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Keeping Count: Studying the Effects of Previous Sexual History on a Current Coupling

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis details a quantitative study focusing on the sexual double standard and how its impact on sexual attitudes and behaviors has a possible influence on relationship satisfaction. The purpose of this research is to understand how attitudes regarding the prevailing double standard reflect the hesitancy towards having a partner with a previous sexual history as the discussion suggests. There will be a review of previous literature for the traditional, cultural, and even paradoxical aspects that make up the standard.

Findings of the study showed that there was no significant relationship found between a respondent's acceptance of the sexual double standard and their relationship satisfaction scores. However, significant relationships were found amongst gender and the sexual double standard as well as gender and relationships satisfaction. In both instances, gender is treated as a predicting variable. These findings help steer the forward direction of the standard, gender and sexual identity, and clinical implications on clients' sexual narratives. The importance of this is for support in understanding which societal or self messages are influencing clients 'views on sexuality and how that might contribute to distress experienced about sex.

Keeping Count: Studying the Effects of Previous Sexual History on a Current Coupling

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By

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This thesis, directed and approved by the committee for the thesis candidate Kaelyn D. Pate, has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Programs of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Marriage and Family Therapy

Donnie Snider

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Assistant Provost for Graduate Programs

Date

_____March 26, 2021_____

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Joanna Méndez-Pounds, Ph.D., LMFT

Dedicated to my loving and supportive family. I love y'all big, big, big.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Combing through social media, one occasionally finds discussions about sex and sexuality. The discussions usually surround sexual expression, history, and equality. Curiosity about this phenomenon motivated a search for literature on the sexual double standard: the belief that it is more acceptable for men to participate in premarital and casual sex than it is for women (Gentry, 1998). This double standard can be found in these discussions and are colloquially referred to as "body count," where value is placed on sexual history. Usually there are rewards for men and consequences for women as the endorsement of the double standard prevails, with some instances of more egalitarian or positive views of casual sex expression occurring (Zaikman & Marks, 2016). Recently there has been an increase in progressive views towards casual sex for women (Schleicher & Gilbert, 2005), and further exploration begets a possible reverse double standard with men as the target (Papp et al., 2015). The emerging thought is now understanding the extent to which the double standard affects partners and relationships. Existing research examines the sexual double standard in how decisions to engage in sexual activity are made (Kuperberg & Padgett, 2016; Weaver, et al., 2013); factors that influence the continuation of the standard's endorsement (Sakaluk & Milhausen, 2012); and ambivalent sexism (Zaikman & Marks, 2014). However, not much is known about the standard's implications on past partner selection (Guo, 2018) and into aspects of the relationship such as relationship satisfaction.

Purpose of Study

The primary goal of this study is understanding the standard's influence over perspectives held on premarital sex and what that might mean for either individual's beliefs or satisfaction about their relationship. The secondary goal is to further research the sexual double standard and hopefully include demographics not previously analyzed, such as the LGBTQIA+ community. The independent variable of the research will be the sexual double standard and the dependent variable is relationship satisfaction.

Definitions

The *sexual double standard* is defined as the assumption that is more acceptable for men to participate in sexually expressive freedoms, but it is not okay for women (Gentry, 1998). *Relationship satisfaction* is defined as the subjective satisfaction of a couple's relationship experience. The hypothesis under consideration is that a participant's high acceptance of the double standard correlates negatively with relationship satisfaction when they believe that their partner has an extensive previous sexual history. The second hypothesis is that more men than women will report a higher acceptance of the sexual double standard. The third hypothesis is that both genders will report high premarital sex permissiveness. Analysis of these variables was completed via simple regression for linear relationship findings.

Review of the Literature

The sexual double standard has dictated traditional dating and sex scripts with its assumption that men can have freedom of sexual expression while women cannot (Gentry, 1998). However, not much is said about how knowing about a current partner's sexual history impacts the current relationship satisfaction.

The History of the Sexual Double Standard

When discussing the sexual double standard, addressing the meanings surrounding sex and dating is necessary. Social constructionism has kept the prevalence of the sexual double standard firmly woven into the sex-and-dating scripts of relationships. The dominant conversation surrounding dating and sexual scripts has evolved over time, being transformed through the common language within that context of time. This is how the concepts and uses of "sexual double standard" and "body count" are being understood by the researcher. The connection between the two is that they both roughly hold the same context: placing a value on previous sexual history and women being viewed more negatively upon societal evaluation. Body count is just the most recent iteration that individuals who do not regularly study literature about sex and sexuality can understand and relate to.

There are levels to the double standard and how it interacts within those sex and dating scripts, such as gender differences amongst dating intention and sex intention (Reid et al., 2011). For example, while premarital sex is generally frowned upon, it is mostly permissible within the boundaries of an exclusive relationship. Casual sex and hookup culture still incur negative reactions, even with a more progressive generation (Weaver et al., 2013).

Historical Context

With the infamous opera *Carmen* written by Georges Bizet (c. 1875), the influence of the sexual double standard and the categorization of women is present. In *Carmen*, it is done through the tale of a beautiful woman who dies at the hands of one of her many suitors. There are countless variations of the same story present across music,

movies, and art that build into the collective reality of the sexual double standard. As the years pass, the rise of women combating the repercussions of the double standard significantly increased with the sexual revolution that swept through the 1960s. This widespread movement for sexual liberation guided the need for acceptance for sexual freedom. Further combatants to the sexual double standard come in the forms of art and other political movements.

In 1957 Sigmund Freud first brought to the psychoanalytic conversation the concept of the Madonna-Whore Complex (Bareket et al., 2018). This theory showcases that men and society view women in two categories: the Madonna, a saintly mother-figure modeled after the Virgin Mary, versus the Whore, who is a sinful temptation. The separation allowed for the value of one group to be higher than the other. Freud attributes the formation of this complex to men receiving maltreatment by their mothers and transferring those feelings onto future women in their lives. The imagery used leads to a discussion that the categorization has roots in religion, such as Christianity (Bareket et al., 2018). Many other religions favor modesty tenets for their women practitioners, including Islamic traditions (Gökarıksel & Secor, 2010) and some sects of Judaism (Taragin-Zeller, 2014). This does not mean that any of these faith traditions use modesty to create a negative environment for the women members. These are only examples of values and beliefs that have been used to create roles and rules to follow based upon gender.

In the book of Proverbs, two scenes personify virtues and vices as women. Proverbs 1:20-33 and Proverbs 8:1-9:12 speak heavily on Wisdom as a woman, using she/her pronouns and bringing to life a knowledgeable caretaker (King James Version).

Then there is Proverbs 31:29-30, which describes the noble godly woman. However, Proverbs 7 goes into depth about the adulterous woman and the "sinful nature" of women (King James Version). In this passage, the temptation is given the physical features of a woman. The two foils are structured against each other, similar to a battle of good versus evil. The relevance is that it underlines the core of the standard, providing context and reasoning behind why it has been accepted as a means to dissuade women from the same sexual freedom similar to men. If women choose to explore any aspect of sexual freedom, they are placed into the category of women that are used as cautionary tales, warning signs, and caricatures of unlovable women. And the opposite image implied by the opposite category is an almost impossible standard of virtuous perfection. This concept has left imprints onto other sections of society and culture regarding women and sexuality.

Current Social Context

The sex and body positivity movement can be considered the daughter of the sexual revolution. There has been an uptick in sex positivity that started in the early 2010s. This culminated in the repurposing of certain derogatory terms and titles such as "whore" and "slut." Set in Toronto, a city in Ontario, Canada, a SlutWalk was held for the protesting of a rape culture assumption that if a woman presents herself a certain way, she is asking to be sexually assaulted (Aldrich, 2011). The event saw 3,000 people in attendance and garnered worldwide attention. The movement expanded, and various SlutWalk events began happening, organized by both everyday women and celebrity socialites.

The biggest celebrity name to spearhead SlutWalk events is Amber Rose (Finley, 2017). Amber Rose is a social media influencer/model who organized her SlutWalk in 2016. For years she had been a woman demeaned, and Rose said that people took one look at her and categorized her as "the Whore." It is through SlutWalks that women and individuals like Amber wish for their voices and choices about their bodies be heard. Having a space for sexual freedom of expression can greatly increase positive development for healthy sexual wellbeing. However, there is still a noticeable lack of movement for the deconstruction of the sexual double standard despite burgeoning political movements (Farvid et al., 2016). This is where the outright challenge of the sexual double standard and possible reversal of the standard has occurred.

Literature on the Reversal of the Sexual Double Standard

Papp (2015) set out to determine the perceptions of slut-shaming in social media and saw the possibility of a sexual double standard reversal. The findings show that the theoretical "promiscuous" man is viewed more negatively than his female counterpart. The assumption is that men engaged primarily in casual sex are now viewed as a) less appealing as a long-term dating partner and b) more dangerous. The emerging consensus is that men who go out expecting to be sexually active have higher potential for predatory tendencies (Papp et al., 2015).

This reconceptualization of the standard is also noted in discussing the prevalent attitudes of the sexual double standard both at social and personal levels of acceptance (Milhausen & Herold, 2002). On the personal acceptance level, men were seen to have more permissive attitudes than women. Women perceived men as having more sexual freedom, with only 4% believing that men and women experienced equal freedom. As the

researchers framed the double standard as men being allowed to have a higher number of sexual partners, then both men and women were seen to believe that others socially believe the standard. However, both men and women were found to support a reverse double standard, as respondents answered that they were more likely to discourage their female friends from dating a male partner with multiple previous partners (Milhausen & Herold, 2002).

The existence of a reversal of the sexual double standard is made by two possibilities. The first possibility is due to the progressive strides made against the traditional double standard, with the goal now becoming reflecting men's behavior to them. A second possibility is that it has become increasingly socially undesirable to judge women for their expression of sexual autonomy (Milhausen & Herold, 2002). However, the level of unequal sexual expression is still present, with men now being the target of the standard. It seems that with how ingrained the double standard is written into dating scripts, everyone has become susceptible to using this within partner selection, not just men.

CHAPTER II

FACTORS AND INFLUENCES OF PARTNER SELECTION

Partner Selection

While much of the literature accounts for the sexual double standard with varying perspectives and a possible role reversal, not much has been said on acknowledging the standard's effect on present relationships. Will knowing a partner's past sexual history (quantity and frequency) color them in a different light? Are attitudes towards sex and sexuality progressing far enough for the acceptance of each other's sexual history? What will it mean for the relationship's future intimacy?

Partner selection varies by each individual and each stage of life. Since couple formation can happen at any stage of an individual's life cycle, the influence of individual preferences as well as the double standard can fluctuate, as elaborated in the next sections. This section is presented for the relevance of how the sexual double standard can impact partner selection.

Partner Selection in Emerging Young Adulthood

This family life stage is associated with the system members who are preparing to launch from their family of origin. It is separated between first and second-order developmental tasks for the individual's healthy and normative wellbeing. A second-order task that the emerging young adult is to develop intimate peer relationships outside their original system (McGoldrick et al., 2016). The assumption is that the decisions

made in partner selection as young adulthood have grown to encompass socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, values, and race/ethnicity (Schwartz, 2013).

Race and Ethnicity Influences

Guo (2018) developed a study to delve deeper into any ethnic/cultural similarities and differences towards attitudes or preferences regarding the sexual double standard. The purpose was to compare the attitudes of the sexual double standard amongst White and Asian Americans. Asian Americans also reported both their levels of assimilation, termed American acculturation, and their Asian affiliation. Of the 506 participants (334 White Americans and 172 Asian Americans, aged 18 to 45), findings reported both groups holding similar conservative ideals in choice of marriage partner. When sexual experience was controlled for, mean scores held slight support towards the study's first hypothesis of more conservative attitudes amongst the Asian American group. This hypothesis was rooted in the belief that because of their level of Asian affiliation (conservative ideals in the East), Asian Americans are more conservative about sex than White Americans. When researchers did not control for sexual experience, the differences in sexual attitudes between the two groups became larger. Ethnicity differences were found to not be significant for only three comparisons (sex initiative for men and women and having a large partner history for men) (Guo, 2018). What this adds to the conversation is how the double standard is endorsed may be impacted by ethnic and cultural effects (i.e., the more liberal ideology of sex in the West acting amongst how assimilated to that ideology Asian Americans feel). Both groups still showed a tendency toward more conservative sexual attitudes regarding having a potential marriage partner

with multiple previous sex partners, however. The preference for a potential marriage partner with a little to no sexual partner history shone through.

Sexual Permissiveness

The implications of these sexual standards have also been discovered in longitudinal research. When studying premarital sexual standards and sociosexuality, a cohort population of 7,777 young college adults were sampled (Sprecher et al., 2013). The investigation was carried over a 23-year time period, examining gender, ethnicity, and group differences towards sexual permissiveness, double standard, and sociosexuality. Findings suggested men had more permissiveness, endorsed the double standard at a higher level, and had more of an unrestricted sociosexuality. Black men were found to be more permissive than their White, Hispanic, and Asian counterparts, but there were no ethnicity related differences amongst the women. Cohort differences showed that the 1995 to 1999 participants were less permissive than the participants of the 1990 to 1994 and 2005 to 2012 (Sprecher et al., 2013). The researchers of this study regarded this information as being indicative of the sexual double standard prevailing over at least three separate cohorts and almost two decades despite the steady progression of premarital sex permissiveness.

The progression of premarital sexual permissiveness has been studied for its reception amongst varying groups and lifestyles. Kaestle et al. (2017) examined the implications of no sex, casual sex, and exclusive sex on the sexual wellbeing of the college-aged women (2017). The quantitative study extended itself into what makes up sexual wellbeing and its contribution to the satisfaction and positivity in a young woman's life. The study concluded that having sex in an exclusive relationship led to

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greater sexual wellbeing if attitudes towards the idea were permissive. It was consistent

with previous research showing the correlation between conservative sexual attitudes and

negative emotional experiences associated with sex. Concerning the sexual double

standard, the inference is that premarital sex in a committed relationship is more

permissive than casual premarital sex. The discussion now is about where in romantic

relationships where the sexual double standard makes its impact.

CHAPTER III

RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

In the first few lines of the song "Body Count" by Jessie Reyez (2018), the R&B singer is having a tongue-in-cheek conversation with her lover. She states that her lover does not need to tell her about their sexual past because she knows that if they want to know the same about her, they "will feel some type of way" (Reyez, 2018). This highlights the awareness of the double standard as keeping a record of behavior that society has deemed wrong and that knowledge of a partner's previous sexual history is a point of contention. The extent of that tension has been shown in partner selection, but there is also a case for its impact on relationship satisfaction.

Relationship satisfaction is a wide realm within the kingdom of couples and marriage. It is regarded as a high area of relationship assessment (Hendrick, 1988) and with varying definitions of what it is. Relationship satisfaction has been utilized as a factor in understanding couples 'coping adaptations to stressful events (Samios & Khatri, 2019) and relationships where a partner is experiencing depressive symptoms (Whitton & Kuryluk, 2012). Relationship satisfaction has also been looked at as an outcome of certain perceptions between individuals and their partners. Hromatko and colleagues (2015) delved into examining the perceived value of their potential mate as a relationship satisfaction predictor. The mate value in question dealt with men seeking young and attractive reproductive mates and women seeking mature mates who are of high social and financial standing. The results showcased that an individual's perception of their

mate's quality or value is a strong predictor for relationship satisfaction (Hromatko et al., 2015). The team also discussed the importance of cultural context on relationship satisfaction, where the influence of sociocultural expectations can have a high impact. As mentioned previously, the sexual double standard is a standard that has inhabited dating scripts. Due to this, the expectation of the standard could have implications on the satisfaction of a relationship. With its prevalence in popular culture within the "body count" discussion, it is quite possible that there are implications of this affecting personal relationship satisfaction.

CHAPTER IV

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Participant Recruitment and Procedure

Simple regression analysis was used to explore the possible relationship between sexual double standard and relationship satisfaction. This cross-sectional survey was built through the use of SurveyMonkey.com and distributed via Mechanical Turk, an Amazon marketplace. Respondents ($N = 112$) were given the ability to terminate participation at any time, with compensation ($0.15) still being given to every respondent.

Mechanical Turk (MTurk) is a virtual marketplace that allows persons and companies to outsource tasks, such as surveys, in the form of a Human Intelligence Task (HIT). The respondents are MTurk Workers registered for the website and are at least 18 years of age. Since the study concerns relationship satisfaction, the criteria for them to included that they either be currently dating or have just gotten out a recent relationship within the last six months.

Measures and Data Collection

The following covers the measures and form of data collection used for this study. The measures were picked with the goals of relationship satisfaction and the sexual double standard in mind. Data collection was chosen based upon ease and familiarity of software used.

Sexual Double Standard Scale

Amongst the scales used to build the survey was the Sexual Double Standard Scale developed by Muehlenhard and Quackenbush (Muehlenhard & McCoy, 1991). This measure has 26 items set on a Likert scale used for assessing how strong the acceptance each gender holds for the sexual double standard. The options are on a range of 0 to 3, with the answers being disagree strongly = 0, disagree mildly = 1, agree mildly = 2, and agree strongly = 3. Both Quackenbush and Muehlenhard noted in the *Handbook of Sexuality-Related Measures* (Milhausen et al., 2020) how other researchers adapted their scale to fit their research needs. For example, a study examining the relationship between gendered attitudes and beliefs about sexual behavior and sexual double standard endorsement adapted to a 17-item short form, with a 1 to 4 option scale (Lefkowitz et al., 2014). Employing a neutral option between disagree mildly and agree mildly made for the ability to keep the variable continuous and the options for current purposes to be 1 to 5. Acceptance of the sexual double standard is measured by how strongly participants agree with endorsements of the standard, such as, "worse for a woman to sleep around than it is for a man" (Sakaluk & Milhausen, 2012).

For the scoring of the double standard scale, the sum is the calculation of the one scale and the categorization of its items: the three positively scored items in favor of the sexual double standard, the three negatively scored items against, and then the ten items regarding differences amongst the genders (Milhausen et al., 2020). Scores have been found to range between -30 to 0 to 48, similar to a sliding scale. A score of zero is indicative of the respondent's ideals that men and women are equal within the sexual double standard. The scores closer to 48 represents the respondent's adherence to the

traditional double standard, while scores closer to -30 show the reversal of the standard, in which they evaluate men by the double standard more harshly. Validity of the sexual double standard was shown through its pairing with other scales and predictions about gender sexual behaviors, and reliability is determined ranging between .60 and .86, with most published works having alphas .68 and .74. (Milhausen et al., 2020)

Relationship Assessment Scale

Relationship satisfaction was measured using the Relationship Assessment Scale (1988), which developed by Susan Hendrick after noting the need for a compact relationship satisfaction while still general enough to include couple relationships outside of marriage. The RAS is a seven-item Likert scale with items such as "how well does your partner meet your needs?" and "to what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?". Scores can range from 1 to 5, meaning low satisfaction and high satisfaction, respectively. This scale has an alpha of .86 (Hendrick, 1988).

Additionally, there were demographic questions concerning age, race/ethnicity, gender orientation, and sexual orientation. These questions were for gathering demographic information only for representation findings within the sample and not for identifying respondents. A demographic question of "what do you count as a sexual encounter?" with definitions to choose from such as "penetrative sex only" or "oral and penetrative sex" was also asked. The utilization of these questions was for understanding the how the participant answered the questionnaire, due to the assumption that their definition of sex would influence their responses to the Sexual Double Standard scale. "I personally believe that my partner has had more than the average number of sexual partners" was a categorical question used to group respondent surveys together. The

answer choice options for this question were "Yes" or "No." Following the responses to this question, 54.02% ($n = 47$) of all respondents selected "No" or "Not More than Average," and 45.98% ($n = 40$) selected "Yes" or "More than Average."

Variables and Storage

The independent variable is the sexual double standard, and the dependent variable is personal relationship satisfaction. Data collection was completed by SurveyMonkey.com and then transferred to SPSS. The information was stored on a flash drive and kept in the Marriage and Family Institute clinic within a lockbox. No identifying information was necessary during any part of the research process. Storage of the data is from the time of the final collection to the end of the school year.

Survey Scoring and Reverse Coding

Prior to running simple regression analyses, reverse coding and scoring of each respondent's survey was necessary. Muehlenhard and Quackenbush state that to find the sum of a respondent's Sexual Double Standard score (or SDS score), you add the three positively grouped items, the three negatively grouped items (which are reverse scored), and the ten differences that are totaled from the ten parallel grouped items (Milhausen et al., 2020).

The positively grouped items include item 1, "It's worse for a woman to sleep around than it is for a man;" item 15, "A man should be more sexually experienced than his wife;" and item 19, "Women are naturally more monogamous (inclined to stick with one partner) than are men." Negatively grouped items, also referred to as the "egalitarian" items by Muehlenhard and Quackenbush, include item 4, "It is just as important for a man to be a virgin when he marries as it is for a woman;" item 8, "A

woman's having casual sex is just as acceptable to me as a man's having casual sex;" and item 5, "I approve of a 16-year-old having girl's having sex just as much as a 16-year-old boy's having sex." The parallel or paired items are meant to be subtracted from each other and the difference is then added to sum equation to complete the scoring. Paired items are as follows: items 2 and 24; items 12 and 3; items 10 and 6; items 17 and 7; items 9 and 22; items 11 and 26; items 13 and 18; items 25 and 14; items 16 and 21; items 20 and 23.

As mentioned previously, Sexual Double Standard scores range from 48 to 0 to -30, assumedly in a sliding scale fashion. The closer to 48, the more the respondent accepts and adheres to the traditional SDS. A score closer to or at 0 indicates a more egalitarian view of the SDS and shows that the respondent holds the same standard for both genders. Scores closer to -30 are inferred to be reflective of a possible reverse double standard, where men are more likely to be viewed negatively for their sexual history or experience.

Scoring for the respondents 'Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) scores went much of the same way. The sum equation for scoring respondents 'surveys includes adding up the answer of each item, then dividing by seven. The scale does say to reverse score two items, the first being item 4, "How often do you wish you hadn't gotten in this relationship," and the second being item 7, "How many problems are there in your relationship." Respondents 'scores could range from one to five, indicating low satisfaction to high satisfaction, respectively.

The next task was to explore the data for possible relationships. The vehicle for exploring these relationships was done first through simple linear regression and then

through bivariate correlation. Simple regression was the first chosen method of data analysis due to the mode's ability to assess linear association and make predictions.

Analysis Structure

The surveys were first divided between complete and incomplete surveys. An incomplete survey was marked as being 1) not answering any of the questions, or 2) not answering a significant portion of survey. These participants were still compensated the same amount as the participants who completed the survey.

While beginning the analysis portion of this study, I was reminded of the goal of hypothesis testing: trying to reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative hypothesis. The null hypothesis states that there is no relationship or significant finding, and that any statistical observation is due to chance (i.e., there is no relationship between the acceptance/adherence of the sexual double standard and relationship satisfaction experienced). The alternative hypothesis states that there is a relationship being observed between sexual double standard adherence and relationship satisfaction. Specifically, the alternative hypotheses being explored here are that a participant's high acceptance of the double standard correlates negatively with relationship satisfaction when they believe that their partner has had more than the average number of previous sexual partners, that more men than women will report a higher acceptance of the sexual double standard, and/or that both genders will report high premarital sex permissiveness.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Demographics

A total of 112 surveys were collected, then 25 were deleted for being incomplete and their scores invalid. Of those 87 ($N = 87$) complete surveys, 60 of the respondents identified as male, 26 identified as female, and 1 respondent identified as nonbinary. Race and ethnicity demographics determined that 37.93% ($n = 33$) identified as White or Caucasian; 40.23% ($n = 35$) as Asian or Asian American; 16.09% ($n = 14$) as Hispanic or Latinx; and 5.75% ($n = 5$) as African American or Black. Sexual orientation demographics found that 70.11% ($n = 61$) of all respondents identified as straight/heterosexual; 22.99% ($n = 20$) as bisexual; 5.75% ($n = 5$) as gay; and 1.15% ($n = 1$) as asexual. None of the respondents recorded themselves as identifying as lesbian or pansexual. When it came to the question of how they defined sex, 57.47% ($n = 50$) of all respondents reported "all of the above" as their definition, which meant their definition of sex included penetrative, oral, and fingering/fondling. Approximately 32.18% ($n = 28$) of all respondents selected that their definition of sex only includes penetration, whereas 5.75% ($n = 5$) and 4.6% ($n = 4$) responded that only oral sex or only fingering/fondling were their definition of sex respectively.

Descriptive Statistics

The mean of scores came out to be 14.95, with a standard deviation of 6.54. The highest recorded score was 39, while the lowest recorded was -2. The most recorded

score was 19. Aforementioned, scores can range between -30 to 0 to 48, with anything closer to -30 reflecting a possible reversed sexual standard, closer to 0 indicative of egalitarian standards, and closer to 48 being respective of the traditional sexual double standard. Cronbach's Alpha was also run to determine the reliability of the sexual double standard score for this survey. The alpha score came to be .84, similar to other studies where the sexual double standard scale has been used (Milhausen et al., 2020). Overall, the mean of sexual double standard scores is indicative of the respondents 'general acceptance of the traditional standard. There are no cutoff scores provided for the measure to say that one score is higher than the other. However, the assumption currently worked under is provided by an understanding that the higher the individual score, the more acceptance of the standard.

Next, the same statistical descriptive was run for RAS scores. A mean average of 3.433 was found, as well as a median and most recorded score of 3.428. There was a standard deviation of .452, with the minimum score being 2.142 and the maximum score being 4.428. The scale's Cronbach's alpha came to be .341, lower than the alpha of the scale when published by Hendrick (1988).

Data Analysis

The data analysis structure was determined by priority of possible relationship amongst the groupings.

Total SDS Scores Versus Total RAS Scores

The first group to be analyzed was the "More than Average" grouping, consisting of 40 respondents. A simple regression analysis was run to determine this groupings relationship between SDS and RAS scores. This analysis is located in Table 1. The *p*-

value, which denotes statistical significance, was determined to be .737. For

observational statistical significance to be achieved, *p*-value must be less than or equal to

.05. Concluding, there were no statistically significant observations made amongst the

"More than Average" grouping's SDS and RAS scores.

Table 1

Summary of Regression Between the Sexual Double Standard and Relationship

Assessment Satisfaction of 'More than Average' Grouping

Model	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Regression	.030	1	.030	.114	.737b
Residual	9.898	38	.260		
Total	9.928	39			

a Dependent Variable: TotalRASScore
b Predictors: (Constant), TotalSDSScore

Next was the analysis of the "Not More than Average" grouping, which consisted

of 47 respondents. After both a run of simple regression and bivariate correlation

analyses, no statistically significant observation was made amongst this grouping either.

An I-value of .659 was observed, and the full analysis can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of Regression Between the Sexual Double Standard and Relationship

Assessment Satisfaction of 'Not More than Average' Grouping

Model	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Regression	.033	1	.033	.198	.659b
Residual	7.528	45	.167		
Total	7.562	46			

a Dependent Variable: TotalRASScore
b Predictors: (Constant), TotalSDSScore

The next analysis decision was to complete the simple regression on the total grouping of survey respondents, the results of which are in Table 3. Again, no statistical significance amongst this correlation is observed. These analyses indicated that there is no statistical significance when the total SDS score is the only predictor, and the total RAS score is the dependent variable. However, there is an observable statistically significant relationship when gender served as the predictor variable and total SDS score was the dependent variable, as well as when gender served as the predictor and total RAS score was the dependent variable.

Table 3

Summary of Regression between Total Sexual Double Standard (SDS) Scores and Total Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) Scores of Total Data Grouping

Model	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Regression	.006	1	.006	.029	.865b
Residual	17.567	85	.207		
Total	17.573	86			

a Dependent Variable: TotalRASScore
b Predictors: (Constant), TotalSDSScore

Gender and the Sexual Double Standard

For the examination of these two variables, a one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted with gender as the predictor against the entire grouping of respondents 'SDS scores. The statistical significance was observed at .005, rendering the relationship to be less likely due to chance and means declared to be unequal. This defines that there is a relationship being observed between these two variables. A means plot was constructed with this information and shown below in Graph 1, *Gender of Respondent and Mean of*

Total SDS Scores. The mean of the male-identified group is shown to be slightly higher than the female-identified group, and both groups 'means are higher than the mean of the nonbinary respondent. This indicates that the male-identified respondents had double standard scores that trended slightly higher toward the acceptance side of the sexual double standard scale than other respondents 'scores.

Figure 1

Gender of Respondent and Mean of Total SDS Scores
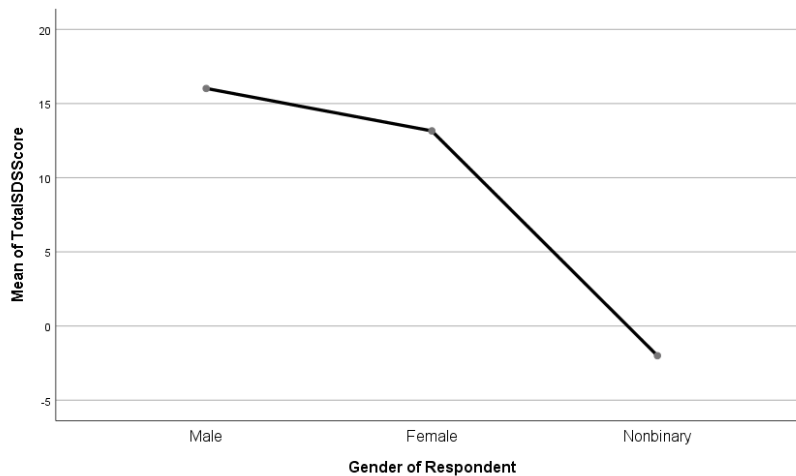
No observation of statistical significance was seen in the relationship between gender and total SDS scores of respondents within the "More than Average" grouping, however there was a significant relationship observed amongst the "Not More than Average" grouping. The possible conclusion of this is the different sample sizes of the two groupings, with the "More than Average" group having 40 respondents and the "Not More than Average" group having 47. With the slightly larger sample size of the "Not" grouping, this gave the chance of observing statistical significance to be higher due to higher statistical power that grouping held.

Sexual Orientation and the Sexual Double Standard

One-way ANOVA analysis showcased a statistical relationship being observed at .016. A means plot, shown in Graph 2, determined that heterosexual respondents had the highest group mean of scores. This indicates that the average mean of heterosexual respondents 'SDS scores was higher than the means of other sexualities reported. With this analysis, heterosexual respondents had a scores that trended towards the acceptance side of the tradition double standard. During a one-way ANOVA analysis for the relationship between gender and relationship satisfaction scores, no statistical significance was observed.

Figure 2

Sexual Orientation of Respondent and Mean of Total SDS Scores
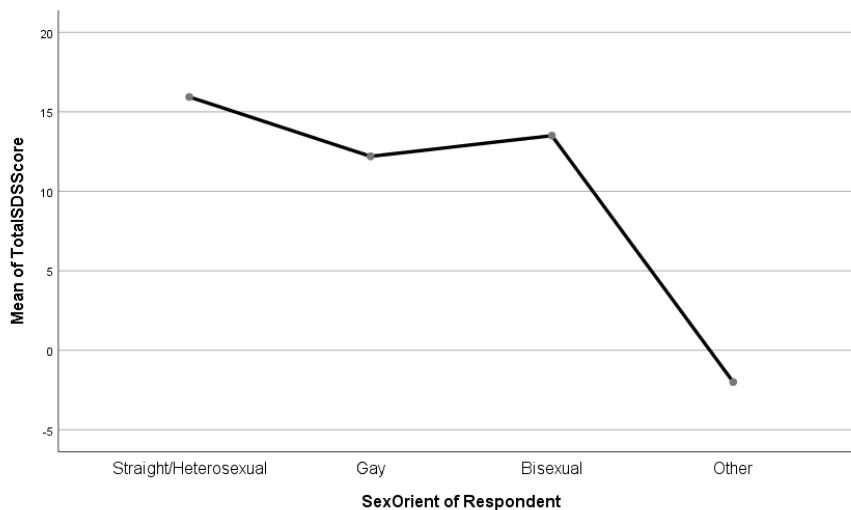
There are two meaningful implications of this round of analyses. The first is that there is no relationship between sexual double standard scores and relationship assessment scores for this sample population. The second implication is that while there is no relationship between SDS and RAS scores, there is a relationship between gender and those respective scores as long as the predictor is only gender and no separation

based upon groupings. It is this second implication that leads the following secondary analyses.

Diving further into these secondary analyses, I examined the relationship found between gender and the sexual double standard. As earlier stated, the relationship was found significant amongst the "Not More than Average" grouping of respondents and the total grouping of respondents. Thus, this leads towards determining the next hypothesis of more men reporting more scores of high SDS acceptance than women.

Secondary Analysis

As already stated, the mean of SDS scores is 14.95, with a median of 15, and the most recorded score being 19. These scores are on the lower side of the acceptance scaling for the sexual double standard scale. This gives the indication that for this particular sample, the acceptance of the traditional standard is low. With no cutoff scores given in the original publishing of the scale, determining between individual low versus high scores is difficult. However, the assumption of the scale is that the higher the score trends in the positive direction (towards 48), the higher that respondent's SDS acceptance. With that in mind, I view the data through the lens of this assumption.

Any SDS score recorded at or above the mean score of 14.95 was determined as average or above-average acceptance of the sexual double standard for this survey. Of the 87 respondents, 60 identified as male, 26 as female, and 1 as nonbinary. Within the sample of male-identified respondents, 35 scored within this range, putting them into at least the 50th percentile of all respondents of this survey. Further, 20 of those 35 respondents recorded SDS scores at or equal to 19. This places them firmly within above average range and in the 75th percentile of all respondents. Using the same parameters for

the sample of female-identified respondents, 8 scored within this range, placing them into at least the 50th percentile of all respondents to this survey. Through observational count, it has been determined that more male-identified persons than female-identified persons reported scores that trended towards acceptance of the traditional sexual double standard.

Lastly is the hypothesis concerning both male-identified and female-identified persons having scores that showcase high premarital sexual permissiveness. There is admittedly no premarital sex measure used within this survey. However, this is still achievable with continued observation of the SDS scores. Amongst the sample, 25 male-identified respondents and 18 female-identified respondents scored at or below the mean average (14.95) for the SDS scale section of this survey. These scores placed these respondents within the 25th percentile of respondents for this survey. While not outright declaring premarital sex permissiveness, these scores are on the SDS scale's spectrum closer to 0. While this does not permit insight into whether or not the respondent has permissive sexual attitudes, the scores are indicative of being closer to more egalitarian standards.

The overall mean score of 14.95 for the double standard scale being observed, along with SDS scores on the considerably low end of the acceptance side of the scale, is explained by the phenomenon of increasing sexual permissiveness (Thompson et al., 2017). This is due in part to cultural shifts in dating concerning sex (Garcia et al., 2012) that inform more positive inclinations towards casual sex.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Study Goals

This study was used to inquire and examine a possible relationship between the sexual double standard (SDS) and relationship satisfaction. The first goal was to address this relationship by analyzing how respondents accept the traditional double standard and the reflection of that acceptance on their relationship satisfaction with their most recent partner. Though the results of this goal yielded no statistical significance in the correlation, it does help in acknowledging that perhaps the sexual double standard still holds influence on other romantic relationship aspects.

This helped in the determining of the second goal of how more male-identified persons would report scores of acceptances for the traditional double standard than female-identified persons. Due to the nature of the standard swinging in favor of a gender over another, seeing this appear made sense. This finding is consistent with other studies hosting similar findings regarding the sexual double standard (Fugère et al., 2008; Salaluk & Milhausen, 2012). Traditionally, many of the double standards found in dating and sex relationship scripts assign appropriate roles based on gender, with men afforded less rigidity (Paynter & Leaper, 2016). Because of the relatively present heteronormativity in our society and the large size of heterosexual respondents in this data sample, it stands to reason that the guiding factor for those high SDS acceptance scores are the dating and sex scripts most familiar to those male-identified respondents.

The same can be said for the high SDS acceptance scores found amongst female-identified respondents. The difference of more male-identified respondents having high SDS acceptance compared to the female-identified respondents, is perhaps rooted in new forming thoughts about sexual agency and sex positivity for women.

Implications

The clinical implications of the study are the most important, as they help in the determining of how the information provided can aid clinical understanding.

Sex Positivity

With the messages about sex varying between gender roles and dating scripts and being influenced by culture or religion, women have typically come up shorthanded. "Sex positivity" is a term that grew out of feminist ideologies and differing positions within feminism (Ivanski & Kohut, 2017). Because of that, it is hard to identify an exact definition. However, a common consensus is that a concept encompassing one's safety to explore or be demure is important for people of all identities (Jones, 2016). As conversations on this concept continue to rise, more and more women put forth challenges to traditional standards, either for themselves or how they view others. This is not saying that the traditional is wrong or that the progression is only right, but that more space has been created for women to choose. Also for consideration is the number of male-identified respondents ($n = 60$) compared to the number female-identified respondents ($n = 26$). The male-identified sample size is about twice that of the female-identified sample size. This means that largely the total data sample was ruled by the perspectives of heterosexual, male-identified respondents.

The third goal of the study was the exploration of permissive premarital sex attitudes through observation of lower sexual double standard scores. With the progressing movements on sexuality beliefs and values, there has been more expansion on permissive sex attitudes. In recent years, this has been attributed to the change in generations within America (Elias et al., 2013); more liberal views towards dating, courtship, and contraceptives (Majumdar, 2017); and cultural shifts within a given generation (Harding & Jencks, 2003). Any combination of these aspects and more could account for the appearance of lower SDS acceptance scores. This is especially noted due to the context of age range addressed in the study (18- to 25+-year-olds), allowing for more appearance of lower acceptance of the traditional sexual double standard.

Outliers

Frequency tables were constructed to observe statistical descriptions and the presence of two outliers were found. First is the respondent who gave an SDS score of -2, who will be referred to as lowest nontraditional or LNT, and the respondent who gave an SDS score of 39, who will be referred to as highest traditional or HT. This present discussion about these outliers is not to make inferences or assumptions but provide insight to possible motivations of sexual narratives both inside and outside the heterosexual norm.

Respondent LNT is 21 years of age, Hispanic, identifies as nonbinary and asexual. When answering the grouping question "I personally believe that my partner has had more than the average number of previous sexual partners," this respondent answered "No." With these demographics, exploration of respondent LNT's score of -2 was considered.

With the recent progression of LGBTQIA+ acknowledgment and support, genders and sexual orientations that before did not have a name are now able receive recognition. Nonbinary individuals are people who do not identify with the binary gender system of male and female. Asexual individuals are those who self-identify with not experiencing sexual attraction. This is a broad definition that since its beginnings has been made to encompass the various experiences these individuals have involving the different levels and intensity of attraction (Teut, 2019). There is a lack of research literature in the exploration of this population and their sexual attitudes (Bulmer & Izuma, 2017); however, it is understood to be due to the differentiated nature of asexuals and asexuality from the norms of a heterosexual society. Noting this, it is important to realize the differing desires and perspectives for relationships these individuals experience. Though this does not entirely account for this individual's SDS score of -2, and thereby reflecting the possibility of them holding a reverse sexual double standard, it does give insight. With the identities that the respondent currently holds, comes with the experience of unlearning more traditional and conservative ways of thought.

The respondent with the highest traditional score, or respondent HT, is a male of 25+ years of age, Asian or Asian American, and identified as straight/heterosexual. In this instance the consideration of looking further into cultural influences along with sexual or gender orientation was considered. As mentioned before, Guo (2018) explored how cultural attitudes impact sexual values and experiences of Asian Americans. Others have found that depending on the specific ethnic background of an Asian population (e.g., Hindu, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Cambodian, etc.), discourse on sexuality is

handled differently (Okazaki, 2002). Despite those differences, open sexuality and sexual expression is still mostly frowned upon by those with more conservative ideals.

Researchers Sarah L. Trinh and Janna L. Kim took to studying the sexual socialization of Asian Americans to observe the relationship between sexual expression and culture (2021). What they found was that messages of sex as a taboo presented from parent to child, resulted in higher instances of abstinence. The larger reasoning behind these messages was for the prevention of physical risks, such as STDs or HIV. It was also found that more women than men received stricter messages of pro-abstinence than their male counterparts (Trinh & Kim, 2021). With this in mind, the implications of how one's culture influences on their values on sexuality is made clearer.

These two respondents' scores are just examples of the possibilities of how and why their scores could reflect what the way they do and not on the whole populations these individuals are a part of. These possibilities showcase the intricate factors of identity, culturally or sexually, and its influence on sexual standards and values.

Limitations

Addressing this study's limitations also gives context to its findings. First, the sample's generalizability is limited to persons 18 to 25 years of age who were mostly male and mostly heterosexual. Secondly, there was no demographic question to account for possible religious values. Thirdly, publishing error regarding the survey where the link for the survey closed for an indiscriminate amount of time, leading to a smaller than expected sample size used. Fourthly, there were no definitive cutoff scores for the sexual double standard scale to differentiate between low and high scores. Lastly, there was no demographic information collected about which region or country in which the

respondent was living. Work on the study was completed under the assumption that respondents were English-speaking and U.S. based.

An interesting concept that might have contributed to a lack of significant findings found is that of social desirability. Social desirability is a bias that results from societal norms affecting the reporting of answers or beliefs. This can cause a participant or respondent to report what is socially preferred but not individually believed (Larson, 2018). This prompts an interesting question of if respondents underreported or overreported their beliefs of the sexual double standard that is currently more socially accepted. The possibility of this occurring can be seen in the larger than expected pool of low-side and closer to 0 scores, promoting a more egalitarian standard for this sample. Another possibility is within the outlier respondents 'SDS scores, as well as respondents reporting an acceptance score for the traditional standard but having a high relationship satisfaction score.

Clinical Applications

Though the findings of this study were consistent with previous studies, further exploration is needed within the realm of the sexual double standard. Future exploration should be geared toward the LGBTQIA+ community and wonderings about their possible adherence to the standard. Also, due to the range of scores presented, including the instance of a reverse double standard acceptance score, more research is needed to encompass new changes. Special attention should be due towards sex positivity and how our clients define what that means for themselves and in their lives. Collaboration with clients on the meaning of sex within their relationships can also provide insight on how important they view traditional dating and sex standards and roles (Landor & Winter,

2019). Achievement of this is by mapping out the stories, definitions, and meanings given overtly and covertly. This is not only helpful working with heterosexual clients and couples, but also with LGBTQIA+ individuals. Working on these sexual narratives with our clients can help in addressing sexual performance issues, sexual trauma, or challenging harmful sex beliefs.

Conclusion

The sexual double standard has impacted dating scripts and how individuals select romantic partners. The standard has created an assumption that lowers equity within those scripts and relationships, and the research proposed is to examine the extent of that influence. Finding its impact on relationship satisfaction will help in understanding what is considered impactful from this "body count" conversation in relationships and what that may mean in a supposed sexually progressive world.

While no statistically significant relationship was noted between the sexual double standard and relationship satisfaction based on relationship assessment, findings consistent with how the standard prevails appeared and were helpful. This includes the standard's relationship with gender and marked appearance of more progressive/egalitarian attitudes. Continued work both in research and clinical work is needed for identifying the double standard and its affect or presence in sexual narratives.

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APPENDIX

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

January 28, 2021

Kaelyn D. Pate
Department of Marriage and Family Therapy
ACU P.O. Box 29409
Abilene Christian University

Dear Kaelyn,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled
"Keeping Count: Studying the Effects of Previous Relationship History on Current Couplings",

was approved by expedited review (Category 7   ) on 1/28/2021   (IRB # 20-201   ). Upon
completion of this study, please submit the Inactivation Request Form within 30 days of study completion.

If you wish to make any changes to this study, including but not limited to changes in study personnel,
number of participants recruited, changes to the consent form or process, and/or changes in overall
methodology, please complete the Study Amendment Request Form.

If any problems develop with the study, including any unanticipated events that may change the risk profile
of your study or if there were any unapproved changes in your protocol, please inform the Office of Research
and Sponsored Programs and the IRB promptly using the Unanticipated Events/Noncompliance Form.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs