SUBVERTING THE SEXUAL DOUBLE STANDARD:
HOW EXPOSURE TO AND IDENTIFICATION WITH CHARACTERS IN TELEVISED
COUNTER SEXUAL SCRIPTS AFFECT YOUNG WOMEN'S SEXUAL WELL-BEING

Rebecca R. Ortiz

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Mass Communication in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Chapel Hill
2012

Approved by:

Jane D. Brown, Ph.D.

Rhonda Gibson, Ph.D.

Melanie Green, Ph.D.

Carolyn Halpern, Ph.D.

Brian Southwell, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

REBECCA R. ORTIZ: Subverting the sexual double standard:
How exposure to and identification with characters in televised
counter sexual scripts affect young women's sexual well-being
(Under the direction of Jane D. Brown, Ph.D.)

Television is a major source of sexual scripts for adolescents and young adults. This dissertation examined how exposure to and identification with characters in sexual scripts that either reinforce or subvert a heterosexual script affect young adult female viewers' agreement with the sexual double standard (i.e., different "rules" of appropriate sexual behavior for males and females) and their sexual self-concepts (i.e., how they view themselves as sexual beings).

An experiment with a 3 (script: dominant heterosexual script, equal desire counter script, or equal love counter script) X 2 (manipulation: character identification or no identification), plus control group, between-subjects factorial design was conducted. One hundred and sixty-two female undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 23 (M =20.41) completed an online pre-test questionnaire about one week before exposure. After exposure in the laboratory to a randomly-assigned sexual script or control video that did not include any sexual scripts, participants completed an immediate post-test questionnaire. The identification manipulation was unsuccessful and therefore all participants were examined by their level of identification as measured in the post-test questionnaire.

Main findings include exposure to the equal desire counter script increased participants' sexual optimism, belief that their future sex lives will be positive and rewarding.

Exposure to the equal desire counter script also increased the sexual self-efficacy of participants who had engaged in casual sex and the sexual esteem of participants who had engaged in sex. Exposure to any of the sexual scripts increased participants' agreement with the sexual double standard the more they identified with the male character than with the female.

Results indicate that exposure to counter sexual scripts that highlight gender equality between sexual partners may influence young female viewers positively by strengthening their sexual self-concepts, especially for participants with previous sexual experience. Viewing sexual scripts from a male character's perspective, however, can negatively influence female viewers by reinforcing agreement with sexual stereotypes. Given that identification with different characters affected the outcomes of viewing sexual scripts, health communicators should pay close attention to the role that identification plays in persuasive and narrative communication.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have many people to thank for getting me through these past years of graduate school and successfully completing this doctorate degree, but there are three people who rdeserve the most recognition: my mother, Nancy Ortiz, father, Andy Ortiz, and advisor, Jane D. Brown.

To my mom, I thank you for being a best friend and support system. You are one of the strongest, most intelligent women I know, and I thank you for being such an amazing role model and teaching me how to be my own strong, independent woman. Thank you for always picking up the phone (day or night!) and listening for as long as I needed to talk.

To my dad, I thank you for all the years of insights and knowledge you have given me. Some of the most precious memories in my life are riding alongside you in the car or chatting with you over dinner about life and future goals. Your own thoughtfulness inspired me to follow this career path, and I hope to always make you proud.

To my advisor, Jane, there is absolutely no way that I will ever be able to repay or thank you for all you have done for me. I came to this graduate program because I wanted to work with you and follow in your footsteps. I had no idea how much I would learn and gain from you in the process. You are a fantastic mentor and friend, and I will ever be indebited to you for all your guidance and kindness. You trained an amazing group of women who will continue your legacy. I hope you can look back on your years at UNC and realize how much you have meant to this school and your students.

I would also like to thank my fellow partners in crime in this sexual media research game, Autumn Shafer and Christina Malik, for being amazing friends and colleagues. I look forward to many more years in your company, laughing, crying, and drinking wine.

Thank you to the rest of my doctoral cohort, fellow students from years before and after, and all faculty I have interacted with at UNC for getting me through these past three years.

Thank you to all members of my dissertation committee. Your thoughtful insights and guidance make me proud to turn in this completed document. I hope to continue to make you proud for many years to come and remember the struggles of this process when I am serving on committees of other doctoral candidates.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Roy H. Park Foundation for funding my doctoral studies. Without that support, none of this would be possible. I will forever be grateful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Television and other entertainment media are major sources of common sexual scripts for adolescents and young adults. Sexual scripts are cognitive models that individuals use to guide their sexual interactions, learned from culturally available messages such as the media (Frith & Kitzinger, 2001). Most youth have yet to experience a variety of sexual situations and therefore may base their ideas and expectations about sexuality on media examples. Sexual content is frequent in media popular with youth (Pardun, L'Engle, & Brown, 2005), especially in entertainment television programming. One content analysis found that more than 75% of prime-time television shows popular with teens and young adults on the major networks contained sexual content (Kunkel, Eyal, Finnerty, Biely, & Donnerstein, 2005).

While researchers consistently find a link between exposure to sexual media and sexual attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Brown et al., 2006; Chandra et al., 2008; Collins et al., 2004), less is known about how, why, and which sexual portrayals affect young viewers. The proliferation of stereotypically-gendered sexual messages in the media is of particular concern because constant exposure may lead to reinforcement of such stereotypes by viewers and could negatively affect their sexual well-being (American Psychological Association, 2007; Kim et al, 2007). Young female viewers are arguably more vulnerable than young male viewers to these negative media effects since much of entertainment media includes portrayals of the heterosexual script. The heterosexual script includes depictions of gender inequality between heterosexual partners, where male characters are often portrayed as

sexual initiators and aggressors, while female characters are passive recipients and sexual gatekeepers who prefer love and affection over sex (American Psychological Association, 2010; Hust, Brown, & L'Engle, 2008; Kim et al., 2007).

A few experiments examined the effects of viewing different sexual portrayals on young adults' sexual attitudes and behavioral intentions (e.g., Bryant & Rockwell, 1994; Eyal & Kunkel, 2008; Farrar, 2006; Moyer-Guse, Chung, & Jain, 2011; Moyer-Guse & Nabi, 2011; Nabi & Clark, 2008). Farrar (2006), for example, exposed female and male undergraduate students to sexual portrayals that did or did not include depictions of condom use. Female participants who viewed the depictions of condom use had more positive attitudes about using condoms than those who did not view such depictions, but male participants were not affected differently by exposure. Moyer-Guse and Nabi (2011) found that after exposing college participants to a television drama depicting the difficulties associated with teen pregnancy, females and those who had not engaged in sexual intercourse reported greater safe sex intentions. These experiments lend credence to the notion that viewing different sexual portrayals can have significant effects on viewers' sexual attitudes and intentions, particularly for females and viewers who do not have direct experience with the sexual situations portrayed.

Most experiments focused on how the viewers' safe sex attitudes and intentions are affected by exposure. We have yet to explore how exposure to stereotypically-gendered sexual scripts (i.e., depictions of the heterosexual script) may affect young viewers' judgments of what is "appropriate" sexual behavior for males compared to females and how such exposure may affect the viewer's own sexual self-concept (i.e., sense of herself as a sexual being). This study was thus designed to investigate the extent to which viewing

2

stereotypical (i.e., male seeking sex, female wanting affection) or non-stereotypical (i.e., gender equality) sexual scripts affects a viewer's sexual stereotypes and sexual self-concept.

The constellation of different "rules" for sexual behavior for men and women found in the heterosexual script in Western culture is often called the "sexual double standard" (Crawford & Popp, 2003). The male double standard script stipulates that the male should seek multiple sexual partners and endorse the sexual exploits of peers (Gagnon & Simon, 1973, 2005). For females, the script includes passively waiting for a male partner and a desire for affection or love rather than sex. Women who seek sexual gratification may experience criticism and disapproval from others. The dominant script assumes heterosexuality as the socially-constructed standard (Schwartz, 2007). Females are expected to act as the gatekeepers to sexual interactions, while males are the initiators and aggressors (Gagnon & Simon, 2005). While some shifting of the scripts in popular culture and in adolescents' lives is observed, the heterosexual script remains the dominant standard (Dworkin & O'Sullivan, 2007).

Greater agreement with the sexual double standard is linked with detrimental effects on women's sexual health, according to a review of the literature by Crawford and Popp (2003). Women who reported greater acceptance of the sexual double standard were less likely to approve of women providing condoms during sexual encounters, believing that it is the man's responsibility. Women who endorse the sexual double standard may also internalize these beliefs and sacrifice their sexual autonomy, thus engaging in sexual activity only when their male partner expresses the desire and ignoring their own sexual desires.

The sexual self-concept of females is also important to assess as an indicator of women's sexual health. How an woman perceives herself as a sexual person is often related

3

to her sexual behaviors and other sexual attitudes (Snell, Fisher, & Schuh, 1992; Snell, 2001). The sexual self-concept of an individual includes multiple dimensions, such as cognitive structures associated with the sexual aspects of the self derived from previous experiences and sexual motivations for engaging in certain behaviors. Three dimensions of the sexual self-concept most relevant to the goals of this dissertation were assessed: sexual optimism, sexual self-efficacy, and sexual esteem. Sexual optimism is that belief that the future sexual aspects of one's life will be positive and rewarding. Sexual self-efficacy is the belief that one has the ability to deal effectively with the sexual aspects of his or her life. Sexual esteem is the generalized tendency to positively evaluate one's own capacity to engage in healthy sexual behaviors and to experience his or her sexuality in a satisfying and enjoyable way. Stronger ratings of these dimensions for females are associated with making greater sexual contributions in and receiving substantial benefits from their romantic relationships, indicating greater gender equality between sexual partners (Snell, 2001).

Popular entertainment media may play a major role in reinforcing or subverting the common heterosexual script. Television's frequent sexual scripts are often gendered and reinforce a sexual double standard (Hust, Brown, & L'Engle, 2008; Kim et al., 2007). Female characters are more likely to be judged and objectified for their sexuality by other characters, for example, (Lampeman, et al., 2002; Montemurro, 2003; Ward, 1995) and to experience negative consequences from their sexual behaviors than are male characters (Aubrey, 2004).

Television is particularly important to examine for its effects on sexuality because it is the medium that youth engage with most often (Nielsen, 2009; Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). Youth cite television as a major source of sexual health information, with many saying they learned "a lot" about pregnancy and birth control from television (Kaiser Family

Foundation, 2000). Television is also thought to contribute to knowledge about sexual relationships, judgments about sexual social norms, and sexual attitudes (Farrar et al., 2003).

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001) and sexual script theory (Gagnon & Simon, 2005) help explain why viewers of televised sexual scripts may model the sexual attitudes and behaviors of the characters. How a viewer processes these sexual scripts in entertainment programming will likely impact how he or she is affected by them. Much of entertainment television programming is in a narrative format, which suggests that narrative processing may play an important role in how a viewer is influenced by televised sexual scripts. Transportation theory (Green & Brock, 2000) proposes that narratives can affect viewers' attitudes and behaviors, such that the more a viewer is "transported" or immersed into the story, the more he or she will report attitudes consistent with the story's messages.

Being transported into the story also involves emotional connection with the story's characters. Different levels of identification with one or more of the characters in an entertainment message can influence how a viewer is affected. Moyer-Guse, Chung, and Jain (2011) found, for example, that stronger identification with the characters in a narrative that modeled discussion of sexual history with a current sexual partner was positively associated with increased self-efficacy to engage in such a discussion in the future. Thus, further study of narrative processing, with a focus on character identification, should advance our understanding of the ways in which viewers are affected by different televised sexual scripts.

The viewer's perceived realism of the portrayal and its characters may also play a role in message effects. Perceived realism is defined here as the viewer's perception of the plausibility that the events and characters in the portrayal could happen in "real life." Green (2004) proposed that a story would seem more plausible to individuals who are transported

5

and found, in an experiment, that individuals who were more transported into the story also thought the events, settings, and characters were more believable. The level of perceived realism awarded to a sexual script may therefore also influence the extent to which a viewer identifies with its characters.

This study was thus designed to examine how exposure to and identification with characters in different sexual scripts (i.e., either reinforcing or subverting the dominant script) affects young adult female viewers' agreement with the sexual double standard and their sexual self-concept. The dominant heterosexual script in this study is a stereotypical portrayal of gender inequality in which a female and male character engages in casual sex but have different expectations. The female character expresses the desire to begin a committed, monogamous relationship with the male character, but he wants only a sexual relationship and chastises her for wanting more. Two counter scripts were created to portray gender equality between the same characters, subverting the dominant script. The counter scripts include the same characters engaging in casual sex but expressing equivalent expectations, either (1) to continue in a casual sex relationship, or (2) to enter into a committed, monogamous relationship.

This study addressed two major research questions:

(1) What effects does exposure to televised counter sexual scripts that either reinforce or subvert the dominant sexual script have on female viewers' agreement with the sexual double standard and their sexual self-concept?

(2) Does identification with the story's characters influence whether viewers are more or less affected by exposure to the counter sexual scripts?

6

An experiment with a 3 (script: dominant heterosexual script, equal desire counter script, or equal love counter script) X 2 (manipulation: character identification or no identification), plus control group, between-subjects factorial design with pre- and post-test was conducted. Participants completed an online pre-test questionnaire about one week before exposure to the sexual scripts. After exposure to a randomly-assigned sexual script (i.e., with portrayals that either reinforce or subvert the sexual double standard) in the computer laboratory, participants completed an immediate post-test questionnaire. The control group viewed a video clip that did not include any sexual portrayals (i.e., an MTV documentary about stuttering). Each clip was approximately 10 minutes long.

Identification with the male and female characters and transportation into the story were measured to assess the level of engagement with the scripts. Perceived realism was also measured to assess whether perceiving the scripts as possible and/or likely to occur in real life had a greater impact on identification with the characters. Participants each viewed a different script and received an identification manipulation or not.

The next chapter (Chapter 2) provides a review of the recent literature on the effects of sexual portrayals on adolescents and young adults and provides further rationale for the study, including discussion of the study's conceptual and theoretical frameworks. The main study's hypotheses are then proposed. Chapter 3 provides the results from pilot testing stimuli and proposed manipulations, and Chapter 4 describes the methods for the main study. The final two chapters include results from the main study and discussion and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND STUDY JUSTIFICATION

Media influence on sexuality

The media can make a difference in young people's sexual lives. Greater exposure to sexual media content has been associated with stronger endorsement of recreational attitudes toward sex, increased intentions to have sex, earlier sexual initiation, and even increased likelihood of adolescent pregnancy (Brown et al., 2006; Chandra et al., 2008; Collins et al., 2004; Ward & Rivadeneyra, 1999). In a review of cross-sectional, longitudinal, and experimental studies, Wright (2011) concluded that, given the substantial evidence to date, exposure to sexual media affects adolescents' sexual behavior. Research on the effects of sexual media on adolescents' and young adults' sexual behavior is far from complete, however. The primary research question "do the media affect adolescents' sexual behavior?" was answered in the affirmative. The next question to answer is "how and why does that happen?"

Young people spend a great deal of time with media (Nielsen, 2009; Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010) and often turn to the media for information about sexuality (Strasburger, Wilson, & Jordan, 2009). They spend the most time with television, a typical teenager consuming three hours and 20 minutes of television a day (Nielsen, 2009). Television is saturated with sexual content (Pardun, L'Engle, & Brown, 2005). In 2012, teens were watching teen and young adult characters engage in sex with multiple partners on The CW's teen drama *Gossip Girl*, characters on MTV's *The Jersey Shore* engage in one-night stands,

and a female teen character promise to have sex with a male character in exchange for illegal drugs on MTV's *Skins*.

In a 2004 national survey of more than 500 teens and young adults, the media far outranked parents or schools as a source of information about sex (Kaiser Family Foundation/*Seventeen* Magazine, 2004). Some evidence suggests that television and other media may act as a "super peer" for female teens, educating them and pushing them into engaging in sex earlier than they might otherwise (Brown, Halpern, & L'Engle, 2005).

Popular teen shows often contain more sexual content than other, adult-targeted prime-time shows (Strasburger, Wilson, & Jordan, 2009). Recent content analyses of popular television shows among teen and young adult viewers find that the majority of shows include sexual content and that the amount has increased over time, with the percentage of shows portraying sexual intercourse doubling from 7% to 14% in the 1997-1998 to 2001-2002 seasons (Kunkel et al., 2007). Topics related to sexual risks or responsibilities also increased, but such information remained infrequent (Kunkel et al., 2007). Most consequences, nearly equally positive and negative, were transient and emotionally insignificant (Eyal & Kinnerty, 2007). Hust, Brown, and L'Engle (2008) found that the rare sexual health messages in the media adolescents used in the early 2000's (television, magazines, music, and movies) were ambiguous and inaccurate, reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes that males seek sex and females are responsible for contraception.

In the study proposed here, female portrayals are of particular interest because the sexual portrayals of female characters have changed in recent years. Female characters who openly express themselves sexually are almost as frequent in entertainment media as are sexually-expressive male characters (e.g., Aubrey, 2004). These sexual portrayals, however,

9

are often still gendered, such that female and male characters experience different outcomes from their sexual expression. One content analysis of television dramas popular with teens found that negative consequences were more common in scenes in which female characters initiated sexual activities than in scenes in which male characters initiated sexual activities (Aubrey, 2004). Female characters were just as likely to initiate sexual dialogue as were male characters, although male characters were significantly more likely to initiate sexual behaviors than female characters.

Overall, these findings suggest that both male and female media characters are expressing themselves sexually. Female characters are more often punished for their sexuality, however, which may lead viewers to believe that female sexual expression leads to more negative consequences than male sexual expression, which may impact the sexual self-concepts of female viewers negatively.

Experimental research reveals that depending on the type of portrayal, exposure to televised sexual portrayals can affect viewers' attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Bryant & Rockwell, 1994; Eyal & Kunkel, 2008; Farrar, 2006; Moyer-Guse, Chung, & Jain, 2011; Moyer-Guse & Nabi, 2011; Nabi & Clark, 2008). Televised sexual portrayals may be most powerful among female viewers and viewers who have not experienced the sexual situations portrayed (e.g., Farrar, 2006; Moyer-Guse & Nabi, 2011). Narrative processing of the portrayals (e.g., identification with the characters, perceived realism of the story, transportation into the story) appears to play a major role in these effects, such that the more engaged a viewer, the more he or she is affected by the portrayal (e.g., Moyer-Guse & Nabi, 2010; Moyer-Guse, Chung, & Jain, 2011).

Greater effects on females than males may be a product of media preferences. Females watch narrative drama programming featuring female characters, such as the ones used in previous experiments and the present study, more often than males (Brown & Pardun, 2004) and therefore may be more likely to become transported into such programming and thus more affected. Investigating the effects of different televised sexual scripts on female viewers exclusively allows for close inspection into how this specific population is affected by portrayals that reinforce or subvert a sexual double standard that arguably affects them negatively more than it does males. The format of the scripts used in the present study, narrative dramas featuring a female character, is also one that is typically preferred by females over males. Females are thus more likely to expose themselves to such programming in their daily lives than are males and will arguably be more affected as well.

Conceptual and theoretical frameworks

This next section provides a review and critique of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used to guide this dissertation, including sexual script theory, transportation theory, and social cognitive theory.

Sexual script theory

Sexual script theory, originally proposed by Gagnon and Simon (2005), posits that a person's sexual self or sexual subjectivity is primarily shaped by social construction. How to recognize and how to react in sexual situations are learned from previous social encounters and observations. Sexual scripts are cognitive models that people use to guide their sexual interactions, learned from culturally available messages (Frith & Kitzinger, 2001). Common sexual scripts to which we are exposed will influence our perceptions of how certain sexual situations are most likely to happen to ourselves and to others (Gagnon & Simon, 2005).

The theory assumes that the sexual effects of biological instincts are minor compared to those of sociocultural processes (Gagnon & Simon, 2005; Kimmel, 2007). Individuals acquire their patterns of sexual conduct through a lifetime of acculturation though much of our scripts are learned early in our lives. Sexual scripts also differ by culture. People may make minor adaptations in cultural scripts to suit their own needs, but individuals will typically stick with the scripts that consistently result in sexual success with a minimal amount of anxiety (Gagnon & Simon, 1987).

Three levels of sexual scripts exist (Simon & Gagnon, 1987; Dworkin & O'Sullivan, 2007). First, cultural scripts are the societal norms and narratives that provide general guidelines for sexual conduct. We may learn these scripts from the media, parents, peers, or anyone else we interact with or observe engaging in sexual scenarios. Interpersonal scripts are developed and translated at the individual level, converted from general cultural scripts, appropriated for realizing sexual desires in specific situations. Intrapsychic scripts are the sexual fantasies, objects, and the sequence of behaviors that elicit and sustain sexual arousal and connect individual desires to social context. These scripts may or may not be culturally accepted but exist in the psyche, nonetheless.

Gagnon and Simon (2005) noted the differences in sexual scripts for males and females, such that gender plays a pivotal role in how individuals express and experience themselves sexually. The male script typically involves actively seeking out sexual partners and endorsement of sexual exploits by peers. For females, the sexual script tends to include passively waiting for a male to seek her out and desire for affection or love instead of sex. Such gender differences have been called the sexual double standard, such that men and women are subject to different "rules" of sexual behavior (Crawford & Popp, 2003).

12

Acceptance of the sexual double standard may have an impact on the well-being of both women and men, though women tend to bear the brunt of the different standard (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Agreement with the standard indicates inequality in the sexual decision-making process in heterosexual couples. Females may learn they have to say no to sex despite their desire to engage in sexual activities, which can be detrimental to sexual well-being (e.g., Tolman, 2002). Females may also see themselves as sexual objects and lack initiative to use protection when they do engage in sex. Males who agree with the sexual double standard are also more likely to accept the objectification of women, find rape more justified in certain situations, and believe in the notion of token resistance (that women say "no" when they really mean "yes") (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Stronger belief in the traditional sexual double standard has also been correlated with less sexual self-disclosure and less dyadic sexual communication between heterosexual couples (Greene & Faulkner, 2005).

The sexual self-concept of females is also important to assess as an indicator of women's sexual health. How an individual perceives themselves as a sexual person is often related to their sexual behaviors and other sexual attitudes (Snell, Fisher, & Schuh, 1992; Snell, 2001). The sexual self-concept of an individual includes multiple dimensions, such as cognitive structures associated with the sexual aspects of the self derived from previous experiences and sexual motivations for engaging in certain behaviors. Three dimensions of the sexual self-concept most relevant to the goals of this dissertation were assessed: sexual optimism, sexual self-efficacy, and sexual esteem. Sexual optimism is that belief that the future sexual aspects of one's life will be positive and rewarding. Sexual self-efficacy is the belief that one has the ability to deal effectively with the sexual aspects of his or her life.

Sexual esteem is the generalized tendency to positively evaluate one's own capacity to engage in healthy sexual behaviors and to experience his or her sexuality in a satisfying and enjoyable way. Stronger ratings of these dimensions for females are associated with making greater sexual contributions in and receiving substantial benefits from their romantic relationships, indicating greater gender equality between heterosexual partners (Snell, 2001).

Television is a major source of sexual scripts. Narrative persuasion theory and research is helpful in understanding how viewers are responding to these scripts, as much of what adolescents and young adults watch on television (or online) is in a narrative format.

Transportation into a narrative

A narrative is a story with a beginning, middle, and end, where a character or multiple characters engage in a journey or obstacles, often resulting in either turmoil or joy (Green & Brock, 2000). Narratives are different from non-narrative, rhetorical messages, because they have the ability to engage a recipient in a process of story engagement through a sequence of events from a character's or characters' eyes. An example of a non-narrative message may include a "talking head" listing the pros and cons of purchasing a new car. A narrative message, however, would show the young woman reading an ad, visiting a showroom, test driving and finally taking the car home. Both message formats have the potential to persuade, but the process by which they persuade is different.

A growing body of research explores the underlying dimensions of how narratives work to persuade and influence viewers asking such questions as: How are viewers processing narrative messages? How do these processes lead to changes in attitudes and behaviors? Much of the research credits absorption or immersion into the narrative as the source of the narrative's effects. Transportation theory is the commonly cited theoretical

framework that conceptualizes this process. The theory proposes that when a narrative

viewer is "transported," he or she loses awareness of his or her surroundings and experiences

the story as if it were happening to him or her (Green & Brock, 2000; Green, Brock, &

Kaufman, 2004). Transportation is thought to be a distinct mental process that happens

unconsciously and allows the individual to "travel" through the story along with the

characters. If transported, the viewer is lost in the story, becoming part of it, feeling the

emotions of some or all of the characters. Transportation is thus characterized as a melding of

attention, imagery, and feelings (Green & Brock, 2000).

Transportation theory posits that the more an individual is "transported" into a

narrative, the more likely he or she is to show effects of the story on real-world beliefs

(Green & Brock, 2000). For example, a young man who is prejudiced against gays and

lesbians and is transported into a story about a gay character and his struggles may be able to

experience life as a gay person through the eyes of the character and reconsider his

prejudices. Transportation is thought to stimulate attitude change by decreasing the desire to

argue against persuasive elements of a story and increasing the ability to make emotional

connections with the characters (Mazzocco, Green, Sasota, & Jones, 2010). While

transported, a person's cognitive abilities are strained, making him or her less likely to

scrutinize details in the text that may be counter to his or her beliefs (Green & Brock, 2000).

Counterarguing with the persuasive elements of a message is more likely to occur

with traditional, rhetorical messages than with narratives. A spokesperson in a commercial

telling a viewer that one brand works better than the other may not persuade her to change

when she already has a belief that the original brand is better. She may wonder such things

as: "how is it better?" and "what is the "catch?" Instead, if she is transported into a story

15

where a character uses both the original and newer brand and experiences greater benefits with the newer brand, she may find herself less able to argue that the original brand is, in fact, better. Reduced counterarguing is a key component of transportation effects. Green and Brock (2000), for example, found that highly transported viewers found fewer false statements in a story than less transported viewers.

Being transported is also likely to increase enjoyment with the story (Green, Brock, & Kauffman, 2004). Disposition theories focus on how and why people enjoy engaging with media entertainment, with a focus on emotional responses (Zillmann & Vorderer, 2000). Many viewers like to engage with media that evoke emotions. Being transported involves the viewer's ability to make an emotional connection with the characters and the story. Media that evoke tears are often seen by viewers as enjoyable (Zillmann & Vorderer, 2000).

A viewer can experience situations and settings to which he or she would ordinarily not have access by being transported. Viewers of science fiction dramas or video game players, for example, are able to enter into fantastical worlds that would never be possible in their normal lives. Viewers may also enjoy entering into these narrative worlds to escape their troubles or boredom. The more a viewer enjoys a narrative or genre of narratives, the more likely he or she will continue watching them and be influenced by the messages embedded in them.

A potential hurdle in transportation research, and narrative engagement in general, is determining how the audience members will interpret the text in which they are absorbed. Just because a story is created with certain intentions to persuade does not mean that the viewers of the message will interpret the story as intended, even when they are transported. Research reveals that being transported into a story influences viewers in various ways, but

more work needs to be done to learn how transportation works for stories that do not have intentionally persuasive messages (e.g., soap operas, science fiction stories, teen dramas, etc.).

Stories in which audience members engage are typically for entertainment purposes (e.g., television dramas, romance novels, etc.), and while the producers of the stories may have hidden agendas, it is more likely that they are simply trying to provide the most engaging story possible to maintain viewership. For example, producers of teen television dramas popular with adolescent girls are likely to create stories with which they know teen girls can relate and will find engaging and enjoyable. They may also use stereotypical characters (e.g., the "virginal good girl" or the "slutty bad girl") to engage the audience, but audience members are going to interpret these characters differently based on their previous experiences and expectations. They may become equally transported into the story, but because they may engage with the story in different ways, and identify with different characters, they may also be influenced by the text differently. It is thus important in narrative engagement research not only to assess whether a viewer is transported into a text and to what degree, but to also what allowed them to be transported and their interpretation of the text. Assessing individual character identification is one possible way to better understand such interpretations and possible outcomes of the exposure.

Identification as part of the transportation process

A key component of transportation is emotional connection with the story's characters. Research has examined how involvement with media characters may play a part in narrative effects. Studies of character involvement have included an array of concepts, including perceived similarity with a character, affinity (liking) for a character, parasocial

interaction (i.e., perceiving the character as a friend), wishful identification (i.e., wanting to be like the character), and identification (i.e., taking on the perspective of the character).

Identification is the least consistently defined involvement concept in the literature. Researchers often confuse identification with other concepts, such as perceived similarity or affinity (e.g., Bandura, 2009; Konijn & Hoorn, 2005; Slater & Rouner, 2002). Cohen (2001) most recently and thoroughly defined identification as adopting the identity and perspective of a character. Identification is the process by which the viewer loses self-awareness and "steps into the shoes" of a character, experiencing the story as the character does. The other concepts of character involvement position the viewer outside the character, as a friend or spectator. Identification positions the viewer as the character, no longer as him or herself. (e.g., Moyer-Guse & Nabi, 2010; Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010).

Identification with a media character is often linked with empathy (e.g., Chory-Assad & Cicchirillo, 2005). Empathy is defined as sharing the perspective (thoughts and feelings) of someone else (Campbell & Babrow, 2004). Identification with a media character is defined as including both cognitive empathy (adopting the point of view of the character) and affective empathy (feeling what the character feels) (e.g., Igartua, 2010). Busselle and Bilandzic (2009) attempted to create a measurement of narrative engagement that included affective empathy and cognitive perspective-taking as separate constructs, but the items were found to overlap or not load on the overall scale. It may therefore be that the cognitive and affective elements of identification with a media character are, in fact, conceptually distinct but do not occur as independent processes. For a viewer to identify with a character, therefore, he or she must not only adopt the cognitive perspectives of a character but also his or her affective feelings.

18

The distinguishing characteristic of identification from other concepts of character involvement, such as perceived similarity (perceiving a character as similar to oneself) or parasocial interaction (viewing a character like a friend), is the viewer's position as the character instead of as a spectator. To identify with a character, the viewer shifts his or her own identity and becomes absorbed into the story as the character.

The process of absorption in identification is thus similar to the process of absorption in being transported into a story. Transportation theory proposes that emotional connection with the story's characters is a component of being transported. Identification, therefore, is perhaps part of the mental process of being transported. Whether a viewer can identify with one or more of the characters without being transported into the story and vice versa have not yet been thoroughly explored.

A few researchers have examined the distinctions between identification and transportation (Moyer-Guse & Nabi, 2010; Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010) and generally found the two to be distinct processes but strongly correlated. Tal-Or and Cohen (2010), for example, manipulated both transportation and identification independently with a dramatic narrative. They created manipulations based on the assumptions that transportation is linked with suspense and identification is linked with emotional connection with the characters. They measured transportation using the majority of items from Green & Brock's (2000) validated transportation scale and five items from a scale suggested by Cohen (2001). They found that the transportation and identification items factored separately. These separate factors, however, may have more to do with the wording of the items than actual distinct conceptualizations, as all the identification items specifically mentioned the main character's name.

19

Although Tal-Or and Cohen (2010) argued that they were able to show that transportation and identification are distinct concepts, their manipulations and measures raise some questions. The manipulation for identification included desirable and undesirable information about the character as a cheater or a loyal husband. Participants may have therefore felt a certain level of social desirability not to admit identifying with a cheater. The manipulation appeared to get more at whether the participant liked the character or not. They also measured identification only with the main character, whereas some participants may have identified with other primary characters in the text.

Moyer-Guse and Nabi (2010) also conducted an experiment with a dramatic narrative about safe sex using Green and Brock's (2000) transportation scale and Cohen's (2001) identification scale. They also measured other concepts of character involvement, such as parasocial interaction and perceived similarity, to develop a model of entertainment-education effects. All concepts were measured and not manipulated. All the measures of character involvement were significantly correlated with transportation but lead to different outcomes. Identification with the two main characters (female and male), for example, was associated with reduced counterarguing, while transportation was not. The authors noted that their measures of counterarguing may have been faulty. While the research may therefore supply some evidence that transportation and identification are distinct processes, a number of methodological issues undermine a clear conclusion.

Thus, previous research suggests that identification and transportation are different but strongly related concepts. Identification deals with specific characters, while transportation is absorption into the entire narrative, which also includes the characters. Transportation may be a necessary but not sufficient condition for identification to occur.

20

Liking of or perceived similarities between the viewer and a specific character may help aid in the viewer's ability to be transported, but to fully identify and take on the perspective of the character, he or she arguably must first be transported into the story. When measuring identification and transportation, multicollinearity is a potential problem. The scales most commonly used to measure the concepts overlap in wording. Both scales include items about loss of self-awareness and emotional involvement (Cohen, 2001; Green & Brock, 2000).

Another potential issue in the identification literature is that some of the researchers testing the effects of identification ask participants to indicate their level of identification with all the characters in a story, instead of with individual characters (e.g., Campbell & Babrow, 2004; Igartua, 2010). This may prove troublesome as narratives often include characters with distinct personas. Some characters play a protagonist role, while others are antagonists. Many of the most interesting and engaging characters in a story are known as "transitional characters," characters whose ideas and behaviors evolve over the course of the drama, as they play a pivotal role in the action (Slater, 2002). It would be important to determine the character(s) with whom a viewer identifies to determine which behaviors are most likely to be modeled later. It should also not be assumed that viewers will always identify with the most prominent character in the story, as they may take on the cognitive and affective perspectives of a supporting character instead. Research has shown that some viewers can build connections with "bad" or "evil" characters, not just "good" characters, and are affected differently based on those connections (e.g., Konijn & Hoorn, 2005).

Some researchers measured identification separately for two or more main characters in a story and then collapsed the responses together to create one identification item, citing high correlation between the scales (Moyer-Guse & Nabi, 2010; Murphy, Frank, Moran, &

21

Patnoe-Woodley, 2011). While for some narratives such a technique may be valid, it may be more helpful theoretically to assess which character a viewer identified with most (if at all) in studying the effects of the narrative on the viewer.

Another important element may be the viewer's perceived realism of the portrayal and its characters. Perceived realism is defined here as the viewer's overall perception of the plausibility that the events and characters in the portrayal could happen in "real life." Green (2004) proposed that a story would seem more plausible to individuals who are transported and found, in an experiment, that individuals who were more transported into the story also thought the events, settings, and characters were more believable. The level of perceived realism awarded to a sexual script may therefore also influence whether and the extent to which a viewer identifies with its characters.

Implications from social cognitive theory

Although social cognitive theory defines identification with media characters differently (e.g., as perceived similarity and liking) than the definition being used here, propositions of social cognitive and social learning theory are important to consider in how different viewers will interpret a media text and subsequent outcomes. Social cognitive theory proposes that much of what people learn about proper and successful social interactions is based on observing the actions and consequences of others (Bandura, 2009). While not everyone will be arrested and sent to jail, many people know the basic protocol for getting arrested and having their rights read, having seen television shows such as *Cops*. Many forms of media, in fact, can inform readers and viewers about various social interactions and how best to navigate them.

The portrayals and consequences of sexual behavior on television are important because, as posited by social cognitive theory (e.g., Bandura, 2009), the reinforcement of certain kinds of behaviors may lead to modeling of behaviors by viewers. If a female viewer observes a character engaging in a sexual behavior that is rewarded, she may be more likely to model that behavior in the future. A viewer may be less likely to model a sexual behavior when a character suffers negative consequences or is not rewarded for the behavior. Adolescents and young adults may also adopt certain ideologies about their own sexuality by viewing characters experiencing positive or negative sexual consequences. If female characters are consistently chastised for their sexual behavior while male characters are rewarded, for example, young women viewers may begin to believe that they should be cautious in expressing their sexuality.

Social cognitive theory focuses on the behavioral outcomes influenced by media portrayals, recognizing how attitudes and emotions can mediate subsequent outcomes (Bandura, 2001). The theory considers contextual elements of a media portrayal, including characteristics of the models/characters in the portrayal. How viewers perceive a character will influence whether they model the character's behaviors. The more involved a viewer becomes (i.e., connects, identifies) with a character, the more likely he or she will be influenced by the actions and consequences of the character. Viewers observe the characters in a media portrayal and may see them as a guide for future behavior. Consequences experienced by the characters play a major role, such that characters who are punished for their actions are less likely to be modeled by viewers than characters who are rewarded. Such a result is termed social modeling. For social modeling to occur, four processes are necessary: (1) attention, (2) retention, (3) reproduction, and (4) motivation (Bandura, 1977).

A viewer must first pay attention to the message. Attention is influenced by the viewer's mental capacity to take in the information, their interest in the message, their prior knowledge and attitudes about elements of the story, salience of the message, and the attractiveness of the models/characters. The viewer must be willing to listen to and engage with the story. If a viewer finds out the story is about gay and lesbian rights and has a strong prejudice against gays and lesbians, he or she may refuse to attend to the message. The theory also proposes that the more attractive (physically and psychologically) the characters are, the more likely a viewer will attend to the story. The narrative quality and structure of a story is also important, such that a well-produced story should lead to greater transportation by viewers and thus greater cognitive attention (Green, Brock, & Kaufman, 2004).

Retention involves recalling the modeled behavior at a subsequent time. Prior beliefs about a behavior can influence how much information is retained. While watching a story where a character is punished for a certain behavior may influence an individual in the short term, other experiences and observations may override these learned behaviors. Research has also shown that individuals may forget where they learned a certain behavior and its resulting credibility, known as the "sleeper effect," which could bias whether they chose to model the behavior or not. Attractive characters could also aid in the retention process, such that the more attractive a character is to the individual, the more likely he or she will retain the learned behavior.

Reproduction includes the ability to envision or act out the behavior. Just because a teenage girl learned through observation that having unprotected sex is bad, if the girl does not have the ability to have protected sex because of extenuating circumstances (e.g., access to protection, knowledge about using protection), then she will not be able to model the

24

behavior. Reproduction thus leads into the final process, motivation, which is a key component, such that viewers need to believe that they have the ability to enact or avoid the behavior, including not only the ability to reproduce the behavior but confidence in the expected outcome.

Motivation to enact a learned behavior is influenced by perceived self-efficacy and outcome expectancies (Bandura, 2004). Viewers must first believe that they can exercise control over their own actions (i.e., self-efficacy). Watching others similar to themselves (i.e., demographics, personality, and/or situational similarities) perform the behavior also can help increase self-efficacy. Viewers must also believe that by performing the behavior, they will experience the outcomes expected. The learned behavior is thus likely to occur after a person pays attention to the message, witnesses the observed behavior and subsequent consequences, recalls it later, and believes that he or she has the ability and self-efficacy to enact the behavior. Returning to transportation and identification, it would make sense that both of these processes could help aid in all the processes of social modeling. Being transported into a text and identifying with a character requires full attention from viewers, such that they must use most of their cognitive abilities to become absorbed into the text and lose awareness of the outside world.

Viewers are also more likely to remember the behavior if they are actively involved in the text. Identifying with a particular character should thus also allow viewers to feel as though they have already performed the behavior through vicarious experience. Going through the story and taking on the perspective of a character should allow for a feeling of reproduction, more so than just viewing a character as similar. Such "production" of the behavior should then influence the viewer's motivation to enact the behavior in the future, as

25

self-efficacy to perform the behavior and confidence in what to expect as an outcome will be increased.

Social cognitive theory positions the viewer as a spectator, with viewers as themselves watching the character experience positive or negative reinforcement from a behavior. Identification, however, proposes that the viewer is not a spectator but actually transforms his or her self-concept into that of the character's. Despite these differences, the implications of social cognitive theory are perhaps more likely for viewers who become transported and identify with a character, such that he or she is essentially acting out the behavior alongside the character.

Manipulating identification

Based on the logic discussed, elements of spectatorship (i.e., perceived similarity, affinity for, etc.) can be influential in the absorption of a viewer into the text and to identify with a character, increasing attention, retention, and willingness and motivation to reproduce the behavior. A character that a viewer initially finds attractive and/or similar to him or herself, for example, may generate greater identification and eventual loss of self-awareness. Tal-Or and Cohen (2010) provided positive or negative information about a character and found that viewers who received the positive information identified with the character more than those who received negative information, perhaps a result of affinity for the character. The viewers were perhaps more able to identify with a likeable character, such that they were placed in an appropriate mindset to experience identification.

Prior knowledge and experience with elements of a story may also increase transportation into the story. Green (2004) found that in a story about a gay man attending his college fraternity reunion participants who had prior knowledge or experience with the

story's themes (i.e., had friends or family members who were gay and/or had knowledge about American fraternities) were more likely to be transported into the story than those who did not. While identification with the characters was not measured, based upon the propositions discussed thus far, it is likely that those with prior knowledge about gay men would have been more likely to report greater identification with the gay character as well. Identification has also been significantly correlated with perceived similarity (e.g., Moyer-Guse & Nabi, 2010). The identification process may therefore be aided by related experiences and personality similarities between the character and viewer.

Alternatively, Kaufman (2009) was able to manipulate identification with a fictional character by placing participants in a temporarily de-individuated state, such that participants whose self-concept accessibility was reduced were more likely to identify with the fictional character. Those in the de-individuation condition read a paragraph that told them their participation was to assess "the attitudes and perceptions of students in general" (p. 36) and that no personal identifying information would be gathered. Kaufman suggested that the reduction of participants' self-concept accessibility increased their ability to internalize the character's focal personality traits, because they were not actively thinking about their own self-concepts. Likewise, when participants' self-concept accessibility was increased, their level of identification with the character was reduced. Those who identified with the character more were also more likely to report similar personality traits (i.e., in this case, self-rated introversion) as the character.

It is therefore not clear whether increasing the perceived similarity between a character and the viewer or reducing the viewer's self-concept accessibility will be more likely to increase identification with a fictional character. It is likely that manipulation of

27

identification is dependent upon the valence of the information given about the character, as demonstrated by Tal-Or and Cohen (2010). Participants who view a character shown in a positive light, experiencing positive reinforcement from his or her actions, may be more likely to identify with the character if they perceive the character as similar to themselves, because they like the character and are pleased to be associated with him or her. However, a viewer's self-concept accessibility may need to be reduced to encourage identification with a character shown in a negative light. Those participants whose self-concept accessibility is reduced may be more likely to empathize with the character for experiencing a negative outcome than participants whose self-concept accessibility is not reduced.

Given that identification is an unconscious state and a loss of self-awareness, it may not occur if viewers are actively thinking about their own self-concept and perceived similarity to the character while viewing a story. Such information, however, given before story exposure may help put the viewer in the right mindset to more easily take on the identity of a given character. Different manipulations of identification were therefore tested to examining the effect of identification on viewers' sexual attitudes.

Hypotheses

This dissertation examined how exposure to and identification with the characters in televised counter sexual scripts that either reinforce or subvert the sexual double standard affects young adult female viewers' sexual self-concept and agreement with the sexual double standard. Participants each viewed one of the scripts and received an identification manipulation or not. A control group viewed a video without any sexual scripts and did not receive an identification manipulation. See Table 1 for the study design.

The scripts include a dominant heterosexual script, a stereotypical portrayal of gender inequality in which a female and male character engage in casual sex but have different expectations. The female character expresses the desire to begin a committed, monogamous relationship with the male character, but he wants only a sexual relationship and chastises her for wanting more. Two counter scripts portrayed gender equality between the characters and were designed to subvert the heterosexual script. The counter scripts portrayed the same characters from the dominant script engaged in casual sex but expressing equivalent expectations. In the "equal desire" counter script, the characters decide together to continue their casual sex relationship with no expectations of a committed, monogamous relationship. In the "equal love" counter script, the same characters decide together to enter into a committed, monogamous relationship.

An experiment was conducted with a 3 (script: dominant, equal desire, or equal love) X 2 (manipulation: identification or no identification), plus control group, between-subjects factorial design with pre- and post-exposure assessment. Participants completed an online pre-test questionnaire about one week before exposure to the sexual scripts to assess their baseline agreement with the sexual double standard and ratings of their sexual self-concept (i.e., sexual self-efficacy, sexual esteem, and sexual optimism). After exposure to their randomly-assigned video in the computer laboratory, participants completed an immediate post-test questionnaire.

Participants who watched a counter script were expected to endorse the sexual double standard less than participants who viewed the dominant script. The dominant script is a prime example of the sexual double standard, in which the male character only wants sex and the female character eventually wants a committed relationship. The counter scripts go

against the notion that men and women engage in different "rules" of sexual behavior, because both of the characters experience the relationship with the same expectations. Gender inequality is therefore less of an issue in the counter scripts. Exposure to these counter scripts was expected to decrease agreement with the culturally normative belief in the sexual double standard. It was proposed that participants who viewed the video without any sexual scripts (control group) would therefore neither increase nor decrease their agreement with the sexual double standard.

H1a: From pre- to post-exposure, participants who view the dominant script will significantly increase their agreement with the sexual double standard, while participants who view a counter script will significantly decrease their agreement with the sexual double standard.

It was hypothesized that exposure to a counter script would also strengthen the viewers' sexual self-concept, while exposure to the dominant script would weaken the viewers' sexual self-concept. The dominant script portrays a sexual scenario of gender inequality that most negatively impacts the female character. Exposure to this script may make viewers feel less confident about their sexual self-concept, after seeing another female experience a negative outcome from engaging in sex. Viewing a counter script that portrays gender equality and positive outcomes for the female character may instead increase their sexual confidence. It was proposed that participants who viewed the video without any sexual scripts (control group) would therefore neither strengthen nor weaken in their sexual self-concept.

H1b: From pre- to post-exposure, exposure to the dominant script will weaken the sexual self-concept of participants, while the sexual self-concept of participants who view a counter script will strengthen.

In assessing the relationship between identification with the two main characters and agreement with the sexual double standard, it was proposed that the more a participant identifies with at least one of the main characters in either script, the more she will report attitudes consistent with that portrayal (as indicated in H1a).

H2a: The more a participant identifies with at least one of the main characters, the more likely she will be to significantly increase or decrease (dependent upon the script viewed) in her agreement with the sexual double standard.

It was also proposed that the more a participant identifies with at least one of the main characters in either script, the more she will report a sexual self-concept consistent with that portrayal (as indicated in H1b).

H2b: The more a participant identifies with at least one of the main characters, the more likely her sexual self-concept will strengthen or weaken (dependent upon the script viewed).

Transportation into the story was also important to assess for its relationship with character identification. It was proposed that identification would not exist without transportation into the story; however, viewers may be transported into the story without strongly identifying with any one of the characters. Participants who report greater identification with at least one of the characters are therefore expected to report greater transportation than participants who report less identification.

H3: The more participants identify with at least one of the characters, the more they will be transported into the story.

Perceived realism was also important to assess for its relationship with character identification. It was thus proposed that the more viewers perceive the story as realistic, the more likely they will be to identify with the characters.

H4: The more participants perceive the story as realistic, the more they will identify with at least one of the characters.

Alternatively, as proposed earlier, transportation into the story may be necessary for identification with at least one of the characters to occur, but identification may not occur even if a participant is transported. A research question was therefore proposed to examine whether participants could be transported without identifying with at least one of the characters and whether it would lead to different levels of agreement with the sexual double standard and strengthening or weakening of the sexual self-concept.

RQ1: Will some participants be transported into the story without also identifying with at least one of the characters? And if so, how do these participants differ in their agreement with the sexual double standard and their sexual self-concept from participants who are: (1) both transported and identify with at least one of the characters, or (2) did not identify and are not transported at all?

Outcomes may also differ depending on which main character (male or female) a viewer identifies with more, given the different outcomes experienced by the male and female characters in the dominant script. In the dominant script, the female character experiences the negative outcome, not getting the committed relationship she wants and feeling humiliated for having different expectations than the male character. In the counter

32

scripts, both characters experience gender equality and have the same expectations. Agreement with the sexual double standard may therefore differ based upon with whom a viewer identifies more, although differences will likely be seen only among those who viewed the dominant script.

RQ2: Does agreement with the sexual double standard differ depending on which character viewers identify with more?

Previous sexual experience and relationship status was also important to consider in predicting how participants may interpret the different scripts. Participants who engaged in casual sex (as the characters in the stimulus do) and/or are in a committed relationship, for example, may interpret the scripts differently than participants who have not engaged in casual sex, have never engaged in sexual intercourse, and/or are not in a committed relationship. Those with direct, relevant experience may be better able to relate to the story.

Some previous studies find differences in message effects based on personal experience. Nabi and Clark (2008) exposed college-aged women to different portrayals of a female character engaging in casual sex (i.e., a "one-night stand") and found that young women who had not experienced a one-night stand before were more likely to intend to model the behavior in the future, regardless of consequence valence portrayed, than young women who had experienced a one-night stand.

Moyer-Guse and Nabi (2011) also found that direct experience with sexual intercourse moderated the effects of a television program about teen pregnancy on safe sex intentions and behaviors, such that those without direct experience reported greater safe sex intentions after viewing the entertainment education program than did those with direct experience. Results indicate that those without direct personal experience with the behaviors

33

portrayed may be more influenced by sexual portrayals than those with sexual experience, because those without experience are more likely to perceive the media portrayals as educational.

It is therefore important to assess past sexual experience and relationship status when considering message effects. Participants were assessed on whether they have ever engaged in sexual intercourse, ever engaged in casual sex, and whether they were currently in a committed relationship. Casual sex was defined as "sexual intercourse outside the context of a committed, monogamous relationship."

CHAPTER 3

PILOT STUDIES

The following is a summary of results from two pilot studies. The first pilot study tested possible stimulus materials for use as dominant or counter sexual scripts in the main study. The second pilot study confirmed that the chosen dominant and counter scripts were interpreted as intended and tested two identification manipulations.

Pilot study #1

An initial pilot study tested the proposed stimulus materials for proper interpretation as counter or dominant sexual scripts and to assess engagement with the stories (i.e., identification with the characters and transportation into the story). Four different portrayals (approximately 10-minutes long each) were tested for use as dominant or counter scripts in the final study. They were presented in a four treatment group between-subjects design. Each group viewed a different portrayal.

Stimulus materials

Each portrayal came from a reality television show popular among adolescents and young adults, edited to reflect either: (1) a recreational or relational attachment between the main female and male character after engaging in casual sex, from the point of the view of the female character, and (2) a positive or negative consequence experienced by the main female character.

To enhance internal validity, each portrayal included the same two characters that appeared across 24 episodes of the popular MTV network reality television show, *The Real*

World: Las Vegas, which aired originally in 2002. The show was chosen because it was unlikely that participants had seen the series recently, if at all, and was currently available only on DVD for purchase.

In the series, the two main characters, Trishelle and Steven, engage in casual sex (i.e., sex outside of a committed, monogamous relationship), then later attempt to engage in a committed relationship but soon return to engaging in a casual sex relationship. The female character also experiences a variety of emotional outcomes, both positive and negative, from the sexual relationship. The stimulus materials were edited to reflect four different portrayals with the same two characters. Trishelle and Steven are both white, physically-attractive young adults, ages 22 and 23, respectively. See Figure 1 for a screenshot of the characters.

The beginning of each portrayal was the same across conditions. Trishelle and Steven meet and soon after begin a casual sex relationship. They engage in sexual intercourse and other sexual acts without making a monogamous commitment to each other. At this point, the portrayals diverge. Those in the recreational-attachment condition view Trishelle expressing to the camera and to Steven that she does not expect a "real" relationship to form between them and plans to continue having casual sex with him. In the relational-attachment condition, however, Trishelle tells the camera and Steven that she cares for him as more than a friend and wants to start a "real" relationship with him.

In the recreational-attachment condition with a positive consequence, Trishelle expresses her happiness and comfort with the casual sex relationship to the camera and to Steven. In the relational attachment condition with a positive consequence, Steven tells Trishelle that he also cares for her and wants to begin dating seriously, which makes Trishelle visibly happy. In the recreational-attachment condition with a negative

36

consequence, Trishelles experience shame and embarrassment because some of her family members (i.e., sister and father) express disappointment in her for engaging in casual sex. In the relational attachment condition with a negative consequence, Steven tells Trishelle that he does not want to date her seriously and then also talks badly about her to others, which embarrasses Trishelle. See Table 2 for a table detailing these conditions.

Emotional rather than behavioral consequences were chosen for representation, because previous content analyses find that emotional outcomes of sexual behavior are more prevalent than behavioral outcomes on television (e.g., Aubrey, 2004; Eyal & Kinnerty, 2007).

Procedures

Four different undergraduate classrooms were randomly assigned to view one of the four portrayals at the beginning of one of their regularly-scheduled class sessions (with permission and assistance from the class instructor). After obtaining informed consent from all participants, each class watched their assigned portrayal on a large video screen positioned at the front of the classroom. Afterward, participants filled out a paper-and-pencil questionnaire with the relevant measures. All study procedures and measures were approved by UNC's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Analysis was conducted with the female participants only.

Participants

Participants included 99 female undergraduate students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, between the ages of 19 and 22 (M=20.32, SD=0.87). All participants identified as heterosexual, and the majority of participants identified as White/Caucasian (76.8%). Ten participants (10.1%) identified as Asian/Asian American, six (6.1%) as

Hispanic/Latino(a), six (6.1%) as Black/African American, and one chose not to identify her race/ethnicity. Forty-two percent said they were currently in a committed romantic relationship. Seventy-five percent reported that they had engaged in sexual intercourse before, and 45.5% of all participants had engaged in sex outside of a committed relationship. Almost half (46.9%) reported they had seen episodes from the season of *The Real World: Las Vegas* previously.

Manipulation check

The questionnaire included eight items as a manipulation check to determine whether recipients perceived the female character as engaging in a recreational or relational attachment (four items) and experiencing a positive or negative consequence (four items). Each of the manipulation statements were rated by participants on a 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* scale. The items were averaged together to create two scales.

For perceived attachment, the items included: (1) "Trishelle and Steven were very emotionally attached by the end of the show," (2) "Trishelle was not interested in having a committed relationship with Steven; she was only interested in having sex with him," (3) "Trishelle and Steven seemed like they were 'in love,'" and (4) "Trishelle and Steven were not connected emotionally to each other at all." Items 2 and 4 were reverse-coded. Ratings on the higher end of the scale indicated a perceived relational attachment.

For perceived consequence, the items included (1) "Trishelle was very disappointed by the end of the show," (2) "Trishelle appeared happy with her decision to have sex with Steven." (3) "Trishelle did not seem upset with her decisions by the end of the show," and (4) "Trishelle seemed to regret having sex with Steven by the end of the show." Items 2 and 3

were reverse-coded. Ratings on the higher end of the scale indicated a perceived negative consequence.

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to determine whether the clips were interpreted as intended. Participants in the negative-consequence conditions rated the consequence statements significantly greater (M=3.75, SD=.67) than did participants in the positive conditions (M=2.14, SD=.58), $t(97) = -12.34$, $p < .001$. Participants in the relational-attachment conditions rated the attachment statements significantly higher (M=3.07, SD=.61) than did participants in the recreational-attachment conditions (M=2.14, SD=.62), $t(97) = 6.97$, $p < .001$. It was concluded that the clips were interpreted as intended.

Measures

The post-test questionnaire included several measures to assess participants' degree of narrative processing, including transportation into the story, perceived similarity with Trishelle, and identification with Trishelle. Relevant demographic information was also gathered. (*Note:* Later pilot testing also examined identification with Steven.)

Transportation into the story was assessed with seven items adapted from Green and Brock's transportation scale (2000). Sample items included: "While I was watching the show, I could easily picture the events in it taking place," and "I was mentally involved in the show while watching it." Participants rated the statements on a 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* scale (α = .63).

Identification with Trishelle was measured using eight items suggested by Cohen (2001) and validated in other experiments (e.g., Moyer-Guse & Nabi, 2010). Sample items included: "I think I have a good understanding of Trishelle" and "When Trishelle succeeded I

39

felt joy, but when she failed, I was sad." Participants rated the statements on a 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* scale (α = .84).

Perceived similarity with Trishelle was measured using the attitude similarity subscale of the Perceived Homophily Measure (McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975). This scale uses four semantic differential items (e.g., "is similar to me," "is not similar to me") that range from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating greater perceived attitude similarity (α = .91).

The following *open-ended question* was also asked to examine additional interpretation of the clips: "What do you think about Trishelle and Steven?"

Demographic variables included age, ethnicity (recoded as white/other), ever engaged in "sexual intercourse" (yes/no), ever engaged in "sexual intercourse outside a committed relationship" (yes/no), currently in a committed romantic relationship (yes/no), and ever seen clips from this season of *The Real World: Las Vegas* (yes/no). Chi-square and one-way ANOVA analyses were conducted to determine whether any differences existed between conditions. Only age was significantly different for one group, $F(3, 94) = 28.62$, $p < .001$, and was therefore entered as a covariate in all analyses.

Results

A two-way MANCOVA was conducted to test the main effects of the attachment and consequence variables and the interaction between the two (attachment x consequence). Age was entered as a covariate. The dependent variables were identification with Trishelle, transportation into the story, and perceived similarity with Trishelle.

Identification with Trishelle was significantly predicted by the consequence variable, $F(1, 92) = 6.42$, $p < .05$. Post-hoc analysis revealed that participants who viewed Trishelle

experience disappointment or being chastised were significantly more likely to identity with Trishelle (M=3.17, SE=1.00) than were participants who viewed a positive outcome (M=2.79, SE=.12).

The sexual experience (i.e., ever had sex, ever had casual sex) and relationships status (i.e., in a committed relationship or not) variables were then entered individually into the model to test for main effects and interactions with the consequence and attachment condition variables. Ever had sex was a significant predictor of identification, $F(1, 89) = 7.18$, $p < .01$, and perceived similarity, $F(1, 89) = 9.94$, $p < .01$, with Trishelle, across all groups. Participants who had had sex were significantly more likely to identify with Trishelle (M=3.10, SE=.08) and perceive her as similar (M=3.30, SE=.20) than participants who had not had sex (identification: M=2.63, SE=.15; similarity: M=2.01, SE=.38), regardless of the portrayal viewed.

Ever had casual sex was also a significant predictor across all groups for identification, $F(1, 89) = 5.40$, $p < .05$, and perceived similarity, $F(1, 89) = 10.49$, $p < .01$, with Trishelle. Participants who had engaged in casual sex were significantly more likely to identify with Trishelle (M=3.16, SE=.11) and perceive her as similar (M=3.64, SE=.26) than participants who had not engaged in casual sex (identification M=2.84, SE=.09; similarity: M=2.54, SE=.24). A significant interaction was also found between casual sex experience and the attachment conditions for identification with Trishelle, $F(1, 89) = 4.42$, $p < .05$. Post-hoc analysis revealed that among participants who viewed a recreational attachment, and those who had engaged in casual sex were more likely to identify with Trishelle (M=3.34, SE=.18) than participants who had not engaged in casual sex (M=2.74, SE=.16), $F(1, 89) = 7.06$, $p < .01$.

A significant interaction was also found for relationship status and attachment condition for perceived similarity with Trishelle, $F(1, 89) = 5.33$, $p < .05$. Post-hoc analysis revealed that among participants who viewed a recreational attachment, $F(1, 89) = 6.58$, $p < .05$, those not currently in a committed relationship were more likely to perceive Trishelle as similar ($M=3.89$, $SE=.45$) than were participants in a committed relationship ($M=2.35$, $SE=.43$).

The open-ended question asking "What do you think about Trishelle and Steven?" was then examined for patterns by portrayal viewed. Most of the comments could be seen as perceptions of realism and outcome expectations. Mentions of different "rules" of sexual behavior for men and women (i.e., the sexual double standard) were also frequent. Participants who watched the negative consequence-relational attachment portrayal, for example, made such comments as: "I think that the situation that Trishelle and Steven are in is similar to a majority of 'relationships' today: guy is in it for the sex and the girl isn't," and "It was so sad watching that all play out. He was the stereotypical guy wanting sex and she wanted more out of it."

In contrast, participants who watched the positive consequence-recreational attachment portrayal commented: "I think that's her prerogative and as long as she's being safe and lays out where she stands with Steven there's nothing wrong with what she's doing," and "Similar to most people in early 20's wanting to hook up." Those who watched Trishelle experience a negative consequence for engaging in the sexual double standard made comments about her naiveté for engaging in such a relationship, while those who watched Trishelle engage in a positive, non-committed casual sex relationship were more accepting of her decisions.

Conclusions

All four portrayals were interpreted as intended, with corroboration found in responses to the open-ended question. Based on these comments, it appeared that participants interpreted the clips as either common or uncommon sexual scripts (i.e., dominant or counter), especially for the negative consequence-relational attachment and positive consequence-recreational attachment portrayals. The participants noted the likelihood and frequency of some of the storylines in "real life," such that the negative consequence-relational attachment portrayal was particularly realistic, with the female character wanting a committed relationship after engaging in sex and the male character not wanting one. The negative-relational and positive-recreational portrayals revealed the most comments consistent with the sexual double standard and heterosexual script. These two portrayals were therefore used as a dominant script and one of the counter scripts ("equal desire") in the main study. A second counter script -- positive-relational or "equal love" -- was added after the initial pilot study so two counter scripts could be tested against the dominant script. .

All participants were equally transported across conditions. Participants who viewed a negative portrayal, however, were more likely to identify with Trishelle than were participants who viewed a positive portrayal. It is possible that participants identified more with Trishelle in the negative portrayals because, as seen in the qualitative comments, this kind of portrayal is considered more common and likely to happen in "real life." Such portrayals are often found in entertainment television popular with young female viewers (Aubrey, 2004). The participants were thus arguably more capable of seeing the story from Trishelle's perspective when she experienced a negative consequence from her sexual behavior.

43

The impact of the sexual experience and relationship status variables also indicated that personal experience with the story's portrayals may lead to greater engagement with the characters, which could result in different interpretation of the scripts and message effects. Sexual experience and relationship status were therefore included in all subsequent analyses.

Pilot study #2

The second pilot study tested two identification manipulations and further assessed the perceived realism of the scripts (i.e., dominant heterosexual or equal desire counter). Identification with both characters, Trishelle and Steven, was also measured. Participants in the second pilot test viewed either the dominant or equal desire script (as chosen from the first pilot study) and received one of two identification manipulations (i.e., self-concept accessibility or perceived similarity) or no manipulation.

Procedures

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the six conditions. After obtaining informed consent upon the participant's arrival to the computer lab, each participant was asked to sit at a computer and follow the instructions pre-programmed on the screen. Participants were either given instructions with an identification manipulation included or a generic introduction to the study. All participants then viewed the randomly-assigned script on their computers using headphones. After viewing the script, participants filled out an online questionnaire with the study's measures. All study procedures and measures were approved by UNC's Institutional Review Board (IRB). See Table 3 for the study design.

Participants

Participants included 108 female undergraduate students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, between the ages of 18 and 22 ($M =20.51$, $SD=0.89$). The majority of participants identified as White/Caucasian (76.9%). Thirteen percent identified as Black/African American, 4.6% as Multiracial or other, 3.7% as Asian/Asian American, and 1.9% as Hispanic/Latino(a). Thirty-eight percent indicated they were currently in a committed romantic relationship. Seventy percent had engaged in sexual intercourse, and 44.4% of all participants had engaged in casual sex (i.e., sex outside of a committed relationship). Almost forty percent (39.8%) indicated they had seen episodes from *The Real World: Las Vegas* previously.

Sexual orientation was also assessed. Two participants who identified their preferred partner as same sex were removed from the analysis, as they did not make up enough of the sample to allow for control of sexual orientation (leaving the total $N = 108$).

Identification manipulations

Identification with characters has previously been manipulated by self-concept accessibility (i.e., putting the participant in a state of de-individuation) or increasing the participant's perception of his or her similarity with one or more of the characters in the story (i.e., telling the participant he or she is similar to the characters), as discussed in Chapter 2. Thus, two identification manipulations were tested to determine whether identification could be enhanced (or reduced).

The first was Kaufman's (2009) strategy of placing participants in a temporarily de-individualized state and thus reducing the participant's self-concept accessibility. As

performed by Kaufman, participants who received the accessibility manipulation read the following paragraph before they viewed their script:

> For this study we are **_not interested_** in you as an individual member of the college population. We are running this study in order to assess the attitudes and perceptions of people your age in general. For the purposes of today's study **_you represent an average young adult_** no matter what your background or major is. Your responses will be grouped together with others in this study and **_will not be evaluated individually_**.

The second manipulation, the similarity manipulation, attempted to increase the perception that the main characters in the videos were similar to the participant. Those in the similarity manipulation group received the following instructions before watching their script:

> You are about to watch a 10-minute clip from a popular television show. We have a database of more than 50 shows and want to match you with the one that includes characters **most similar to you**. Please take the following quick personality test so that we may identify which program is best suited for you.

These participants were then given a short personality test of random questions and told that the following video clip was chosen specifically for them based upon their answers: "Based upon your answers to the personality test, we have identified the clip that is best suited for you as including characters **most similar to you**."

After each set of instructions, participants then viewed their randomly-assigned script and immediately answered the post-test questionnaire. Two groups did not receive any identification manipulation but watched either one of the scripts.

Measures

The post-test questionnaire included measures to assess participants' degree of identification and perceived similarity with the main female and male characters (i.e., Trishelle and Steven), their perceived realism of the story, and relevant demographic information. (*Note:* Likert scales were changed from a 1-5 scale to a 1-6 scale to keep participants from relying on the midpoint, forcing them to make a decision in either direction.)

Perceived similarity with Trishelle and *Steven* was measured with two separate scales of the attitude similarity subscale of the Perceived Homophily Measure (McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975). This scale uses four semantic differential items (e.g., "is similar to me," "is not similar to me") that range from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating greater perceived attitude similarity (Trishelle: $\alpha = .87$; Steven: $\alpha = .86$).

Identification with Trishelle and *Steven* was measured with two separate scales of eight items suggested by Cohen (2001) and validated in other experiments (e.g., Moyer-Guse & Nabi, 2010). Sample items included: "I think I have a good understanding of Trishelle" and "When Steven succeeded I felt joy, but when he failed, I was sad." Participants rated the statements on a 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree* scale (Trishelle: $\alpha = .90$; Steven: $\alpha = .80$).

Perceived realism of the story was assessed with eight items adapted from Elliott, Rudd, & Good (1983) and Green (2004). Sample items included: "The dialogue in the show was realistic and believable" and "People in this show are like people you or I might actually know." Participants rated the statements on a 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree* scale ($\alpha = .84$).

47

Demographic variables included age, ethnicity (recoded as white/other), ever engaged in "sexual intercourse" (yes/no), ever engaged in "sexual intercourse outside a committed relationship" (yes/no), currently in a committed romantic relationship (yes/no), and ever seen episodes from *The Real World: Las Vegas* previously (yes/no). Chi-square and ANOVA analyses were conducted to determine whether any differences existed between conditions by these variables. No significant differences between the groups were found for any of the demographic variables.

Results

Bivariate correlations were conducted for all five of the narrative processing variables. All variables were significantly correlated at the .05 significance level, except for perceived similarity with Steven and perceived realism, which was only marginally significant, $p=.06$. See Table 4 for all correlations.

Perceived similarity. Two-way MANOVAs were conducted to test the main effects of the scripts viewed and manipulation and the interaction between the two (script x manipulation) on perceived similarity with Trishelle and Steven. The accessibility and similarity manipulations were examined separately against the no-manipulation conditions.

No significant main effects or interactions were found for the accessibility manipulation on perceived similarity with either character. No significant main effects or interactions were found for the similarity manipulation on perceived similarity with Steven.

A significant interaction was found between the script and similarity manipulation conditions, $F(2, 74) = 4.34$, $p < .05$, for perceived similarity with Trishelle. Post-hoc analysis revealed that among those in the no-manipulation group, participants reported being less similar than Trishelle when they viewed the dominant script ($M=2.91$, $SE=.33$) than when

48

they viewed the equal desire script (M=3.51, SE=.31). The reverse occurred among participants who received the similarity manipulation, such that these participants reported being more similar to Trishelle when they viewed the dominant script (M=3.59, SE=.36) than those who viewed the equal desire script (M=2.77, SE=.36). See Figure 2 for a graphic representation of these results.

Identification. Two-way MANOVAs were conducted to test the main effects of the scripts viewed and manipulation and the interaction between the two (script x manipulation) on identification with Trishelle and Steven. The accessibility and similarity manipulations were examined separately against the no-manipulation group.

No significant main effects or interactions were found for the accessibility manipulation on identification with either character. No significant main effects or interactions were found for the similarity manipulation on identification with Steven.

For the similarity manipulation, a significant main effect of the script viewed, $F(1, 75) = 5.07$, $p < .05$, and interaction between script and manipulation conditions, $F(1, 75) = 4.32$, $p < .05$, were found for identification with Trishelle. Post-hoc analysis revealed that, regardless of whether the participants received a manipulation, participants were more likely to identify with Trishelle in the dominant script (M=3.83, SE=.14) than in the equal desire script (M=3.39, SE=.14).

Among participants who received the similarity manipulation, those who viewed the dominant script were significantly more likely to identify with Trishelle (M=3.98, SE=.21) than participants who viewed the equal desire script (M=3.12, SE=.21), $F(1, 76) = 8.07$, $p < .01$. When compared against those who did not receive a manipulation, a marginal significance, $F(1, 76) = 6.57$, $p = .06$, was found between those who viewed the Equal desire

script, such that among these participants, those who received the similarity manipulation were significantly less likely to identify with Trishelle (M=3.12, SE=.21) than those who did not receive a manipulation (M=3.65, SE=.18). See Figure 3 for a graphic representation of these results.

A two-way ANCOVA was then conducted with identification with Trishelle as the dependent variable and perceived similarity with Trishelle as a covariate. The script and similarity manipulation conditions and the interaction between the two (script x manipulation) were entered as fixed factors. Perceived similarity was a significant predictor of identification with Trishelle, $F(1, 73) = 59.30$, $p < .001$. The script variable also remained a significant predictor, $F(1, 73) = 7.22$, $p < .01$, such that participants identified more with Trishelle in the dominant script (M=3.78, SE=.10) than in the equal desire script (M=3.41, SE=.10), but the interaction was no longer significant.

Perceived realism. An independent samples t-test was then conducted for perceived realism based upon the script viewed. Participants who viewed the Dominant script were significantly more likely to rate it as realistic (M=4.07, SD=.75) than participants who viewed the Equal desire script (M=3.70, SD=.80), $t(106) = 2.53$, $p < .05$.

An additional two-way ANCOVA was then conducted with perceived realism as a covariate, identification Trishelle as the dependent variable, and the script and similarity manipulation conditions entered as fixed factors. Perceived realism was a significant predictor of identification with Trishelle, $F(1, 73) = 17.36$, $p < .001$. The main effect of script viewed was no longer significant, but the interaction between the fixed factors was significant, $F(1, 73) = 6.00$, $p < .05$. Participants who view the dominant script and received the similarity manipulation identified more with Trishelle (M=3.93, SD=.19) than

50

participants who did not receive a manipulation (*M*=3.46, *SD*=.18), whereas participants who viewed the equal desire script identified more with Trishelle when they did not receive the similarity manipulation (*M*=3.75, *SD*=.17) compared to those who did (*M*=3.33, *SD*=.20) See Figure 4 for a graphic representation of these results.

Conclusions

The accessibility manipulation was not successful in inducing or reducing perceived similarity or identification with either character. The similarity manipulation, however, did reveal some success in inducing and reducing perceived similarity with the female character. The similarity manipulation appeared to reduce identification with the female character for those who viewed the equal desire script and increase identification with the female character for those who viewed the dominant script, when controlling for perceived realism. The similarity manipulation may therefore influence identification with the main female character but only when perceived realism is also considered, especially given how much participants perceived the dominant script as more realistic.

Participants did not show any differences in perceived similarity or identification with the male character between groups. The manipulated reactions to Trishelle, however, suggest that young adult females are more likely to see the story from the female character's perspective than from the male character.

Based on the results of this pilot study, the similarity manipulation was used in the main study and focused exclusively on the female character, Trishelle. In the main study, after participants complete the short personality test, they received the following instructions: "Based upon your answers to the personality test, we have identified the clip that is best suited for you as including a character that is **most similar to you** named Trishelle. You will

51

now watch a video about Trishelle." Identification with Steven was also assessed as a

potential predictor.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS FOR MAIN STUDY

The main study examined how exposure to counter sexual scripts (i.e., reinforcing or subverting the sexual double standard) and identification with the characters may affect young adult female viewers' sexual self concepts and agreement with the sexual double standard. An experiment with a 3 (script: dominant heterosexual script, equal desire counter script, or equal Love counter script) X 2 (manipulation: character identification or no identification), plus control group, between-subjects factorial design with pre- and post-test was conducted. Participants completed an online pre-test questionnaire about one week before exposure to the sexual scripts. After exposure to a randomly-assigned sexual script (i.e., with portrayals that either reinforce or subvert the sexual double standard) in the computer laboratory, participants completed an immediate post-test questionnaire. The control group viewed a video clip that did not include any sexual portrayals (i.e., an *MTV* documentary about stuttering). Each clip was approximately 10 minutes long. Participants were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions or a control group, with an average of 23 participants per condition (range of 18 to 30).

Participants

Participants included 162 female undergraduate students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, between the ages of 18 and 23 (M =20.41, SD=1.00). The majority of participants identified as White/Caucasian (N=129, 79.6%), while the other 20.4%

identified as Black/African American (*N*=13, 8.0%), of mixed race/ethnicity (*N*=9, 5.6%),

Asian/Asian American (*N*=8, 4.9%), or Hispanic/Latino(a) (*N*=3, 1.9%).

Almost half of all participants (46.3%) indicated they were currently in a committed

relationship. The majority of participants (74.7%) said they had engaged in sexual

intercourse, and almost half of all participants (49.4%) said they had engaged in casual sex

(i.e., sex outside of a committed, monogamous relationship). When asked what gender is

their preferred sexual partner, all but seven participants (95.7%) said it was "always male."

The other participants (4.3%) indicated their preferred sexual partner was "usually male, but

sometimes female." Fifty-five participants (38.7% of participants in an experimental

condition) indicated that they had seen episodes from *The Real World: Las Vegas* previously.

Procedures

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the six experimental conditions or a

control group. Each participant consented to participating in the study and then completed an

online pre-test questionnaire, assessing their agreement with the sexual double standard and

rating of their sexual self-concept, approximately one week before exposure to the stimulus.

Each participant then came to the computer laboratory to view their randomly-assigned script

and complete an immediate post-test questionnaire.

In both the pre- and post-test questionnaires, participants were asked for the last four

digits of their cell phone number (or phone number most often used) and last four digits of

their student identification number assigned to them by the university. These numbers were

used to match up responses from the pre- and post-test questionnaires.

In the lab, each participant was asked to sit at a computer and follow the instructions

pre-programmed onto the screen. Each participant was instructed to click on a link that

brought them to a screen with an introduction to the study. If they were not in one of the manipulation conditions, they would immediately proceed to watching the randomly-assigned video. If in an identification manipulation condition, the participant would receive the manipulation instructions before proceeding. All participants viewed their randomly-assigned video on individual computer screens using headphones.

After viewing the video clip, participants completed the online post-test questionnaire with all the study's measures. All study procedures and measures were approved by UNC's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Identification manipulation

The similarity manipulation tested in the second pilot study was used in the main study. The manipulation was designed to increase the perception that the main female character in the video, Trishelle, was similar to the participant and therefore increase (or decrease) identification with the character. Those in the identification manipulation group received the following instructions before watching their randomly-assigned video:

> *You are about to watch a 10-minute clip from a popular television show. We have a database of more than 50 shows and want to match you with the one that includes characters **most similar to you**. Please take the following quick personality test so that we may identify which program is best suited for you.*

These participants were then given a short personality test of random questions and told that the following video clip was chosen specifically for them based upon their answers: "Based upon your answers to the personality test, we have identified the clip that is best suited for you as including a character that is **most similar to you** named Trishelle. You will now watch a video about Trishelle."

After each set of instructions, participants then viewed their randomly-assigned video and completed an immediate post-test questionnaire. The control group and participants in the no-manipulation conditions did not receive the manipulation instructions and were immediately instructed to watch their video. All videos were embedded within the online post-test questionnaire.

Stimulus materials

As described in the first pilot test, one clip was chosen to represent a dominant heterosexual script (i.e., a stereotypical sexual portrayal found in entertainment television that reinforces the sexual double standard), and two clips represented counter sexual scripts (i.e., less-commonly-found sexual portrayals in entertainment television that do not reinforce the sexual double standard, titled "equal desire" and "equal love"). In the dominant script, after engaging in casual sex, Trishelle tells the camera and Steven that she cares for him as more than a friend and wants to start a "real" relationship with him. Steven tells Trishelle that he does not want to date her seriously and then also talks badly about her to others, saying such things as "where did just hooking up go wrong?"

In the equal desire script, Trishelle and Steven individually tell the camera that they do not expect a "real" relationship to form between them and plan to continue having casual sex with each other. Both Trishelle and Steven also express to each other their happiness and comfort with the casual sex relationship and promise to communicate with each other if anything changes. In the equal love script, Trishelle and Steven express to each other that they both have significant feelings for each other and wish to enter into a committed, monogamous relationship instead of just engaging in casual sex.

56

Measures

Main outcome variables

The pre-test and post-test questionnaires included measures assessing the participants' agreement with the sexual double standard and their sexual self-concept before and after exposure to their randomly-assigned video. See Table 5 for descriptive statistics of the pre- and post-test scores of the main outcome variables by condition.

Agreement with the sexual double standard was assessed using all 26 items of the Sexual Double Standard Scale, created and validated by Muehlenhard & Quackenbush, 2011. Sample items include "It's worse for a woman to sleep around than it is for a man" and "A man should be more sexually experienced than his wife." Participants rated each statement on a 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree* scale (pre-test: $\alpha = .76$; post-test: $\alpha = .74$). Scores can range from -30 (indicating no agreement with the sexual double standard to +30 (indicating total agreement with the sexual double standard). Muehlenhard and Quackenbush (2011) reported that higher scores on the sexual double standard were associated with more traditional gender role attitudes (Muehlenhard & McCoy, 1991) and more conservative sexual attitudes (Boone & Lefkowitz, 2004).

Sexual self-concept. Three subscales most relevant to the scripts in this study were chosen from the Multidimensional Sexual Self-Concept Questionnaire (Snell, 1998) to assess sexual self-concept: (1) *sexual self-efficacy*, defined as the belief that one has the ability to deal effectively with the sexual aspects of oneself (pre-test: $\alpha = .89$; post-test: $\alpha = .91$), (2) *sexual esteem*, defined as a generalized tendency to positively evaluate one's own capacity to engage in healthy sexual behaviors and to experience one's sexuality in a satisfying and enjoyable way (pre-test: $\alpha = .89$; post-test: $\alpha = .92$), and (3) *sexual optimism*, defined as the

expectation that the sexual aspects of one's life will be positive and rewarding in the future (pre-test: α = .70; post-test: α = .77). Each subscale included five statements each, and participants rated each statement on a 1= *not at all characteristic of me* to 5 = *very characteristic of me* scale.

Narrative processing variables

The post-test questionnaire also included relevant narrative processing variables, including transportation into the story, identification with Trishelle and Steven, perceived similarity with Trishelle and Steven, and perceived realism of the story.

Transportation into the story was assessed with seven items adapted from Green and Brock's transportation scale (2000). Sample items included: "While I was watching the show, I could easily picture the events in it taking place," and "I was mentally involved in the show while watching it." Participants rated the statements on a 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* scale (α = .79).

Perceived similarity with Trishelle and Steven was measured with two separate scales of the attitude similarity subscale of the Perceived Homophily Measure (McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975). This scale uses four semantic differential items (e.g., is similar to me, is not similar to me) that range from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating greater perceived attitude similarity (Trishelle: α = .87; Steven: α = .79).

Identification with Trishelle and Steven was measured with two separate scales of eight items suggested by Cohen (2001) and validated in other experiments (e.g., Moyer-Guse & Nabi, 2010). Sample items included: "I think I have a good understanding of Trishelle" and "When Steven succeeded I felt joy, but when he failed, I was sad." Participants rated the

statements on a 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree* scale (Trishelle: α = .90; Steven: α = .84).

Perceived realism of the story was assessed with nine items adapted from Elliott, Rudd, & Good (1983) and Green (2004). Sample items included: "The dialogue in the show was realistic and believable" and "People in this show are like people you or I might actually know." Participants rated the statements on a 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree* scale (α = .77).

Demographics

Demographic variables included age, ethnicity (recoded as white/other), ever engaged in "sexual intercourse" (yes/no), ever engaged in casual sex (i.e., sexual intercourse outside a committed relationship) (yes/no), currently in a committed romantic relationship (yes/no), and ever seen clips from *The Real World: Las Vegas* before today (yes/no).

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Manipulation check

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to determine whether the identification manipulation was successful in increasing or decreasing identification with Trishelle across all script conditions. Tests revealed no significant difference for identification with Trishelle by whether participants received the manipulation or not. A two-way ANOVA for identification with Trishelle was then conducted with perceived realism as a covariate, but the main effects and interactions were not significant.

The relationship of perceived similarity with Trishelle on identification with Trishelle was then tested using a hierarchical liner regression analysis, with identification with Trishelle as the dependent variable. Casual sex experience, relationship status, ethnicity, age, and previous exposure to the show were entered as control variables in the first block. Perceived similarity with Trishelle was then entered in the second block. The final model was significant, $R^2=.48$, $F(6, 135)=20.52$, $p < .001$. Adding perceived similarity significantly increased the model's variance from 12.0% to 47.7%, $F(1, 135)=92.18$, $p < .001$. Perceived similarity was a predictor of identification with Trishelle, $\beta=.36$, $p < .001$.

The relationship of perceived similarity with Steven on identification with Steven was then tested using hierarchical linear regression analysis, using identification with Steven as the dependent variable and perceived similarity and the control variables as independent variables. The final model was significant, $R^2=.15$, $F(6, 135)=4.09$, $p < .01$. Adding

perceived similarity also significantly increased the variance from 10.1% to 15.4%, $F(1, 135)=8.44$ $p < .01$. Perceived similarity with Steven was a significant predictor of identification with Steven, $\beta=.13$, $p < .01$.

These results indicate that while the intended manipulation was unsuccessful, increasing perceived similarity with a character may increase identification with that character, if manipulated correctly. The relationship between perceived similarity and identification for Steven, however, was not as powerful as the relationship between perceived similarity and identification with Trishelle. In light of the unsuccessful manipulation of identification, the manipulation and no-manipulation groups were hereafter collapsed into three sexual script groups.

Equivalence across groups

All four groups (i.e., three sexual scripts and one control group) were examined for equivalence across conditions for all control variables using chi-square and one-way ANOVA analyses. A chi-square test revealed a significant difference between the groups for casual sex experience, X^2 $(3, N=162) = 8.56$, $p < .05$, with slightly more participants who have not had casual sex in the control group than in the experimental groups. Casual sex experience was therefore entered into all relevant subsequent analyses when comparing results against the control group. All other demographic variables were equally represented across the groups.

Narrative processing by script viewed

All narrative processing variables were examined for differences by script group as dependent variables in a MANOVA analysis. Relationship status, casual sex experience, and previous exposure to the show variables were also included as control variables. See Tables

6, 7, and 8 for descriptive statistics and significant differences between the variables by script viewed.

Sexual and casual sex experience and relationship status were significant predictors for many of the narrative processing variables but differences within each script group found that differences were primarily found among viewers of the equal desire script. These variables were therefore assessed in the subsequent analyses as potential influences on how participants experienced the scripts. Previous exposure to the show was also entered as a control variable in analyses when examining experimental participants only, as the question was not asked of the control group.

Hypothesis testing

Each hypothesis was tested using ANOVA, MANOVA, or hierarchical linear regression analyses. When testing the impact of the script viewed on the relevant outcome variables, the control variables (i.e., sexual experience, casual sex experience, and relationship status), script group variable (i.e., all four groups: three experimental, one control), and interactions between the script variable and control variables were entered into the models. The sexual and casual sex experience variables were entered into the models separately to avoid multicollineraity between the variables. Change scores were also created by subtracting the pre-test score from the post-test score to interpret post-hoc results. Specific tests used and any divergence from this analysis strategy was noted.

Hypothesis 1a. H1a predicted that participants who viewed the dominant heterosexual script would increase in their agreement with the sexual double standard after exposure, and participants who viewed one of the counter scripts would decrease in agreement after exposure. Repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted with the relevant

62

between-subjects factors. The models did not show a significant main effect of script group or any significant interactions on the change from pre- to post-exposure for agreement with the sexual double standard when compared against the control group.

Previous exposure to the show was then entered into the models as a control variable to investigate differences between the experimental groups. The interaction between script group and relationship status was significant in the model controlling for casual sex experience, $F(2, 132) = 3.34$, $p > .05$. Post-hoc analysis revealed that for participants who viewed the dominant heterosexual script, participants in a committed relationship significantly increased in their agreement with the sexual double standard ($M=3.03$, $SE=1.18$) compared to participants not in a committed relationship ($M=-1.43$, $SE=1.04$), $F(1, 132) =$ 8.21, $p > .01$. Participants not in a committed relationship who viewed the equal desire counter script significantly increased in their agreement with the sexual double standard ($M=2.37$, $SE=.94$), compared to participants also not a relationship who viewed the dominant heterosexual script, $F(2, 132) = 3.71$, $p > .05$.

H1a was thus not supported as proposed, but participants in a relationship who viewed the dominant heterosexual script and participants not in a relationship who viewed the equal desire counter script significantly increased in their agreement with the sexual double standard. Participants not in a relationship who viewed the dominant heterosexual script slightly decreased in their agreement with the sexual double standard.

Hypothesis 1b. H1b predicted that the sexual self-concept of viewers would be strengthened after viewing one of the counter scripts and weakened after viewing the dominant script. Repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted for each sexual self-concept subscale. The models did not reveal a significant main effect of the script group or

63

interactions with the control variables on the change from pre- to post-exposure for sexual esteem.

A significant main effect of script group was found for sexual optimism in the model, controlling for casual sex experience, $F(3, 150) = 5.14$, $p > .05$. The change score for sexual optimism was then entered into an ANOVA analysis. Post-hoc analysis of the significant main effect of script group on sexual optimism revealed significant differences between participants who viewed the equal desire script and all other groups. Participants who viewed the equal desire script significantly increased in sexual optimism ($M=.30$, $SE=.08$), compared with all other groups which remained unchanged (control group: $M=-.03$, $SE=.14$; equal love script: $M=.04$, $SE=.07$; dominant script: $M=-.02$, $SE=.09$).

The interaction between script group and casual sex experience was significant for sexual self-efficacy, $F(3, 149) = 2.82$, $p > .05$. Post-hoc analysis revealed that among participants who had engaged in casual sex, those who viewed the equal desire counter script significantly increased in sexual self-efficacy ($M=.57$, $SE=.12$) compared with participants who had not engaged in casual sex and viewed the equal desire counter script ($M=.04$, $SE=.10$) and participants who had engaged in casual sex from all other groups (control group: $M=.01$, $SE=.24$; equal love script: $M=.14$, $SE=.09$; dominant script: $M=-.11$, $SE=.11$).

Previous exposure to the show was then entered into the models as a control variable to investigate additional differences between the experimental groups. The interaction between sexual experience and script group was significant for change in sexual esteem, $F(1, 132) = 4.34$, $p < .05$. Post-hoc analysis revealed significant differences among participants who had engaged in sex, $F(2, 132) = 3.93$, $p < .05$, and among participants who viewed the dominant script, $F(1, 132) = 5.03$, $p < .05$. Among participants who had engaged in sex,

those who viewed the equal desire script increased in their sexual esteem ($M=.29$, $SE=.10$) compared to those who viewed the dominant script ($M=-.10$, $SE=.10$). Among participants who viewed the dominant script, participants who had not engaged in sex increased in their sexual esteem ($M=.40$, $SE=.20$) as compared to participants who had engaged in sex.

Hypothesis 1b was therefore partially supported. Exposure to the equal desire script strengthened viewers' sexual optimism, the sexual self-efficacy of participants who had engaged in casual sex and the sexual esteem of participants who had engaged in sex.

Hypothesis 2a. H2a proposed that the more a participant identifies with at least one of the main characters, the more she will increase in her agreement with the sexual double standard after exposure to the dominant script and decrease in her agreement after exposure to one of the counter scripts.

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted with the sexual double standard change score as the dependent variable. The relevant control variables (i.e., sexual or casual sex experience, relationship status, and previous exposure to the show) were entered into the first block, identification with Trishelle was entered into the second block, and identification with Steven was entered into the third. The model with identification with Trishelle and the model with both identification variables were tested with (1) all participants who viewed a sexual script and (2) by individual sexual script viewed.

All experimental participants. The models with identification with Trishelle were not found significant. The models with both identification variables was also not found significant but did reveal identification with Steven (with sexual experience: $\beta = 1.89$, $p < .05$; with casual sex experience: $\beta = 1.90$, $p < .05$) and identification with Trishelle (with sexual experience: $\beta = -1.40$, $p < .05$; with casual sex experience: $\beta = -1.38$, $p < .05$) as

significant predictors of change in the agreement with the sexual double standard. Adding

identification with Steven increased the variance of the models significantly, from 3.5% to

7.5%, for both models with sexual or casual sex experience, $F(1, 136) = 5.78, p > .05$. The

more a participant identified with Steven, the more she increased in her agreement with the

sexual double standard after viewing a sexual script, while the more a participant identified

with Trishelle, the more she decreased in her agreement.

Equal love script. All models for those who viewed the equal love script were not

statistically significant. Neither of the identification variables were significant predictors of

the change in agreement with the sexual double standard.

Equal desire script. The models were not significant for those who viewed the equal

desire script, but identification with Steven was a significant predictor (with sexual

experience: $\beta = 4.15, p < .05$; with casual sex experience: $\beta = 3.98, p < .05$). Adding

identification with Steven significantly increased the variance of the model with sexual

experience from 4.0% to 13.7%, $F(1, 41) = 4.62, p > .05$, and the model with casual sex

experience from 2.2% to 12.4%, $F(1, 41) = 4.79, p > .05$. The more a participant identified

with Steven in the equal desire script, the more she increased in her agreement with the

sexual double standard.

Dominant script. The models with both identification variables were significant (with

sexual experience: $R^2=.37$, $F(5, 32)=3.83, p < .01$; with casual sex experience: $R^2=.36$, $F(5,$

$32)=3.65, p < .05$) for participants who viewed the dominant script. Identification with

Steven was a significant predictor (with sexual experience: $\beta = 3.19, p < .05$; with casual sex

experience: $\beta = 3.25, p < .05$). Adding identification with Steven significantly increased the

variance from 23.2% to 37.4% for the model with sexual experience, $F(1, 32) = 7.27, p > .05$,

66

and from 21.6% to 36.3% for the model with casual sex experience, $F(1, 32) = 7.39$, $p > .05$. The more a participant identified with Steven in the dominant script, the more she increased in her agreement with the sexual double standard.

Hypothesis 2a was therefore supported for those who viewed the dominant script. The more a participant identified with Steven in the dominant or equal desire scripts, the more a participant increased in their agreement with the sexual double standard.

Hypothesis 2b. H2b proposed that the more participants identify with at least one of the main characters, the more their sexual self-concept will weaken after exposure to the dominant script and strengthen after exposure to one of the counter scripts.

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted with the change scores of each of the sexual self-concept subscales as dependent variables. The relevant control variables (i.e., sexual or casual sex experience, relationship status, and previous exposure to the show) were entered into the first block, identification with Trishelle was entered into the second block, and identification with Steven was entered into the third. The models were tested with (1) all the participants who viewed a sexual script and (2) by sexual script viewed.

Sexual self-efficacy. All models with all experimental participants were not significant for change in sexual self-efficacy, and neither of the identification variables were significant predictors. Statistically-significant differences in sexual self-efficacy were not found for participants who viewed the equal love script or dominant script.

The models with the casual sex experience variable included, however, were significant for participants who viewed the equal desire script (model with identification with Trishelle: $R^2=.28$, $F(4, 41)=4.07$, $p < .01$; model with both identification variables: $R^2=.35$, $F(5, 40)=4.31$, $p < .01$). In the first model, identification with Trishelle was a significant

predictor, $\beta = -.28$, $p < .05$, and significantly increased the model's variance from 19.5% to 28.4%, $F(1, 41) = 5.12$, $p > .05$. Adding identification with Steven also significantly increased the model's variance from 28.4% to 35.0%, $F(1, 40) = 4.05$, $p < .05$, and was a significant predictor, $\beta = -.39$, $p < .05$. Once identification with Steven was added, however, identification with Trishelle was no longer significant.

Sexual esteem. The first and second models with all experimental participants were not found significant for change in sexual esteem. Neither of the identification variables were significant predictors. The same was found for each of the scripts.

Sexual optimism. The models with all experimental participants were significant for change in sexual optimism, but neither of the identification variables were significant predictors. The same was found for each of the scripts.

Hypothesis 2b was therefore partially supported. The more a participant identified with Steven, the more she weakened in her sexual self-efficacy after exposure to the equal desire script. Also for participants who viewed the equal desire counter script, the more they identified with Trishelle and also increased in identification with Steven, the more they weakened in their sexual self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 3. H3 proposed that the more a participant identified with at least one of the characters, they more likely she would be to be transported into the story. Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted with transportation as the dependent variable. The relevant control variables (i.e., sexual or casual sex experience, relationship status, and previous exposure to the show) were entered into the first block, identification with Trishelle was entered into the second block, and identification with Steven was entered into the third.

The models were tested with (1) all the participants who viewed a sexual script, and (2) by sexual script viewed.

The models with identification with Trishelle added were significant (with sexual experience: R^2=.56, $F(4, 137)$=44.34, $p < .001$; with casual sex experience: R^2=.56, $F(4, 137)$=44.36, $p < .001$), and the models with both identification variables were also significant (with sexual experience: R^2=.57, $F(4, 136)$=35.88, $p < .001$; with casual sex experience: R^2=.57, $F(5, 136)$=35.86, $p < .001$). Adding identification with Trishelle significantly increased the model's variance from 9.6% to 56.4% for the model with sexual experience, $F(1, 137)$=147.22, $p < .001$, and from 7.0% to 56.4% for the model with casual sex experience, $F(1, 137)$=155.31, $p < .001$. Adding identification with Steven did not significantly increase the model's variance. Identification with Trishelle was a significant predictor (with sexual or casual sex experience: β=.64, $p < .001$), but identification with Steven was not. Analysis by each script viewed showed the same results across all groups.

Identification with Steven was then also assessed without including identification with Trishelle. The models with identification with Steven and the relevant control variables were significant (with sexual experience: R^2=.35, $F(4, 137)$=18.32, $p < .001$; with casual sex experience: R^2=.34, $F(4, 137)$=17.54, $p < .001$), and identification with Steven was a significant predictor (with sexual experience: β=.56, $p < .001$; with casual sex experience: β=.54, $p < .001$).

Hypothesis 3 was thus supported. The more participants identified with Trishelle in any of the sexual scripts, the more she was transported into the story. Also, the more participants identified with Steven as well as identifying with Trishelle, the more she was transported into the story.

Hypothesis 4. H4 proposed that the more a participant perceived the script as realistic, the more she will identify with the characters. Regression analyses were conducted with each identification variable entered separately as the dependent variable. The relevant control variables (i.e., sexual or casual sex experience, relationship status, and previous exposure to the show) were entered into the first block, and perceived realism was entered into the second block. The models were tested with (1) all the participants who viewed a sexual script, and (2) by sexual script viewed.

All experimental participants. The models for identification with Trishelle were significant (with sexual experience: R^2=.28, $F(4, 137)$=13.36, $p < .001$; with casual sex experience: R^2=.27, $F(4, 137)$=12.53, $p < .001$). Perceived realism was a significant predictor for both models (with sexual experience: β=.53, $p < .001$; with casual sex experience: β=.56, $p < .001$) and significantly increased the model's variance from 12.4% to 28.1% when controlling for sexual experience, $F(1, 137)$=29.77, $p < .001$, and from 8.6% to 26.8% when controlling for casual sex experience, $F(1, 137)$=34.13, $p < .001$.

The models for identification with Steven were also significant (with sexual experience: R^2=.17, $F(4, 137)$=7.01, $p < .001$; with casual sex experience: R^2=.17, $F(4, 137)$=7.20, $p < .001$). Perceived realism was a significant predictor for both models (with sexual experience: β=.31, $p < .01$; with casual sex experience: β=.32, $p < .001$), and significantly increased the model's variance from 9.9% to 17.0% when controlling for sexual experience, $F(1, 137)$=11.72, $p < .01$, and from 9.3% to 17.4% when controlling for casual sex experience, $F(1, 137)$=13.37, $p < .001$. The more a participant perceived a sexual script as realistic, the more she identified with both Trishelle and Steven.

Equal love script. The models for identification with Trishelle in the equal love script were significant (with sexual experience: $R^2=.42$, $F(4, 52)=9.53$, $p < .001$; with casual sex experience: $R^2=.43$, $F(4, 52)=9.73$, $p < .001$). Perceived realism was a significant predictor for both models (with sexual experience: $\beta=.76$, $p < .001$; with casual sex experience: $\beta=.73$, $p < .001$), and significantly increased the model's variance from 6.1% to 42.3% when controlling for sexual experience, $F(1, 52)=32.61$, $p < .001$, and from 8.7% to 42.8% when controlling for casual sex experience, $F(1, 52)=31.01$, $p < .001$.

The models for identification with Steven in the equal love script were also significant (with sexual experience: $R^2=.33$, $F(4, 52)=6.48$, $p < .001$; with casual sex experience: $R^2=.35$, $F(4, 52)=6.87$, $p < .001$). Perceived realism was a significant predictor for both models (with sexual experience: $\beta=.54$, $p < .001$; with casual sex experience: $\beta=.53$, $p < .001$), and significantly increased the model's variance from 11.5% to 33.3% when controlling for sexual experience, $F(1, 52)=16.99$, $p < .001$, and from 13.5% to 34.6% when controlling for casual sex experience, $F(1, 52)=16.75$, $p < .001$. The more a participant perceived the equal love script as realistic, the more she identified with both Trishelle and Steven.

Equal Desire script. The models for identification with Trishelle in the equal desire script were significant (with sexual experience: $R^2=.33$, $F(4, 42)=5.19$, $p < .01$; with casual sex experience: $R^2=.30$, $F(4, 42)=4.59$, $p < .01$). Perceived realism, however, was only a significant predictor of identification with Trishelle for the model with casual sex experience, $\beta=.38$, $p < .05$, and significantly increased the model's variance from 22.5% to 30.4%, $F(1, 42)=4.74$, $p < .05$. Neither of the models for identification with Steven found perceived

71

realism as a significant predictor. The more a participant perceived the equal desire script as realistic, the more she identified with Trishelle.

Dominant script. Perceived realism was not a significant predictor of identification with Trishelle or Steven for any of the models.

Hypothesis 4 was therefore supported for the equal love and equal desire scripts. The more a participant perceived the equal love script as realistic, the more she identified with both characters. The more a participant perceived the equal desire script as realistic, the more she identified with Trishelle.

Research Question 1. RQ1 asked whether some participants would be able to experience transportation without identification or vice versa, and if so, are different effects found between participants based upon differences in narrative processing.

Identification (with both Trishelle and Steven) and transportation variables were measured on 1 to 6 Likert scales. Dichotomous measures were created such that scores greater than 3.5 were considered positive identification or transportation. With this measure, the majority of participants identified with Trishelle (66.9%), but did *not* identify with Steven (64.1%). More than half of the participants (56.3%) were transported.

Cross-tabulations were conducted between the two identification variables and the transportation variable. Half of the participants who identified with Trishelle also identified with Steven (50.5%). The vast majority of participants who did not identify with Trishelle also did not identify with Steven (93.6%), leaving only three participants who identified with Steven but not Trishelle.

As shown in Table 9, only 13 participants experienced either transportation without identification or identification without transportation, indicating that participants were not

likely to experience one without the other. Overall, 30% of participants identified with both characters and were transported; 26% did not identify with either character and were not transported. Only seven participants were transported but did not identify with either character, and six participants were not transported but identified with both characters.

ANOVA analyses were conducted to examine how the main effects and interactions between each of the identification variables and the transportation variable affected the outcome variables. Script group, relationship status, previous exposure to the show, and the sexual or casual sex experience variables were entered as control variables. The change scores for agreement with the sexual double standard and the sexual self-concept subscales were entered as dependent variables.

No significant main effects or interactions were found for change in agreement with the sexual double standard, sexual self-efficacy, or sexual esteem. The interaction between identification with both Trishelle and Steven and transportation was, however, significant for a change in sexual optimism, $F(1, 131)=4.19$, $p < .05$. Post-hoc analysis revealed that among participants who were not transported, participants who also did not identify with Trishelle and Steven experienced an increase in sexual optimism ($M=.33$, $SE=.15$), compared with participants who identified with Trishelle ($M=-.03$, $SE=.17$), $F(1, 131)=4.14$, $p < .05$. Chi-square analyses of these two groups by demographic variables revealed significant differences in sexual experience, $X^2 (1, N=62) = 10.09$, $p < .01$, and casual sex experience, $X^2 (1, N=62) = 11.30$, $p < .01$. Among these non-transported participants, those who identified with Trishelle were significantly more likely to have engaged in sexual intercourse (88.0%) and casual sex (64.0%) than participants who did not identify with Trishelle and Steven (48.6% and 21.6%, respectively).

Results indicate that though participants can experience transportation without identification and vice versa, it is unlikely to happen. Also, not experiencing identification and transportation was a significant predictor of an increase in sexual optimism across all groups.

Research Question 2. RQ2 asked how agreement with the sexual double standard may differ based upon which character a viewer identifies with more, either Trishelle or Steven. The scores for identification with Steven were subtracted from the scores for identification with Trishelle to create a new identification variable to determine which character a participant identified with more. A negative number indicated greater identification with Steven and a positive number indicated greater identification with Trishelle. Participants whose scores fell near zero identified about equally with both characters.

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted with the sexual double standard change score as the dependent variable. The relevant control variables (i.e., sexual or casual sex experience, relationship status, and previous exposure to the show) were entered into the first block and the new identification variable was entered into the second block. The final model was tested with (1) all the participants who viewed a sexual script, and (2) by sexual script viewed.

The models with all experimental participants were significant (with sexual experience: $R^2=.07$, $F(4, 137)=2.59$, $p < .05$; with casual sex experience: $R^2=.07$, $F(4, 137)=2.57$, $p < .05$), and the new identification variable was a significant predictor (with sexual experience: $\beta = -1.54$, $p < .05$; with casual sex experience: $\beta = -1.52$, $p < .05$), significantly increasing the model's variance from 3.3% to 7.0%, $F(1, 137)=5.53$, $p < .05$.

See Figure 5 for a scatter plot of the results for all experimental participants. It should also be noted that the group of participants who identified with Steven more than with Trishelle was a small portion of the participants; only 16 participants had scores lower than zero.

The models were not significant for participants who viewed the equal love or equal desire counter scripts, and the identification variable was not a significant predictor.

The models for participants who viewed the dominant script were, however, significant (with sexual experience: $R^2 = .33$, $F(4, 33) = 4.00$, $p < .01$; with casual sex experience: $R^2 = .30$, $F(4, 33) = 3.52$, $p < .05$), but the identification variable was a significant predictor only in the sexual experience model, $\beta = -1.97$, $p < .05$, significantly increasing the model's variance from 23.1% to 32.7%, $F(1, 33) = 4.70$, $p < .05$.

A linear relationship therefore exists between which character a participant identified with more and change in agreement with the sexual double standard for viewers of the all sexual scripts and particularly the dominant script. Participants who viewed the dominant script and identified more with Steven than Trishelle increased in their agreement with the sexual double standard, while those who identified more with Trishelle than Steven decreased in their agreement. Those participants who identified with both characters equally were less likely to change in their agreement.

Exploratory analysis

Additional analyses were conducted to further clarify the significant findings found in hypothesis testing and investigate contributions of the other narrative processing variables.

Other narrative processing variables

Partial correlations were examined for significant relationships between all the narrative processing variables and the relevant change scores, by script viewed, controlling for relationship status, casual sex experience, and previous exposure to the show.

Identification with Steven remained as the only narrative processing variable significantly correlated with the change score for agreement with the sexual double standard for participants who viewed the dominant script, $r = .40$, $p < .05$, or the equal desire script, $r = .31$, $p < .05$. As shown in Table 11, identification with Steven in the dominant heterosexual script was also positively correlated with transportation and identification with Trishelle. Identification with Steven in the equal desire counter script was positively correlated with transportation, perceived similarity with Trishelle, perceived similarity with Steven, and identification with Trishelle.

Identification with Steven and identification with Trishelle remained as the only significantly correlated narrative processing variables with the sexual self-efficacy change score for participants who viewed the equal desire script (identification with Steven: $r = -.44$, $p < .01$; identification with Trishelle: $r = -.33$, $p < .05$). The identification variables were positively correlated with each other, $r = 69$, $p < .001$ and both correlated with transportation and perceived similarity with Trishelle. See Table 12 for the significant correlations.

None of the narrative processing variables was found significantly correlated with the sexual esteem or sexual optimism change scores for any of the scripts viewed.

Identification by relevant experiences

Significant interactions between the relationship status and sexual or casual sex experience variables and the identification variables were then examined for their effect on

76

the change in agreement with the sexual double standard and sexual self-efficacy in the

relevant scripts, using ANCOVA analyses.

Change in agreement with the sexual double standard for participants who viewed the

dominant or equal desire scripts was entered as the dependent variable. Sexual or casual sex

experience, relationship status, and previous exposure to the show were entered as fixed

factors. Identification with Steven was then entered as a covariate. Two-way interactions

between identification with Steven and sexual or casual sex experience and between

identification with Steven and relationship status were tested.

The interaction between relationship status and identification with Steven was

significant for participants who viewed the dominant script, $F(1, 31)=4.46$, $p < .05$. Post-hoc

analyses revealed that among participants who were currently not in a relationship, the more

they identified with Steven, the more they increased in their agreement with the sexual

double standard, $\beta = 4.45$, $p < .01$. See Figure 6 for a graphic representation of these results.

Results were equivalent for models using either of the sexual experience variables. No

significant interactions for change in agreement with the sexual double standard were found

for participants who viewed the equal desire script.

Change in sexual self-efficacy among participants who viewed the equal desire script

was then examined using the same ANCOVA analysis as above to test significant

interactions with identification with either character. Both identification variables were

examined separately. The change score for sexual self-efficacy was the dependent variable.

Sexual or casual sex experience, relationship status, and previous exposure to the show were

entered as fixed factors. Identification with Steven or identification with Trishelle was

entered as a covariate. Two-way interactions between the relevant identification variable and

sexual or casual sex experience and between the relevant identification variable and relationship status were tested. None of the interactions were found significant for change in sexual self-efficacy for identification with Steven or identification with Trishelle.

Summary of findings

H1a predicted that viewing the dominant script would increase agreement with the sexual double standard, while viewing a counter script would decrease agreement. While all participants did not change their beliefs as predicted, participants in a relationship who viewed the dominant script did increase in agreement with the sexual double standard. Alternatively, participants *not* in a relationship who viewed the equal desire script also increased in agreement.

H1b predicted that viewing the dominant script would weaken the participant's sexual self-concept, while viewing a counter script would strengthen her sexual self concept. All participants who viewed the equal desire script increased in sexual optimism. Viewing the equal desire script also strengthened the sexual self-efficacy of participants who had engaged in casual sex and the sexual esteem of participants who had engaged in sex. Viewers of the dominant script who had *not* engaged in sex also increased in their sexual self esteem.

H2a predicted that greater identification with the story's characters would increase or decrease agreement with the sexual double standard. The more a participant identified with Steven after exposure to the dominant or equal desire script, the more she increased in her agreement with the sexual double standard.

Identification with Steven in the dominant and equal desire scripts was significantly correlated with transportation and identification with Trishelle. Identification with Steven in

the equal desire script was also significantly correlated with perceived similarity with Steven and perceived similarity with Trishelle.

H2b predicted that greater identification with the story's characters would strengthen or weaken the participant's sexual self-concept and was partially supported. The more a participant identified with Trishelle and also identified with Steven in the equal desire script, the more likely she was to weaken in her sexual self-efficacy. Identifying with Steven and Trishelle in the equal desire script was also positively correlated with transportation and perceived similarity. See Table 10 for a summary of the results related to Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b.

H3 proposed that the more a participant identified with at least one of the characters, the more she would be transported into the story. The hypothesis was supported. The more a participant identified with Trishelle in all the sexual scripts, the more likely she was to be transported into the story. Also, the more a participant identified with Steven and also identified with Trishelle, the more likely she was to be transported.

H4 proposed that the more a participant perceives the story as realistic, the more likely she will be to identify with the story's characters. The hypothesis was partially supported. The more a participant perceived the equal love script as realistic, the more she identified with both characters. The more a participant perceived the equal desire script as realistic, the more she identified with Trishelle.

RQ1 asked about whether some participants could be transported into the story without also identifying with at least one of the characters. Only 13 participants experienced either transportation without identification or identification without transportation, indicating that participants were not likely to experience one without the other. Participants who were

not transported and did not identify with either character were less likely to have engaged in sex and/or casual sex than other participants who experienced some level of narrative processing. Also, those participants who were not transported or identified with either character increased in sexual optimism across all groups.

RQ2 was posed to examine how agreement with the sexual double standard may differ depending on which character viewers identify with more. Participants who identified more with Steven than Trishelle increased in their agreement with the sexual double standard after exposure to any of the scripts, while those who identified with Trishelle more decreased in their agreement.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Young female viewers of entertainment television are frequently exposed to sexual scripts that reinforce a sexual double standard. Male characters are often portrayed as sexual initiators, while female characters are portrayed as sexual gatekeepers or passive partners. Exposure to such stereotypical scripts may weaken the sexual self-concept of female viewers and increase their own endorsement of the sexual double standard. Identification with either the male or female or both characters in the scripts may mediate the effects of exposure.

While research has consistently found a link between exposure to sexual media and sexual attitudes and behaviors, less is known about how, why, and which sexual portrayals affect young viewers. This dissertation sought to examine how viewing sexual scripts that either reinforce or subvert the sexual double standard and identification with the characters affects young adult female viewers' sexual self-concepts and their perceptions of the sexual double standard.

In the main experiment, young adult female viewers were randomly assigned to see either a dominant (i.e., reinforcing the sexual double standard), counter script (i.e., subverting the sexual double standard), or no sexual script, and the primary outcome variables were measured pre- and post-exposure. Identification with the characters was also measured post-exposure for participants who viewed a dominant or counter script. Identification with a character was defined as viewing the story from the cognitive and affective perspective of that character.

Much of entertainment television programming is in a narrative, story-telling format, which suggests that narrative processing may play an important role in how a viewer is influenced by televised sexual scripts. Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001) and sexual script theory (Gagnon & Simon, 2005) explain how viewers of televised sexual scripts may model the sexual attitudes and behaviors of characters. Transportation theory (Green & Brock, 2000) proposes that narratives can affect viewers' attitudes and behaviors by way of being "transported" or "immersed" into the story, such that the more a viewer is transported, the more he or she will report attitudes consistent with the story's messages. Being transported into the story also involves emotional connection and identification with its characters. Different levels of identification with one or more of the characters in an entertainment narrative can influence how a viewer is affected by exposure.

It was thus hypothesized that exposure to televised counter sexual scripts would either reinforce or subvert the sexual double standard and strengthen or weaken the sexual self-concepts of female viewers depending upon the portrayals of gender equality or inequality. It was further hypothesized that stronger identification with the story's characters would mediate these effects and be related to being transported into the story and perceiving the script as realistic.

Exposure to the equal desire counter script strengthened the sexual self-efficacy, sexual optimism, and sexual esteem of most of the viewers, but not all of these effects were related to identification with the characters. Stronger identification with the male character, however, did lead to greater agreement with the sexual double standard for viewers of the dominant and equal desire script and a weakening of sexual self-efficacy for viewers of the equal desire script. Stronger identification with the female character was related to being

82

more transported into all the scripts and perceiving the counter scripts as more realistic. Stronger identification with the male character was also related to being more transported but only when the viewer also reported stronger identification with the female character. Exposure to the equal love counter script did not result in change in agreement with the sexual double standard or the viewers' sexual self-concepts.

Relationship status and previous sexual experience were also indicators of change in agreement with the sexual double standard and the viewers' sexual self-concepts. Exposure to the dominant script increased agreement with the sexual double standard for participants in a relationship and increased sexual esteem for participants who had not engaged in sex. Exposure to the equal desire script increased agreement with the sexual double standard for participants not in a relationship and strengthened the sexual self-efficacy of participants who had engaged in casual sex and the sexual esteem of participants who had engaged in sex.

The analyses, therefore, suggested three main conclusions: (1) Exposure to televised sexual scripts that subvert the sexual double standard can strengthen the sexual self-concept of young adult female viewers; (2) Viewing televised sexual scripts from the male perspective, regardless of whether the script reinforces or subverts the sexual doubles standard, can increase agreement with sexual stereotypes and weaken the sexual self-concept of young adult female viewers, and (3) Prior sexual and relationship experience can affect how young women process and are affected by televised sexual scripts.

Strengthening of the sexual self-concept

Exposure to the equal desire script significantly strengthened the sexual optimism, self-efficacy and sexual self esteem of most of the viewers. Higher scores on sexual optimism indicated that these young women expected their future sex lives to be positive and

83

rewarding. Viewing a sexual script that portrays the characters as equal partners in a recreational sexual relationship therefore left participants feeling optimistic about their future sex lives. Viewing gender equality between characters in a casual sex relationship encouraged the viewers to imagine positive outcomes for their own future romantic relationships.

Exposure to the equal desire script also significantly strengthened the sexual self-efficacy of participants who had engaged in casual sex and the sexual self esteem of participants who had engaged in sex. Exposure to the dominant script strengthened the sexual esteem of participants who had not engaged in sex. Higher scores on sexual self-efficacy signify that these young women believe they have the ability to deal effectively with the sexual aspects of their lives. Viewing the equal desire script may have therefore reinforced their past decisions to engage in casual sex and made them feel more efficacious about their future sexual lives. Higher scores of sexual self esteem indicate that these young women believe they have the ability to engage in healthy sexual behaviors and to experience their sexuality in a satisfying and enjoyable way. Viewing the gender equality between the characters in the equal desire script may have therefore left these viewers who have engaged in sex feeling more positive about their own sexual decision-making. Likewise, viewing the gender inequality in the dominant script may have also made participants who had not engaged in sex feeling more positive about their decision to refrain from sexual intercourse.

Viewers of the equal desire script who had engaged in casual sex also were more likely than viewers who had not engaged in casual sex to experience greater narrative processing on all the relevant variables. Viewers of the equal desire script who had engaged in sex were also more likely than viewers without equivalent sexual experience to perceive

the script as realistic and Trishelle as similar to themselves. Identification with the characters was, however, not directly related to the increase in sexual self-efficacy or sexual esteem for these viewers, but the differences in narrative processing does explain how these viewers with sexual experience are likely to process counter sexual scripts compared to other viewers.

Increasing agreement with the double standard and weakening the sexual self-concept

Exposure to the dominant script significantly increased agreement with the sexual double standard for participants who were in a committed relationship, while exposure to the equal desire counter script significantly increased agreement for participants *not* in a relationship. Relationship status thus had an opposite effect on agreement with the sexual double standard when viewing counter scripts.

Identification with the male character also played a major role. Stronger identification with Steven led to an increase of agreement with the sexual double standard for viewers of the dominant script who were not in a relationship and viewers of the equal desire script. Identifying more with Steven than with Trishelle also resulted in an increase in agreement with the sexual double standard, while identifying more with Trishelle than with Steven resulted in a decrease in agreement.

Viewing a sexual script from the male's perspective is perhaps may determine whether female viewers will increase or decrease in their agreement with sexual stereotypes and is furthered indicated by the viewer's own relationship status. These findings may suggest that when female viewers do have a male partner on which to reflect, they do not need to take on the male character's perspective to be affected by what they see. Participants who do not have a male partner, however, will be more affected by the stereotypical script when they perceive it from the male character's point of view.

85

Exposure to non-stereotypical sexual scripts that display gender equality will, however, increase sexual stereotyping only if they perceive the story from the male character's perspective and/or are not in a relationship with a male partner. Thus, taking the male's perspective may affect female viewers' beliefs about sexual scripts no matter how equal the relationship portrayal is.

Viewing sexual scripts from the male character's perspective can also negatively influence the sexual self-concept of viewers even when the portrayal is non-stereotypical. The more viewers identified with Steven in the equal desire script, the more likely they were to decrease in their sexual self-efficacy after exposure. While results indicated that viewing a non-stereotypical portrayal of gender equality between sexual partners can strengthen the sexual self-concept of female viewers, seeing the script from the male's perspective may make viewers feel less efficacious about their future sexual lives. Such propositions, however, are purely speculation without additional information about these participants' past and current relationships.

Theoretical implications

Social cognitive and sexual script theories predict that exposure to sexual scripts in the media can have an impact on viewers' sexual beliefs and perceptions of how certain sexual situations are likely to occur. Viewers may model the behaviors and attitudes of the characters in sexual scripts based upon the kinds of outcomes experienced by the characters. These propositions were supported in this study by the reactions of viewers of the equal desire counter script. Sexual optimism increased among the viewers of the equal desire script. Those who saw the equal desire counter script who had relevant sexual experience also increased in their sexual self-efficacy and sexual esteem. All participants with sexual or

86

casual sex experience also reported greater perceived realism of the script and perceived similarity with both characters than did participants without relevant sexual experience. Thus, prior experience appears to be an important factor in how viewers perceive and respond to televised sexual portrayals.

Given that the equal love script was not as powerful in changing attitudes, some elements of the equal desire script must have been more persuasive. The equal desire script may have been more persuasive simply because it is a relatively novel portrayal in mainstream media, especially for female viewers. The equal love script would perhaps be more novel to male viewers, but as indicated by the sexual double standard, it is more normative for females to seek affection over sex, which may have made the equal love script less persuasive to female viewers.

Transportation theory suggests that the more a viewer is immersed or transported into the narrative, the more likely they are to report attitudes consistent with the portrayals. Identification with the story's characters can play a major role in being transported and affected by the portrayals. Most previous research examining the effects of transportation and identification on viewers measured identification with all the characters in a given portrayal. In this study, however, we see that identification with different characters affected outcomes. Some viewers built stronger connections with one character and weaker connections with another. The results of this study suggest that it is important to assess identification with characters independently of each other.

Past research on identification with characters has also often used stimulus materials from different television shows or similar characters but different storylines, which can reduce internal validity. One strength of this study is that the stimulus materials included the

same initial introduction with the same characters in the entire narrative but with different outcomes in the last few minutes of the script.

It was expected that the level of transportation into the narrative would independently affect outcomes of exposure, but in this study, transportation, although correlated with identification with both characters, did not directly influence the main dependent variables. The processes of transportation and identification therefore appear to be intertwined, as others have found. It is infrequent that a viewer of a narrative message will experience identification without transportation or vice versa, but, in this study, different degrees of identification with the characters were more powerful predictors than the measures of transportation. This study's results suggest, therefore, that identification with individual characters in sexual scripts may be a more powerful predictor of sexual stereotypes than other narrative processes.

Though identification with Steven was the only consistent predictor of change in the outcome variables after exposure, identification with Steven was also positively correlated with identification with Trishelle and transportation. Therefore, while identification with one character in a narrative can directly influence viewers, identification with that one character may also be predicted by other narrative processes, such as transportation. It is therefore important to assess which character will be most persuasive in influencing viewers and how other narrative processes may predict the process of identification with that character.

Implications for health communication and sexual media effects

Results indicate that exposure to dominant heterosexual scripts may negatively affect young adult female viewers' sexual self-concepts and expectations about sexual relationships, especially when they consider the script from a male perspective. Alternatively,

televised sexual scripts that subvert the dominant standard and promote gender equality between sexual partners may help strengthen young adult female viewers' sexual self-concepts and decrease their beliefs in disempowering standards. The results of this study suggest that more television sexual scripts and portrayals that highlight gender equality between sexual partners could result in more sexually-responsible behavior and greater sexual well-being for young adult women.

These findings also suggest that while the proliferation of the heterosexual script in entertainment media can negatively impact young female viewers, not all young viewers will be affected in the same way. In this study, female viewers who were able to consider the scripts from a male's perspective were more likely to endorse sexual stereotypes, even when the portrayal was one of gender equality. These results may have further negative implications. Crawford and Popp (2003) found in their literature review of the sexual double standard that a women's belief about her partner's endorsement of the sexual double standard is important in predicting healthy sexual behaviors. A woman who wants to engage in sex but believes her partner endorses a sexual double standard may suppress her own sexual desires and use "token resistance," refusing or resisting sexual activity while intending to eventually engage in the activity. Considering the male's perspective in sexual portrayals may, therefore, increase agreement with the sexual double standard and put the female viewer at increased risk for misunderstanding and even sexual violence in sexual relationships.

Young female viewers are, overall, more likely to identify with a female character than a male character in all sexual scripts, but it is ultimately identification with the male character that could have the most impact on message effects, especially for scripts that reinforce the dominant heterosexual script that males want sex and females should suppress

89

their sexual desires. Thus, when creating narrative sexual health messages, it is important to consider how all the characters in the narrative may be understood by the target audience. It is particularly important to consider how viewing sexual narratives from the point of the view of a male character may have an unintended negative impact on female viewers.

Limitations

Results should be interpreted cautiously as post-test data collection occurred in a laboratory setting instead of a more naturalistic setting. Also, pre-test measures were gathered using an online questionnaire; therefore, participants could have completed the questionnaire in a distracting or public setting which may have influenced their responses. Participants were exposed to the counter sexual scripts in only a one-time-exposure experiment. As some theories of media effects, such as cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 2002) suggest, media effects may be cumulative, occurring after many exposures to similar portrayals. Finding changes on attitudes about sexual relationships after one exposure is of interest. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that such effects may be only immediate and transitory. Delayed post-tests would be necessary to assess the extent to which exposure to counter scripts can have lasting effects.

Another threat to external validity is that the participants were a homogenous population of young adult female undergraduates, primarily of Caucasian descent, and therefore may not represent how female viewers with different backgrounds and experiences would be affected by such stimuli.

The attempt to manipulate identification with the characters to assess the relationship between perceived similarity and identification and identification and transportation was unsuccessful. The relationships between these variables were examined post-hoc in

90

regression analyses and therefore establishing the order of steps in narrative processing was not possible. Future research would benefit from development of a reliable method of inducing character identification.

Future research should include examining how exposure to televised counter sexual scripts that highlight other sexual stereotypes may affect young female and male viewers. The present study design may also be applicable for examining non-sexual counter scripts. It will also be important to determine whether the effect of identification with the male character is found in sexual scripts with different scenarios and outcomes.

Conclusions

Television and other entertainment media are major sources of common sexual scripts, such as the heterosexual script that reinforces sexual stereotypes and emphasizes gender inequality between heterosexual partners. Most youth have yet to experience a variety of sexual situations and therefore may base their own expectations about sexuality on common media examples. Exposure to counter sexual scripts that highlight gender equality between sexual partners may influence young female viewers positively by strengthening their sexual self-concept. Viewing sexual scripts from the male's perspective, however, can negatively influence female viewers by reinforcing agreement with sexual stereotypes. Given the findings in this study that identification with different characters affects the outcomes of viewing dominant and counter sexual scripts, health communicators should pay more attention to the role that identification plays in persuasive and narrative communication.

TABLES

Table 1. Main study design

	Dominant Script (Heterosexual Script)	Counter Script 1 (Equal Desire)	Counter Script 2 (Equal Love)	Control (No Sexual Script)
Identification manipulation				*No Manipulation*
No identification manipulation				

Table 2. Description of the four portrayals used in the first pilot study

		Attachment between characters (after engaging in casual sex)	
		Recreational	Relational
Consequence experienced by Trishelle (female character)	Positive	The characters decide together to continue having a non-committed sexual relationship. Trishelle expressed happiness with this decision.[1]	Trishelle tells Steven that she wants to start a committed, monogamous relationship with him, and he agrees, saying he also cares about her.[2]
	Negative	The characters decide together to continue having a non-committed sexual relationship. Trishelle is chastised by her family for having casual sex.	Trishelle tells Steven that she wants to start a committed, monogamous relationship with him, but he says he does want to and talks badly about her to others. She is embarrassed and upset.[3]

[1] *Equal desire counter script*
[2] *Equal Love counter script*
[3] *Dominant heterosexual script*

Table 3. Second pilot study design

	Dominant Script (Double Standard)	Counter Script (Equal Desire)
Self-concept accessibility manipulation		
Similarity manipulation		
No manipulation		

Table 4. Bivariate correlations for narrative processing variables (Pilot study #2)

	Identification		Perceived Similarity		Perceived Realism
	Trishelle	Steven	Trishelle	Steven	
Identification with Trishelle	--	.59**	.70**	.21*	.41**
Identification with Steven		--	.43**	.47**	.31**
Perceived similarity with Trishelle			--	.40**	.27**
Perceived similarity with Steven				--	.18
Perceived Realism					--

*Note: *p<.05, **p<.001*

Table 5. Means and standard deviations of the pre- and post-test scores of the main outcome variables by condition

		Dominant		Equal Desire		Equal Love		Control	
		Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Sexual double standard	*Pre-test*	6.24	7.48	6.60	6.06	7.58	6.62	5.80	7.19
	Post-test	6.76	8.07	8.53	6.40	8.91	6.70	6.50	8.68
Sexual self-efficacy	*Pre-test*	3.43	1.04	3.30	.93	3.40	.96	3.37	.83
	Post-test	3.53	.95	3.57	.84	3.51	.90	3.55	.74
Sexual esteem	*Pre-test*	3.46	1.00	3.44	.86	3.46	.90	3.78	.78
	Post-test	3.45	.98	3.64	.77	3.52	.99	3.79	.74
Sexual optimism	*Pre-test*	3.95	.79	3.90	.65	3.89	.60	4.11	.57
	Post-test	3.93	.69	4.16	.66	3.94	.70	4.00	.69

Table 6. Means and standard deviations of the narrative processing variables by sexual experience by script viewed

	Dominant				Equal Desire				Equal Love			
	Had Sex		Not Had Sex		Had Sex		Not Had Sex		Had Sex		Not Had Sex	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Identification with Steven	3.32	.69	3.07	.62	3.49*	.69	2.95*	.53	3.55*	.76	3.20*	.72
Identification with Trishelle	4.07	.90	3.67	.82	4.09*	.71	3.46*	.71	4.13	.61	3.78	1.01
Transportation	3.75	.80	3.43	.78	3.89*	.69	3.40*	.48	3.77	.59	3.44	.90
Perceived similarity with Trishelle	3.79	1.46	2.37	1.10	4.39*	1.39	2.94*	1.26	4.45	1.36	3.68	1.40
Perceived similarity with Steven	2.32	1.24	1.73	1.34	2.95	1.28	2.00	1.12	3.15*	1.38	2.21*	.90
Perceived realism	4.08	.50	3.84	.81	4.17*	.53	3.66*	.62	3.95	.61	3.56	.80

Note: Significant differences within each condition are noted, *$p < .05$.

Table 7. Means and standard deviations of the narrative processing variables by casual sexual experience by script viewed

	Dominant				Equal Desire				Equal Love			
	Had Casual Sex		Not Had Casual Sex		Had Casual Sex		Not Had Casual Sex		Had Casual Sex		Not Had Casual Sex	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Identification with Steven	3.32	.69	3.07	.62	3.49*	.69	2.95*	.53	3.55	.76	3.20	.72
Identification with Trishelle	4.07	.90	3.67	.82	4.09*	.71	3.46*	.71	4.13	.61	3.78	1.01
Transportation	3.75	.80	3.43	.78	3.89*	.69	3.40*	.48	3.77	.59	3.44	.90
Perceived similarity with Trishelle	3.79*	1.46	2.37*	1.10	4.39*	1.39	2.94*	1.26	4.45*	1.36	3.68*	1.40
Perceived similarity with Steven	2.32	1.24	1.73	1.34	2.95*	1.28	2.00*	1.12	3.15*	1.38	2.21*	.90
Perceived realism	4.08	.50	3.84	.81	4.17*	.53	3.66*	.62	3.95*	.61	3.56*	.80

Note: Significant differences within each condition are noted, *$p < .05$.

Table 8. Means and standard deviations of the narrative processing variables by relationship status by script viewed

	Dominant				Equal Desire				Equal Love			
	In relationship		Not in relationship		In relationship		Not in relationship		In relationship		Not in relationship	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Identification with Steven	2.96*	.59	3.40*	.67	3.26	.72	3.10	.59	3.60	.51	3.22	.89
Identification with Trishelle	3.43*	.77	4.26*	.79	3.80*	.77	3.65*	.77	4.12	.73	3.84	.88
Transportation	3.33	.67	3.84	.84	3.62	.46	3.60	.74	3.81	.77	3.46	.71
Perceived similarity with Trishelle	2.98	1.27	3.41	1.64	3.78	1.50	3.35	1.48	4.31	1.26	3.93	1.54
Perceived similarity with Steven	2.05	1.29	2.11	1.33	2.23	1.16	2.56	1.36	2.96*	1.02	2.53*	1.45
Perceived realism	3.77	.63	4.14	.61	3.81	.69	3.94	.57	3.87	.60	3.69	.81

Note: Significant differences within each condition are noted, *$p < .05$.

Table 9. Cross-tabulation of identification and transportation dichotomous variables

		Identify with Trishelle	Do not identify with Trishelle
Identify with Steven	Transported	42 (29.6%)	3 (2.1%)
	Not Transported	6 (4.2%)	0 (0.0%)
Do not identify with Steven	Transported	28 (19.7%)	7 (4.9%)
	Not Transported	19 (13.4%)	37 (26.1%)

Note: Being transported and identifying with a character was indicated by a score greater than 3.5 on the relevant scales, *N*=142.

Table 10. Significant findings by script viewed

Outcome variables	Dominant heterosexual script	
	By script viewed (H1)	**By identification (H2)**
Agreement with the sexual double standard	Participants in a relationship increased	Among participants *not* in a relationship, the more identified with Steven, the more increased
Sexual esteem	Participants who had not had sexual intercourse increased	*None*
Outcome variables	**Equal desire counter script**	
	By script viewed (H1)	**By identification (H2)**
Agreement with the sexual double standard	Participants *not* in a relationship increased	The more identified with Steven, the more increased
Sexual optimism	All participants increased	*None*
Sexual self-efficacy	Participants who had had casual sex increased	The more identified with Trishelle and Steven, the more decreased
Sexual esteem	Participants who had had sexual intercourse increased	*None*

Note: No significant differences were found for the Equal Love script.

Table 11. Significant partial correlations with identification with Steven, for change in agreement with the sexual double standard

	Identification with Steven	
	Dominant heterosexual script	Equal desire counter script
Transportation	.41*	.56***
Identification with Trishelle	.39*	.71***
Perceived similarity with Trishelle	--	.45**
Perceived similarity with Steven	--	.30*

Note: *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001, controlling for casual sex experience, relationship status, and previous exposure to the show.

Table 12. Significant partial correlations with identification with both characters in the equal desire counter script, for change in sexual self-efficacy

	Identification with Steven	Identification with Trishelle
Transportation	.59**	.68**
Perceived similarity with Steven	.48*	.75**

Note: *p<.01, **p<.001, controlling for casual sex experience, relationship status, and previous exposure to the show.

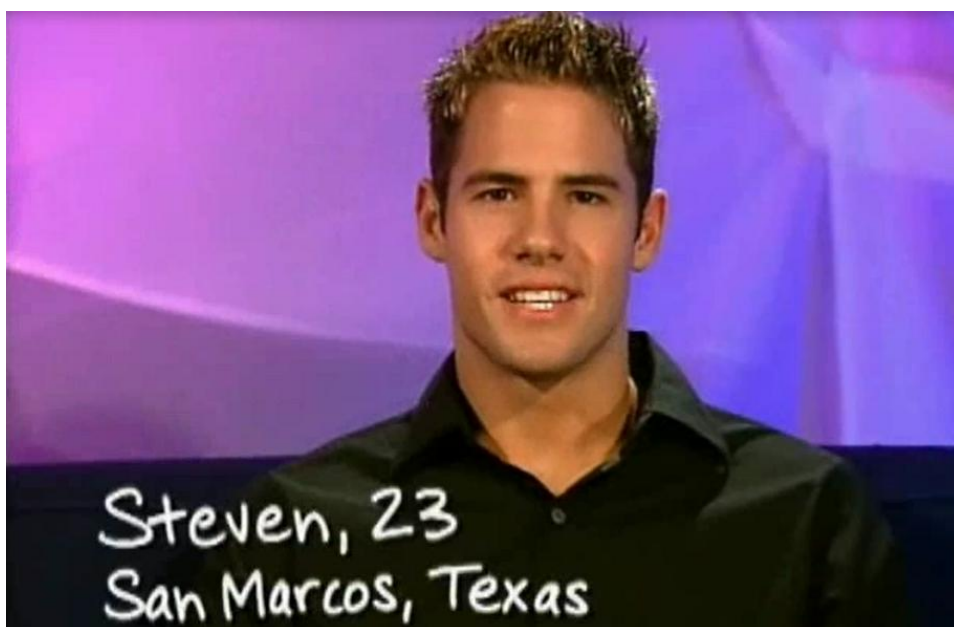**Figure 1.** Screenshots of the main characters, Trishelle and Steven

Figure 2. Interaction of similarity or no manipulation by script on perceived similarity with Trishelle (Pilot study #2)
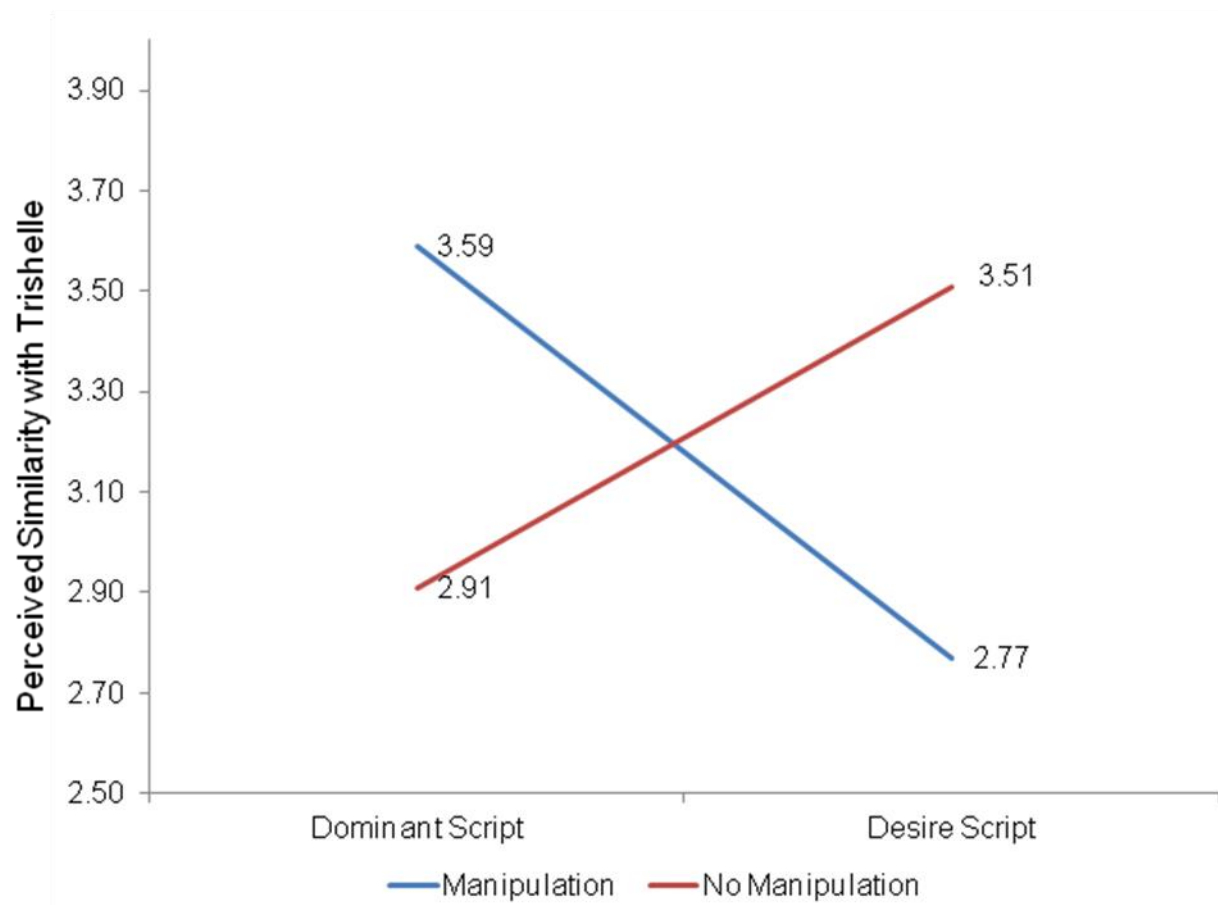
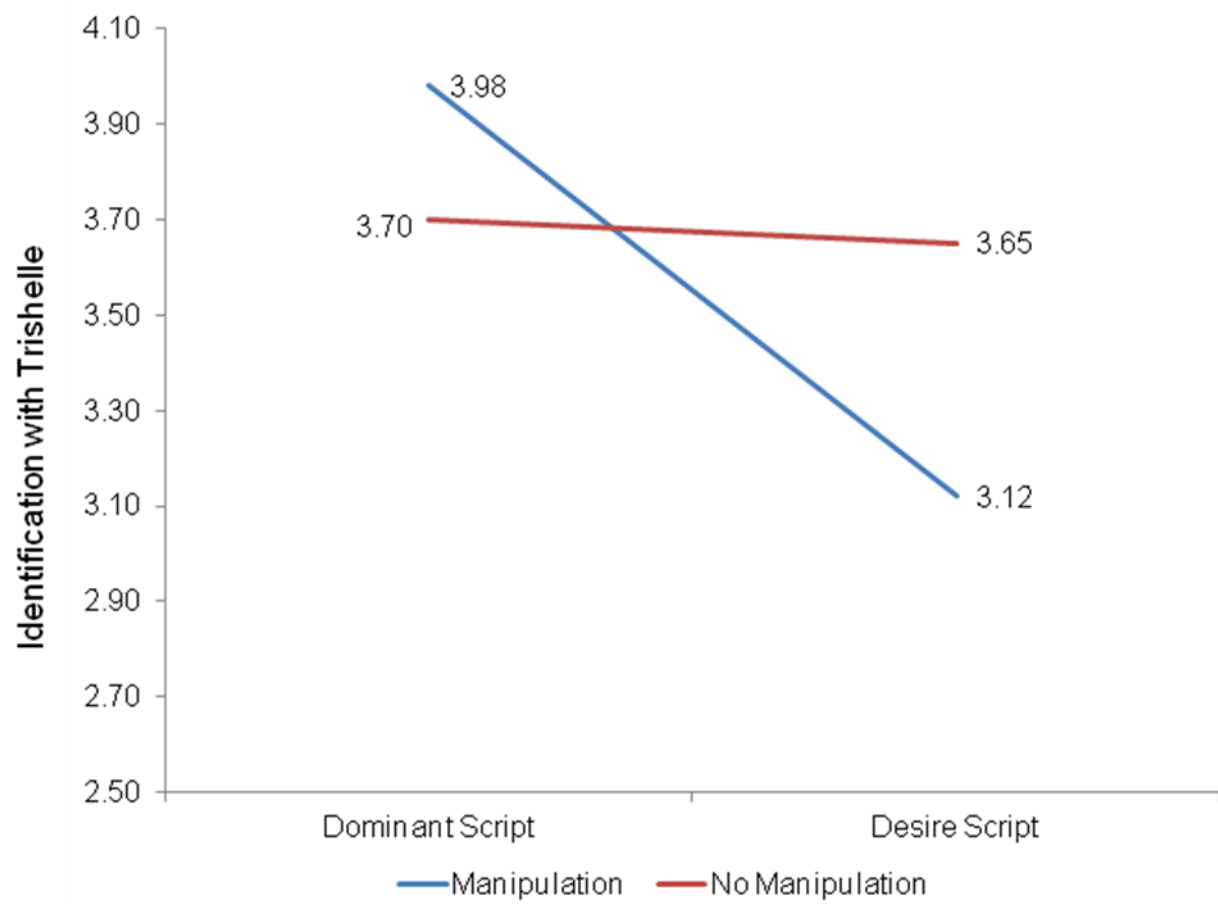**Figure 3.** Interaction of similarity or no manipulation by script on identification with Trishelle (Pilot study #2)

Figure 4. Interaction of similarity or no manipulation by script on identification with Trishelle, controlling for perceived realism (Pilot study #2)
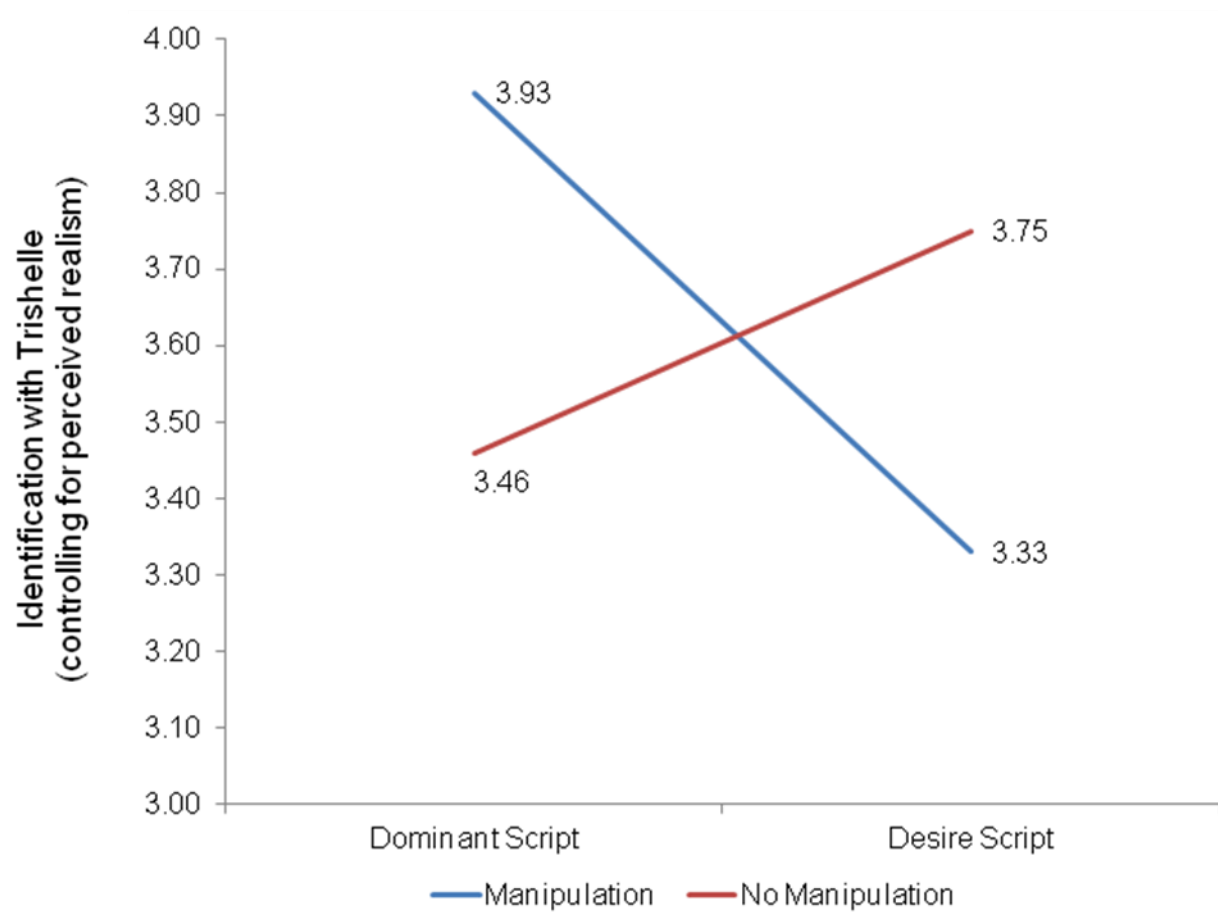
Figure 5. Scatter plot of identification variable and sexual double standard change score, for *all experimental participants* (with linear trend line)
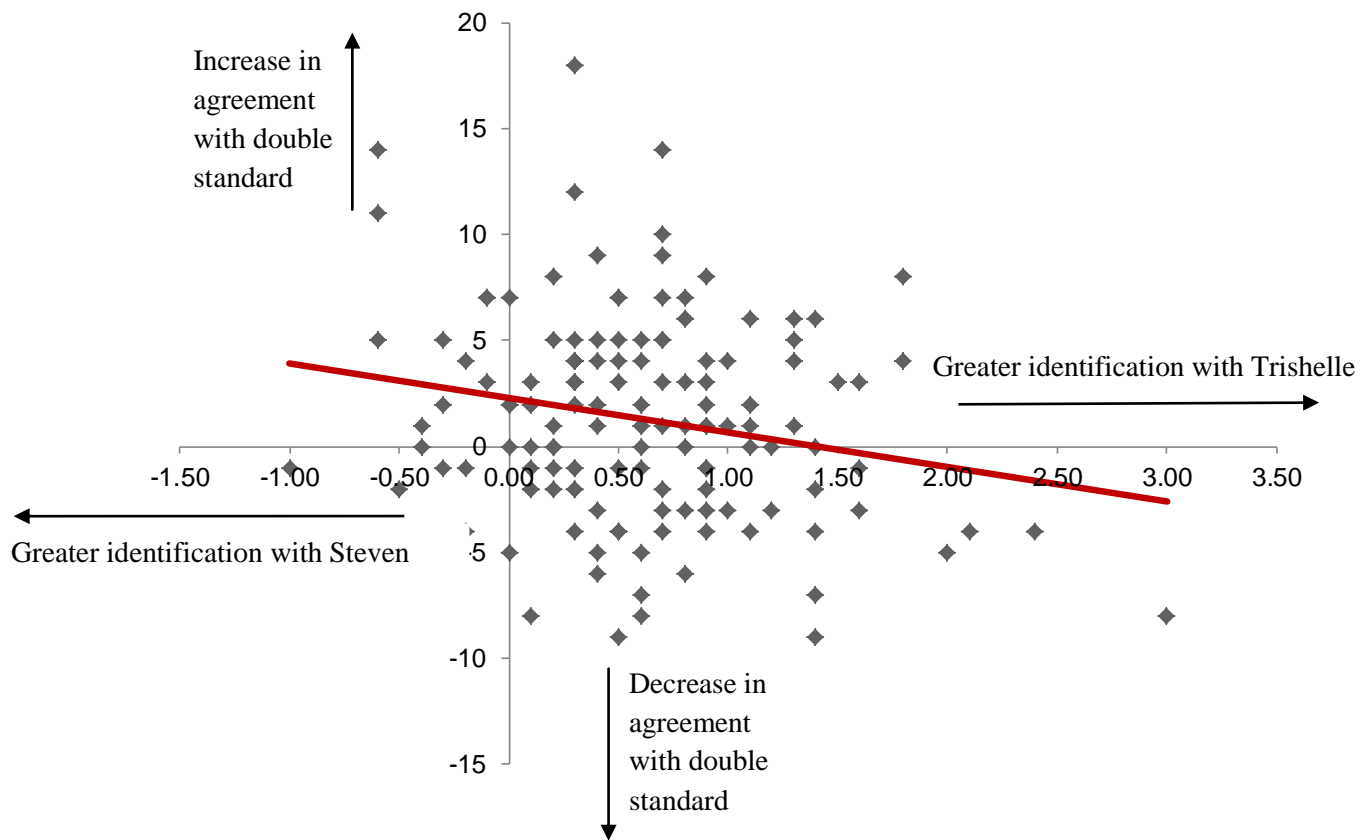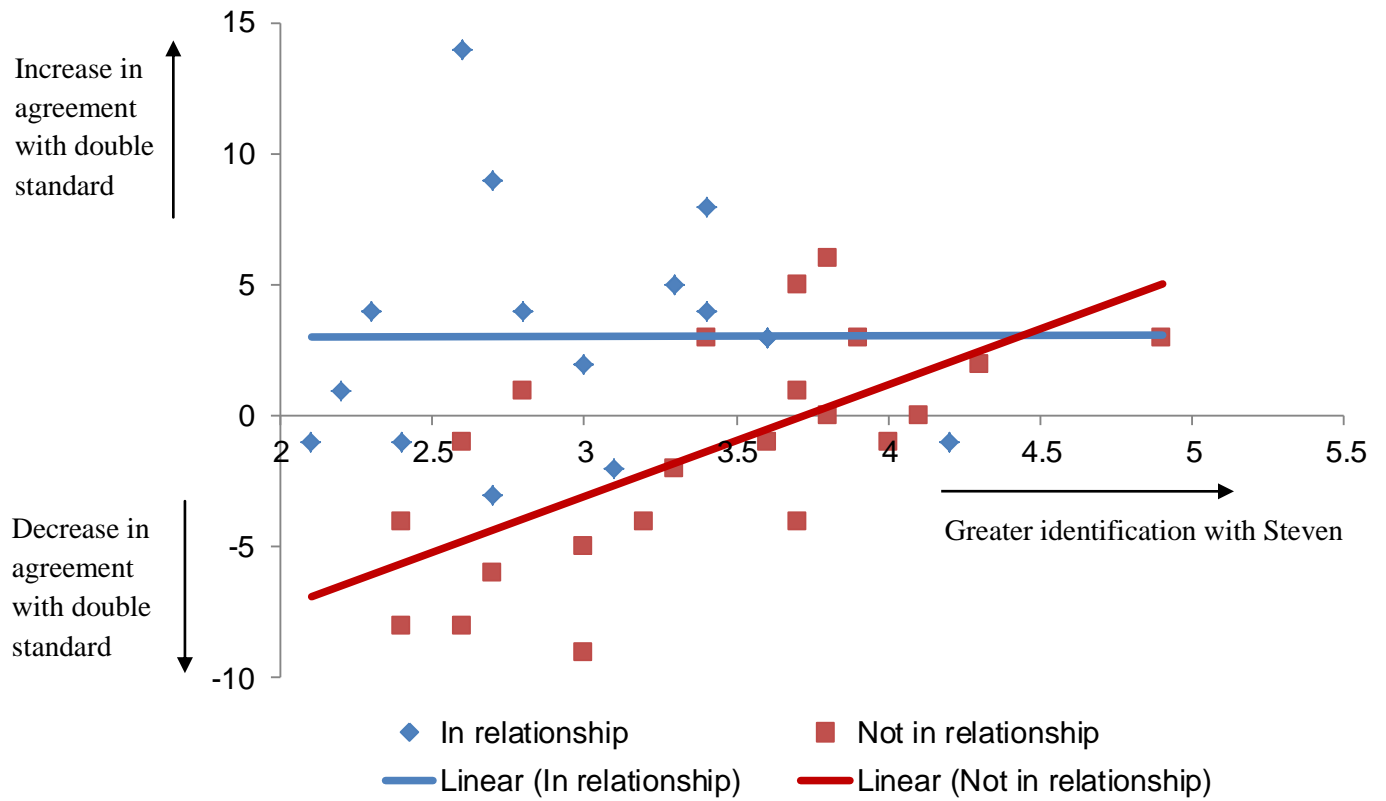
Figure 6. Scatter plot of the relationship between identification with Steven on change in agreement with the sexual double standard by relationship status, for participants who viewed the dominant script (with linear trend lines)

REFERENCES

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls.* Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report-full.pdf

Aubrey, J. S. (2004). Sex and punishment: An examination of sexual consequences and the sexual double standard in teen programming. *Sex Roles, 50*(7-8) 505-514.

Campbell, R. G., & Babrow, A. S. (2004). The role of empathy in responses to persuasive risk communication: Overcoming resistance to HIV prevention messages. *Health Communication, 16,* 159-182.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. *Media Psychology, 3*, 265-298.

Bandura, A. (2004). Social cognitive theory for personal and social change by enabling media. In A. Singhal, M. J. Cody, E. M. Rogers, & M. Sabido (Eds.), *Entertainment-education and social change: History, research, and practice* (pp. 75-96). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bandura, A. (2009). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. In J. Bryan & M.B. Oliver (Eds). *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 94-124). New York: Routledge.

Boone, T. L., & Lefkowitz, E. S. (2004). Safer sex and the health belief model: Considering the contributions of peer norms and socialization factors. *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality, 16*, 51-68.

Busselle, R., & Bilandzic, H. (2009). Measuring narrative engagement. *Media Psychology, 12*, 312-347.

Brown, J.D., Halpern, C.T., & L'Engle, K.L. (2005). Mass media as a sexual super peer for early maturing girls. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 36*(5), 420-427.

Brown, J. D., L'Engle, K. L., Pardun, C. J., Guo, G., Kenneavy, K., & Jackson, C. (2006). Sexy media matter: Exposure to sexual content in music, movies, television, and magazines predicts black and white adolescents' sexual behavior. *Pediatrics, 117*(4), 1018-1027.

Brown, J.D., & Pardun, C.J. (2004). Little in common: Racial and gender differences in adolescents' television diets. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 48*(2), 266-278.

Bryant, J., & Rockwell, S.C. (1994). Effects of massive exposure to sexually oriented prime-time television programming on adolescents' moral judgment. In D. Zillman, J. Bryant, & A.C. Huston (Eds.), *Media, children and the family: Social scientific, psychodynamic, and clinical perspectives* (pp. 183-195). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Chandra, A., Martino, S. C., Collins, R. L., Elliott, M. N., Berry, S. H., Kanouse, D. E., & Miu, A. (2008). Does watching sex on television predict teen pregnancy? findings from a national longitudinal survey of youth. *Pediatrics, 122*(5), 1047-1054.

Chory-Assad, R., & Cicchirillo, V. (2005). Empathy and affective orientation as predictors of identification with television characters. *Communication Research Reports, 22*(2) 151-156.

Cohen, J. (2001). Defining identification: A theoretical look at the identification of audiences with media characters. *Mass Communication & Society, 4*(3) 245-264.

Collins, R. L., Elliott, M. N., Berry, S. H., Kanouse, D. E., Kunkel, D., Hunter, S. B., & Miu, A. (2004). Watching sex on television predicts adolescent initiation of sexual behavior. *Pediatrics, 114*(3), e280-289.

Crawford, M., and D. Popp. (2003). Sexual double standards: A review and methodological critique of two decades of research. *Journal of Sex Research, 40*, 13-26.

Dworkin, S.L., O'Sullivan, L. (2007). "It's Less Work For Us and It Shows Us She Has Good Taste:" Masculinity, sexual Initiation, and contemporary sexual scripts. In M. Kimmel (Ed.), *The Sexual Self: The Construction of Sexual Scripts* (pp. 105-121). Nashville: University of Vanderbilt Press.

Elliott, W.R., Rudd, R., & Good, L. (1983). *Measuring the perceived reality of television: Perceived plausibility, perceived superficiality, and the degree of personal utility.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Eyal, K., & Finnerty, K. (2007). The portrayal of sexual intercourse on prime-time programming. *Communication Research Reports, 24*(3), 225-233.

Eyal, K., & Kunkel, D. (2008). The effects of sex in television drama shows on emerging adults' sexual attitudes and moral judgments. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 52*, 161-178.

Farrar, K. M. (2006). Sexual intercourse on television: Do safe sex messages matter? *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 50*(4), 635-650.

Farrar, K., Kunkel, D., Biely, E., Eyal, K., Fandrich, R., & Donnerstein, E. (2003). Sexual

messages during prime-time programming. *Sexuality & Culture, 7*, 7–37.

Frith, H., & Kitzinger, C. (2001). Reformulating sexual script theory: Developing a discursive psychology of sexual negotiation. *Theory & Psychology, 11*(2), 209-232.

Gagnon, J.H., & Simon, W. (2005). *Sexual conduct: The social sources of human sexuality*, 2nd edition. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (2002). Growing up with television: The cultivation perspective. In M. Morgan (Ed.), *Against the mainstream: The selected works of George Gerbner* (pp.193-213). New York: Peter Lang.

Green, M.C. (2004). Transportation into narrative worlds: The role of prior knowledge and perceived realism. *Discourse Processes, 38*(2), 247-266.

Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*(5), 701-721.

Green, M.C., Brock, T.C., & Kaufman, G.F. (2004). Understanding media enjoyment: The role of transportation into narrative worlds. Communication Theory, 14(4), 311-327.

Green, K., & Faulkner, S.L. (2005). Gender, belief in the sexual double standard, and sexual talk in heterosexual dating relationships. *Sex Roles, 53*(3/4), 239-251.

Hust, S. J. T., Brown, J. D., & L'Engle, K. L. (2008). Boys will be boys and girls better be prepared: An analysis of the rare sexual health messages in young adolescents' media. *Mass Communication & Society, 11*(1), 3-23.

Igartua, J. (2009). *Film involvement and narrative persuasion: The role of identification with the characters.* Presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association.

Kaiser Family Foundation. (2000). *National survey on teens about HIV/AIDS.* Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

Kaiser Family Foundation/*Seventeen* Magazine. (2004). *Sex smarts: Birth control and protection.* Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation.

Kaufman, G.F. (2009). Down the rabbit hole: Exploring the antecedents and consequences of identification with fictional characters. *Doctoral Dissertation.* Ohio State University.

Kim, J. L., Sorsoli, C. L., Collins, K., Zylbergold, B. A., Schooler, D., & Tolman, D. L. (2007). From sex to sexuality: Exposing the heterosexual script on primetime network television. *Journal of Sex Research, 44*(2) 145-157.

Kimmel, M. (2007). *The sexual self: The construction of sexual scripts.* Nashville: Vanderbilt
    University Press.

Kunkel, D. Eyal, K., Finnerty, K.,Biely, E., & Donnerstein, E. (2005). *Sex on TV 4: A
    biennial report to the Kaiser Family Foundation.* Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family
        Foundation.

Kunkel, D., Eyal, K., Donnerstein, E., Farrar, K. M., Biely, E., & Rideout, V. (2007). Sexual
    socialization messages on entertainment television: Comparing content trends 1997-
    2002. *Media Psychology, 9*(3) 595-622.

Konijn, E. A., & Hoorn. J. F. (2005). Some like it bad: Testing a model on perceiving and
    experiencing fictional characters. *Media Psychology, 7,* 107–144.

Lampman, C., Rolfe-Maloney, B., David, E. J.,Yan, M., McCermott, N.,Winters, S., et al.
    (2002). Messages about sex in the workplace: A content analysis of primetime
    television. *Sexuality & Culture, 6,* 3-21.

Mazzocco, P. J., Green, M. C., Sasota, J. A., & Jones, N. (2010). This story is not for
    everyone: Transportability and narrative persuasion. *Social Psychological and
    Personality Science*, *1*, 361-368.

Montemurro, B. (2003). Not a laughing matter: Sexual harassment as "material" on
    workplace-based situation comedies. *Sex Roles, 48,* 433-445.

Moyer-Guse, E., & Nabi, R.L. (2011). Comparing the effects of entertainment and education
    television programming on risky sexual behavior. *Health Communication, 26*(5), 416-
    426.

Moyer-Gusé, E., Chung, A., & Jain, P. (2011). Identification with characters and discussion
    of taboo topics after exposure to an entertainment narrative about sexual health.
    Journal of Communication, *61*, 387-406.

Moyer-Gusé, E., & Nabi, R. L. (2010). Explaining the effects of narrative in an entertainment
    television program: Overcoming resistance to persuasion. *Human Communication
    Research, 36*(1) 26-52.

Muehlenhard, C. L., & Quackenbush, D. M. (2011). The Sexual Double Standard Scale. In T.
    D. Fisher, C. M. Davis, W. L. Yarber, R. Bauserman, G. E. Schreer, & S. L. Davis
    (Eds.), *Handbook of sexuality-related measures* (3rd ed.; pp. 199-200). Philadelphia:
    Taylor & Francis.

Murphy, S.T., Frank, L.B., Moran, M.B., & Patnoe-Woodley, P. (2011). Involved,

transported, or emotional? Exploring the determinants of change in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior in entertainment-education. *Journal of Communication, 61*(3), 407-431.

Nabi, R. L., & Clark, S. (2008). Exploring the limits of social cognitive theory: Why negatively reinforced behaviors on TV may be modeled anyway. *Journal of Communication, 58*(3), 407-427.

Nielsen. (2009). *How teens use media: A Nielsen report on the myths and realities of teen media trends.* Chicago, Il: The Nielsen Company.

Pardun, C. J., L'Engle, K. L., & Brown, J. D. (2005). Linking exposure to outcomes: Early adolescents' consumption of sexual content in six media. *Mass Communication & Society, 8*(2), 75-91.

Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2008). Asymptotic and resampling strategies for assessing and comparing indirect effects in multiple mediator models. *Behavior Research Methods*, 40, 879-891.

Muehlenhard, C. L., & McCoy, M. L. (1991). Double standard/double bind: The sexual double standard and women's communication about sex. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 15*, 447-461.

Rideout, V.J., Foehr, U.G., & Roberts, D. F. (2010). *Generation M2: Media in the lives of 8-to 18-year-olds.* Kaiser Family Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.kff.org/entmedia/upload/8010.pdf

Schwartz, P. (2007). The social construction of heterosexuality. In M. Kimmel (Ed.), *The sexual self: The construction of sexual scripts* (pp. 80-92). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Slater, M. (2002). Entertainment education and the persuasive impact of narratives. In M. Green, J. Strange, & T. Brock (Eds), *Narrative impact: Social and cognitive foundations.* (pp. 157-182). Mahwah: Erlbaum.

Slater, M.D., & Rouner, D. (2002). Entertainment-educatino and elaboration likelihood: Understanding the processing of narrative persuasion. *Communication Theory, 12*(2), 173-191.

Simon, W., & Gagnon, J.H. (1987). The scripting approach. In J. Geer and W. O'Donoghue *Theories of Human Sexuality*, New York: Plenum.

Snell, W. E., Jr., Fisher T. D., & Schuh, T. (1992). Reliability and validity of the sexuality scale: A measure of sexual-esteem, sexual-depression, and sexual-preoccupation. *Journal of Sex Research*, 29, 261-273.

Snell, W. E., Jr. (1998). The multidimensional sexual self-concept questionnaire. In C. M. Davis, W. L. Yarber, R. Baurerman, G. Schreer, and S. L. Davis (Eds.), *Sexuality-related measures: A compendium* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Snell, W. E., Jr. (2001). Measuring multiple aspects of the sexual self-concept: The Multidimensional sexual self-concept questionnaire. In W. E. Snell, Jr. (Ed.), *New directions in the psychology of human sexuality: Research and theory*. Cape Girardeau, MO: Snell Publications.

Strasburger, V.C., Wilson, B.J., & Jordan, A.B. (2009). *Children, adolescents, and the media.* (2nd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tal-Or, N., & Cohen, J. (2010). Understanding audience involvement: Conceptualizing and manipulating identification and transportation. *Poetics, 38*, 402-418.

Tolman. D. L. (2002). *Dilemmas of desire: Teenager girls talk about sexuality.* President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Van Damme, E. (2010). Gender and sexual scripts in popular US teen series: A study on the gendered discourses in One Tree Hill and Gossip Girl. *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies, 2*(1), 77-92.

Ward, L. M. (1995). Talking about sex: Common themes about sexuality in the prime-time television programs children and adolescents view most . *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 24*(5) 595-615.

Ward, L. M., & Rivadeneyra, R. (1999). Contributions of entertainment television to adolescents' sexual attitudes and expectations: The role of viewing amount versus viewer involvement. *Journal of Sex Research, 36*(3), 237-249.

Wright, P. (2011). Mass media effects on youth sexual behavior: Assessing the claim for causality. In C.T. Salmon (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook* (pp. 343-386). New York: Routledge Press.

Zillmann, D., & Vorderer, P. (2000). Media entertainment: The psychology of its appeal. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associated.