Contributions of Reality TV Consumption to College Women's Endorsement of the Heterosexual Script and Acceptance of Sexualized Aggression

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Abstract

A prominent feature of mainstream television, especially reality programming, is a heterosexual script that outlines women's and men's traditional courtship roles. Although frequent media use is believed to produce greater acceptance of this script, existing analyses have not fully delineated contributions of scripted versus reality programming or tested these notions using a holistic heterosexual script scale. We addressed these limitations in two studies. In Study 1, 466 undergraduate women indicated their support of the heterosexual script and their consumption of popular reality programs, sitcoms, and dramas. Heavier viewing of reality programming predicted greater support for the heterosexual script, and heavier viewing of sitcoms predicted weaker support. In Study 2, we used longitudinal data to explore relations between viewing reality television, acceptance of the heterosexual script, and acceptance of sexualized aggression during undergraduate women's first 2 years in college ($N = 244$). We found that reality television consumption was not a direct predictor of acceptance of sexualized aggression but was a significant, indirect predictor through endorsement of the heterosexual script. These studies contribute to our understanding of unique media contributions to endorsement of the heterosexual script and illuminate one process by which women may come to normalize sexual mistreatment. Campus educational programming on sexuality, sexual assault, and healthy relationships may be able to intervene in this normalization through critique of the heterosexual script and media portrayals of dating and relationships.

Keywords

college women, heterosexual script, scripted television, reality television, sexualized aggression

Dating and courtship are normative behaviors during emerging adulthood. Approximately 62% of college students report having been involved in casual, sexual hookups, and 51% report having had at least one relationship that lasted 6 months or longer (Kuperberg & Padgett, 2016). Assumptions about normative courtship behavior are guided by the culture's sexual scripts, including the heterosexual script, which outlines the courtship strategies, commitment orientations, and sexual goals expected of women and men. This script expects men to actively pursue sexual relationships, objectify women, and prioritize sex over emotion; conversely, women are expected to be sexually passive, use their appearance to attract men, and prioritize emotions over sex (Kim et al., 2007). One prominent force conveying and normalizing the heterosexual script are the media, and television, in particular, which airs 15.5 references to the script per hour on popular youth-oriented programs (Kim et al., 2007). Examples appearing on reality TV may hold additional sway with viewers because of the popularity of this format and the

authenticity attributed to its content (Hall, 2009). Although the messages within this script are normative, they may also be problematic because they reflect an inherent adversarial relationship and power differential.

Does embracing the heterosexual script, as modeled by television, affect women's views of sexual relationship behaviors? Although studies have examined contributions of media use to women's sexual scripts (e.g., Seabrook et al., 2016), this larger question has seldom been tested fully and over time to demonstrate connections across time. Our goal

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was to test this question in two studies. In Study 1, we examined contributions of sexual sitcoms, dramas, and reality programming to women's endorsement of the heterosexual script. In Study 2, we used three waves of data from an ongoing longitudinal study to investigate one potential consequence of the heterosexual script: young women's acceptance of *sexualized aggression* ("mild" sexual assault and aggressive tactics) in party and bar settings.

Dynamics of the Heterosexual Script

According to sexual scripting theory (Simon & Gagnon, 1987), sexual beliefs and assumptions are learned from culturally available messages or scripts that help create and maintain guidelines for appropriate sexual conduct (Greene & Faulkner, 2005). Individuals adapt these cultural scripts to their particular interpersonal contexts and also internalize personalized versions into their psyches. However, the culture's sexual narratives are not gender neutral but instead offer profoundly different norms for women's and men's sexuality (Tolman, 1999). Referred to as the heterosexual script, this cultural script outlines complementary but inherently unequal sexual expectations for women and men (Tolman et al., 2007). The script includes four elements: (a) a sexual double standard wherein sexual experiences are more appropriate and desirable for men than for women; (b) differential courtship strategies that encourage men to use active and powerful tactics to attract partners and women to use passive and alluring tactics; (c) differential commitment strategies whereby men avoid while women prioritize emotional commitment; and (d) differing orientations to same-sex attraction, which is to be avoided by men but eroticized among women (Kim et al., 2007). Therefore, men, situated in positions of power, enact the script by actively pursuing sexual relationships, avoiding commitment and emotional attachment, treating women like sexual objects, appropriating female sexual desire, and experiencing their sexual feelings as uncontrollable. Women, situated in subordinate positions, enact the script by acting sexually passive, using their bodies and looks to attract men, setting sexual limits, and prioritizing emotional commitment (Kim et al., 2007). Because the roles for women and men are at odds, there is an implicit assumption that heterosexual relations are inherently adversarial (Eaton & Matamala, 2014). Awareness of and adherence to this script remains prevalent within heterosexual relationships today, despite claims of sexual equality (Sanchez et al., 2012).

Understanding the correlates and consequences of heterosexual script endorsement is critical, as endorsing traditional sexual scripts may be related to unhealthy relationship beliefs and behaviors. *Healthy* relationships could be defined as those that are consensual, honest, mutually pleasurable, nonexploitative, and protected against sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancy (Tolman, 1999). One concern is that the script's focus on women's responsibility to set sexual limits and its prioritization of men's pleasure may increase women's risk of losing touch with their own bodily feelings and desires (Tolman, 1999). Tolman argued that women who silence their own needs and desires may be more likely to struggle with making their sexual needs known. Second, the passivity component of the heterosexual script may reduce women's sexual satisfaction by socializing women to take a less proactive approach to their own sexuality and a more responsive rather than initiative role in sexual encounters (Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007; Sanchez et al., 2012). Third, there is concern that women may feel pressure to consent to unwanted sex because traditional sexual scripts value women primarily as sex objects who aim to please others (Hust et al., 2017; Kennett et al., 2013). Finally, scholars acknowledge that the adversarial relationship between women and men is a feature of the heterosexual script that may justify the use of manipulative techniques by men or by women in an effort to gain power and control (Eaton & Matamala, 2014). Together, these features of the script may diminish women's capacity to have healthy sexual relationships.

Empirical evidence validates these concerns, suggesting that endorsing heterosexual script beliefs interferes with women's sexual well-being. First, stronger endorsement of the sexual double standard, one aspect of the heterosexual script, has been associated with diminished sexual agency, including lower levels of sexual assertiveness, perceiving more barriers to condom use, less sexual resourcefulness, more experience giving-in to unwanted sexual activity, and perceiving less ability to control sexual situations (Greene & Faulkner, 2005; Kennett et al., 2013; Lefkowitz et al., 2014). Second, greater adherence to gendered sexual scripts, more generally, is associated with more passive sexual behavior, decreased sexual autonomy and assertiveness, decreased sexual body esteem, and increased avoidance motives (Emmerink et al., 2016; Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007; Rubin et al., 2019; Woerner & Abbey, 2017). Finally, stronger support of heteronormative beliefs and gendered sexual stereotypes among women is linked to greater acceptance of verbal sexual coercion and lower expectations to seek sexual consent (Eaton & Matamala, 2014; Hust et al., 2017). Thus, in many ways, embracing the norms of the heterosexual script could diminish women's sexual well-being.

Television and the Heterosexual Script

Although young women see the heterosexual script play out in their social lives, they may also learn its dynamics via media consumption. Indeed, emerging adults are some of the heaviest media consumers, noted to spend approximately 12 hr engaged with media each day (Coyne et al., 2013; Ward et al., 2015). Television content, a prominent aspect of their media diets, features abundant examples of these traditional courtship norms. Kim et al. (2007) examined the presence of the heterosexual script among 25 primetime programs popular among youth (16 sitcoms and nine dramas). They reported that references to the heterosexual script occurred 15.5 times per

hour, dominated by depictions of sex as masculinity (45.2% of references) and by depictions of feminine courtship strategies (13.4%), which reflected the idea that women are primarily valued for their physical appearance and use passive strategies to gain men's affection. Most recently Aubrey et al. (2020) analyzed sexual references appearing in 70 programs that target tweens, teens, or young adults. They reported 1237 total sexual references and 605 of these (48.9%) addressed aspects of the heterosexual script. Within this subset of 605, the largest theme was sex as masculinity (72.1% of the 605), followed by masculine commitment messages (16.4% of the 605).

Perhaps an even more potent source of heterosexual script references on television is unscripted programming or reality television, which was watched 14 hr a week in one sample of undergraduate women (Behm-Morawitz et al., 2015). Reality television is presented to viewers as unscripted entertainment featuring "real people" rather than professional actors. The nature of this programming may lend the genre power to appear as an authentic and realistic portrayal of everyday interactions, further reifying its sexual scripts (Hall, 2009). Again, portrayals that sexually objectify women or link masculinity to sexual prowess and interest are particularly prominent. For example, in their analysis of 299 episodes of five reality programs, Flynn et al. (2015) found that female cast members exposed their bodies more than 50% of the time and exhibited higher rates of body exposure than male cast members. Analyzing 64 hr of reality dating programming, Ferris et al. (2007) reported that references to women as sexual objects occurred 5.9 times per hour and references to men as always looking for sex occurred 3.6 times per hour. Based on these studies, both scripted TV and reality TV offer abundant examples of the heterosexual script that could be informing viewers' perspectives of courtship.

Theoretical and Empirical Analyses Linking Media Use to Heterosexual Script Support

Wright's (2011) script acquisition, activation, and application model (3AM) provides a theoretical framework for understanding how regular exposure to this content could be shaping viewers' own sexual scripts and beliefs. The model posits that media shape our sexual beliefs by teaching us new scripts, priming familiar scripts, and encouraging the use of scripts in everyday life. The 3AM emphasizes that media reinforce socially constructed roles and behaviors in sexual interactions, such as those outlined by the heterosexual script. Television programming may contribute to the normalization, acceptance, and perpetuation of the beliefs that underlie the script given their prevalence in portrayals of heterosexual sex and romance. Following the 3AM, TV viewing may expose viewers to new scripts or strengthen endorsement of known scripts and, through illustrating the "success" of these scripts, promote use of and reliance on the scripts for personal sexual or relationship endeavors.

Empirical evidence indicates that TV consumption is indeed linked to holding views about courtship that are consistent with the heterosexual script. Initially, scholars noted associations between individual elements of the heterosexual script, namely, expectations that men are sexually-driven and women are sexual objects, and undergraduates' television use. Across several cross-sectional survey studies, findings document that heavier viewing of reality programming or reality dating programming (e.g., Ferris et al., 2007; Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006), music videos (e.g., Hust & Lei, 2008; Ward, 2002; Ward et al., 2011), and sports programming (e.g., Hust & Lei, 2008) is each associated with stronger support for these individual elements of the heterosexual script. Although null or minimal results are also reported (e.g., Guo & Nathanson, 2011), overall, there is consistent and significant evidence that for United States (US) undergraduates, diverse forms of TV exposure are linked to greater endorsement of sexual scripts that objectify women and privilege men's aggression and dominance.

In 2016, a Heterosexual Script Scale (HSS) was created that measured these two gendered sexual roles, as well as commitment orientations for women and men and other courtship strategies featured in the heterosexual script (Seabrook et al., 2016). In the initial development and testing of this 22-item scale, the authors assessed its connections to TV viewing among 750 undergraduates, finding that more frequent viewing of 30 reality TV programs predicted greater endorsement of the HSS; however, their viewing of 32 sitcoms and eight dramas did not. Since this time, others have included the HSS as part of a composite measure of gendered sexual scripts and have continued to show a contribution of TV viewing. Among sexually experienced undergraduate women, greater viewing of TV (overall hours and reality TV hours) predicted greater support of gendered sexual scripts (as measured by four scales, including the HSS; Seabrook et al., 2017). Similarly, Ward et al. (2019) found that among heterosexual Black women, media use (a latent variable that included music videos, reality TV, movies, and women's magazines) predicted greater acceptance of gendered sexual scripts, as measured by the HSS and three other scales. Because these latter two studies used a composite measure of media use and a composite measure of gendered sexual scripts, we do not know the individual contribution of reality TV, nor specific connections to the HSS. We sought to tease out these relations in our first study and test possible consequences of these relations in Study 2.

Study 1: Overview and Expectations

Media models, though offered as entertainment, could play a significant role in providing young women with prominent and attractive examples of "normative" courtship behavior. It is believed that the media frequently present examples of the

heterosexual script, and that regular consumption of this content normalizes and validates these scripts for media consumers. Reality TV may be an especially powerful purveyor of these scripts because of the authenticity assumed of its content and the role model status attributed to its stars (Hall, 2009; Kuhne & Opree, 2020). Therefore, the heterosexual scripts that are shared through TV programs, and especially reality TV programs, may become internalized, creating a framework for how individuals understand themselves and their interpersonal relationships. Accordingly, the goal of our first study was to confirm a link between TV consumption and college students' endorsement of the heterosexual script and to delineate contributions of reality and scripted TV. Given past evidence (e.g., Ferris et al., 2007), we expected that heavier viewing of reality TV would be associated with greater support of the heterosexual script (Hypothesis 1). Expectations concerning scripted comedies and dramas were less clear, but, given the prevalence of heterosexual script content in scripted programming (Aubrey et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2007), we anticipated that heavier viewing of scripted comedies and dramas would also be associated with greater support of the heterosexual script (Hypothesis 2).

Method

Participants

Participants were 466 undergraduate women aged 17–22 years ($M = 18.6$, $SD = 0.87$). A majority of the sample identified as White, non-Hispanic ($n = 288$, 61.8%), with lesser representation of Asian/Asian American women ($n = 96$, 20.6%), Latina women ($n = 31$, 6.7%), Black women ($n = 31$, 6.7%), Middle Eastern women ($n = 14$, 3%), and multiracial women ($n = 5$, 1.1%). As a proxy for socioeconomic status, we obtained information on the highest level of education attained by participants' mothers, scored via 10 categories that ranged from 1 (*a few years of high school or less*) to 10 (*PhD*). The mean fell at 5.55 ($SD = 2.16$), with 39.3% of mothers ($n = 183$) having completed a 4 year college degree and 32.2% ($n = 150$) having completed a master's, business, law, or medical degree. In terms of their sexual orientation, 92.7% of the participants identified as exclusively ($n = 386$) or predominantly heterosexual ($n = 46$). The remaining 7.3% of the sample identified as bisexual, predominantly gay/lesbian, or not sure. In terms of their current dating status, 157 women (33.7%) indicated that they were currently in a dating relationship and 300 were not (64.4%). Finally, religiosity, a common correlate of sexual attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Kuperberg & Padgett, 2016), was assessed via three items that examined participants' self-perceived religiosity, frequency of attending religious services, and frequency of prayer. Each item was scored from 1 (*never/not at all*) to 5 (*very/all the time*), and a mean score was computed such that higher scores indicated greater religiosity ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.05$, $\alpha = .88$).

Measures

Television Exposure. Participants were provided with a list of 50 TV programs known to feature sexual and courtship content. To create this list, we first compiled a longer list of popular programs using online viewing information and data from previous published studies (e.g., Grower et al., 2019). We then used sexual content ratings from Common Sense Media to select out programs that are higher in sexual content. Common Sense Media is an independent, nonprofit organization that provides online information about media content to help families and youth use media and technology in a healthy way. This organization evaluates popular television programs and movies on several content dimensions, including the presence of sexual content, which is rated using a 1–6 rating; a higher rating indicates more sexual content. Drawing on these ratings, we selected out 50 programs that were on our larger list of popular programs and that had also received a Common Sense rating of 3 or higher for sexual content. We then presented this list of 50 programs to participants, who used a 1 (*never*)–4 (*quite a bit/most or all episodes*) scale to indicate their frequency of exposure to each program.

Once these data were collected, we created three genre-specific variables from these 50 programs. We first eliminated 13 programs (e.g., *Californication*) that were high in sexual content, but were viewed by less than 10% of the sample. We then grouped the remaining programs into three genres (reality television, comedy, and drama) based on their online descriptions. These steps resulted in the following three variables that were used in our analyses: 11 sexual reality TV programs (e.g., *The Bachelor, Dating Naked, and Keeping up with the Kardashians*); 11 situation comedies with sexual content (e.g., *The Big Bang Theory and Friends*), and 17 dramas high in sexual content (e.g., *Gossip Girl and Grey's Anatomy*). Mean scores were computed across each genre such that higher scores indicated more frequent exposure. In addition, we assessed participants' weekly television use via three items. Participants were asked "How many hours on a typical weekday do you watch television," and provided responses on a scale anchored by 0 and 10+. This question was then repeated, instead referring to "a typical Saturday" and "a typical Sunday." A weekly TV hours sum was produced by multiplying responses to the "weekday" item by five and adding this product to the responses for their weekend viewing hours.

Heterosexual Script. Participants completed the Heterosexual Script Scale (HSS; Seabrook et al., 2016), which measures the extent to which they endorse Kim et al.'s (2007) descriptions of the oppositional yet complimentary ways that women and men should think, feel, and act regarding sex and relationships. Using a 6-point scale anchored by 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 6 (*strongly agree*), participants indicated their level of agreement with statements such as "Guys are always ready for sex" and "Girls should be more concerned about their appearance than guys." A mean score was computed across the

Table 1. Descriptives and Zero-Order Correlations Between Study 1 Variables.

	Sitcoms	Dramas	Reality TV	Heterosexual Script
11 sexual sitcoms	—	.36***	.28***	−10*
17 sexual dramas		—	.42***	−.05
11 sexual reality TV			—	.15**
Heterosexual script				
M	1.80	1.82	1.59	2.73
SD	.44	.47	.41	.65
Possible range	1–4	1–4	1–4	1–6

Note. N = 465. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

22 items, such that higher scores indicated stronger endorsement of the heterosexual script. Construct validity of the HSS was supported by significant, positive correlations between the HSS and traditional gender role attitudes, benevolent sexism, traditional sexual scripts, self-sexualization, and self-objectification. Cronbach's alpha was .88 for women in the original study and .87 for the current sample.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from our university's Introductory Psychology Subject Pool in 2017. All students enrolled in introductory psychology classes could sign up for this study, which was identified by a number only. Participants received course credit for full or partial completion of the survey. Students completed the survey in small groups no larger than 10 participants on tablets in an on-campus research lab. Participants were informed that the study examined media use and beliefs about social relationships. Other scales were included that were not analyzed here; these scales examined gender beliefs, body image, social media use, and academic beliefs. Participants completed the study in hour-long sessions and were provided a debriefing form upon completion. Administration of the full survey took approximately 45 min. The university's Institutional Review Board approved all procedures and measures.

Results

Descriptives and inter-correlations of the central study variables are provided in Table 1. Consumption of the 11 Sexual Reality TV programs (M = 1.59, SD = 0.41) was moderate, but was lower than consumption of the 11 Sexual Sitcoms (M = 1.80, SD = 0.44; $t(464)$ = −8.93, p < .001) and the 17 Sexual Dramas (M = 1.82, SD = 0.47; $t(464)$ = 10.48, p < .001), whose consumption levels were equal, $t(464)$ = .788, p = .431. Within the 11 reality TV programs, the most watched programs were *America's Next Top Model* (M = 2.27, SD = 1.00), *The Bachelor* (M = 2.16, SD = 1.12), *Keeping up with the Kardashians* (M = 2.16, SD = 1.04), and *The Bachelorette* (M = 2.14, SD = 1.14). Within the 11 Sexual Sitcoms, the most watched ones were *Friends* (M = 2.94, SD = 1.15), *How I Met*

Your Mother (M = 2.40, SD = 1.29), and *The Big Bang Theory* (M = 2.06, SD = 1.02). Within the 11 Sexual Dramas, the most watched were *Gossip Girl* (M = 2.75, SD = 1.33), *Grey's Anatomy* (M = 2.66, SD = 1.30), and *Pretty Little Liars* (M = 2.39, SD = 1.11).

To determine possible demographic correlates, we ran a series of zero-order correlations between the HSS variable and the following six variables: age, identification as Asian (coded 0/1; selected because it was the only ethnic minority group represented by at least 10% of the sample), mother's education level, religiosity, identification as gay or bisexual (coded 0/1), and currently being in a relationship (coded 0 = not partnered; 1 = partnered). Four significant correlations emerged. Having a more educated mother, $r(465)$ = −.10, p < .05, being in a relationship, $r(457)$ = −.12, p < .01, and identifying as predominantly lesbian, bisexual, or unsure, $r(465)$ = −.18, p < .001, was each associated with weaker endorsement of the HSS. Expressing higher levels of religiosity was associated with stronger endorsement of the HSS, $r(465)$ = .18, p < .001. These four variables served as covariates in the regression analyses.

To test the main hypotheses, that exposure to reality TV programs (H1) and to scripted comedies and dramas (H2) would predict greater endorsement of the heterosexual script, we conducted a hierarchical regression analysis. On Step 1, we entered the four covariates named above, and also weekly TV hours, in order to isolate contributions of the three genres in question. On Step 2, we added sexual comedies, dramas, and reality TV programs. Results are provided in Table 2. At Step 1, the equation was significant, accounting for 8.6% of the variance. At this step, having a more educated mother, identifying as gay or bisexual, and being in a relationship were each associated with weaker endorsement of the HSS, and greater religiosity was associated with stronger endorsement. Weekly TV hours was not a correlate. At the second step, the equation was again significant and explained 12.3% of the variance. Adding the three genres contributed an additional 3.7% of the variance, which was a significant contribution. Results were somewhat unexpected, however. Consumption of the 11 sexual reality TV programs was indeed associated with stronger endorsement of the HSS, as expected (H1). However, counter to expectations, heavier consumption of the

Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Analyses Testing Associations Between Television Genres and Heterosexual Script Endorsement (Standardized Coefficients, Beta, Reported).

	Step 1	Step 2	VIF (Evidence of Multicollinearity)
Mother's education	−.11*	−.12**	1.022
In a relationship	−.12**	−.11*	1.037
Gay/bisexual/unsure	−.18***	−.16**	1.061
Religiosity	.13**	.11*	1.066
TV weekly viewing hours	.05	.07	1.084
11 sexual reality TV		.19***	1.277
11 sexual sitcoms		−.12*	1.207
17 sexual dramas		−.09	1.387
R^2	.086	.123	
F	8.441***	7.808***	

Note. VIF = Variance Inflation Factor. N = 456. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

sexual sitcoms was associated with weaker support of the HSS (H2). Viewing of sexual dramas was not a significant correlate.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to test previous findings demonstrating a link between TV consumption and college women's endorsement of the heterosexual script and to delineate contributions of reality and scripted TV. Although other studies have tested components of the heterosexual script via individual scales, such as notions that women are sexual objects or that men are sexually driven (e.g., Ward, 2002; Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006), we sought to test media contributions to the full Heterosexual Script Scale. Confirming H1 and matching the outcome of Seabrook et al. (2016), we did indeed find that reality TV viewing was associated with greater support of the heterosexual script, even controlling for multiple demographic variables. However, counter to our expectations that comedy and drama viewing would produce a similar association, we found that viewing sitcoms was associated with lower endorsement of the HSS. Why did sitcom viewing yield a significant and negative correlation when analyses in Seabrook et al. (2016) found *no* contribution of comedy and drama exposure? Sitcoms are comedies and are therefore purposefully humorous and sometimes even absurd by nature. It is possible that these programs include humorous efforts to present, make fun of, or even critique common norms and scripts and that may contribute to viewers' being less accepting of them. Indeed, Dhoest (2017) noted that comedies often transgress and question norms and expectations for humor, and they can in some ways be subversive. It was surprising, too, that drama viewing produced no correlates. Further study is needed concerning the content and impact of scripted comedies versus dramas. However, similar to Seabrook et al. (2016), we do see a significant contribution of reality TV.

Having found links between reality TV viewing and greater endorsement of the heterosexual script, we sought, for our second study, to offer a stronger test of the consequences of this script in two key ways. First, we wanted to attend more closely to the potential consequences of holding this script for women's views of sexualized aggression. As noted earlier, endorsing this script has been noted to diminish women's sexual well-being; however, we believe that adhering to its norms may also shape women's views toward sexualized aggression, or mild forms of sexual assault and aggression, that occurs in social drinking settings. Of particular concern is the script's unequal power distribution, whereby women are sexually objectified and male pleasure and sexual drive are prioritized, for it is argued that these dynamics could help legitimize violence against women (e.g., Tolman et al., 2003). Indeed, findings link both hegemonic masculinity and aspects of the heterosexual script, such as objectification, with greater support of sexual violence among men. For example, support for the belief system comprising hegemonic masculinity has been consistently linked with men's sexual harassment, violence against women, sexual assault, and rape-supportive attitudes (McDermott et al., 2015; Murnen et al., 2002). Additionally, multiple studies have found that men's sexual objectification of women is linked to increased support of sexual harassment and aggression and greater victim blaming (e.g., Bevens & Loughnan, 2019; Gervais et al., 2014; Rudman & Mescher, 2012; Vasquez et al., 2017).

Extending these applications to women, it is possible that the script's inherent power differential and its construction of men's sexuality as urgent, insistent, and forceful could help normalize sexualized aggression for women, fueled by the assumption that "boys will be boys." There are indeed some indications that supporting themes featured in the heterosexual script are linked to greater acceptance of a wide spectrum of sexually aggressive behaviors among undergraduate women. For example, greater support of specific gendered sexual stereotypes (e.g., believing that men are sexually driven) has been shown to predict more frequent perpetration of stereotypical sexualized behaviors (e.g., making sexual comments or jokes, touching someone in a sexual way; Jewell & Brown,

2013) and lower expectation to seek sexual consent, adhere to sexual consent decisions, and to refuse unwanted sexual activity (Hust et al., 2017). Among heterosexual undergraduate women, Eaton and Matamala (2014) found that greater support of heteronormative beliefs predicted greater acceptance of verbal sexual coercion, greater perpetration of verbal sexual coercion, and greater victimization. Barnett et al. (2017) found that for undergraduate women, greater support of sexual dysfunctional beliefs predicted greater rape myth acceptance. In addition, more frequent interpersonal experiences of objectification, which is related to framing women as sexually passive, is positively associated with rape myth acceptance and system justification (Papp & Erchull, 2017). Through the endorsement of the heterosexual script, which is heavily promoted in reality television programming, varying forms of sexual violence may be further normalized for young women.

Study 2: Introduction

For Study 2 we attended to "mild" forms of sexual assault and aggression that exist on and off college campuses and may be particularly noticeable in social drinking settings such as parties and bars (Becker & Tinkler, 2015; Kavanaugh, 2013). Kelly (1987, 1988), in proposing her continuum of sexual violence, argued that most women experience sexual violence in their lives and that there is little recognition of harm that does not fit within the legal understanding of criminal behavior. Several decades after urging scholars to acknowledge these experiences, Kelly (2011) critiqued the absence of the "everydayness of violence" from survey research. We use the term "sexualized aggression" to refer to the mild forms of sexual assault and aggression that often fall outside our definitions and measurements of sexual violence (Papp & McClelland, 2020). Sexualized aggression is distinct from sexual aggression, which is a term often used in association with rape. Sexualized aggression includes mild sexual assault: non-consensual sexual touching that is not preceded by force, threat of force, or incapacitation. It also includes sexual aggression, such as coercive tactics (e.g., guilt-tripping, nagging, and anger) that do not result in rape and may not result in physical contact at all. These behaviors are not typically recognized by the law—or even by individuals—as problematic. Impressions that sexualized aggression is "no big deal" underscore the extent to which we rely on force, incapacitation, and rape to understand sexual violence, limiting us to seeing assault and aggression in only their most "severe" forms. For this reason, sexualized aggression may be easily normalized relative to other, more recognizable forms of sexual violence.

Social drinking settings are a common site for college students to meet sexual and romantic partners, and within these spaces they encounter and enact the heterosexual script (Armstrong et al., 2006). The structure of party environments on campuses is often gendered: large parties are almost exclusively hosted by fraternities where women are expected to perform and compete for men's attention (Armstrong et al., 2006). In addition, parties are the primary way for undergraduate women to meet men on campus, due to same-gender dormitories and large lecture halls that prevent socializing. This is particularly true for women under the age of 21 as they may not be able to enter bars. Gender dynamics play a crucial role in party environments, as women must "earn" men's approval by looking and behaving in certain ways (e.g., White, tan, blonde, and wearing revealing clothing), while men use sex to earn status among their peers. Thus, within social drinking settings, the heterosexual script informs how women and men look, behave, and interact, playing a large role in both the structure of the environment and interpersonal interactions.

In line with the heterosexual script and their role as sexual initiators, men may not always attend to women's verbal or non-verbal cues of non-consent and unwantedness. Past research has documented that women's boundaries are tested, disregarded, and manipulated in party, bar, and club settings (Armstrong et al., 2006; Graham et al., 2014; Papp & McClelland, 2020). Unwanted and non-consensual sexual attention is common, with documentation supporting its normalization. Graham et al. (2014) reported that approximately one-quarter of women experienced unwanted touching and nearly half experienced unwanted, persistent pursuit over the course of a single night in the bar district of a Canadian city. Tinkler et al. (2018) investigated US college students' perceptions of the legality of overt, physical aggression in public drinking settings. When describing their experiences, participants consistently separated unwanted sexual contact from violence, citing the ubiquity of the former, the unlikelihood of physical injury resulting from unwanted sexual contact, and expectations to encounter aggressive sexual behavior in a drinking environment as reasons for their differences.

Therefore, in Study 2, we examined the acceptance of sexualized aggression in social drinking settings, where mild assaultive or aggressive behaviors might seem more "normal" than the same behavior would in, for example, a grocery store or doctor's office. Berkowitz's (1992) integrated model of sexual assault proposed that individuals' personalities (including socialization experiences), situational characteristics, and misunderstanding of victims' consent cues contribute to perpetration of sexual violence. Although this model focused on understanding why men sexually assault women, it is helpful to consider similar factors in analyzing women's normalization of sexualized aggression. Their socialization experiences, such as messaging concerning the heterosexual script and the context of social drinking settings may inform how women interpret these incidents. Experimental research has illustrated that men, but not women, may express more acceptance of violence against women after watching films that positively portray sexual violence (Malamuth & Check, 1981). Our study examined the effects of exposure to reality

television shows that air on major networks, and thus messaging about or depictions of aggression may be less obvious than the materials used by Malamuth and Check. Furthermore, given that sexualized aggression may also be a less obvious form of sexual mistreatment, we may see a link between reality programming and acceptance of sexualized aggression.

A second goal of Study 2 was to help establish connections between media use, heteronormative beliefs, and sexualized aggression over time using longitudinal data. Although Study 1 found that reality TV viewing is associated with HSS endorsement, these data were cross-sectional. Analyses using data collected at multiple time points are needed to help demonstrate relations across time, and two recent studies offer precedents. Gamble (2018) found that for undergraduate women, having a more sexualized media diet (across TV, movies, music videos, and magazines) predicted greater acceptance of heteronormative scripts two months later. In a longitudinal study that followed youth in Belgium from adolescence into emerging adulthood (ages 18–24 years), Vangeel et al. (2020) found that more frequent viewing of music channels (that feature music videos and reality TV programs) at Time 2 predicted greater acceptance of gendered sexual roles at Time 3 (painting men as sexually driven and women as sexual objects), which predicted greater rape myth acceptance at Time 4, in emerging adulthood.

Overview and Expectations

In Study 2, we used three waves of longitudinal data to explore relations between reality TV viewing, heterosexual script endorsement, and acceptance of sexualized aggression in party and bar settings. Given the results of Study 1, we predicted that courtship-oriented reality TV consumption at the start of participants' first year in college (baseline) would be significantly and positively correlated with heterosexual script endorsement at the end of their first year (Time 2; Hypothesis 1(a)). Because sexualized aggression reflects elements of the heterosexual script, specifically that men actively and aggressively pursue sexual interaction, we expected that heavier viewing of courtship-oriented reality TV programming at baseline would correlate with acceptance of sexualized aggression at the end of participants' second year (Time 3; Hypothesis 1(b)). Similarly, we anticipated that heterosexual script endorsement at Time 2 and acceptance of sexualized aggression at Time 3 would be significantly and positively correlated (Hypothesis 2). Finally, we anticipated that there would be a significant indirect effect of reality TV exposure on acceptance of sexualized aggression through endorsement of the heterosexual script (Hypothesis 3).

Method

These data were from a larger study investigating female students' social experiences throughout the course of their undergraduate career at a large midwestern public university. Three waves of data from the ongoing longitudinal study were used in the current paper. Participants who had missing data at baseline ($n = 2$), Time 2 ($n = 14$), or Time 3 ($n = 3$) were not included in the current analysis.

Participants

Participants were 244 undergraduate women attending a large, public university in the Midwest US. More than half of the sample identified as White ($n = 143$; 58.6%), followed by Asian/Asian Pacific Islander ($n = 57$; 23.4%), multiracial ($n = 28$; 11.5%), Black/African American ($n = 6$; 2.5%), Middle Eastern ($n = 5$; 2%), and Latinx ($n = 4$; 1.6%). One participant declined to respond. Approximately three-quarters of the participants identified as heterosexual or straight ($n = 183$; 75%), followed by mostly heterosexual or straight ($n = 25$; 10.2%), bisexual ($n = 19$; 7.8%), lesbian or gay ($n = 3$; 1.2%), mostly lesbian or gay ($n = 3$; 1.2%), asexual ($n = 2$; 0.8%), queer ($n = 2$; 0.8%), and other sexual identities ($n = 7$; 2.9%). Among those who used the open text box to provide their sexual identity, responses included pansexual, demisexual, gray-asexual, and questioning.

Procedure

We recruited participants via emails from the registrar's office. The registrar's office at the university randomly selected 2000 female undergraduates in the incoming first-year class and emailed each an invitation to participate in our study on September 4, 2018. We designed the initial survey to take approximately 30 min to complete; excluding outliers, participants completed the survey in an average of 25 min ($SD = 10.44$). There were 456 participants enrolled at baseline. We sent emails inviting participants to respond to the end-of-the-year survey on May 3, 2019, with two reminders. We designed this survey to take approximately 20 min to complete. Excluding outliers, participants spent an average of 21 min taking the survey ($SD = 10.93$). We retained 67% of the sample at the May 2019 survey ($n = 306$). On May 1, 2020, we sent the first of three emails inviting participants to complete the end-of-year survey. The Time 2 and Time 3 surveys were nearly identical. Excluding outliers, participants spent an average of 24 min taking the survey ($SD = 11.12$). We retained 68% of the sample at the May 2020 survey ($n = 310$). At each wave, either all (baseline, Time 3) or a substantial proportion of participants (70%; Time 2) were compensated with US$5 or US$10 Amazon gift cards.

Measures

We used the Heterosexual Script Scale (HSS; Seabrook et al., 2016) described in Study 1 as part of the Time 2 survey ($\alpha = .91$).

Table 3. Descriptives, Zero-Order, and Partial Correlations Between Study 2 Variables.

	RTV	HSS	ASA
RTV at baseline (September 2018)	—	.22***	.12
HSS at Time 2 (May 2019)	.21**	—	.39***
ASA at Time 3 (May 2020)	.09	.24***	—
M	1.61	2.37	1.59
SD	.68	.70	.59
Possible range	1–4	1–6	1–6

Note. RTV = reality television exposure, HSS = Heterosexual Script Scale, ASA = acceptance of sexualized aggression. N = 244. Zero-order correlations are presented above the diagonal and partial correlations (controlling for Acceptance of Sexualized Aggression at baseline) are presented below the diagonal. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Reality Television Exposure. Reality television exposure was assessed at baseline. Participants were asked to record the frequency with which they watched *The Bachelor*, *The Bachelorette*, *Big Brother*, and *Love and Hip Hop*. Responses were provided using a 1–4 scale that included the following options: *never*, *a little (a few episodes)*, *sometimes*, or *quite a bit (most or all episodes)*. *Love and Hip Hop* was removed because 98.5% of the sample had never watched it. Mean scores were produced across the remaining three items (α = .73 at baseline and .70 at Time 3), with higher scores reflecting greater reality television consumption.

Acceptance of Sexualized Aggression. This scale was designed for the purpose of this study to measure participants' attitudes toward sexualized aggression as it appears in social drinking settings. Scale development and validation analyses were completed using data from college women (N = 612) at two large, public universities in the Midwest and Southwest US (Papp et al., 2021 in preparation). For the original 10 items, both a two-factor and one-factor model had good fit to the data; in the current study we use the single-factor scale. Supporting validity, the single-factor scale correlated positively and significantly (p < .001) with the HSS (Seabrook et al., 2016), a modified Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale (Burt, 1980; Teten et al., 2005), Attitudes Toward Male Physical Dating Violence Scale (Snell, 1998), Male Role Attitudes Scale (Pleck et al., 1994), and the Modified Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (McMahon & Farmer, 2011; Payne et al., 1999). Correlations ranged between .23 and .46. Cronbach's alpha for the 10-item scale was .81.

In the current study, acceptance of sexualized aggression was measured at baseline and Time 3. The prompt preceding the scale was "There are many ways that people might communicate sexual attraction at parties and bars. Please read the statements and respond based on the following scale." Response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*), with higher scores indicating greater acceptance of sexualized aggression. We computed a mean score across the 10 items (e.g., "It's not a big deal when a guy grinds on a girl when she's not into it," "It's not a big deal when a guy becomes visibly offended or upset when a girl turns him down"). The full scale is provided in the Appendix 1. Cronbach's alpha was .80 at baseline and .88 at Time 3.

Results

Descriptive statistics, zero-order correlations, and partial correlations (controlling for acceptance of sexualized aggression at baseline) are provided in Table 3. On average, participants reported low reality television exposure (M = 1.61, SD = 0.68), heterosexual script endorsement (M = 2.37, SD = 0.70), and acceptance of sexualized aggression (M = 1.59, SD = 0.59). Partial correlation results indicated that reality TV viewing was significantly and positively correlated with HSS endorsement, $r(244)$ = .21, p = .001. Reality TV exposure was not, however, significantly associated with acceptance of sexualized aggression, $r(244)$ = .09, p = .18. HSS endorsement was significantly and positively correlated with acceptance of sexualized aggression, $r(244)$ = .24, p < .001.

We utilized PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017; Model 4) for SPSS to conduct the mediation analysis. Confidence intervals were bootstrapped with 10,000 samples for significance. Acceptance of sexualized aggression at baseline was included as a covariate in the model (see Figure 1 for the complete model results). The mediator model was significant, $F(2, 241)$ = 26.66, p < .001, R^2 = .18; viewing reality TV at baseline positively predicted endorsement of the HSS at Time 2 (β = .19, p = .001). The outcome model was significant as well, $F(3, 240)$ = 41.25, p < .001, R^2 = .34; endorsement of the HSS positively predicted acceptance of sexualized aggression at Time 3 (β = .21, p < .001). We interpreted the significance of the indirect effect by examining the 95% confidence intervals; if confidence intervals do not include 0, the indirect effect is significant. There was a significant indirect effect of viewing reality television at baseline on acceptance of sexualized aggression at Time 3, through endorsement of the heterosexual script at Time 2 (β = .04, SE = .02, 95% CI = [.01, .08]).

To better understand the relations between reality TV viewing, heterosexual script endorsement, and acceptance of sexualized aggression, we also tested the reverse model. Acceptance of sexualized aggression at baseline was the predictor and reality TV consumption at Time 3 was the outcome. Reality TV consumption at baseline was included as a covariate (see Figure 2 for the complete model results). The mediator model was significant, $F(2, 241)$ = 26.66, p < .001, R^2 = .18; acceptance of sexualized aggression at baseline positively predicted endorsement of the HSS at Time 2 (β = .36, p < .001). However, neither acceptance of sexualized aggression at baseline (β = .03, p = .52) nor HSS endorsement at Time 2 (β = .02, p = .64) were significant predictors of reality TV viewing at Time 3. Furthermore, there was not a significant indirect effect of acceptance of sexualized

Figure 1. The Mediating Role of Heterosexual Script Endorsement (Time 2) in the Relation Between Reality Television Exposure (Baseline) and Acceptance of Sexualized Aggression (Time 3), When Controlling for Acceptance of Sexualized Aggression at Baseline.
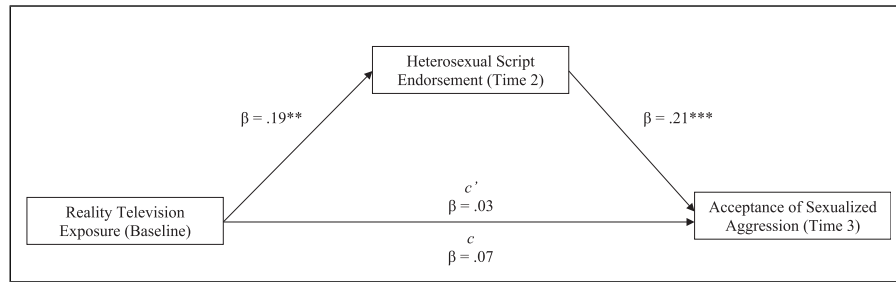
Note. N = 244. When controlling for acceptance of sexualized aggression at baseline, the indirect effect of reality television consumption (baseline) on acceptance of sexualized aggression (Time 3) was significant, β = .04, 95% CI [.01, .08]. Standardized coefficients (β) are presented. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Figure 2. The Mediating Role of Heterosexual Script Endorsement (Time 2) in the Relation Between Acceptance of Sexualized Aggression (Baseline) and Reality Television Exposure (Time 3), When Controlling for Reality Television Exposure at Baseline.
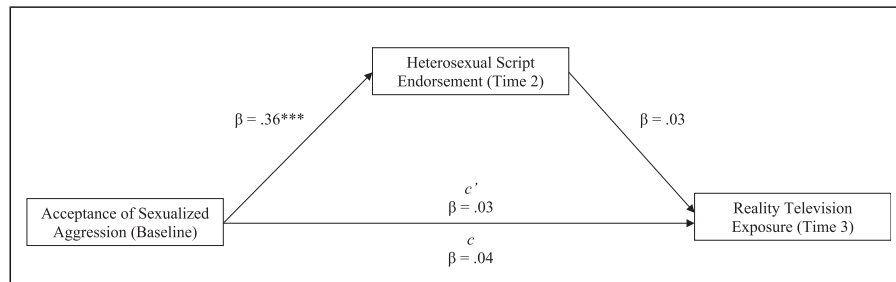
Note. N = 244. When controlling for reality television exposure at baseline, the indirect effect of acceptance of sexualized aggression (baseline) on reality television consumption (Time 3) was not significant, β = .01, 95% CI [−.03, .05]. Standardized coefficients (β) are presented. ***p < .001.

aggression at baseline on reality TV consumption at Time 3 (β = .01, *SE* = .02, 95% CI = [−.03, .05]).

Discussion

The major aims of Study 2 were to test longitudinal associations between reality television consumption and heterosexual script endorsement in a sample of first-year college women and to test acceptance of sexualized aggression as a possible outcome of reality TV viewing and heterosexual script endorsement. We found support for Hypothesis 1a, that baseline reality TV viewing was associated with stronger endorsement of the heterosexual script at Time 2. These findings were similar to those from Study 1 and also demonstrated potential connections between variables over time. We did not find support for Hypothesis 1b, in that reality TV consumption was not significantly correlated with acceptance of sexualized aggression. Hypothesis 2, that heterosexual script endorsement would be correlated with acceptance of sexualized aggression, was supported. Finally, we found support for Hypothesis 3, that there would be a significant

indirect link between reality TV consumption and acceptance of sexualized aggression.

Study 2 demonstrated that reality TV consumption at the start of college predicted stronger endorsement of the heterosexual script at the end of participants' first year, which in turn was associated with greater acceptance of sexualized aggression in party and bar settings at the end of their second year. Although there was not a significant direct effect of reality TV viewing on acceptance of sexualized aggression, there was a significant indirect effect through HSS endorsement. Results of the reverse model provided evidence that the temporal relation between reality TV exposure and acceptance of sexualized aggression moved in the hypothesized direction. The reverse model results also indicated that acceptance of sexualized aggression was a strong, significant predictor of heterosexual script endorsement. There may be a circular relationship between these beliefs, whereby endorsement of one construct reinforces endorsement of the other.

Wright's (2011) 3AM posits that viewers may learn and reinforce cultural sexual scripts through frequent media use and may draw on and apply these scripts to their own lives.

Berkowitz's (1992) integrated model of assault might be applicable to understanding the normalization processes as resulting from socialization experiences and situational context. Given the prominence of the heterosexual script on reality TV, young women in the audience may be incorporating it into their expectations for and approaches to courtship and applying it when making judgments about their experiences at campus bars and parties. Women may be using this larger script to make sense of unwanted physical and non-physical advances they experience, possibly influencing them to interpret these events as acceptable. Although reality TV may not be the first or only place women see the heterosexual script, its frequent depiction may communicate that the script is a reliable guide for those who desire sexual or romantic relationships.

General Discussion

From *The Bachelor* to *The Real Housewives*, reality television offers abundant examples of successful and unsuccessful courtship bids and sexual relationships. Given their high rates of media use and their developmentally appropriate interest in sexual relationships, college women are primed to encounter and attend to the sexual narratives presented on reality TV. Indeed, the content and models within reality programming may be especially powerful because they provide viewers with a purportedly "authentic" look into, and thus guidance for, sexual and romantic relationships. Wright's (2011) 3AM postulates that viewing content saturated with aspects of the heterosexual script may fuel the normalization and internalization of such beliefs, and Berkowitz's (1992) integrated model incorporates situational factors that may be especially relevant when studying normalization of sexualized aggression in social drinking settings. The findings presented here support both the 3AM (Study 1 and Study 2) and the integrated model (Study 2) and illustrate potential implications. Drawing on both cross-sectional and longitudinal data, we demonstrated that reality TV viewing predicts greater endorsement of the heterosexual script. Moreover, endorsing this script was associated with college women's greater acceptance of sexualized aggression in social drinking settings. These findings extend well the existing literature on the correlates and consequences of the heterosexual script for young women.

Practice Implications

Our findings offer important implications for women's enactment of healthy sexual relationship behavior. As noted earlier, past research has focused on diminished sexual agency as a central consequence of women's media use and support of the heterosexual script (e.g., Seabrook et al., 2017). Our work extends these relationship implications to the less-studied domain of sexualized aggression. In Study 2, we demonstrated the potential normalization of sexualized aggression at parties and bars as a possible outcome of reality TV exposure

mediated by endorsement of the heterosexual script. We chose to focus on these more mild and public sexual violations because they are prevalent within party and bar settings that are common on many campuses (Papp & McClelland, 2020). We see sexualized aggression as part of the larger spectrum of sexual violence, which is pervasive on college campuses. Approximately one-in-five women are sexually assaulted during their time in college (Muehlenhard et al., 2017), and unwanted sexual contact is the most common form of sexual assault reported in studies of campus sexual assault (Fedina et al., 2018). In many ways, the heterosexual script and sexualized aggression are intimately intertwined. Certain aspects of the heterosexual script encourage men to be aggressive sexual initiators, which may result in indifference toward women's cues of consent and wantedness. Social life on college campuses is rife with courtship rituals that may leave space for aggressive pursuit, unwanted and non-consensual touching, and manipulative practices (e.g., using alcohol to inebriate someone in order to facilitate sexual compliance).

Whereas the notion that men use insistent and even coercive tactics to exert power and/or gain sexual satisfaction underlies both the heterosexual script and sexualized aggression, the heterosexual script includes other elements that could also support sexualized aggression. The HSS includes items related to men's attention to women's appearance and attractiveness (e.g., "The best way for a girl to attract a boyfriend is to use her body and looks") and the idea that sex with numerous women is both desired by men and benefits their status (e.g., "Guys like to play the field and shouldn't be expected to stay with one partner for too long"). These beliefs, that women need to emphasize their physical features to attract men and that women are in competition with one another for men's limited attention, coalesce in party and bar settings and may set the stage for accepting aggressive tactics as normal or expected. The relative normalcy of sexualized aggression in students' social lives may stall educators' efforts to identify these behaviors and intervene. Given that many university students are required to complete consent and sexual assault trainings, it may be helpful to incorporate information about these constructs into this instruction. These additions could include critiques of popular media portrayals of sexual and romantic relationships, efforts to unpack sexual and romantic expectations delineated by the heterosexual script, and discussions of how these portrayals and expectations reflect harmful dynamics that may set the stage for non-consensual and unwanted sexual interactions.

If endorsing the heterosexual script is linked to diminished sexual well-being, does endorsing egalitarian gender scripts predict more healthy outcomes? Evidence supports this premise, with multiple studies indicating that supporting more egalitarian gender scripts predicts better sexual well-being. For example, Sanchez et al. (2012) noted that women with feminist attitudes reported both lower endorsement of traditional sexual scripts and also greater sexual arousability,

self-efficacy, and satisfaction. In their survey of 449 young women aged 16–20, Horne and Zimmer-Gembeck (2005) found that greater resistance to the sexual double standard was correlated with greater sexual body esteem, greater entitlement to sexual pleasure from self and from a partner, greater self-efficacy for achieving sexual pleasure, greater sexual self-reflection, greater self-esteem, and less self-silencing. In addition, among 424 undergraduate women aged 18–30 years, Schick et al. (2008) found that feminist ideology predicted greater sexual subjectivity and greater intrinsic motivation for sex. In turn, sexual subjectivity predicted greater condom use, self-efficacy, and sexual satisfaction. There appear to be clear benefits for women's sexual well-being of maintaining a feminist ideology; perhaps, this ideology could potentially buffer the impact of the media on women's endorsements of the heterosexual script and sexualized aggression.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the many contributions named above, there are several limitations of the current study that future research should address. First, because we assessed only a small segment of women's reality TV viewing, we may have missed some popular programs that could be influential in shaping their sexual scripts (e.g., *90 Day Fiancé; Married at First Sight*). The media landscape is a moving target, and survey selections need to be updated regularly. Indeed, it is also possible that television's depictions of the heterosexual script, as described in Kim et al. (2007), may have also changed over time and may need some updating. Systematic content analyses are needed concerning the nature and prevalence of the heterosexual script in modern reality TV and across the television landscape. Second, our data were collected at a large, state university in the Midwest from a predominantly White and heterosexual sample of women whose parents are well-educated. As a result, the findings derived from them are not generalizable to all young women. Other researchers may consider replicating this study, specifically with an emphasis on participants who are women of color, lower-income women, or non-students. Finally, our data do not account for the fact that reality TV may not be consumed in isolation, but instead may be watched and/or discussed with others. Indeed, there is a phenomenon of social media users posting about the TV programs they are watching that is called Social TV (Pagani & Mirabello, 2011). This type of groupthink may help to normalize or draw attention to the dominant scripts presented.

One additional avenue for future research is to examine how media use and the heterosexual script affect assumptions that heterosexual and bisexual men bring to their relationships with women. Presently, there is cross-sectional evidence that buying into gendered sexual scripts, spurred on by media use, has consequences for healthy relationships; perhaps this work can be expanded in longitudinal formats. For example, surveying undergraduate men, Seabrook et al. (2019) reported

that heavier consumption of reality TV programs, sports, and pornography each predicted greater acceptance of the objectification of women, which, in turn, predicted greater rape myth acceptance and greater sexual deception. Similarly, among undergraduate men, Wright and Tokunaga (2016) demonstrated that greater exposure to pornography, men's magazines, and reality TV predicted greater acceptance of women as sexual objects, which, in turn, predicted greater acceptance of violence against women. It would be useful to examine whether and how these relations change throughout college and among men in different types of relationships.

Conclusion

Together, these two studies identify that young women's reality TV consumption is associated directly with a greater endorsement of the heterosexual script and indirectly with greater acceptance of sexualized aggression via support of the heterosexual script. Implications concerning their acceptance of sexualized aggression are especially relevant for college women, as sexualized aggression is highly prevalent at college parties and bars, and media consumption may contribute to the normalization of such behavior. Although media are just some of the many outlets where young people learn appropriate sexual and romantic behavior, this research is useful in that it identifies reality television as a particularly powerful source that has the potential for far-reaching consequences in young women's sexual and romantic lives. Sexuality, sexual assault, and healthy relationship education programs aimed at undergraduates are possible sites for intervention concerning the normalization of sexualized aggression. Particularly useful might be modules that challenge students to unlearn the heterosexual script and encourage media literacy, especially as it relates to portrayals of dating and relationships.

Appendix 1

The 10-item Acceptance of Sexualized Aggression Scale.

There are many ways that people might communicate sexual attraction at parties and bars. Please read the statements and respond based on the following scale.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. It's not a big deal when a guy grinds on a girl when she's not into it.
2. It's not a big deal when a guy offers a girl something (e.g., alcohol or drugs) if she will join him somewhere more private.

3. It's not a big deal when a guy touches a girl over her clothing when she's not into it.
4. It's not a big deal when a guy becomes visibly offended or upset when a girl turns him down.
5. It's not a big deal when a guy offers to get a girl a drink or drugs even after she turns him down.
6. It's not a big deal when a guy touches a girl under her clothing when she's not into it.
7. It's not a big deal when a guy tries to convince a girl to leave with him when she is intoxicated.
8. It's not a big deal when a guy asks a girl to explain why she isn't interested in him.
9. It's not a big deal when a guy tries to get a girl to do something she doesn't want to do (e.g., by saying "But I bought you a drink…," "But I thought we were friends...," or something similar).
10. It's not a big deal when a guy pursues a girl even after she turns him down.

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