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Traditional Sexual Script and Double Standard Adherence: Predictors of Heterosexually Identified Women's and Men's Previous Engagement in Consensual Non-Monogamy

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Traditional Sexual Script and Double Standard Adherence: Predictors of Heterosexually Identified Women's and Men's Previous Engagement in Consensual Non-Monogamy

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Introduction

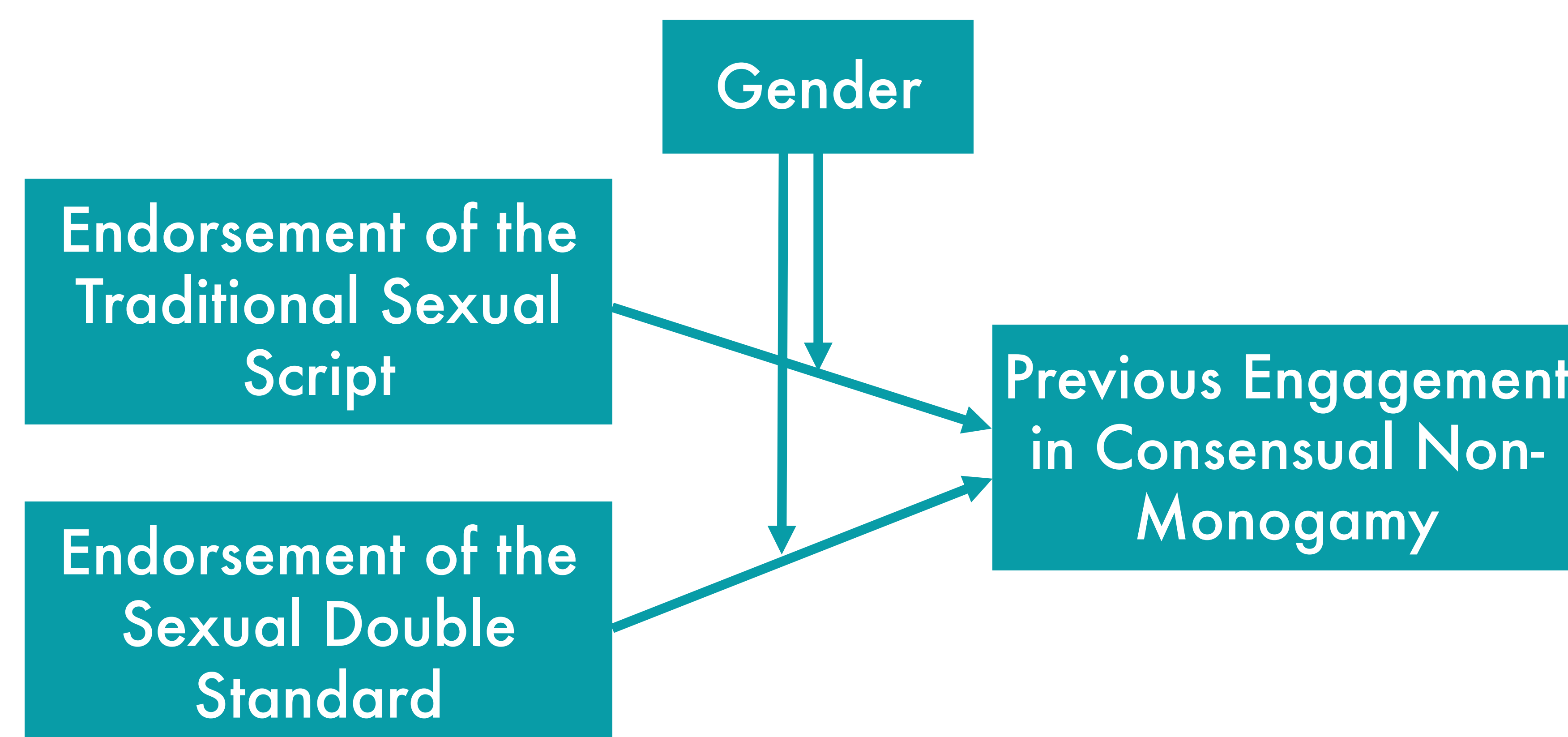
- Consensual non-monogamy (CNM) is an umbrella term for all relationships in which an agreement has been made regarding having multiple romantic and/or sexual partners (Hauptert, Moors, Gesselman, & Garcia, 2017)
- Interestingly, a consistent gender difference has been found: heterosexual men systematically report greater engagement in CNM than heterosexual women (Hauptert et al., 2017).
- This gender difference may be due to women's stronger adherence to the traditional sexual script, which is rooted in gendered dating norms, punishes women who engage in non-committed sexual behaviors, and glorifies monogamy (Frith & Kitzinger, 2001).

Results

- Consistent with our hypothesis, both sexual script adherence and double standard adherence significantly affected CNM engagement such that more sexual norm adherence was related to less previous engagement CNM.
- Gender was found to moderate the aforementioned effect such that heterosexual women were more likely to endorse the double standard and sexual script, which in turn predicted their lower likelihood to report previous engagement in CNM ($B = -0.31, p = .03$ and $B = -.49, p = .01$.)

Why do heterosexual men report greater engagement in consensual non-monogamy (CNM) than heterosexual women?

This secondary data analysis of a nationally represented sample of U.S single adults studied participants' previous CNM engagement in terms of their gender and adherence to sexual script norms.



Method

- This study used the 2017 Singles in American data set which surveyed a nationally-representative sample of US adults ($n = 3,438$) regarding their attitudes towards dating, romance, and sex.
- Participants completed three measures relevant to this study: 1) endorsement of the sexual script, 2) endorsement of the sexual double, and 3) previous engagement in open-relationships and polyamorous relationships.
- Due to the mono-normative nature of the current sexual script, greater endorsement of both the traditional sexual script and the double standard were hypothesized to be related to less reported engagement in CNM.

Conclusion

- While one in five American adults have engaged in CNM at some point in their lives, these relationships continued to be stigmatized and understudied (Hauptert et al., 2017).
- This is the first study to study why gender differences in CNM engagement and desire exist, thus expanding the current research on CNM relationships to demystify relationships that challenge the monogamous ideal.
- This study demonstrates that gender norms and double standard constraints for women may account for their lack of reported engagement in CNM.