularly with regard to sexual conduct—the sociocultural has ascendency over the biological. According to Simon and Gagnon (1986), all sexual conduct can be represented through scripts.

Scripting exists at three distinct levels: cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts, and intrapsychic scripts (Irvine, 2003; Jones & Hostler, 2001; Simon & Gagnon, 1986). *Cultural scenarios* are historically developed guidelines that outline an expected sequence of events in specific social interactions as well as govern appropriate sexual behavior associated with a specific role (Irvine, 2003; Jones & Hostler, 2001). Simon and Gagnon (1986) explained that virtually all conduct

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reflects the content of cultural scenarios, and hence this level of scripting will be the predominant focus of this article. *Interpersonal scripts* are for context-specific behaviors that have taken into account relevant cultural scenarios (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). They represent the dyadic process through which partners, as social actors, become partial scriptwriters negotiating appropriate conduct and making it congruent with desired expectations (Irvine, 2003; Simon & Gagnon, 1986). *Intrapsychic scripts* stem from the internal self, which includes personality traits, and are influenced by culture and individual history (Irvine, 2003; Jones & Hostler, 2001). All sexual conduct involves all three levels of scripting, though each level is not necessarily equally relevant in all situations (Gagnon & Simon, 1973/2005; Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Although sexual scripting theory may not provide a comprehensive theory of human sexuality (Carpenter, 2010), it provides a strong theoretical framework for investigating sexual behaviors and attitudes (Simon & Gagnon, 1986).

Heterosexual Sexual Scripts

The learning of sexual scripts, roles, and identities occurs over an entire lifetime, with many aspects that are remote from sexual experience only becoming integrated with sexuality following puberty (Simon & Gagnon, 1969). Biological differences between females and males influence sexual experiences and also have implications for the social expectations and messages received during development (Simon & Gagnon, 1969, 1986; Wiederman, 2005). The use of a gender binary framework results in differential upbringings of boys and girls, which provides the foundation for the dichotomous development of traditional sexual scripts for men and women (Simon & Gagnon, 1969; Wiederman, 2005). Prescribed gender roles for men and women are rigid and pervasive in the media and the general population (Eaton & Rose, 2011; Markle, 2008; Ménard & Cabrera, 2011). Individuals speak about sex and sexuality in a way that corresponds with traditional gendered cultural scenarios, but individual experiences are not necessarily congruent (McCabe, Tanner, & Heiman, 2010).

In addition to gender norms, sexual desire and attraction toward the other gender partially supports the divergence of sexual scripts for heterosexual men and women (Hill, 2006; Simon & Gagnon, 1986). The traditional dating script is long-standing and highly gendered, with both women and men expecting "the man to take control of the date, including picking up the woman, paying for the date, and taking her home" (Eaton & Rose, 2011 p. 852). Ménard and Cabrera (2011) provided evidence from decades of romance novels that support a consistent dominant cultural scenario, expecting congruency between heterosexual partners with regard to their age, ethnicity, physical attractiveness, being able-bodied, sexual orientation, and/or relationship status.

While there is growing evidence of the emergence of more egalitarian scripts (Dworkin & O'Sullivan, 2005; Suvivuo, Tossavainen, & Kontula, 2010), for example, women initiating sex (Markle, 2008; Ménard & Cabrera, 2011; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2011), established heterosexual scripts for men and women are largely oppositional yet complementary (Wiederman, 2005). These scripts typically dictate that men and women take on differing roles in sex (McCabe et al., 2010; Simon & Gagnon, 1986).

Conventionally, men are described as having a strong physical perspective on sexuality, with an emphasis on sexual performance (Oliver & Hyde, 1993; Ménard & Cabrera, 2011; Simon & Gagnon, 1969; Wiederman, 2005). Muehlenhard and Shippee (2010) provided evidence of this performance script in young adults: men are responsible for a woman's orgasm, and women should achieve orgasm before men (Braun, Gavey, & McPhillips, 2003). A woman's orgasm is an indicator of a man's success, whereas a woman not achieving orgasm represents his failure. Men emphasize the importance of being sexually experienced as well as sexually skilled (Oliver & Hyde, 1993; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003; Wiederman, 2005) and thus are permitted to have more sexual partners (Oliver & Hyde, 1993). Further, men are expected to always be prepared for sex (Hawton, 1986) and to initiate potential sexual opportunities (Dworkin & O'Sullivan, 2005, Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2011). In contrast, women are expected to delay sexual activity until emotional intimacy has been established (Dworkin & O'Sullivan, 2005; Meston & O'Sullivan, 2007).

Women's sexual scripts have often been investigated in the context of, and in contrast to, men's sexual scripts. Complementing traditional masculine gender roles, women's dominant "gatekeeper" sexual script represents a boundary that men are required to overcome (Wiederman, 2005). Women are objectified more than men; their physical appearance and attractiveness are prioritized (Eaton & Rose, 2011; McCabe et al., 2010; Ménard & Cabrera, 2011). Traditional scripts include women servicing or pleasuring men (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012; Weinberg, Williams, Kleiner, & Irizarry, 2010). However, women are expected to limit their sexual desire and not to talk about sexual pleasure (McCabe et al., 2010). In comparison to men's physical orientation to sex, women are described as having a strong emotional and relationship-centric view of sexuality (Bartoli & Clark, 2006; Krahé, Bieneck, & Scheinberger-Olwig, 2007; McCabe et al., 2010). For example, Vannier and O'Sullivan (2012) recently found that young women report more emotional reasons for engaging in oral sex, whereas men were more likely to report physical motives. Women have been found to evaluate women as more relational than men, whereas men considered men and women to be equally relational

(Hynie, Lydon, Côté & Wiener, 1998). It may be that women subscribe more strongly to the content of women's sexual scripts than young men. However, Suvivuo, Tossavainen, and Kontula (2010), in their study of young adolescent girls from Finland, found a diverse range of sexual scripts available to young women: the traditional romantic script was still strongly present but also competing and available were novel, alternative scripts (e.g., engaging in sex based solely on desire or due to the curiosity of seeking new experiences).

It is important to recognize that sexual scripts are more than just explicit internalizations of differentiated gender norms and stereotypes (Dworkin & O'Sullivan, 2005). Though the development of personal sexual scripts begins with at least partial internalization of heterosexual cultural scenarios and gender roles (Jones & Hostler, 2001; Kim et al., 2007), individuals will form their own conceptualizations of appropriate behavior based on their own personal lessons and experiences (Carpenter, 2010; McCabe et al., 2010).

Sexual scripting provides a widely used and inclusive theoretical framework that allows for the description of romantic, casual, and even transactional sexual experiences (Sanders, 2008). Sexual scripts are important not only for understanding and describing sexual conduct; successfully negotiating sexual scripts can lead to increased sexual and relationship satisfaction (Stulhofer, Busko, & Landripet, 2010). Young women and men are at a crossroads between pervasive traditional gender roles (Eaton & Rose, 2011; Ménard & Cabrera, 2011) and emerging egalitarian scripts (Dworkin & O'Sullivan, 2005; Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012). While minor deviations from scripts are acceptable (and possibly even sexually desirable at times), major deviations are not (Ménard & Cabrera, 2011). To improve sexual experience, satisfaction, and knowledge among emerging adults, it is critical to conceptualize and measure adherence to, and conflict with, their sexual scripts (Vannier & O'Sullivan, 2012).

Research Objectives

Sexual scripting is embedded in a historical context, with shrinking gender differences in sexuality (e.g., Oliver & Hyde, 1993; Petersen & Hyde, 2010) hinting at the possibility that sexual scripts have changed as well. An important step for modern sexual script research should be examining current cultural scenarios (McCabe et al., 2010). Wiederman (2005) highlighted the importance of individual differences in sexual scripting, effectively presenting measurement as an additional area of need for sexual script research. However, measures of sexual script endorsement are few and far between; existing measures (e.g., LaPlante, McCormick, & Brannigan, 1980; Muehlenhard & Quackenbush, 2011) are limited insofar as they are dated, narrow in focus, and often have not gone through extensive development and validation

processes (O'Sullivan, Hoffman, Harrison, & Dolezal, 2006). For example, the Sexual Script Questionnaire (LaPlante et al., 1980) considers only initiator and gatekeeper scripts. Therefore, the objectives of the present studies were twofold: to create a taxonomy of the current sexual scripts guiding young adult sexual attitudes and behavior (Study 1) and to develop and validate a measure of sexual script endorsement based on the current sexual scripts of young adults (Studies 2 and 3).

Emerging adults are the ideal sample for such an endeavor as emerging adulthood represents a critical juncture in human life development (Tanner & Arnett, 2009). Emerging adults are actively exploring aspects of their identity; coming to terms with their own beliefs and values is considered a key criterion for adult status (Arnett, 1997). Further, this developmental period is considered a critical time for experimentation with regard to love, sex, and relationships as well as the formation of values and preferences which set the foundation for more enduring choices in adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Nonetheless, the most prominent cultural scenarios of sexual scripts are well established by young adulthood (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Thus, the sexual scripts adopted in emerging adulthood will likely influence the lives, values, and choices of individuals throughout later life stages. The study of emerging adults' sexual scripts and the measurement of their script endorsement, therefore, could offer the opportunity to understand the formative and enduring sexual scripts of adulthood and later life.

Study 1

Method

Participants. A total of 39 heterosexual undergraduate students were recruited from a southern Ontario university. Students who were interested contacted the principal investigator to participate in a study "to investigate the rules of dating, relationships and sexuality," were screened for eligibility, and then given a focus group appointment time. Participants were eligible if they were undergraduate, heterosexual students.

Focus groups were stratified by gender and comprised mostly Caucasian students. Participants were all young adults ranging in age from 18 to 26 years old ($M = 20.26$), in different programs of study, and most were seriously dating someone (43.6%), casually dating someone (12.8%), or single (38.5%). Overall, seven focus groups (three male groups, four female groups) were established, each consisting of five to eight participants.

Focus group guide. The focus group guide included four sections that were categorized based on the predicted discussion time as well as appropriate content sequencing. The first section, Dating, consisted of questions

such as "What does a typical date look like for heterosexual men and women?" and served largely as an introductory phase of dialogue to allow participants to become comfortable talking with one another. The next section, Sexuality, included questions like "What does the term *slut* mean today?" and "Are there other terms used today to label people related to their sexual behavior?" The third section, Sexual Activity, asked questions such as "Who typically initiates sex, men or women?" and "Do you think women/men feel pressure to perform sexually?" Finally, the Casual Sex Relationships section contained such questions as "How would you define a booty call?"

Moderators utilized prompts and probes to guide the flow of discussion. In addition, given that the aim of this study was to capture cultural scripts, participants were encouraged to discuss sexual attitudes and experiences of young people in general, as opposed to reporting on their own sexual encounters. Moderators included one male (who moderated all male focus groups) and two females (who each moderated two female groups). Although focus groups were not explicitly monitored for consistency of facilitation, all moderators attended a training workshop provided by a faculty member with expertise in conducting focus groups. In addition, moderators facilitated mock focus groups prior to commencement of the study. Finally, all moderators followed the same written guide during focus group sessions.

Data collection. Focus groups were conducted in a seminar room on campus, were approximately two hours in duration, and were moderated by a senior research assistant with the help of an assistant scribe. All moderators and assistants received training on focus group conduct from an experienced faculty member. The moderator, scribe, and focus group participants were matched in terms of gender and sexual orientation. While moderators explained the guidelines of the focus group, students filled out name cards with either their real names or pseudonyms. At the conclusion of each focus group, participants completed demographic surveys and participated in a draw for $100.

Data analysis. Focus group recordings were transcribed verbatim and cross-referenced with the scribe's notes to ensure complete and accurate transcription. Transcripts were analyzed by three of the authors in accordance with the thematic analysis approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasized the need to explicitly describe the process of generating themes via several procedural decisions. For the purpose of this study, themes were theoretically derived and semantic in nature. Specifically, analysis was driven by traditional sexual script theory, and the idea that what constitutes acceptable sexual

behavior is different depending on gender (Simon & Gagnon, 1969). Consequently, themes that were generated related in some way to traditional sexual scripts, either by confirmation, rejection, or modification of each traditional script. For example, data related to sexual initiation was extracted and categorized further based on women initiating, men initiating, or equal initiation of sex. Finally, themes were generated based on support for or against each category.

Semantic themes generally describe the content of the data and are presented in a way that highlights the overarching significance as it relates to existing literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, themes were described and categorized in terms of whether they provided support for or refuted traditional script theory. Finally, because sexual scripting theory is constructionist in essence, themes were generated within this paradigm as well. In other words, themes were generated and understood as social constructs, rather than interpreted based on individual values, as is required when working from an essentialist perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis consists of six phases, during which researchers familiarize themselves with data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, define and name final themes, and finally produce a report containing vivid extracts of participant discussion (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The three authors coded each extract individually and later met to collectively review coding to arrive at a consensus with regard to the appropriate node under which the extract was to be placed. Initial coding yielded 91 nodes, such as Equal Initiation, Women Control, Men Performance, Gatekeeping, and Slut. During the generation of themes, nodes that were too conceptually similar were merged, ensuring that all content within each theme was homogenous, coherent, and meaningful. Furthermore, themes were reviewed in relation to one another to ensure that themes generated were unique and displayed external heterogeneity.

Results

Sex drive scripts.

Men are always ready for sex. There was strong support for the script that men are always ready for sex. Some participants suggested that this was the result of a stronger sex drive than women's, giving evolutionary and hormonal explanations for this phenomenon:

> Yeah, it's like evolutionary protection, 'cause we only have one seed at a time, they have multiple, they can just kinda go off and spread it around . . . . [N]o need to save the lovin'. (W)

> It's like, "Oh, he's a guy, he's driven by his hormones. That's sort of his nature to be promiscuous." (W)

In any case, most participants believed men were interested in having sex at almost any time. One man said:

> [T]he guy's usually always ready to go and you're waiting for the girl . . . like you never hear of a guy, say, waiting for six months before you have sex . . . . I mean that's never happened in the history of man!

Further, participants reported that men who turned down sex risked having their sexual orientation questioned or creating the perception that something is wrong with them. In addition, because of the expectation that men will engage in sex given the opportunity, participants believed that women who were rejected sexually might perceive themselves as lacking in some way:

> I have to be honest, I think we are like partially trained to think that, like, "No, guys want it all the time and so if he doesn't want it right now like there must be something wrong with me or something wrong with him." And I think a lot of girls would be like, "What, are you gay or something?" Because I think that a lot of girls feel that guys are supposed to want it whenever they can get it, right? (W)

Many participants noted that there were only a few specific circumstances in which it would be acceptable for a man to turn down sex: after a recent death, when the man is too tired or intoxicated to perform adequately, if the woman he is with is physically unattractive, or for religious reasons. A man who turned down sex without a "good reason" was labeled by men and women as a "loser," "pussy," "chicken," and more.

Women inhibit their sexual expression. The majority of participants supported the idea that men and women both experience the urge to be sexual. Some felt, however, that women are compelled to limit their sexual behavior in order to avoid social sanctions:

> I'd say that women are more inclined to—uh, single women in particular—are more inclined to shield their real sex drive for fear of being labeled as a "slut" or anything like that. (M)

> [W]e [women], like, are almost forced to—because of the stereotypes and the reputations and things like that— like, we're forced to control our urges in that sense. (W)

Notably, there was widespread agreement for the idea that within a committed relationship women are free to express themselves sexually. As one male participant said, "Once they get in a relationship, they're more . . . maybe let their guard down a little bit and show their real sex drive."

While some participants believed that women, at times, experience a more intense sexual drive than

men, participants largely agreed that women experience sexual desire less frequently than men:

> I think for women, when it comes it can be stronger, but it might come less often, whereas for the guy, the urge . . . can happen a lot more often, and it's not such a big deal. Whereas women, when it happens, they want to do something about it. (M)

Physical and emotional sex scripts.

Men have a physical approach to sex. There was unanimous support for the script that men have a physical approach to sex. Men described the importance of the physical release that came with sex and almost unanimously agreed that, for men, the sole purpose of sex is to have an orgasm. In fact, some participants agreed that, for men, sex without an orgasm was not really sex at all. One man said, "Like, you're looking for an end result when you have sex. You're not . . . like, 'Oh, this is so nice, I'm so close to you.'"

Female participants noted that women can experience sexual satisfaction without reaching orgasm while men cannot. The understanding that orgasm is tremendously important for men is demonstrated by the following exchange between two female participants:

> For a lot of guys it's basically that pinnacle, that what they're searching for is at the end, is ejaculation. (W)

> Some guys won't even count it as sex if they don't orgasm . . . like that's the goal. (W)

Women have an emotional/relational approach to sex. Men and women across the focus groups largely agreed that women have an emotional or relational approach to sex. Men suggested that women are more prone to getting attached or forming an emotional connection through sex. Specifically, one stated:

> It's like you automatically assume that the girl associates that connection with sex, so it's like, oh my goodness, now you had sex and now you're . . . to a certain extent your foot's not just in the door anymore, you're in the door and it's closed behind you and it's locked, you know what I mean? And it seems a little more difficult if you wanted to get out, you know, without hurting that person. (M)

Women generally agreed that they have an emotional approach to sex. One participant stated:

> I think guys would want the one-night stand, whereas girls are like, . . . "Well, I'm gonna like go home with this guy that I just met at the bar, but hopefully it will be romantic and we'll fall in love and it will actually turn into a relationship." (W)

Women in this study perceived women to be more sexually complex than men, needing to consider mental

and emotional factors in addition to physical aspects of sex. They suggested that women's complexity prevents them from having a physical or pleasure-based approach to sex, and that this is especially true within a casual context.

Sexual performance scripts.

Men should be sexually skilled and knowledgeable. There was support from both men and women across all focus groups for a male performance script or, more specifically, the idea that men are expected to be skilled and knowledgeable when it comes to sex. Men described the self-imposed pressure they felt to provide pleasure to their partner. One male participant stated,

> I think it also has to do with how well can you be a . . . a provider. From sex, you can look at it as a provider of pleasure for women, and if you can't provide, that's sort of a male role, that might impede on your confidence as a male providing role.

Men's ability to give pleasure was most often measured by their ability to "give" their partner an orgasm.

Participants reported that women judge and critique men based on many different factors related to sexual performance (i.e., duration of the sexual act, ability to give an orgasm, penis size). Indeed, women in the focus groups described the negative impact a man's poor sexual performance can have on his reputation. For example, one women shared the following, which another women reiterated in her own answer:

> I just felt so guilty . . . talking to them [friends] about it, because I felt guilty for . . . my boyfriend because like it makes him look bad . . . and like, so in that sense I was like, [okay], this [achieving orgasm] has to happen.

Focus group participants were not consistent in their reports of the importance of men's performance across different relationship contexts (e.g., within a committed relationship versus a one-night stand). Some participants believed that men's performance was more important within a committed relationship because of the apparent association between sexual and relationship satisfaction. However, some participants felt that male performance was equally important in a casual sexual relationship, as two women said:

> If it goes poorly, then it looks bad on you, . . . and if it's your only experience with them, then that's even worse. (W)

> If it was a really good night and you want it to happen again, you can kind of like initiate, "Hey can I get your number for future reference?" kind of idea . . . but if it was really bad, you're like "[Okay], bye." (W)

Women should be sexually skilled and knowledgeable. Evidence for a new performance script for women was found in which a premium is placed on oral sex skills. Specifically, female participants discussed how important it is to men for their partner to be good at oral sex. One woman noted:

> Apparently, for guys, it's more important if the girl is good at oral sex than it is when she's having sex with the guy . . . and they talk about it a lot more, like . . . how how good is the girl giving head.

However, female participants agreed that discretion must exist with regard to how they acquired sexual skills. This is demonstrated in the following interaction between two female participants:

> It's important for them [girls] to be good at it [oral sex]. (W)

> They [men] just don't want to know how you got good at it. (W)

In addition, male participants acknowledged that women have a certain desire to please their partners. One man stated, "I think girls also take pride in the little things that they know how to do to please their man or whatever, like their little tricks." Many participants agreed that men are more easily aroused than women and thus noted that the pressure for a woman to perform is not as substantial as it is for a man. As one man noted, "I don't think it's as hard for a woman to do [arouse her male partner], so I don't think they have as much . . . like. . . they don't think about it so much."

Initiation and gatekeeping scripts.

Men initiate sex. Most men and some women agreed that men take on the responsibility for initiating sex:

> Usually the guy does it, even if it's a drunk thing at the bar, it's usually the guy that does it . . . and even in a relationship, I've found that it's usually the guy that brings it up, not necessarily completely initiates it but brings up the idea, that kind of thing. (W)

However, some participants indicated that factors beyond gender influenced sexual initiation. For instance, some participants agreed that egalitarian initiation can occur within a committed relationship. In other cases, the more sexually experienced partner may be responsible for initiation.

Women are gatekeepers. There was almost unanimous support for the script that women are gatekeepers with regard to sex; the idea that women are the ones setting limits on sexual behavior was discussed in every group. One male participant stated, "Women control

the ebb and flow of sexual experience." Another man put forward:

> You can make all the moves you want, and you can, you know, get as close as you want, and start getting closer and closer, but really it's up to them [women] when things happen.

Men and women proposed several reasons why women might take on the role of gatekeeping. For some women, withholding sex was seen as a strategy used to determine whether their male partner could be trusted. For others, it was used as a method to maintain some control within the relationship. In addition, some men and women indicated that women become gatekeepers to avoid getting a negative reputation. One woman noted,

> I think that—yeah, there is definitely the feeling of trying to avoid those negative labels like *slut* or...you're trying to avoid that, then sometimes it comes down to having to prove it to people.

Sexual evaluation scripts.
Single women who appear sexual are judged negatively. There was strong support across all focus groups for the script that single women who appear sexual are judged negatively. As one male participant stated, "Single women that have a lot of sex are labeled as sluts." Some participants indicated that men perceive provocatively dressed women as sending the signal that they want to be "picked up" or have sex. One participant said:

> You're wearing the outfit that says that I want to sleep with you tonight, so you can forgive our own confusion when we think that you want to sleep with us tonight. I'm not actually saying you do want to, I'm just saying, you know, don't be mad at me for thinking that is what you want when that's how you're portraying yourself. (M)

In addition, men and women judge women who behave in a sexual manner (by flirting or alluding to sex) to actually be sexual. Furthermore, they are expected to follow through on sexual acts; otherwise they are judged negatively by both men and women and are at risk of being labeled (i.e., as a tease/cock tease). However, once in a relationship, women were generally perceived to have the freedom to pursue sex or act sexually without negative repercussions. Participants believed that people accept and assume that women in relationships are having sex. One woman indicated:

> No one cares what you do when you're in a relationship ...but like if you're not in a relationship, everything's like, oh, well, is that really appropriate?

Men are rewarded for being sexual. Some participants maintained the traditional view that men are rewarded for behaving sexually. As one woman noted,

"For men, you get 'props' from the boys for picking up [a partner] at the bar kinda thing." And as a male participant explained, "Their reputation is bolstered by the fact that they're with other girls."

Men are rewarded for not being sexual. Other participants suggested that men do not gain respect for being sexual but rather for denying the opportunity to be sexual. The following quote from a male participant illustrates this point: "Anytime I hear about or see a man turn down sex, I...I get respect for them, and almost feel like applauding." This shift toward varied evaluations of men's sexual behavior was also noted when discussing the meaning of the term *player*. Specifically, men typically agreed that it holds some negative connotation. As one man stated, "I think it's pretty insulting to be called a player." However, when described in comparison to the term *slut*, participants generally agreed that *player* was not as harsh of a term. One woman stated, "It's not as derogatory as *slut*." Another woman agreed: "It's sort of cheerier." A male participant qualified it this way: "I don't think it's [player] the worst thing you could be called."

In sum, participants demonstrated strong agreement regarding what constitutes acceptable and appropriate sexual behavior among young men and women. Many of the themes were consistent with traditional sexual scripts and provided support for the idea that men and women follow very different scripts pertaining to sexual behavior (Simon & Gagnon, 1969). Moreover, participants demonstrated a shared understanding not only of what was expected of them but also of what was reasonable to expect from the other gender. In addition, participants acknowledged that deviation from expected gender roles can harm an individual's reputation.

Nevertheless, participants periodically described scripts that contrasted with traditional constructions of male and female sexual roles. Some participants, for example, suggested that women could be sexual initiators, while others maintained that men are encouraged not to be sexual. Perhaps the starkest example of deviations from traditional scripts was participants' proclamation that women are now expected to be sexually skilled and knowledgeable. In the past, women were expected to be passive and compliant yet it is clear that presently women are expected to take on a much more active role in sexual exchanges. Thus, while results from Study 1 largely support traditional constructions of male and female sexual roles, they also provide some evidence for the modernization of sexual scripts.

Study 2

In Study 1, we used focus groups to identify the major sexual scripts of young adults. The objective

of Study 2 was to develop and validate a new measure of endorsement of the major scripts identified in Study 1.

Method

Participants. We recruited 721 young adults ($M_{age} = 22.45$, $SD = 2.93$) from Canada, with the majority of the sample living in Ontario (90.3%). All participants were heterosexual, and most of the participants were White (90.8%). Almost half of the participants were seriously dating one person (42.7%), while many were single (35.4%), and a smaller number were casually dating one or more partners (11.7%). Regarding gender, 126 participants identified as men, and 317 identified as women. Because the gender item was positioned at the end of the survey, a number of participants exited the survey prior to responding to it. As a result, gender information is not available for 277 participants who completed the sexual scripts validation items. However, because these 277 participants identified earlier as heterosexual, and because gender comparisons were not a part of this study, their data were retained in the analyses.

Measures

Sexual Script Scale. An initial list of more than 500 items was created for the Sexual Script Scale. We created many of the items based on verbatim (or near verbatim) quotes by participants from Study 1, as doing so can "provide a degree of authenticity that in turn can contribute to the scale's validity" (Dawis, 1987, p. 482). This list was reviewed, revised for clarity, and eventually many items were deleted; a strong effort was made to ensure that the initial list of items adequately represented the content domain of the scripts from the thematic analysis of Study 1. The revised list consisted of 160 items and represented scripts such as initiation and gatekeeping, emotional versus physical orientations to sex, and sexual performance. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with items, and responded on a 6-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 6 = *Strongly agree*). An even-numbered scale—without a middle or neutral point—was used to reduce socially desirable responding.

Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding. The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1991) was used to provide a measure of socially desirable responding. The BIDR was chosen over the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) because the BIDR uses a continuous—and therefore more psychometrically sound—response scale, contains items from the MCSDS, and assesses social desirability in greater detail via two subscales. A total of 20 items form an impression

management subscale (e.g., "I never cover up my mistakes"), and 20 items form a self-deception subscale (e.g., "I am fully in control of my own fate"), which are rated on 7-point scale for how true they are of a participant (1 = *Not true*, 7 = *Very true*). Ratings of 6 or 7 constitute a socially desirable response, unless the item is reverse-scored. For this study, both the impression management subscale ($\alpha = 0.83$) and self-deception subscale ($\alpha = 0.73$) demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency.

Sexual Double Standard Scale. The Sexual Double Standard Scale (Muehlenhard & Quackenbush, 2011) is a measure of endorsement of the sexual double standard. It includes 26 items, which are rated on a 4-point scale (0 = *Disagree strongly*, 3 = *Agree strongly*). Sexual Double Standard Scale scores range from 48 (strong acceptance of a traditional double standard) to 0 (equal standards) to −30 (strong acceptance of a reverse sexual double standard). Internal consistency in this study for the Sexual Double Standard Scale was found to be lower than desired ($\alpha = 0.60$).

Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale. The Masculine Gender Role Stress scale (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987) provides a measure of "the cognitive appraisal of specific situations as stressful for men," specifically pertaining to situations that require "unmanly or feminine behavior" (p. 125). Items are rated on a 7-point scale for how stressful participants perceive the situation (*Not at all stressful* to *Extremely stressful*). A composite score for the Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale was calculated by averaging all 40 items. Internal consistency for the Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale was high ($\alpha = 0.91$).

Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale. The Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale—similar to the Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale—provides a measure of the cognitive appraisal of specific situations as stressful for women (Gillespie & Eisler, 1992). Items are rated on a 6-point scale (*Not at all stressful* to *Extremely stressful*). The Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale contains 39 items that were averaged to form a composite score for participants. Internal consistency for the Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale was also high ($\alpha = 0.92$).

Procedure

Data were collected between February and July 2010, following approval by the associated institutional review board. Participants were recruited online via snowball sampling through Facebook to participate in a study on "the 'new' rules for dating, relationships, and sexuality." Participants were presented with a consent form

and clicked an option to indicate their consent to participate. Participants first completed demographic items and then completed the Sexual Script Scale items, the Sexual Double Standard Scale, and the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding. At this point, male participants were directed to the Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale and female participants were directed to the Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale.

Data analysis strategy. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to determine the factor structure of the Sexual Script Scale, following the process outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2006). Items were deleted for violating normality and multicollinearity to meet the assumptions of maximum-likelihood extraction (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006). Maximum-likelihood factoring was used as the extraction method for scale development. To account for the potential relatedness between the factors, we used promax rotation to allow correlations between the factors. In the EFA process, items were deleted for having communalities lower than .30, having factor loadings lower than .40, loading onto two factors at .40 or greater, and for having factor loadings greater than 1.0 until a clean, interpretable factor solution was achieved. Finally, initial evidence of the construct validity of the Sexual Script Scale was examined by Pearson product moment correlations between the factor scores and scores on the other measures used in the study.

Results

Exploratory factor analysis. The initial EFA factor solution contained 11 factors and 43 items, and accounted for 58% of the variability in the data. However, five factors were comprised of two variables each, which would render them underidentified in future latent variable analyses; therefore, these factors were removed. With the variables from these unstable factors removed, factor loadings for the final six-factor solution, comprised of 33 items, ranged from .46 to .89 and accounted for 49% of the variability in the data. Table 1 contains descriptive statistics, the percentage of variance in the data accounted for by the solution, and the alpha for each factor, while Table 2 presents the rotated factor loadings for each item. Factor intercorrelations are presented in Table 3.

Of the six scripts, the first, Sexual standards, and fifth, Players, were attitudinal, as participants reported their evaluations (positive or negative) of given targets (i.e., men and women, or the term *player*). The remaining scripts were belief based, not attitudinal, as participants reported the extent to which they agreed with information-based statements (e.g., "Men are simple when it comes to sex").

Factor 1: Sexual standards. Factor 1 consisted of nine items pertaining to sexual standards for both men and women regarding involvement in casual sex, having sex early in a relationship, and number of lifetime sexual partners. In contrast to subsequent factors, which are gendered, items loading on this factor include evaluations of both men and women who engage in various sexual behaviors and suggest a single sexual standard rather than a double standard. Specifically, high scores on this factor indicate that a participant negatively evaluates both men and women who have many sexual partners, casual sex, or sex early in a relationship. Internal consistency for this factor was excellent ($\alpha = 0.90$).

Factor 2: Sexual complexity and simplicity. Factor 2 consisted of seven items pertaining to the perceived simplicity of male sexuality and sexual response, relative to the perceived complexity of female sexuality and sexual response. High scores on this factor indicate agreement with the claim that female sexuality is complex and male sexuality is simple. Internal consistency for this factor was found to be good ($\alpha = 0.81$).

Factor 3: Sex drive. Factor 3 consisted of five items pertaining to perceptions of male sex drive relative to female sex drive. High scores on this factor indicate agreement with the claim that men have a stronger sex drive than women. Internal consistency for this factor was found to be good ($\alpha = 0.84$).

Factor 4: Performance and orgasm. Factor 4 consisted of five items pertaining to the perceived importance of men's sexual performance and the importance of orgasm. High scores on this factor indicate agreement with the claim that orgasm—particularly for women—is a central component of positive sexual encounters, and that men are responsible for providing women with orgasms. The fourth item of this factor is reverse-scored. Internal consistency for this factor was found to be adequate ($\alpha = 0.72$).

Factor 5: Players. The fifth factor consisted of four items pertaining to evaluations of the term *player*. Two of these items expressed positive affect toward the term *player*, and the other two expressed negative affect (i.e., Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). High scores on this factor indicate agreement with the claim that *player* is a positive term and that men in general share this attitude. The first and fourth items for this factor were reverse-scored. This factor also demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.74$).

Factor 6: Emotional sex. The sixth factor consisted of three items pertaining to the perceived emotional experience of sex for women relative to men. High scores on this factor indicate agreement with the claim that sex is a more emotional act for women than it is for men and that women are more likely to become emotionally

Table 1. *Sexual Script Scale Factors, Descriptive Statistics, and Internal Consistency*

Factor	% Total Variance	*M*	*SD*	Loading Range	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
Standards	23.37	3.02	1.03	0.64 to 0.83	0.17	−0.45	0.90
Complex	8.85	4.07	0.85	0.53 to 0.75	−0.58	0.38	0.81
Sex drive	5.30	2.90	1.11	0.55 to 0.78	0.20	−0.65	0.84
Orgasm	5.14	3.10	0.92	0.46 to 0.74	−0.06	−0.36	0.73
Players	3.42	3.33	0.92	0.49 to 0.79	−0.10	−0.20	0.74
Emotional	2.92	3.84	1.05	0.51 to 0.77	−0.41	−0.21	0.75

attached during sex than men. The third item for this factor was reverse-scored. This final factor also demonstrated adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.75$).

Construct validity. Correlations between factor scores and the other measures used in the study are presented in Table 3. The Sexual Script Scale demonstrated discriminant validity, as factor scores were mostly unrelated to levels of socially desirable responding measured by the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding. Self-deception was negatively correlated with both the Sexual Standards factor ($r = -.19$,

Table 2. *Sexual Script Scale Factor Loadings*

No.	Item	Sexual Standards	Sexual Simplicity/ Complexity	Sex Drive	Performance and Orgasm	Player	Emotional Sex
102	I think negatively of a man who has had a lot of sexual partners	**.89**	.06	−.10	−.08	.003	−.08
2	I have a hard time respecting a girl who has casual sex	**.80**	−.18	.12	−.03	−.09	.03
31	I have a hard time respecting a guy who has casual sex	**.79**	−.06	−.10	−.03	−.08	.02
63	I think negatively of a woman who has had a lot of sexual partners	**.75**	−.01	.04	−.06	−.09	.07
38	I think men who have had a lot of sexual partners are shallow	**.70**	.04	−.02	.02	.06	−.05
128	A man who has a lot of casual sex partners doesn't respect women	**.69**	.01	.03	.11	.09	−.002
75	I think women who have had a lot of sexual partners have low self-esteem	**.66**	.08	−.02	−.02	.03	.07
123	I would respect a woman more if she didn't have sex early in a relationship	**.64**	.001	.16	−.02	−.02	.02
88	Men who have had a lot of sexual partners are manipulators	**.59**	.06	−.02	.19	.10	−.07
147	It's easy for a girl to turn a guy on	.003	**.75**	.06	−.04	−.04	−.02
57	Men are easily turned on	−.01	**.74**	−.09	−.12	−.01	.06
27	It's easy for men to have orgasms	.02	**.65**	−.11	.003	.08	−.06
69	Men are more easily aroused than women	.03	**.58**	.25	−.15	−.08	.05
141	Men are simple when it comes to sex	.06	**.56**	.02	.08	.002	.03
60	Women's sexuality is more complicated than men's	−.10	**.55**	−.01	.05	.01	.07
140	It's easy for a woman to be good at sex because men are easy to arouse	−.02	**.53**	.20	.19	−.02	−.19
10	Men have stronger urges for sex than women	.04	−.04	**.78**	−.04	−.04	−.02
77	Men need sex more than women	−.04	−.09	**.74**	.05	−.01	.09
135	Men have a higher sex drive than women	.06	.02	**.73**	.02	−.02	.07
30	Men have a stronger biological need for sex	−.07	.07	**.71**	−.08	.05	.00
95	Women aren't as sexually driven as men	.06	.11	**.55**	.01	.07	−.08
144	For it to be good sex, both partners need to orgasm	.04	−.03	.08	**.74**	−.04	−.01
116	If a man wants a woman to sleep with him again, he has to give her an orgasm	.03	−.03	−.04	**.64**	.07	.001
68	A man's ability to give a woman an orgasm is an indicator of his sexual skill	−.04	.11	.02	**.58**	.04	−.001
146	Women can still enjoy sex without having an orgasm	−.03	−.17	.05	**−.58**	−.10	.05
25	Having an orgasm is really important to women	−.02	.16	−.25	**.46**	−.08	.10
109	Men like being called a player	.08	−.01	.01	.01	**.79**	−.01
142	Men think being a "player" is a positive thing	.14	.01	−.05	−.09	**.73**	.04
139	It's an insult to be called a "player"	−.21	−.11	.22	−.01	**−.56**	−.02
19	Men dislike being called a "player"	−.10	.09	−.11	−.003	**−.49**	.12
26	Women are more likely than men to get emotionally attached during sex	.01	−.08	−.02	−.01	.10	**.77**
101	Sex is more emotional for women than men	.06	.16	.06	.03	−.02	**.70**
129	Men are as likely as women to get attached after sex	−.05	−.002	.07	.10	.02	**−.51**

Note. Items scored on a 6-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 6 = *Strongly agree*). Items with negative factor loadings are reverse-scored. Loadings reported are from the rotated pattern matrix.

Table 3. *Sexual Script Scale Intercorrelations and Factor Correlations with Sexuality Measures*

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Standards	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Complex	0.33**	—	—	—	—	—
3. Sex drive	0.37**	0.50**	—	—	—	—
4. Orgasm	0.17**	0.27**	0.13*	—	—	—
5. Players	0.10	0.17**	0.23**	0.13*	—	—
6. Emotional	0.30**	0.44**	0.45**	0.18**	0.26**	—
7. IM	−0.03	−0.01	−0.14*	−0.10	−0.03	−0.02
8. SD	−0.19*	0.08	−0.21**	0.04	−0.05	−0.03
9. SDSS	0.28**	0.39**	0.43**	0.19**	0.27**	0.48**
10. FGRS	0.12	0.20*	0.06	0.22*	0.01	0.12
11. MGRS	0.31	0.25	0.46*	−0.06	0.14	0.43*

Note. IM = Impression Management subscale of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding; SD = Self Deception subscale of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding; SDSS = Sexual Double Standard Scale; FGRS = Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale; MGRS = Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale.
$*p < .05.$ $**p < .01.$ $***p < .001.$

$p < .05$) and the Sex Drive factor ($r = −.21$, $p < .01$), and impression management was negatively correlated with the Sex Drive factor ($r = −.14$, $p < .05$); however, all of these correlations were small. The Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale and the Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale measure constructs that are more conceptually related to—yet still distinct from—sexual scripts. Appropriately, correlations between the Sexual Script Scale and these measures ranged from small to moderate in strength; scores from the Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale were positively correlated with the Sexual Complexity/Simplicity factor ($r = .20$, $p < .05$) and the Performance and Orgasm factor ($r = .22$, $p < .01$), and scores from the Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale were positively correlated with the Sex Drive factor ($r = .46$, $p < .05$) and the Emotional Sex factor ($r = .43$, $p < .05$). The Sexual Double Standard Scale measures a construct that should be related to the Sexual Script Scale factors, as the sexual double standard has strong roots in traditional sexual scripts (Wiederman, 2005). This relationship was reflected in our data, as all of the factors of the Sexual Script Scale were positively correlated with scores from the Sexual Double Standard Scale, and these correlations ranged from small to moderate (rs = .19 to .48, all ps < .01). Given the low reliability of the Sexual Double Standard Scale ($\alpha = 0.60$), it is likely that these correlations represent an attenuated estimation of the relationship between sexual double standard endorsement and the factors of the Sexual Script Scale (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

Study 3

In Study 2, the Sexual Script Scale was developed, and evidence of its construct validity was obtained. The objective of Study 3 was to test the factor structure of the Sexual Script Scale on a separate sample, to assess its factorial invariance between men and women, and to examine its test-retest reliability.

Method

Participants. Participants for the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were 207 heterosexual young American adults ($M_{age} = 22.09$, $SD = 2.28$), who were recruited using Amazon's Mechanical Turk service (MTurk; see Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011, for a review) and who fully completed all items from the Sexual Script Scale. In all, 103 of the participants were men and 104 were women. Of these participants, 73.9% identified as European American/White, 14% as Asian American, 4.8% as Hispanic American/Latino/Latina, 3.9% as biracial/multiracial, 1.9% as African American/Black, and 1.4% as Native American/American Indian. Participants from the CFA analysis who agreed to complete the Sexual Script Scale again at a later date were contacted approximately two weeks later to assess test-retest reliability. In all, 46 (female, $n = 25$; male, $n = 21$) of these participants fully completed the Sexual Script Scale both times. These participants were also heterosexual young adults ($M_{age} = 21.87$, $SD = 2.38$), and most were European American/White (67.4%), or Asian American (17.4%).

Measures. Participants reported their gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation and then completed the 33 items of the Sexual Script Scale. Participants also reported their 14-character MTurk worker identification number; this information was used for matching participant data for test-retest analysis. Participants who completed the retest portion of data collection completed the identical questionnaire a second time.

Procedure. Participants for the CFA analysis were recruited during the summer 2012 semester using MTurk, for a study about "men and women's sexual attitudes, beliefs, and personality." Participants first completed the demographic items and then completed the Sexual Script Scale items. Upon completion, participants who were willing to participate in the retesting of the Sexual Script Scale were transferred to a separate questionnaire where they entered their e-mail addresses. These participants were contacted approximately two weeks later and completed the retesting portion of the study. Participants who completed the initial survey were paid $50 for their participation; participants who completed the retest survey were paid an additional $50.

Data analysis strategy. Confirmatory factor analysis with robust maximum likelihood estimation (MLM) was conducted using Mplus Version 6 (Muthén & Muthén, 2010) to test the fit of the six-factor model

from Study 2. The χ^2 test, standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR), root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI or NNFI) of model fit were selected to evaluate the models (Hoyle & Panter, 1995; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The χ^2 statistic is an absolute index for testing the hypothesis that the CFA model specified is a perfect fit to the data (Hu & Bentler, 1995). Although frequently reported, the χ^2 test is highly sensitive to sample size (Hu & Bentler, 1995). Some authors (e.g., Bentler & Bonett, 1980; West, Taylor, & Wu, 2012) therefore recommend relying on additional indexes of model fit. It bears noting, however, that some scholars continue to use the χ^2 test as the sole determinant of model fit (e.g., Kline, 2010). Our position, similar to that of Bentler and Bonett (1980), and West and colleagues (2012), is that as sample size increases, the power to detect smaller deviations from perfect fit will increase. Subsequently, we consider poor-fitting models as those in which both the χ^2 test and other indexes suggest that model fit is poor.

Given the use of the MLM estimator, we conducted nested model comparisons (i.e., χ^2 difference tests) using the modified Satorra-Bentler testing procedure outlined by Bryant and Satorra (2012). The SRMR indicates the average discrepancy between observed and predicted correlations, with values .08 or less indicating a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The RMSEA indicates the badness of fit per degree of freedom in the specified model; values less than .06 indicate a strong model fit, while values under .10 indicate an acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Finally, the CFI and TLI provide incremental indices of model fit that indicate the improvement of model fit relative to a baseline null model in which manifest variables are not related (Hu & Bentler, 1995). For these fit indices, values higher than .95 indicate a strong model fit, with values closer to 1.00 indicating a stronger fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Results

We identified all CFA models using the fixed factor method. One of the items ("Women can still enjoy sex without having an orgasm") loaded in opposite directions for men and women and was therefore removed. We first fit the data to a single-factor model, which provided an unacceptable level of fit, $\chi^2(464) = 1757.91$, $p < .001$, SRMR = .13, RMSEA = .12 (90% CI: .11 to .12), CFI = .53, TLI = .50. This indicated that our data did not support the existence of a single overarching script.

Next, we fit the data to the six-factor model that was identified in Study 2. After controlling for related error terms (e.g., "I think negatively of a man who has had a lot of sexual partners" and "I have a hard time respecting a guy who has casual sex"; both items share content related to negative evaluations of men), the six-factor model provided a good fit to the data, $\chi^2(443) = 625.34$, $p < .001$, SRMR = .07, RMSEA = .05 (90% CI: .04 to .05), CFI = .93, TLI = .93. A nested model comparison indicated that this model was a superior fit compared to the single-factor model, $\Delta\chi^2(9) = 17.75$, $p = .04$. Standardized factor loadings for this model were all significant and ranged from .34 to .89 ($M = .70$), and the communality values ranged from .12 to .79 ($M = .50$). All of the factors were significantly and positively correlated with one another, and these correlations ranged between small and large in size ($r = .24$ to .70).

We then examined the possibility that a higher-order sexual script factor existed, but this was not supported. Model fit was worse for this higher-order model, $\chi^2(452) = 643.81$, $p < .001$, SRMR = .08, RMSEA = .05 (90% CI: .04 to .05), CFI = .93, TLI = .92, and a nested-model comparison indicated that the higher-order model significantly degraded fit compared to the six-factor model with correlated factors, $\Delta\chi^2(9) = 17.75$, $p = .04$. As such, our analyses supported a model of multiple distinct yet related sexual scripts. Estimated standardized factor loadings and residual variances for the final model are presented in Table 4, as are the standard errors for these parameter estimates.

We then examined factorial invariance of the confirmed factor solution for male and female participants. We examined factorial invariance at three levels: equal form (i.e., configural invariance), equal loadings (i.e., weak invariance), and equal intercepts (i.e., strong invariance; Brown, 2006). Kenny (2012) suggested that incremental fit indexes, such as the CFI and TLI, are not accurate or informative when the RMSEA of the null model is less than .158; our null models for these analyses met this criteria (RMSEA = .13). We therefore do not report CFI and TLI for these models (see Widaman & Thompson, 2003, for an in-depth discussion of this issue). Further, as nested model comparisons (using $\Delta\chi^2$) can be overly sensitive for testing factorial invariance (see Cheung & Rensvold, 2002), we used an RMSEA "reasonableness" test in addition to the $\Delta\chi^2$ test. If the $\Delta\chi^2$ was significant and the RMSEA value from the nested model fell outside of the confidence interval for the RMSEA of the parent model, the nested model was rejected.

Our initial testing indicated that equal form invariance was tenable, $\chi^2(886) = 1267.89$, $p < .001$, SRMR = .09, RMSEA = .07 (90% CI: .06 to .07). Equal loading invariance was also supported, $\chi^2(912) = 1312.19$, $p < .001$, SRMR = .10, RMSEA = .07 (90% CI: .06 to .07), as this restriction did not result in a significant decrease in model fit, $\Delta\chi^2(9) = 17.75$, $p = .05$. Finally, although the $\Delta\chi^2$ test was significant, $\Delta\chi^2(26) = 78.24$, $p \leq .001$, strong invariance was also supported based on the RMSEA reasonableness test, $\chi^2(938) = 1395.45$, $p < .001$, SRMR = .10, RMSEA = .07 (90% CI: .06 to .08).

Finally, four of the factors (rs = .79 to .81, ps < .001), with the exception of the Players factor ($r = .38$,

Table 4. *CFA Parameter Estimates of the Sexual Script Scale*

Factor	Item	Loading	SE	Residual	SE
Standards	SS1	.85	.02	.28[a]	.03
	SS2	.78	.03	.40[bc]	.05
	SS3	.69	.04	.53[ab]	.06
	SS4	.82	.02	.33[c]	.04
	SS5	.81	.03	.35	.04
	SS6	.72	.04	.49	.06
	SS7	.76	.03	.42	.04
	SS8	.73	.03	.47	.04
	SS9	.80	.02	.36	.04
Complex	SC1	.68	.04	.54[d]	.06
	SC2	.71	.04	.50[d]	.06
	SC3	.71	.03	.50	.04
	SC4	.75	.03	.43	.05
	SC5	.62	.05	.61	.06
	SC6	.45	.06	.80	.05
	SC7	.67	.04	.56	.05
Sex drive	SD1	.80	.03	.37	.05
	SD2	.71	.04	.50	.05
	SD3	.80	.04	.37[e]	.07
	SD4	.73	.04	.47[e]	.05
	SD5	.68	.04	.53	.06
Orgasm	PO1	.69	.05	.53	.07
	PO2	.64	.04	.59	.06
	PO3	.69	.04	.53	.06
	PO4*				
	PO5	.64	.05	.59	.06
Players	P1	.89	.03	.21	.06
	P2	.78	.04	.39	.06
	P3	−.42	.06	.83[f]	.05
	P4	−.57	.05	.68[f]	.06
Emotional	ES1	.77	.03	.41	.05
	ES2	.77	.04	.41	.07
	ES3	−.34	.07	.88	.05

Note. Standardized loadings are reported. Items with negative factor loadings are reverse-scored. All loadings and residual variances were significant at the $p < .001$ level. Superscripted residual variances represent significantly correlated residual pairs. *Indicates item was deleted from final scale.

$p < .001$) and Emotional Sex factor ($r = .65$, $p < .001$), demonstrated acceptable test-retest reliability.

Discussion

We conducted three studies to examine the current sexual scripts of heterosexual emerging adults and to develop and validate a self-report measure of sexual scripts endorsement. In Study 1, results from our focus groups with men and women supported gendered scripts pertaining to sex drive, physical and emotional sex, sexual performance, initiation and gatekeeping, and evaluation of sexual others. In Study 2, we generated possible items for a sexual script endorsement scale based on participant quotes from the major scripts found in Study 1. We piloted these items on a large sample of Canadian emerging adults and conducted an EFA, which yielded a set of six interrelated scripts for the Sexual Script Scale: Sexual Standards, Sexual Simplicity and Complexity, Sex Drive, Performance and Orgasm, Players, and Emotional Sex. Initial evidence for the construct validity of the Sexual Script Scale was found, as the scale demonstrated theoretically predictable convergent and discriminant validity. In Study 3, we confirmed the six-factor structure of the Sexual Script Scale using a new sample of American emerging adults. Finally, the test-retest reliability of the scale was acceptable for most factors, indicating that endorsement of many of these scripts is relatively stable over a short period of time.

Our results strongly support the robustness of many sexual scripts among emerging adults. More than 25 years after the inaugural sexual scripting publication (i.e., Simon & Gagnon, 1986), sexual scripts continue to exert influence on defining appropriate and expected sexual behavior in a highly consistent and gendered way (i.e., Wiederman, 2005). Findings from our focus group study regarding traditional sexual scripts are highly congruent with results from previous research pertaining to the gendered nature of sexual scripts. Such supported scripts included: men have a strong physical orientation to sex (Oliver & Hyde, 1993; Simon & Gagnon, 1969; Wiederman, 2005), whereas women have an emotional orientation to sex (Bartoli & Clark, 2006; Krahé et al., 2007); men initiate sexual encounters, whereas women gatekeep (Bartoli & Clark, 2006; Kim et al., 2007; Krahé et al., 2007; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003; Wiederman, 2005); men are expected to be sexually skilled and knowledgeable (Muehlenhard & Shippee, 2010; Simon & Gagnon, 1969); and finally, men should always be ready for sex (Dworkin & O'Sullivan, 2005). Many of these gendered scripts were further supported during the development of the Sexual Script Scale, as factors pertaining to scripts, such as women's emotional orientation to sex and men's expectations for sexual performance and knowledge, were present in the final factor solution.

Despite the consistency of our findings with previous sexual script research, we found some scripts that deviated from their traditional constructions. This was most apparent in our largest subscale related to sexual standards. Instead of having two gendered scales, or one scale reflecting the traditional sexual double standard, all of the items related to men and women having casual sex or many sexual partners loaded on a single factor, indicating participants responded similarly to these items regardless of the gender of the actor. Indeed, focus group participants in Study 1 also largely described these behaviors in negative ways regardless of the gender of the actor. The script pertaining to the evaluation of men who are sexual also contrasted with the traditional sexual double standard, as many participants—particularly men—expressed the view that men who have many partners or casual sex are considered "players" (in this context, a negative term often implying manipulation and deception of women). These participants claimed to gain respect for men who turned down the opportunity to have sex. Taken together, these qualitative and quantitative

findings suggest that both women and men may be negatively evaluated for behaving in overtly sexual ways or in casual sex contexts, perhaps indicating a movement toward more sexual conservatism among emerging adults today (see Risman & Allison, 2012, for recent evidence of this conservative shift). Our results suggest that despite Arnett's conceptualization of emerging adulthood as a time for exploration in terms of sexual and relationship partners, sexual experimentation may not be evaluated positively, especially for women who choose to be sexual outside of the context of a committed relationship and for men who are seen to lie and manipulate to have sex with women (i.e., players).

We believe that our studies effectively demonstrate that sexual script endorsement can be measured with reliability and validity. Importantly, as opposed to focusing on a singular script (e.g., LaPlante et al., 1980), it is our understanding that the Sexual Script Scale provides the first comprehensive self-report measure of sexual script endorsement that covers multiple sexual scripts. Our results are strongly inconsistent with the conceptualization of sexual scripting as being driven by a singular overarching script (i.e., "the traditional sexual script"; see LaPlante et al., 1980; Muehlenhard & Hollabaugh, 1988; Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998; O'Sullivan & Byers, 1992, for examples). Instead, our findings indicate that there are a number of distinct, and often related, sexual scripts guiding and informing the sexual conduct of heterosexual emerging adults.

Strengths and Limitations

We believe the mixed-methods approach we have taken to the study of sexual scripting is a major strength of the research we present in this article. By utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods, we have been able to provide greater depth and breadth of information related to the sexual scripting of young adults' sexual behavior. Furthermore, by using data from our focus group study to create a self-report measure of sexual script endorsement, we have been able to address a major limitation of the sexual scripting literature: the absence of a rigorously developed and validated measure. Specific to our analytic approaches, we used rigorous qualitative methodology, including coding of themes by three independent readers. Further, in our quantitative analysis, a high cutoff value (.40) for factor loadings was used during the EFA process to ensure the final set of items would be strongly related to the sexual script factors, and this analysis was conducted using a very large sample. Finally, in Study 3, we confirmed the initial factor structure of the Sexual Script Scale on a sample from a different country (albeit a similar one in some respects).

However, our research was limited in several ways. First, all of our studies were conducted on a relatively homogenous set of heterosexual young adults, with little diversity regarding factors such as age, ethnicity, and education. Although sample homogeneity can be a strength of exploratory research, a greater understanding of the possibly rich age, cultural, and ethnic diversity in sexual script endorsement is desirable. Related to the issue of sample homogeneity, our results have also likely been influenced by the volunteer bias of our participants, particularly for the focus group studies in which participants needed to be sufficiently comfortable enough to discuss sexuality-related topics openly with strangers. Study 2 was limited by a data collection error, which resulted in more than 200 participants not reporting their gender. However, these participants all identified as heterosexual, which we considered sufficient justification to include their data in the EFA, as our intent was to create a self-report measure to assess endorsement of heterosexual scripts across genders. Despite these limitations, we think the Sexual Script Scale will aid in the conduct of future empirical research regarding the benefits and consequences of traditional sexual script endorsement, and we encourage other researchers to use the scale to assess its appropriateness in different and diverse samples.

Directions for Future Research

Prior to the development of the Sexual Script Scale, the influence of sexual script endorsement on factors such as sexual risk taking, condom use, the experience of sexual problems, and sexual and relationship satisfaction could not be properly assessed. Similarly, the function of sexual script endorsement (e.g., as a source of self-esteem) and the stability of sexual script endorsement could not be determined. It is our hope that the Sexual Script Scale will facilitate these pursuits. As well, future research—qualitative and quantitative—on the sexual scripts of different populations is needed. As such, further psychometric validation and refinement of the Sexual Script Scale could occur with new and more diverse samples. In Study 2, the initial EFA yielded 11 factors, of which 5 were discarded because too few variables (two or less) were associated with them. Researchers interested in expanding the Sexual Script Scale may want to create more items related to the following deleted factors to see if they can be recruited as stable predictors that contribute incremental validity to the scale: sexual knowledge, oral sex skills, women gatekeeping for control, respecting men for declining sex, and the naturalness of men's sex drive. Researchers may also be interested in developing items for scripts that were not supported by our factor analysis. For example, scripts directly related to initiation of sexual acts, or men always being ready for sex, were not included in the initial factor structure of the scale and yet were strongly supported in our qualitative findings from Study 1. One possible explanation for this finding is that agreement with these scripts was so strong and unanimous that it resulted in little item variability, thereby reducing correlations between variables which may have

been related to these factors. Though our goal with creating the Sexual Script Scale was to create a comprehensive measure of sexual script endorsement, we acknowledge that no measure will ever assess all possible sexual scripts. We therefore encourage researchers to continue to develop, refine, and adapt the Sexual Script Scale by piloting items related to other scripts and assessing sexual scripting in other populations and developmental phases in an effort to enhance our understanding of the scripting of human sexual conduct.

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