

**Men's Endorsement of Monogamy: The Role of Gendered Relationship Scripts  
on Beliefs about Committed Relationships, Love, and Romance**

by

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## **DEDICATION**

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## ABSTRACT

The present studies examined whether men disapprove of *monogamy* or if men simply disapprove *gendered relationship scripts* regarding monogamy to which they are expected to adhere. In Studies 1a and 1b, I found that partnered men report frustration with relationship scripts regarding initiating romantic events. In Study 2, I found that men are responsible for orchestrating engagement proposals and Valentine's Day festivities, whereas women are responsible for weddings. In Studies 3-5, I examined the effects of gendered relationship scripts on people's beliefs about committed relationships, sexual and romantic exclusivity, and romance. In Study 3, men and women who were single or in a monogamous relationship responded to monogamy-related items and reported their emotional reactions after viewing common steps to prepare for an engagement proposal, wedding, or surprise birthday party. In two subtle priming studies, men and women responded to monogamy-related items after viewing engagement proposal or landscape photographs (Study 4 included single and partnered participants) or on Valentine's Day or April 10th (Study 5 included partnered participants). When gendered relationship scripts were salient (via engagement proposal or Valentine's Day ideals), partnered men, but not single men, reported lower endorsement of the committed relationship ideology and sexual/romantic exclusivity as compared to partnered men and women in the control conditions and women in the high salience condition. Women's attitudes were unaffected by gendered

relationship script salience; their attitudes were also unaffected by relationship script salience unique to them (wedding planning in Study 3). Study 3 confirmed that heightened negative affect (feeling frustrated, overwhelmed, annoyed) accounted for why partnered men in the high gendered relationship script salience condition reported less endorsement of monogamy. Taken together, partnered men endorse monogamy, but not their gendered relationship scripts associated with monogamy.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

"Valentine's Day is a sham created by card companies to reinforce and exploit gender stereotypes" – Tina Fey (Liz Lemon character; 2010)

In an episode of the popular television show, *30 Rock*, the main character—Liz Lemon—(played by Tina Fey) protests that she is not interested in buying cookies for a Valentine's Day fundraiser because the holiday reinforces and exploits gender stereotypes. Her opinion is dismissed in that scene, but research on dating and relationship scripts supports her point that this holiday (and other aspects of dating) reinforce gender-based stereotypes (Laner & Ventrone, 2000; Rose & Frieze, 1993; Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Dating and relationship scripts are dictated by culture, and, in heterosexual relationships, men are generally expected to be proactive (pursue women) whereas women are typically expected to be reactive (wait to be pursued; e.g., Laner & Ventrone, 2000). Although men and women in relationships largely endorse and engage in these gender-based courtship behaviors (Greene & Faulkner, 2005), there is mixed evidence related to men's endorsement of monogamy (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Conley, Moors, Matsick, & Ziegler, 2013). It seems plausible that men's scripts for long-term relationships (e.g., planning an engagement proposal or Valentine's Day celebration) are frustrating and pressuring; this negative affect toward relationship scripts could ultimately contribute to men's lack of

endorsement of monogamy. This raises the questions: Do men disapprove of monogamy? Or, do men simply disapprove *gendered relationship scripts* regarding monogamy to which there are expected to adhere? In the present studies, I examine whether men's mixed endorsement of monogamy is influenced by gendered relationship scripts and their frustration with these scripts regarding relationships.

### **Men, Women, and Relationships Scripts**

When we enter relationships, we are aware of what is expected of us, and these expectations differ by gender. Social script theory posits that sexual and romantic scenarios are culturally—not biologically—constructed (Simon & Gagnon, 1986, 2003). Accordingly, a cultural lens is used to understand the complexities of dating and sexual practices, fantasies, identities, and desire within a social script framework. This framework rests on the assumption that people follow internalized scripts, which guide them through various behaviors and emotional responses. Social scripting theory provides an insight into dating and sexual behaviors; specifically, scripts function as *social agents* (prescribing what is considered normative within a culture) and *intrapsychic maps* (providing directions for how to feel, think, and behave in various scenarios; Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Simon & Gagnon, 2003). Thus, there are various social scripts that guide our behaviors and, importantly, there is a clear social script for relationships in Western culture.

**Gendered Relationship Scripts in Casual Contexts.** Social scripts for relationships, in particular first dates, emphasize different expectations based on gender in Western culture: Men should initiate and guide dating and sexual activity and women are expected to be passive and accommodating with the initiation of dating and sexual activity (Gagnon, 1990; Rose & Frieze, 1993; Serewicz & Gale, 2008; Simon & Gagnon, 2003). That is, these scripts serve as a guide

for how men and women interact in first dates, and are well-known, explicit, and formal ways of interacting (Rose & Frieze, 1993). In an analysis of popular dating guides (from 1957-1983), Rose and Frieze (1989) found that dating scripts were similar over time: they remained gender stereotyped and formal ways of navigating first dates. More recently, research has shown that men and women endorse the same scripts for first dates as those in previous generations, indicating that men should initiate (e.g., ask for a date, decide on plans) and women should react (e.g., buy new clothes for date, wait for date to arrive; Laner & Ventrone, 2000). Together, these complimentary scripts for men's and women's relationship behaviors form integrated scripts, which I will refer to as *gendered relationship scripts*. Thus, gendered relationship scripts prescribe how women and men should think, feel, and behave in romantic and sexual contexts—from first dates through long-term committed relationships. These scripts persist, in part, because adherence to these normative scripts elicit favorable feedback from friends and family (Holland, 1992).

Scripts operate on three levels: cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic (Gagnon, 1990). At the cultural level, scripts provide a guide for behaviors (and reflect social norms) as illustrated through popular culture and mass media. At this level, mass media (and other cultural outlets) help maintain social norms and reinforce how men and women should behave (Kim et al., 2007; Ward, 2002). For instance, an analysis of popular primetime TV shows found that approximately 16 heterosexual script references were made per hour, including references that men are sexual initiators and women use passive and alluring strategies (e.g., smiling coyly) to win men's affection (Kim et al., 2007). The cultural script filters and guides how men and women behave with each other (at the interpersonal level) and how men and women perceive and feel about their sexual activity (at the intrapsychic level).

**Gendered Relationship Scripts in Monogamous Relationships.** Research on dating and relationship scripts have primarily focused on first dates and initial interactions (e.g., Laner & Ventrone, 2000; Rose & Frieze, 1993; Serewicz & Gale, 2008). I suggest that gendered relationship scripts continue throughout monogamous relationships and guide behavior as relationship commitment increases. Evidence for the existence of these scripts throughout long-term monogamous relationships is illustrated through social exchange rituals, including gift giving, extravagant proposals of love, and romantic rites of passage in Western culture (e.g., prom celebrations, marriage proposals, weddings, and vow-renewal celebrations; Best, 2004; Braithwaite & Baxter, 1995; Strano, 2006). Moreover, these rituals are embedded in the gendered romantic discourse of dating and marriage in Western culture. For instance, men are prescribed to initiate relationships and, if the romantic relationship is successful, men are expected to initiate a marriage proposal (typically with an elaborate surprise). This script for monogamy is consistent with men's expectations in dating, as this script involves men *initiating* the proposal and adorning their fiancée with an (often expensive) symbolic representation of commitment. Women's scripts in this scenario are complimentary, as they are expected to *wait* for the man to propose and subsequently wear the engagement ring to display their commitment.

When newly engaged couples were asked to retell their engagement story, all had elements of this gendered relationship script, including the man asking the woman to marry him, presenting an engagement ring, and orchestrating the proposal as a surprise (Schweingruber, Anahita, & Berns, 2004). In fact, none of the couples interviewed by Schweingruber and colleagues (2004) were aware of alternative proposal models. Moreover, violations of this gendered relationship script—such as a woman asking the man to marry her or a man not

presenting the woman a ring—results in couples being perceived as less strong (Schweingruber, Cast, & Anahita, 2008).

Another example is the celebration of Valentine’s Day: like marriage proposals, this holiday has a distinct romantic discourse whereby gender-based scripts are emphasized. In the U.S., there is a shared cultural understanding of traditions on Valentine’s Day, including gift-giving of symbolic items (e.g., chocolate, flowers), showing affection (e.g., sex, making out), and “going out” (e.g., to a nice restaurant, the ballet; weekend getaway; Close & Zinkhan, 2006). Scripts surrounding this holiday dictate that men should actively pursue women and shower them with gifts whereas women are expected to passively and happily receive men’s affection. Both men and women perceive Valentine’s Day as a day for women, illustrating men’s initiator script (and primary gift-giver script) and women’s reactive script (Close, 2011; Close & Zinkhan, 2006). Although men believe the purpose of Valentine’s Day is to show affection to their partner, they also report that celebrating this holiday is obligatory (Otnes, Ruth, & Milbourne, 1994). When men were asked what they like least about Valentine’s Day, a central theme related to social and psychological pressure emerged, including feeling obligated, anxious, and manipulated into celebrating the holiday (Otnes et al., 1994). Specifically, men reported that their female partners were not under the same pressure to plan or give gifts (Otnes et al., 1994). Consistent with research on men’s roles related to Valentine’s Day and engagements, consumer reports show that men in the U.S. spend twice as much as women on Valentine’s day gifts for their romantic partners (\$175.61 compared to \$88.78) and spend approximately \$5,200 on engagement rings (National Retail Federation, 2013; XO Group Inc., 2011).

Given that engagements (and, likewise, marriages) are viewed as a major milestone within our culture (DePaulo & Morris, 2005, 2006), I argue that engagement proposals and

Valentine's Day celebrations serve to reinforce the committed relationship ideology and place unique relationship script pressure for men. The committed relationship ideology consists of beliefs that monogamous relationships are enduring, most people wish to marry (or couple), and that the committed relationship is the most important relationship (Day, Kay, Holmes, & Napier, 2011). Thus, engaging in these rituals reinforces the committed relationship ideology and serves to promote order and stability within a larger sociopolitical system. Men (but not women) are especially prone to endorse the committed relationship ideology (Day et al., 2011). Men may justify this ideology because they have more at stake than women, regarding social, political, economic, and health power and benefits (e.g., Jackman, 1994; Johnson, Backlund, Sorlie, & Loveless, 2000; Ziegler, Matsick, Moors, Rubin, & Conley, 2014). Thus, men may feel particularly bound by the constraints of gendered relationship scripts within the context of engaging in milestones of monogamy.

Taken together, initiation of an engagement proposal and Valentine's Day celebrations are scripts that appear to be linked to men. That is, men have a unique pressure to pursue, perform, and lead these romantic rites of passage celebrations, whereas women are expected to play a more reactive role and enthusiastically receive tokens of affection. Inherent in gendered relationship scripts are, of course, the belief that women have separate sets of dating and relationship prescriptions that can also pose unique pressures on them. For example, women's relationship scripts tend to be associated with relationship maintenance, including communication and day-to-day relationship upkeep (Ragsdale, 1996; Stafford & Canary, 1991). However, I argue that the pressures to engage (and be the initiator) of romantic rites of passage and relationship milestones are greater for men than women. As such, the primary focus of the present studies is to examine the effects of gendered relationship scripts on *men's* beliefs about

monogamy. More specifically, I aim to examine whether men's disapproval of monogamy may actually reflect discontent with gendered relationships scripts.

### **Men's Endorsement of Monogamous Long-Term Relationships**

Both casual and monogamous relationships involve scripts based on gender that differ in what behaviors are expected to be enacted (for instance, initiating or receiving). It is plausible that men have less stressful or frustrating dating scripts for casual relationships. For instance, relationship scripts in these contexts appear to be less demanding (e.g., initiating a date) than scripts in monogamous relationships (e.g., planning a Valentine's Day celebration or an engagement proposal). Although initiating a date may be stressful (and there is presumably a higher rate of rejection than marriage proposals), I suggest that elaborate celebrations of relationship commitment are more stressful and frustrating than enacting initial relationship scripts. Given that gendered relationship scripts vary in level of involvement between these two types of relationships, gendered relationship scripts may be a socio-cultural factor that is instrumental in explaining men's lack of interest in long-term monogamous relationships. To my knowledge, no research has critically examined the role that gendered relationship scripts may play in men's endorsement (or lack thereof) of monogamy.

Research on men's interest in various relationship types produces mixed evidence for men's interest in long-term monogamous relationships. On one hand, men support monogamy as the optimal relationship model for themselves and others, viewing it as "the ideal" and the "only natural way to love someone" (Anderson, 2010; p. 858). Moreover, men view monogamy as affording life-long benefits of love, commitment, trust, passion, and even sexual satisfaction (to an equal extent as women; Conley, Moors, et al., 2013). Not only do men perceive monogamy as generating a host of positive outcomes, but they benefit from monogamy to a

greater extent than women, especially in terms of health and social relationships (see Ziegler et al., 2014). Thus, given the benefits that monogamy affords men, it is not unexpected that men—not women—are motivated to defend monogamy as a sociopolitical system (Day et al., 2011).

Other research that supports men's proclivity toward monogamy comes from reactions to deviations from monogamy; men are just as likely as women to hold prejudice toward these departures (Conley, Moors, et al., 2013; Morris, DePaulo, Hertel, & Taylor, 2008; Treas & Giesen, 2000). For instance, both men and women stigmatize people who have sexual interactions with someone outside of their monogamous relationship (i.e., infidelity; Treas & Giesen, 2000). Even when men were sexually unfaithful to their partners, their desire to be thought of as monogamous by their peers and society is of utmost importance (Anderson, 2010). For many of these men who cheated, they (ironically) perceive their behavior as a way to show their emotional commitment to their monogamous partner. For instance, these men's sexual transgressions were rationalized as seeking *only* extradyadic sex, not a new romantic partner. According to Anderson (2010), men expressed that they love their partners (after admitting to sexual unfaithfulness) and suggested that reflecting on their transgressions allowed them to understand how much their partner meant to them. That is, these men argue that sexual unfaithfulness maintains emotional monogamy while fulfilling sexual needs.

In addition to sexual activity outside of a *monogamous* relationship, men and women stigmatize other types of departures from monogamy. Specifically, men and women view consensual non-monogamous relationships (i.e., multiple concurrent romantic and/or sexual relationships) as less satisfying and lower in relationship quality than monogamous relationships (Conley, Moors, et al., 2013; Moors, Matsick, Ziegler, Rubin, & Conley, 2013). Men and women also stigmatize people who are not partnered (i.e., single), perceiving them as less secure,

happy, and mature than people in monogamous relationships (Morris et al., 2008). Taken together, this research on men's perceptions of monogamy illustrates a halo surrounding long-term monogamous relationships, whereas *any* alternative is met with extreme stigma.

On the other hand, a cursory glance at popular media suggests that men do not endorse monogamy, whereas women are obsessed with finding a soul mate. In fact, in popular sitcoms and dramas, notions that men actively avoid commitment, whereas women desire commitment (and, are also deficient if not in a relationship) are common plot occurrences (Kim et al., 2007). "Hooking up" or "friends with benefits" relationships (non-committed sexual relationships) are common on college campuses (Lambert, Kahn, & Apple, 2003; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000). Over three-fourths of college students report having at least one non-committed sexual relationship, with men expressing more comfort with and benefits gained from these relationships than women (Bradshaw, Kahn, & Saville, 2010; Lambert et al., 2003; Paul et al., 2000). When undergraduates were asked if they would prefer to go on a date or to hook up with someone, women preferred the former and men preferred the latter (Bradshaw et al., 2010). At the same time, there was no gender difference in desire to seek a long-term commitment from a potential partner (Bradshaw et al., 2010), indicating that men are interested in monogamy.

In addition, evolutionary psychology frameworks support the notion that men prefer casual to long-term monogamous relationships. According to this perspective, men (whose parental investment is minimal), should be more interested in short-term relationships in order to increase the likelihood of reproducing their genes (e.g., Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Trivers, 1972). In contrast, women have greater investment in offspring than men; thus, should seek long-term relationships to ensure help with providing resources for children. Consistent with this framework, research has shown that men typically prefer casual relationships (short-term mating)

and women typically favor monogamy (long-term mating; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Jonason, Li, Webster, & Schmitt, 2009; Li & Kenrick, 2006). Related, men report higher desire to engage in sexual relationships without strong emotional commitments (known as unrestricted sociosexuality) than women (Baumeister, Catanese, & Vohs, 2001; Penke & Asendorpf, 2008; Yost & Zurbriggen, 2006). Thus, this research supports the notion that men tend to have a greater preference for casual than long-term monogamous relationships.

In sum, it appears that men have mixed feelings towards long-term monogamous relationships, whereas women generally prefer this type of relationship. In the next section, I review research on men's attitudes toward relationship scripts to provide support for the notion that gendered relationship scripts may be contributing to men's disapproval of monogamy.

### **Do Men Disapprove of Monogamy or Relationship Scripts Associated with Monogamy?**

Even though men and women are both aware of and enact relationship scripts (Laner & Ventrone, 1998), there is some evidence that both genders are dissatisfied with these gendered relationship scripts. For instance, in comparing male and female relationship scripts (in the context of dating), Rose and Frieze (1993) found that men have much more rigid scripts to follow for a first date, which could explain why men tend to express greater anxiety about dating than women. In terms of initiation, the majority (over three-quarters) of men and women believed that both genders should be equal initiators of sexual relationships (Lottes, 1993). Related, most men and women believe that men should not always have to pay for activities on dates (Ross & Davis, 1996), suggesting a desire for more equitable relationship scripts. Men also positively evaluate women who ask men on dates: they are perceived just as likeable as the women who did not ask men out on dates (Muehlenhard & Scardino, 1985) and, in a newer study, more likeable (e.g., more flexible, active, truthful, intelligent; Mongeau & Carey, 1996).

In fact, men and women were equally likely to accept an invitation for a date from an opposite-gender stranger (56% and 50%, respectively, said yes; Clark & Hatfield, 1989), again indicating support for script reversal or, at least, equity.

Other evidence that men (and women) may be discontent with their gendered relationship scripts comes from research on household labor and finances. Specifically, equitable relationship scripts appear to be (inversely) linked with masculine notions of breadwinning: Men undertake more household responsibilities when they earn less than spouses in societies that do not place priority on earning a high income (Thébaud, 2010). However, men maintain their masculinity by *avoiding* “feminine” work (e.g., household labor) in cultures where earning money for work (and, hence, fulfilling the breadwinner role) is culturally important. In a similar vein, both men and women in countries that have more gender equality tend to be intolerant of household labor inequality (Öun, 2013). These findings illustrate that men in more gender egalitarian societies show signs of discontent with their gendered scripts (by not adhering to them). Related, both men and women view high income earning as desirable for a marriage partner (Kenrick, Sundie, Nicastle, & Stone, 2001), illustrating that men are comfortable with relinquishing their gendered roles associated with breadwinning.

Moreover, men and women who feel pressure to conform to gendered scripts are more likely to base their self-esteem on other’s approval and, in turn, experience less autonomy and sexual satisfaction (Sanchez, Crocker, & Boike, 2005). For men in particular, qualitative work reveals that they desire more gender egalitarianism regarding the “labor” of romantic relationships, such that very few wanted to maintain their male-dominated pattern of behaviors (Dworkin & O’Sullivan, 2005). In fact, nearly all of the men wanted to shift away from scripts that reinforced that they should always pursue to wanting their female partners to pursue them,

illustrating how men want to be the object of desire from their female partners. Taken together, there is some evidence that men and women are dissatisfied with their relationship scripts. However, the research reviewed here is arguably related to attitudes toward scripts and findings (albeit indirect) that suggest both men and women are dissatisfied with relationship scripts. That is, extant research has not assessed whether gender differences in frustration (and other affective responses) to relationship scripts are evident; thus, I examine this further in the preliminary evidence section.

### **Aims of the Present Studies**

The objective of the present studies is to examine whether men disapprove of *monogamy* or, rather, *gendered relationship scripts* associated with monogamy. In the current research, I investigated this research question through six empirical studies; see Figure 1 for an overview of the research questions for each study. First, I investigated possible gender differences in frustration for relationship scripts and reactions to initiating (or being the recipient of) elaborate romantic gestures (preliminary evidence Studies 1a and 1b). In Study 2, I sought to understand men's and women's beliefs about the expectations placed on men (as opposed to women) regarding monogamy. Specifically, I examined people's gendered associations for relationship scripts regarding marriage proposals, Valentine's Day, and other symbols of monogamy (in comparison to non-romantic important life events).

In order to examine the effects of gendered relationship script salience on men's endorsement of monogamy, Studies 3-5 focus on one of two events—engagement proposals and Valentine's Day—that men are primarily responsible for initiating and planning (Otnes et al., 1994; Schweingruber et al., 2004). I conceptualized endorsement of monogamy as positive attitudes toward committed relationships, sexual and romantic exclusivity, and romanticism. In

Figure 2, I outlined the conceptual model and main hypotheses for Studies 3-5. As illustrated, when gendered relationship scripts unique to men are made salient (i.e., engagement proposal, Valentine's Day), I expected this would activate frustration among men (but not women) which would lead to low levels of endorsement of monogamy. However, when gendered relationship scripts unique to men are *not* made salient, I expected that frustration and pressure will *not* be activated; thus men would report high levels of endorsement of committed relationships, sexual/romantic exclusivity, and romanticism (and these levels would be greater than men under high gendered relationship script salience). Additionally, I hypothesized that women's endorsement of monogamy will be unaffected by salience of gendered relationship scripts (given these scripts are unique to men, women's endorsement of monogamy should not change). The goals of Studies 4 and 5 were to conceptually replicate these expected findings using subtle priming techniques; specifically, viewing engagement proposal photographs (Study 4) or taking part in the study on Valentine's Day (Study 5).

In addition, Study 3 had two other goals. One goal was to identify mediating factors—frustration, anxiety, endorsement of traditional scripts—that could account for the effects of gendered relationship scripts salience on men's beliefs about committed relationships, sexual and romantic exclusivity, and romanticism. In the outlined conceptual model, I hypothesized that men's relationship script salience activates negative affect, including feeling frustrated and overwhelmed, which explains why men's endorsement of monogamy is lower than when men's relationship script salience is not activated. Moreover, I investigated plausible additional mediators, including anxiety, endorsement of traditional relationship scripts, and perceived financial stability.

The second goal of Study 3 was to examine the effects of gendered relationship script salience unique to women (planning a wedding) on men's and women's beliefs about monogamy. Although men and women tend to diverge in important ways with regards to how they think about traditional romantic relationships, women's attitudes toward monogamy appear to be more stable than men's (e.g., Bradshaw et al., 2010; Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). Thus, salience of women's relationship scripts (planning a wedding) may *not* affect women's beliefs about monogamy in the same way as men's relationship scripts (planning an engagement proposal) affect men's beliefs about monogamy. At the same time, it is also possible that gendered relationship salience unique to women may decrease women's level of endorsement of monogamy (compared to the control condition), or at least be perceived as frustrating (similar to how men view the pressures associated with planning a marriage proposal). That is, I am not offering straightforward gender-based predictions because both pattern of results seem plausible.

A goal of both Studies 3 and 4 was to examine the effects of relationship status (single or in a monogamous relationship) in conjunction with gender and gendered relationship script salience. Single men defend the committed relationship ideology to the same extent as partnered men (Day et al., 2011), so it is likely that gendered relationship script salience would affect both single and partnered men. However, partnered men may be more sensitive to gendered relationship salience than single men, given that they can specifically think about how engagement proposals relate to their own relationships. Thus, I expected that both single and partnered men would report lower endorsement of committed relationships, sexual/romantic exclusivity, and romance when their gendered relationship scripts are made salient than when these scripts are not made salient. Potentially, these effects would be more pronounced among partnered men than single men.

In addition to the main hypotheses tested in Study 4, another aim was to examine the effects of relationship script salience on men's and women's attitudes toward groups of other people based on relationship status. In other words, how men and women (in both experimental conditions) view other people based on whether they are single or in a monogamous relationship. Specifically, I expected that salience of men's relationship scripts (engagement proposals) would not impact men's (or women's) attitudes toward people who are single or people who are partnered. That is, when engagement proposals are made salient, this would negatively impact men's *own* beliefs about monogamy, not how they viewed others based on relationship status (and women's attitudes towards single and partnered people should also be unaffected).

Figure 1. Overview of research questions

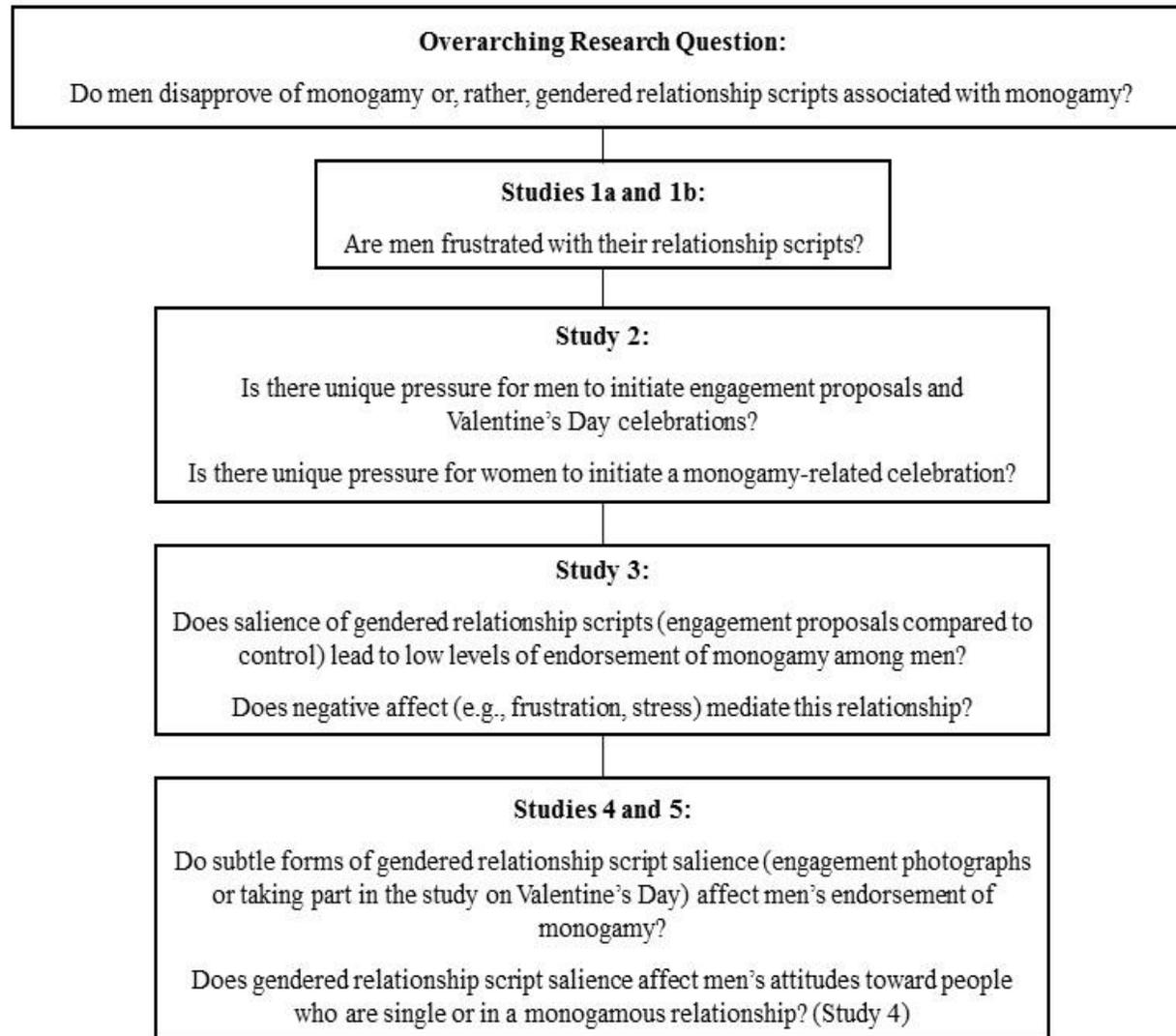
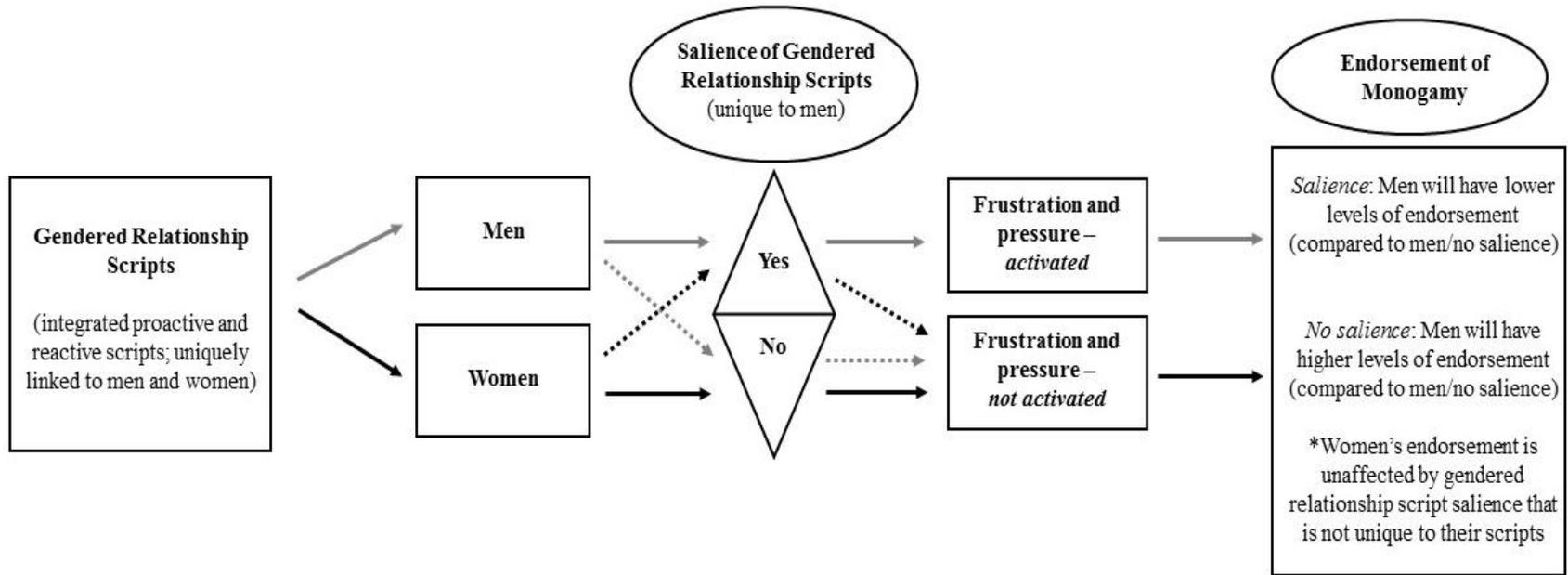


Figure 2. Conceptual model: The effects of gendered relationship scripts on men’s endorsement of monogamy



**CHAPTER 2**

**STUDIES 1A AND 1B - PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE OF MEN AND WOMEN'S  
FRUSTRATION WITH GENDERED RELATIONSHIPS SCRIPTS**

First, I turn to preliminary data to illustrate gender differences in frustration with (gendered) relationship scripts. Although some research (albeit, indirectly) shows that both genders may be dissatisfied with their relationship scripts (e.g., Dworkin & O'Sullivan, 2005; Ross & Davis, 1996), the present preliminary evidence addresses people's affective responses to gendered relationship scripts as well as hypothetically initiating celebrations of love (or being the recipient). That is, these preliminary studies examine frustration, pressure, and other affective responses regarding gendered relationship scripts that are central to monogamous relationships (e.g., anniversary celebrations, engagement proposals) that have not been previously explored. In Study 1a, I expected that men would report higher levels of frustration for scripts unique to men (e.g., to be romantic, plan romantic occasions) than women. In Study 1b, I hypothesized that both men and women who imagined planning an elaborate Valentine's Day or engagement proposal for their partner would report greater frustration and pressure than men and women who imagined their partner planning these events.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Community samples of participants were recruited to take part in both preliminary evidence studies via online volunteer postings (craigslist.org and Facebook.com). I specifically recruited for people currently involved in a romantic monogamous relationship<sup>1</sup> and over-recruited for men in relationships (targeting men was necessary to create an even gender balance). Participants were instructed that the researchers were interested in their attitudes toward different life experiences and relationships. The links to both studies were part of a pre-screening filter in which participants were asked several questions, including geographic region and other items. Those who indicated that they were currently part of a relationship were filtered into the present studies. Given that the purpose of the present study was to examine frustration with gendered relationship scripts, I excluded 49 (Study 1a) and 31 (Study 1b) participants from the analyses because they did not respond to questions regarding the main study variables or indicated that they were currently single, in a consensual non-monogamous relationship, or non-heterosexual.

Participants in Study 1a took part in a correlational study in which they were asked about their frustration with relationship scripts at the societal level and within their personal relationships. The final sample in Study 1a included 256 heterosexual participants currently in a monogamous relationship; 51% identified as female and 49% identified as male. Participants' age ranged from 18-81 years ( $M = 29.23$ ,  $SD = 14.19$ ). The sample's racial/ethnic composition was 77% White, 6% African American, 4% multiracial, 4% Latino/a, 4% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% Native American/American Indian, and 1% Middle Eastern American; the remaining did not report their ethnicity.

In Study 1b, participants were randomly assigned to imagine scenarios in which they planned a Valentine's Day celebration for their partner and proposed to their partner (self-initiator scenarios 1 and 2) or scenarios in which their partner was the actor (and they were the recipient of the partner's planning and proposal; partner-initiator scenarios 1 and 2). The final sample in Study 1b included 164 heterosexual participants currently in a monogamous relationship; 60% identified as female and 40% identified as male. The average length of relationship was 81.91 months. Participants age ranged from 18-70 years ( $M = 32.10$ ,  $SD = 13.67$ ). In terms of the sample's ethnicity, 87% identified as White, 5% identified as multiracial, 3% Latino/a, 1% Native American/American Indian, 1% African American, 1% Asian/Asian American; the remaining did not report their ethnicity.

#### **Preliminary Evidence: Study 1a**

Participants were asked about their frustration with a variety of aspects of dating and relationships (e.g., be romantic, plan romantic occasions, pay the bill)—that society expects them to fulfill and expectations within their own romantic relationships.

#### **Measures: Study 1a**

For all items, participants rated the extent to which they felt frustrated with each statement/expectation, using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*do not feel frustrated at all*) to 7 (*feel extremely frustrated*). All items (grouped by level) were randomly presented.

**Gendered Relationship Scripts: Societal Level.** To assess frustration with societal-level expectations of gendered relationship scripts, eight items were adapted from Laner and Ventrone's (2000) relationship and first-date behaviors and two new items were created. Participants were instructed to think about what society expects of them regarding how to act and behave in romantic relationships and dating (and subsequently rate their frustration). Items

included: “Discuss plans with romantic partner,” “pay the bill,” select/prepare clothes for date,” “make small talk,” “have a deeper conversation,” “make affectionate move (e.g., hug, kiss),” “discuss plans for another date,” “plan romantic occasions (e.g., anniversary celebration),” “embrace traditional gender roles and values,” and “be romantic.” The latter two items were created for this study.

**Gendered Relationship Scripts: Relationship Level.** To examine frustration with gendered relationship expectations in the context of a romantic relationship, four items were created. Given that the purpose of the present study was to examine frustration with men’s relationship scripts related to planning and being romantic, two items reflected this: “In my relationship, I am expected to do the planning for romantic occasions (e.g., anniversary celebration)” and “In my relationship, there is pressure placed on me to be romantic.” Additionally, items that assessed endorsing traditional values and being affectionate were included: “In my relationship, it’s important that my partner and I embrace traditional romantic relationship values” and “In my relationship, I am expected to be very affectionate.”

### **Preliminary Evidence Study 1a: Results**

Table 1 provides the means, standard deviations, and *t*-test results for frustration with societal and personal relationship script expectations organized by gender. Scores, on average, reflected greater frustration with expectations of relationship scripts in the context of personal romantic relationships compared to larger societal expectations.

Both men and women reported mean frustration levels with societal relationship script expectation scores reflecting a range from “not really frustrated” to “sort of frustrated.” As expected, men reported greater levels of frustration regarding expectations to make affectionate moves, be romantic, and plan romantic occasions than women. On the other hand, women

reported greater frustration with respect to relationship scripts involving: pay the bill, select/prepare clothes for date, and decide on plans by yourself. Both men and women expressed equal levels of frustration with expectations to discuss plans for another date, have a deeper conversation, make small talk, and embrace traditional gender roles and values.

In terms of frustration regarding relationship scripts in the context of one's own relationship, both men and women reported, on average, scores reflecting "sort of frustrated" and "somewhat frustrated." As predicted, men reported greater frustration for pressure placed on them to be romantic and expectations for them to do the planning for romantic occasions (e.g., anniversary celebration). Men and women reported similar, moderate levels, of frustration in their personal romantic relationships with feeling pressure to be very affectionate and embrace traditional romantic relationship values.

### **Preliminary Evidence Study 1b**

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions, in which they either imagined they planned an elaborate Valentine's Day celebration for their partner and proposed to their partner, or their partner was the actor in both scenarios (and they were the recipient). Participants were then asked to rate their affect and feelings (e.g., frustration, comfort, happiness).

#### **Measures: Study 1b**

The two scenarios within each experimental condition were randomly presented. Additionally, all dependent measures were randomly presented; participants rated the scenarios on a variety of dimensions; all items were on a 6-point semantic differential scale.

**Experimental Scenarios.** Participants were asked: "Imagine yourself in the following scenario. Please tell us how you would feel and your thoughts using the scales below:" and

randomly assigned to view either two scenarios in which they planned a Valentine's Day celebration and engagement proposal for their partner (self-initiator scenarios 1 and 2) or their partner planned both events for them (partner-initiator scenarios 1 and 2):

***Self-initiator scenario 1.*** “You propose to the love of your life at the place where the two of you met. You have been going over how you are going to do it, but you know your partner has no idea you are preparing to propose. You have arranged for your families and friends to be there for the occasion and everyone is thrilled for the two of you.”

***Self-initiator scenario 2.*** “On Valentine's day, you surprise your partner with a party to celebrate your relationship. You have been planning the event for months, but you know your partner has no idea. You have invited your families and friends to be there for the occasion and they are very excited.”

***Partner-initiator scenario 1.*** “The love of your life proposes to you at the place where the two of you met. Your partner has been going over how he/she is going to do it, but you have had no idea that he/she was preparing to propose. Your partner has arranged for your families and friends to be there for the occasion and everyone is thrilled for the two of you.”

***Partner-initiator scenario 2.*** “On Valentine's day, your partner surprises you with a party to celebrate your relationship. Your partner has been planning the event for months, but you have had no idea. Your partner has invited your families and friends to be there for the occasion and they are very excited.”

**Positive Experience.** Participants rated the extent to which they perceived each scenario as being positive and happy: *I would not like this at all—I would very much like this* and *this would not make me happy—this would make me very happy*. Both items were combined to create a positive experience measure ( $\alpha_{\text{Valentine's Day}} = .96$  and  $\alpha_{\text{engagement}} = .93$ ).

**Comfortable Experience.** Participants rated the extent to which they perceived each scenario as being easy and comfortable: *I would feel uncomfortable—I would feel very comfortable* and *this seems difficult—this seems easy*. Both items were combined to create a comfortable experience measure ( $\alpha_{\text{Valentine's Day}} = .86$  and  $\alpha_{\text{engagement}} = .81$ ).

**Ideal Experience.** Participants rated the extent to which they viewed each scenario as being ideal: *this is not my ideal situation—this is my ideal situation*.

**Pressuring and Frustrating Experience.** Participants rated the extent to which they perceived each scenario as pressuring and frustrating: *this would put a lot of pressure on me—this would put no pressure on me* and *I would feel frustrated—I would not at all feel frustrated* (both items were reverse scored).

### **Preliminary Evidence Study 1b: Results**

Table 2 provides the means and standard deviations for each of the dependent variables organized by gender and experimental condition. I conducted ten separate 2 (initiator: self vs. partner) x 2 (gender: female vs. male) ANOVAs with participants' reports of how positive, comfortable, ideal, pressuring, and frustrating these experiences would be serving as the dependent variables. The analyses were separated by type of event: Valentine's Day and engagement proposal.

#### **Valentine's Day**

As predicted, there were main effects of initiator for experiencing pressure and frustration with planning a Valentine's Day celebration,  $F(1, 160) = 4.09, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .03$  and  $F(1, 160) = 3.87, p = .05, \eta_p^2 = .02$ , respectively. Both men and women who imagined they were planning an elaborate Valentine's Day celebration for their partner reported higher levels of pressure and frustration than those who imagined that their partner planned the celebration for them. There

were no main effects of gender on pressure or frustration,  $F(1, 160) = .01, p = .98$  and  $F(1, 160) = .14, p = .71$ . There were also no significant interactions between initiator and gender for either outcome,  $F(1, 160) = .47, p = .49$  and  $F(1, 160) = 1.68, p = .20$ , respectively. Moreover, both men and women, regardless of initiator condition, reported similar positive, comfortable, and ideal experiences,  $F_{\text{range}} .02 - 1.03; p_{\text{values}} > .31$  (indicating no main effects or interaction terms).

### **Engagement Proposal**

As expected, regardless of gender, participants who imagined they initiated the engagement proposal (self-initiator) reported higher levels of pressure and frustration than those who imagined their partner initiated,  $F(1, 160) = 5.88, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .04$  and  $F(1, 160) = 4.20, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .03$  (indicating a main effect of initiator). There were no main effects of gender or interactions between gender and initiator on experiences of pressure or frustration,  $F_{\text{range}} .00-1.07; p_{\text{values}} > .19$ . Both men and women, regardless of initiator condition, reported similar comfortable and ideal experiences,  $F_{\text{range}} .02 - 1.98; p_{\text{values}} > .16$  (indicating no main effects or interactions).

There were no main effects of gender or initiator on positive experiences,  $F(1, 160) = .57, p = .45$  and  $F(1, 160) = .48, p = .49$ , respectively. However, results revealed an interaction between gender and initiator,  $F(1, 160) = 4.18, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . Simple effects revealed that women who imagined they proposed to their partner (self-initiator) reported the experience as less positive than women who imagined their partner proposed to them (partner-initiator),  $t(97) = -2.18, p = .03, d = -.19$ ; this effect was not found among men  $t(63) = .87, p = .39$ . Additionally, women who imagined that their partner proposed to them (partner-initiator) reported higher positive reactions than men who imagined their partner proposed to them (partner-initiator),  $t(76)$

= 2.27,  $p = .03$ ,  $d = 30$ . There were no differences between men's and women's positive ratings in the self-initiator engagement proposal conditions,  $t(84) = -.84$ ,  $p = .41$ .

### **Additional Analyses: Controlling for Age of Participant**

A similar pattern of results emerged when conducting all analyses with age as a covariate (ANCOVA analyses). For Study 1a, gender differences in frustration with societal expectations to make affectionate move, be romantic, plan romantic occasions, pay the bill, select/prepare clothes for date, and decide on plans by yourself remained significant after controlling for age. Additionally, gender differences in frustration with personal relationship expectations to be romantic and to plan for romantic occasions remained significant after taking age into account. Age was only significantly related to two outcomes (main effects); specifically, older participants expressed greater frustration with the following scripts: "in my relationship, I am expected to be very affectionate" and society expects them to "embrace traditional gender roles and values."

For Study 1b, the main effects of initiator for pressure and frustration remained significant after controlling for age in analyses related to the Valentine's Day event. For the engagement proposal, the interaction between gender and initiator was in the same direction (although the results were trending) and the main effects of initiator for pressure and frustration remained significant with age as a covariate. Age was not significantly associated with any of the outcomes across both events, with the exception that older participants reported more positive reactions to the engagement proposal events (regardless of gender or initiator condition).

### **Preliminary Evidence Studies 1a and 1b: Discussion**

Taken together, these preliminary evidence studies support the notion that, in many cases, both men and women express frustration and feeling pressured by relationship scripts. Men's

relationship scripts entail initiating dates and sexual contact, asking for a women's hand in marriage, and planning Valentine's Day celebrations (Gagnon, 1990; Otnes et al., 1994; Schweingruber et al., 2004; Schweingruber et al., 2008). In Study 1a, men identified these gendered relationship scripts (e.g., being romantic, making an affectionate move, and planning romantic occasions) as more frustrating than women. The frustration experienced by men with these relationship scripts also is experienced within their own monogamous relationships: men reported greater frustration than women with feeling pressured and expected to do the planning for romantic occasions and to be romantic. These results also offer evidence that parallels other research suggesting that both genders express some dissatisfaction with (or desiring reversal of) their gendered scripts (e.g., Lottes, 1993; Thébaud, 2010). Although men reported greater levels of frustration with these relationship scripts than women, it is important to note that, in many cases (in particular feelings toward societal scripts), the average level of frustration was near the mid-point of the scale (i.e., relatively low).

Preliminary evidence from Study 1b supports the idea that being the initiator of elaborate romantic celebrations is particularly frustrating and pressuring. That is, men recognize that this relationship script (which is unique to them) may be challenging—and, importantly, women also report that this gendered relationship script is frustrating and pressuring. In heterosexual relationships, women's scripts are reactive (Laner & Ventrone, 2000; Serewicz & Gale, 2008); thus, when women were asked to imagine planning an elaborate Valentine's Day celebration for their partner or propose to their partner, they reported levels of frustration equal to men. These results illuminate the power of the initiator relationship script for planning milestones of affection and commitment—a script which is unique to men, not women in heterosexual monogamous relationships. Moreover, women's negative reactions to imagining themselves

proposing to their partner (as opposed to a recipient of a proposal) confirms that women link this script to men. In other words, this suggests that women would be happier if their male partner fulfilled this script, consistent with expectations for gendered relationship scripts.

Additionally, men's similar levels of frustration and pressure, regardless of initiator condition, suggest that even in cases where their partner proposed to them, it would make them feel frustrated. Even though men view this initiator relationship script as frustrating, men also find a script reversal similarly frustrating. Men could be embarrassed or have their masculinity threatened if their female partner proposed to them, this would be consistent with gender-theorists conceptualizations of masculinity (Franchina, Eisler, & Moore, 2001; Wood & Eagly, 2002). Finally, these patterns of frustration and pressure regarding gendered relationships scripts were similar among older and younger participants, indicating that younger generations also experience traditionally gendered relationship scripts.

Given this preliminary evidence, I next turn to Study 2 to further investigate symbolic representations of gendered dating scripts and the extent to which certain events (e.g., Valentine's Day, engagement proposals) define men's relationship scripts and monogamous relationships.

### Footnote

<sup>1</sup> Across all research studies, participants were asked “what best describes your current relationship status?” and provided the following options: “single,” “casually dating (you are not committed solely to one person),” “monogamous (you and your partner have agreed to be sexually/romantically exclusive with each other),” “consensually non-monogamous (you and your partner/s have agreed to have sexual and/or romantic relationships with others; e.g., polyamory, swinging, and open relationship),” and “another term best describes my relationship status” (open-ended space provided). Previous research has shown the utility in asking a variety of relationship styles; this format avoids assuming if people respond that they are “in a relationship” that is it a *monogamous* relationship (Moors, Conley, Edelstein, & Chopik, 2015; Rubin, Moors, Matsick, Ziegler, & Conley, 2014)

Table 1. Preliminary Evidence Study 1a: Means, Standard Deviations, and t-test Analyses for Frustration with Relationship Scripts

Relationship Script	Men	Women	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
	M (SD)	M (SD)		
<i>Societal Level</i>				
Pay the bill	2.22 (1.43)	2.85 (1.57)	-3.40 <sup>***</sup>	-.42
Make affectionate move	2.42 (1.74)	1.92 (1.43)	2.47 <sup>**</sup>	.32
Discuss plans for another date	2.34 (1.53)	2.12 (1.42)	1.21	--
Be romantic	2.55 (1.70)	2.01 (1.46)	2.75 <sup>**</sup>	.34
Plan romantic occasions	3.05 (1.72)	2.50 (1.51)	2.70 <sup>**</sup>	.34
Select/prepare clothes for date	2.42 (1.62)	3.12 (1.77)	-3.29 <sup>***</sup>	-.41
Have a deeper conversation	2.11 (1.47)	2.02 (1.61)	0.46	--
Make small talk	2.55 (1.84)	2.34 (1.64)	0.96	--
Embrace traditional gender roles and values	2.79 (1.99)	3.20 (1.94)	-1.65	--
Decide on plans by yourself	2.89 (1.81)	3.40 (1.79)	-2.26 <sup>*</sup>	-.28
<i>Personal Relationship Level</i>				
Pressure placed on me to be romantic	3.27 (1.84)	2.38 (1.24)	4.56 <sup>***</sup>	.57
Expected to do the planning for romantic occasions (e.g., anniversary celebration)	4.03 (1.71)	3.54 (1.67)	2.32 <sup>*</sup>	.29
It's important that my partner and I embrace traditional romantic relationship values	4.65 (1.87)	4.65 (1.72)	0.04	--
Expected to be very affectionate	4.89 (1.83)	4.82 (1.42)	0.31	--

Note. <sup>\*</sup>  $p < .05$ . <sup>\*\*</sup>  $p < .01$ . <sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < .001$ .

Table 2. Preliminary Evidence Study 1b: Partnered Men and Women’s Means and Standard Deviations for Positive, Comfortable, Ideal, Pressuring, and Frustrating Experiences

Dependent Variables	Valentine’s Day				Engagement Proposal			
	Self-Initiator		Partner-Initiator		Self-Initiator		Partner-Initiator	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Positive	3.55 (1.71)	3.46 (1.80)	3.31 (1.56)	3.77 (1.54)	4.05 (1.94)	3.69 (1.92)	3.67 (1.49)	4.45 (1.48)
Comfortable	3.47 (1.57)	3.42 (1.68)	3.43 (1.51)	3.22 (1.39)	3.23 (1.57)	3.06 (1.56)	3.39 (1.44)	3.57 (1.41)
Ideal	2.88 (1.83)	3.02 (1.78)	2.97 (1.53)	2.67 (1.45)	3.12 (1.82)	2.75 (1.95)	3.00 (1.63)	3.04 (1.56)
Pressuring	4.42 (1.11)	4.25 (1.73)	3.75 (1.74)	3.91 (1.47)	4.03 (1.86)	4.64 (1.71)	3.72 (1.84)	3.59 (1.69)
Frustrating	4.06 (1.09)	3.66 (1.71)	3.28 (1.46)	3.50 (1.50)	3.64 (1.43)	4.00 (1.53)	3.34 (1.45)	3.33 (1.46)

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **STUDY 2 - THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN MONOGAMY-RELATED SYMBOLS AND GENDERED RELATIONSHIPS SCRIPTS**

My objective in Study 2 was to examine the extent to which men and women in monogamous relationships view various symbols related to monogamy as defining of gendered relationship scripts. Given my central interest is to understand if men disapprove of monogamy or, rather, gendered relationship scripts associated with monogamy, I sought to identify the most salient symbols of relationship scripts prescribed to men. Although previous work has shown that men are primarily responsible for initiating engagement proposals and Valentine's Day celebration, these studies may be dated and the extent to which these events compared to other rituals associated with monogamy are unclear (Otnes et al., 1994; Schweingruber et al., 2004). In the present study, participants were randomly assigned to view various images related to monogamy/romantic events (e.g., Valentine's Day card and gifts, engagement/marriage proposal, diamond ring, wedding anniversary) or various control images related to non-romantic life events (e.g., graduation celebration, birthday cake). Then participants rated the extent to which they believed these images were associated with monogamy as well as relationship scripts associated with men and women.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

A community sample of participants currently in a romantic relationship was recruited to take part in a study related to people's beliefs and attitudes toward different photographs. Participants were recruited via social networking sites, including craigslist.org (volunteer sections) and Facebook.com. I specifically recruited for people currently involved in a romantic relationship and over-recruited for men in relationships (targeting men was necessary to have an even gender balance). Each participant was randomly assigned to either view 10 images depicting various symbols associated with monogamy or 10 images depicting various symbols of non-romantic events. Participants were instructed that the researchers "were interested in your thoughts and opinions regarding different images... We will now show you 20 images and ask you a few questions about each photograph." Participants rated the extent to which each image was characteristic of monogamy and related to relationship scripts based on gender, as well as the pleasantness and interestingness of the image.

Participants were excluded if they did not respond to questions regarding the main study variables (e.g., relationship status, gender;  $n = 42$ ) or indicated they were currently single ( $n = 13$ ). The final sample included 180 participants currently in monogamous relationships. Of the total final sample, 61% identified as female and 39% identified as male. The majority of the sample identified as heterosexual (93%). The remaining 7% identified as non-heterosexual; however, they were currently engaged in a monogamous relationship with someone of the opposite gender. The sample's racial/ethnic composition was 88% White, 1% Asian/Pacific Islander, 6% multiracial, 3% Latino/a, 1% African American, and 1% Native American/American Indian; the remaining did not report ethnicity. Participants' age ranged from 18-70

years ( $M = 31.62$ ,  $SD = 13.44$ ) and length of relationship ranged from 1-492 months ( $M = 84.00$ ,  $SD = 111.83$ ).

### **Symbols and Artifacts**

Ten images depicted five different symbols (images of artifacts and rituals) associated with monogamy: Valentine's Day, engagement proposal, wedding, prom, and happy older couples (celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary). The other ten images depicted five different symbols associated with friendships and life celebrations (i.e., control symbols): Thanksgiving, birthday celebration, vacation, athletic award win, and happy older people (celebrating their 40 year high school reunion). Specifically, participants were shown two images, one that included people and one that included an object (without people) that related to each of the different symbols. For example, for those who viewed monogamy-related images, one of the images featured people (e.g., a man on one knee proposing) and another featured object(s) associated with the related symbol (e.g., a diamond engagement ring).

### **Measures**

Participants rated the extent to which they perceived each image to be characteristic of several constructs, including monogamy, gendered roles in relationships, youthfulness, pleasantness as well as their beliefs on the pressures associated with men's and women's role for each event. The order of the dependent measures was randomized.

**Positive Qualities.** Participants rated each image using a 6-point semantic differential scale for the following items: *not at all symbolic of youthfulness—very symbolic of youthfulness*, *not at all interesting—very interesting*, and *not at all pleasant—very pleasant*.

**Characteristic of Monogamy.** Participants rated the extent to which they perceived each image as characteristic of monogamy using two items on a 6-point semantic differential

scale: *not at all characteristic of monogamy—very characteristic of monogamy* and *not at all symbolic of monogamy—very symbolic of monogamy*.

**Representative of Gendered Roles and Pressure.** Participants rated the extent to which they viewed each image as representative of gendered roles in romantic relationships using two items on a 6-point semantic differential scale: *not at all representative of men’s roles in romantic relationships—very representative of men’s roles in romantic relationships* and *not at all representative of women’s roles in romantic relationships—very representative of women’s roles in romantic relationships*.

Participants were also asked “does society place more pressure on men or women to act a certain way or do certain things (e.g., buy a gift, make plans, etc...) for [theme for each image; e.g., 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversaries]?” On a 100-point sliding scale (with the slider set at 50 “equally women and men”), participants rated the extent to which they perceived societal pressure placed on women and men related to each photograph. Higher scores reflected greater pressure for men.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Monogamy Symbols versus Non-romantic Symbols**

To examine if both groups of images (monogamy/romantic and non-romantic/control) were equally pleasing and interesting as well as symbolic of youthfulness, I conducted three *t*-tests. I compare the ratings of those who viewed monogamy related images to those who viewed non-romantic images (collapsing across all images within a condition). Participants rated the monogamy related images ( $M = 4.57$ ) and control images ( $M = 4.46$ ) as equally pleasing,  $t(179) = 0.89, p = 0.38$ . Similarly, participants rated the images related to monogamy ( $M = 3.89$ ) and control images ( $M = 3.74$ ) as equally interesting,  $t(179) = 0.99, p = 0.32$ . Moreover, participants

rated monogamy-related images ( $M = 3.91$ ) and control images ( $M = 3.82$ ) as equally symbolic of youthfulness,  $t(179) = 0.79$ ,  $p = 0.43$ . These results provide evidence that the positive attributes elicited from both groupings of images were equivalent. Given that people viewed both stimuli as equally pleasing, interesting, and symbolic of youthfulness, these results rule out the notion that monogamy-related images may be inherently more pleasing, interesting, or related to youth than non-romantic images.

To examine the extent to which people viewed images as characteristic of monogamy and representative of men's and women's roles in relationships, I conducted four  $t$ -tests. As expected, images related to monogamy were perceived as more characteristic of monogamy ( $M = 4.31$ ) and symbolic of monogamy ( $M = 4.36$ ) than non-romantic (control) images ( $M = 2.41$  and  $M = 2.38$ , respectively),  $t(179) = 13.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.97$  and  $t(179) = 13.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.01$ . Images related to monogamy were also viewed as more representative of men's roles ( $M = 3.92$ ) and women's roles ( $M = 3.92$ ) in romantic relationships than non-romantic images ( $M = 2.11$  and  $M = 2.44$ , respectively),  $t(179) = 13.46$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.01$  and  $t(179) = 9.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.36$ . Also as expected, participants indicated that greater societal pressure is place on men for the monogamy-related images ( $M = 59.47$ ) than the non-romantic images ( $M = 41.86$ ),  $t(179) = 10.89$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 1.63$ . Additional analyses were also conducted to examine whether gender or age affected the results. Overall, men and women rated the images similarly, only one of the gender x type of image interactions was significant (men perceived the non-romantic images as more representative of men's roles in romantic relationships than women,  $p = 0.04$ ), all other  $p$ values  $> 0.12$ . Moreover, all interactions for age x type of image were not significant,  $p$ values  $> 0.40$ . Thus, regardless of gender or age, participants rated the images related to monogamy as

higher on each of the qualities (e.g., symbolic of monogamy, greater societal pressure for men) than the non-romantic images.

These results confirm that images associated with monogamy (e.g., Valentine's Day, 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversaries) are perceived as more symbolic of monogamy and representative of both genders' roles in relationships than non-romantic life event symbols, such as winning an award or celebrating a birthday. Additionally, people perceive that greater societal pressure is placed on men (than women) to do certain things and act a certain way in the context of monogamy (e.g., prom, engagement proposals) than non-romantic contexts.

### **Monogamy Symbols: Societal Pressure for Men and Women**

Additional analyses were conducted to compare the extent to which people perceived pressure for men (relative to women) to act and behave a certain way related to each of monogamy images. That is, I conducted a series of paired *t*-tests, comparing each of the five symbols of monogamy (i.e., Valentine's Day, engagement proposal, wedding, prom, and 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary) on perceived gendered relationship script pressure for men; see Table 3. Based on mean ratings, all of the monogamy related images were perceived as placing greater pressure on men or relatively equal pressure on both genders, with the exception that weddings were perceived as placing unique pressure on women. Of importance, people viewed greater pressure placed on men for both Valentine's Day and engagement proposals compared to all other romantic symbols. In other words, Valentine's Day and engagement proposals were the contexts in which men were seen as being especially responsible. Taken together, these results illustrate that Valentine's Day and engagement proposals place unique societal pressure on men to engage to pursue, perform, and lead these romantic rites of passage celebrations.

Table 3. Study 2: Means, Standard Deviations, and Paired t-test Analyses for Monogamy Images and Societal Pressure for Women and Men’s Relationship Scripts

Symbol	Mean (SD)	Pair-wise comparisons	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
Valentine’s Day	72.80 (17.99)	Valentine’s Day v. Engagement	-5.71 <sup>***</sup>	-.54
Engagement Proposal	82.45 (17.70)	Valentine’s Day v. Wedding	13.56 <sup>***</sup>	1.99
Wedding	34.04 (20.86)	Valentine’s Day v. Prom	7.91 <sup>***</sup>	.97
Prom	55.08 (18.52)	Valentine’s Day v. 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary	8.78 <sup>***</sup>	1.11
50 <sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary	52.97 (17.65)	Engagement v. Wedding	16.64 <sup>***</sup>	2.50
		Engagement v. Prom	11.90 <sup>***</sup>	1.51
		Engagement v. 50 <sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary	13.19 <sup>***</sup>	1.67
		Wedding v. Prom	-8.05 <sup>***</sup>	-1.07
		Wedding v. 50 <sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary	-8.45 <sup>***</sup>	-.98
		Prom v. 50 <sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary	-0.94	--

*Note.* <sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < .001$ . Degrees of freedom = 98. Higher scores reflect greater societal pressure for men to act a certain way or do certain things for each event.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **STUDY 3 - SALIENCE OF PLANNING RELATIONSHIP EVENTS AND THE ROLE OF GENDER AND RELATIONSHIP STATUS**

The goal of the third study was to examine the effects of gendered relationship script salience on men's (and women's) beliefs about committed relationships, sexual and romantic exclusivity, and romanticism. Study 2 confirmed that both men and women perceive men to be uniquely responsible for engagement proposals, and women to be responsible for weddings. Thus, in the present study I manipulated gendered relationship salience through randomly assigning participants to imagine planning the perfect: engagement proposal (high script salience for men), surprise birthday party (low script salience for men/control), or wedding (high script salience for women). Given my goal was to activate gendered relationship script salience, each condition was associated with a dozen common steps that people take to prepare for such events (e.g., detailed steps that someone would traditionally take to prepare to ask for their partner's hand in marriage).

As reviewed in Figure 1 (see Chapter 1), I anticipated that high gendered relationship script salience for men (engagement proposal) would lead to decreased endorsement of monogamy among men (compared to men in the low gendered relationship script salience condition)—but not women. I predicted that this pattern of results would be found among both

single and partnered men. However, given that partnered men have a clear frame of reference for planning an engagement proposal—their current partner—the effects of men’s relationship salience may be more pronounced among partnered men than single men. Moreover, I expected that men who viewed steps for planning an engagement proposal will have lower endorsement of committed relationships, sexual and romantic exclusivity, and romance, as a result of the effect of negative affect (e.g., feeling frustrated, overwhelmed). In the present study, I also explored three other plausible mediators: endorsement of heterosexual relationship scripts, anxiety, and perceived financial stability.

Although the primary purpose of the present study was to examine men’s beliefs about monogamy, I also examined the effects of gendered relationship script salience for women (planning the perfect wedding). Arguably, women in this condition could experience less positive attitudes toward monogamy and love than women in the control condition (surprise party). However, previous research on people’s endorsement of monogamy shows that women have relatively stable positive attitudes, whereas there are mixed findings for men (e.g., Bradshaw et al., 2010; Conley, Moors, et al., 2013; Jonason et al., 2009; Moors et al., 2013). Thus, it also seems plausible that activating high gendered relationship script salience for women will *not* impact their endorsement of monogamy.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A community sample of participants was recruited to take part in Study 3 via online volunteer postings (craigslist.org and Facebook.com) and MTurk<sup>2</sup> (payment of \$0.80). Participants who were either single, casually dating, or in a monogamous relationship (but not engaged or married) were asked to take part in the study. Those who were in other types of

relationships, engaged, or married were excluded at the beginning of the study. Additionally, I did not indicate that the study was related to beliefs about monogamy and I over-recruited for men (targeting men was necessary to create an even gender balance). The study was framed as related to people's beliefs and attitudes toward planning big events. A total of 77 participants were excluded from the analyses because they did not respond to questions regarding the main study variables (e.g., gender) or failed the manipulation check.

The final sample included 465 participants; 51% were currently in a monogamous relationship averaging 37.29 months in length<sup>3</sup> ( $SD = 31.81$ ) and 49% were currently single or casually dating. Fifty-two percent of participants identified as female and 48% identified as male. The majority of the sample identified as heterosexual (95%); the remaining identified as non-heterosexual but were currently in a relationship with someone of the opposite gender. The sample's racial/ethnic composition was 68% White, 6% Asian/Pacific Islander, 5% African American, 2% Latino/a, 6% multiracial, 2% Middle Eastern American, and 1% Native American/American Indian; the remaining did not report ethnicity. Participants' age ranged from 18-68 years<sup>4</sup>.

## **Procedure**

**Gendered relationship script salience manipulation.** Participants were told that researchers were interested in their attitudes toward and feelings about planning a big event. Participants were randomly assigned to imagine that they were either responsible for planning the perfect: engagement proposal for their partner, surprise birthday party for their best friend, or wedding for their partner and themselves. Participants who were single were instructed to imagine their ideal romantic partner, and participants who imagined planning a surprise party for their best friend were instructed to think about someone the same gender as them (e.g., male-

male friendship). Participants were specifically instructed to think about a same-gendered best friend to avoid them thinking about their romantic partner (which could also arguably be one of their best friends).

Participants read over 12 common steps or actions that people take to prepare for each of the big events and rate the extent to which they were likely to do each of the steps (on a three-point scale ranging from “*not at all likely to do this step*” to “*very likely to do this step*”). The steps for each condition were developed by the author and eight research assistants. Once the author and research assistants reached agreement on the final dozen steps, the steps were reviewed by seven experts (three professors and four doctoral candidates) in the field of romantic relationship science. Each step, regardless of condition, was designed to be gender neutral (e.g., use of “partner” rather than “he” or “she”) and void of emotional content (e.g., “I would...” rather than “I would love to...”).

***Engagement proposal.*** The steps for planning an engagement proposal were similar to previous research related to actions people (men) take to propose to their partner (Schweingruber et al., 2004; Schweingruber et al., 2008). The steps were: “1) I would plan the perfect engagement for my partner, because I know it only happens once. It's a story we'll tell for the rest of our lives;” “2) I would let my family know that I plan to propose to my partner;” “3) I would talk to my partner's family, especially their father, for permission and approval;” “4) I would save up a lot of money in order to buy my partner the perfect ring;” “5) I would look at different jewelers to find the ideal ring for my partner;” “6) I would propose to my partner at a very romantic spot, a place that represents our love for one another. Maybe I'll propose on a boat ride, horseback riding, on the beach, on vacation, or in one of our favorite spots to visit;” “7) I would write a poem, song, or speech to ask my partner for their hand in marriage. I want them to

know, in the perfect way, that I want to spend the rest of my life with them;” “8) I would remind our friends and family over and over again that they cannot ruin the surprise for my partner. I don't want my partner to be suspicious;” “9) I would ensure there are decorations, possibly candles, rose petals, or a banner for added romance;” “10) I would make sure I have my camera ready or ask someone to take photographs of my proposal;” “11) I would get down on one knee and look my partner in the eyes to propose;” and “12) After I propose, I would put together a dinner for mine and my partner’s families and friends to celebrate the news.”

*Surprise party.* The steps for planning a surprise party were: “1) I would plan the perfect surprise party for my best friend, because I know it only happens once. It's a story we'll tell for years;” “2) I would decide where to have the party, maybe at my house, a bar, or a restaurant;” “3) I would save up money for the party so that my best friend will have the perfect surprise party;” “4) I would check with my best friend's other friends to find a day and time in which my best friend is available;” “5) I would create a list of all friends, family, and co-workers that my best friend would want at their party. I would create an invitation for the surprise party and invite these people;” “6) I would decide what type of food and drinks to order for the party. I’m would also buy decorations, balloons, and a banner for added celebration;” “7) I would to make sure my best friend has something special to wear for the party when they arrive (crown, hat, sash, etc.);” “8) I would order a special cake and pick up candles;” “9) I would make sure my best friend is busy on the day of the party and that they have someone to unknowingly bring them to the party;” “10) I would remind people over and over again that this party is a surprise and that they cannot ruin it for my best friend;” “11) I would coordinate where everyone attending the party should hide to surprise my best friend;” and “12) I would buy several

disposable cameras to pass out to the party guests so that I can develop them later and give the pictures to my best friend.”

**Wedding.** The steps for planning a wedding included: “1) I would plan the perfect wedding for my partner and me, because I know it only happens once. We’ll be telling this story for the rest of our lives;” “2) I would decide the day and location of our wedding. The venue should be somewhere special, maybe at a banquet hall, on the beach, or in a historic building;” “3) I would help my partner pick out a perfect outfit. I would also search for the perfect outfit to wear;” “4) I would create a list of people who will be in our wedding party (bridesmaids and groomsmen) and find the best matching outfits for them;” “5) I would create a list of all the people my partner and I will invite to our wedding. I would send out “Save the Date” messages and invitations to all of these people;” “6) I would find the priest, pastor, or ordained person that I wish to marry us;” “7) I would select a color-scheme for the wedding, including beautiful centerpieces, flowers, balloons, and/or table settings;” “8) I would decide what food and drinks will be served at the wedding reception, with many choices (vegetarian, kosher, wine, beer, etc.). I would find the perfect wedding cake and cake toppers;” “9) I would choose which photographer, DJ/band, florist, and hairdresser to hire to capture our special day beautifully;” “10) I would create a registry at our favorite stores for wedding gifts;” “11) I would organize the seating arrangements so that all of our family, friends, and co-workers are happy with who they are sitting with;” and “12) I would write thoughtful and meaningful vows that my partner will cherish forever.”

Each set of 12 steps yielded high internal reliability, indicating that these were steps people would be likely to take to plan an engagement proposal ( $\alpha = .86$ ), surprise party, ( $\alpha = .86$ ), and wedding ( $\alpha = .89$ )<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, after participants imagined planning their respective

big events, they were asked about their feelings and interest in planning such event. Then participants were informed that the researchers were interested in their beliefs and opinions about relationships and life; they were asked a variety of questions related to love and monogamy. At the end of the study, participants were probed for the purpose of the study; none indicated awareness of the purpose of the study.

## **Measures**

Participants were also asked questions related to their interest toward planning such an event, their feelings (e.g., negative affect, anxiety), perceived financial stability, and beliefs about heterosexual scripts. Additionally, I used three scales (the latter three below) to capture a variety of beliefs related to endorsing monogamy: committed relationships, sexual and romantic exclusivity, and romance. The presentation of the dependent measures, as well as the order of items within each scale, was randomized.

**Interest.** In order to assess people's level of interest and excitement for planning each event, I created a six-item scale ( $\alpha_{engagement} = .90$ ,  $\alpha_{surprise\ party} = .94$ , and  $\alpha_{wedding} = .93$ ). Items include: "Planning the perfect [event] is very important to me;" "I am excited about the possibility of planning a [event];" "I would love to plan a [event] for [reference person];" "I can't wait to plan a [event] for [reference person];" "Planning a [event] is something I have no interest in doing" (reverse scored); and "I have been waiting my whole life to plan the perfect [event]." Participants rated agreement with each statement, using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 5 (*agree strongly*). Higher scores indicate greater interest in planning the specific event.

**Negative affect.** To assess affect after imaging each event, participants indicated the extent to which they felt regarding the following four dimensions ( $\alpha = .86$ ): frustrated, stressed,

overwhelmed, and annoyed. Each affective response or emotion was on a 6-point semantic differential scale, with an anchoring of “not at all [affect]” to “very [affect].” Higher scores indicate greater negative affect.

**Anxiety.** To assess anxiety after imaging each event, participants indicated the extent to which they felt regarding the following three dimensions ( $\alpha = .88$ ): worried, anxious, and nervous. Each affective response was on a 6-point semantic differential scale, with an anchoring of “not at all [affect]” to “very [affect].” Higher scores indicate greater anxiety.

**Financial Stability.** To assess perceived financial stability after imaging each event, participants indicated the extent to which they felt regarding their financial stability on a 6-point semantic differential scale, with an anchoring of “not at all financially stable” to “very financially stable.”

**Heterosexual Script.** To assess endorsement of traditional gendered relationship scripts, the newly developed 19-item Heterosexual Script Scale ( $\alpha = .92$ ; Seabrook et al., under review) was used. Items include: “There is nothing wrong with men being primarily interested in a woman’s body,” “Women are attracted most to a man with a lot of money,” “Sometimes girls have to do things they don't want to do to keep their boyfriend happy,” “A woman should be willing to make personal sacrifices in order to satisfy her partner,” “Girls should do whatever they need to (e.g., use make-up, buy attractive clothes, work out) to look good enough to attract a date/partner,” “Guys who are able to date a lot of people (players) are considered cool,” “Being with an attractive partner gives a guy prestige,” “It’s only natural for a guy to make advances on someone he finds attractive,” “It is natural for a guy to want to admire or check out other people, even if he is dating someone,” “Men should be the ones to ask women out and initiate physical contact,” “A good way to romance/impress a woman is with fancy gifts, including flowers,

candy, and nice dinners,” “A woman wants a man because she wants someone to protect her,” “Women like to admire men’s bodies and are attracted most to men who are muscular and handsome,” “A man should always protect and defend his woman,” “Guys are more interested in physical relationships and girls are more interested in emotional relationships,” “It is up to women to keep things from moving too fast sexually,” “Women with a lot of ‘experience’ should expect a bad reputation,” and “Most guys don’t want to be ‘just friends’ with a girl.”

Participants rated agreement with each statement, using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*).

**Committed Relationship Ideology.** To assess endorsement of the committed relationship ideology, the 12-item Committed Relationship Ideology Scale ( $\alpha = .83$ ; Day et al., 2011) was used. Day and colleagues created this measure to reflect the committed relationship ideology—the notion that committed relationships are greatly valued and those who attain this status are considered to be better than those who remain single (as originally conceptualized by DePaulo & Morris, 2005). Items include: “Single life is often unreliable and not secure”; “Good friendships are more secure than committed relationships” (reverse scored); “There are very few major downsides to being in a committed relationship;” “Committed relationships are overrated” (reverse scored); “Committed relationships improve the lives of both partners involved;” “Single people are missing out;” “In general, people in committed relationships are happier than single people;” “The concept of the committed relationship is the ultimate answer;” “Most of my single friends would be better off in a committed relationship;” “Becoming involved in a committed relationship is the right thing to do;” “Most of my single friends should try to be in a committed relationship;” and “It makes me happy when I see a close friend in a committed relationship.” Participants rated agreement with each statement, using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1

(*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*). Higher scores indicate greater endorsement of the committed relationship ideology.

**Endorsement of Sexual and Romantic Exclusivity.** In order to provide a nuanced assessment of endorsement of monogamy, as characterized by lifelong sexual and romantic commitment and exclusivity to one person, I created an 8-item scale ( $\alpha = .88$ ). Five experts (one professor and four doctoral graduate students) on romantic relationships generated a list of items that related to endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals. The experts were asked to generate items that captured realistic sexual and romantic aspects of lifelong monogamy. Items that were common themes among the experts were combined into single items; all experts reached agreement on the final 8-item measure. Items include: “Maintaining a monogamous relationship with a romantic partner is one of the most important values in my life;” “Once one is in a relationship with one person, there is never any excuse for having an outside sexual partner;” “Having an outside sexual partner when one is already in a romantic relationship does not diminish the value of either relationship” (reverse scored); “Two people in a relationship should be limited to having sex with only each other;” “I feel it would be okay to romantically see more than one person at the same time” (reverse scored); “Monogamy is very important to me;” “Being married (currently or in the future) is very important to me;” and “I am perfectly happy having sex with the same person for the rest of my life.” Participants rated agreement with each statement, using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*). Higher scores indicate greater endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity.

**Romanticism.** The 15-item Romantic Beliefs Scale ( $\alpha = .90$ ; Sprecher & Metts, 1989) assessed the ideology of romanticism. This scale measures a constellation of romantic love ideal beliefs, and includes beliefs such as: love can overcome any obstacles, there is only one true

love, true love lasts forever, idealization of the romantic partner and of the relationship, and love at first sight. Items include: "I believe that to be truly in love is to be in love forever;" "The relationship I will have with my 'true love' will be nearly perfect;" "I believe if another person and I love each other then we can overcome any differences and problems that may arise;" "I don't need to know someone for a period of time before I fall in love with him or her;" "If I were in love with someone, I would commit myself to him or her even if my parents and friends disapproved of the relationship;" "Once I experience "true love," I could never experience it again, to the same degree, with another person;" "If I love someone, I know I can make the relationship work, despite any obstacle;" "When I find my 'true love' I will probably know it soon after we meet;" "I'm sure that every new thing I learn about the person I choose for a long-term commitment will please me;" "The relationship I will have with my "true love" will be nearly perfect;" "If I love someone, I will find a way for us to be together regardless of the opposition to the relationship, physical distance between us or any other barrier;" "If a relationship I have was meant to be, any obstacles (for example, lack of money, physical distance, career conflicts) can be overcome;" "I am likely to fall in love almost immediately if I meet the right person;" "I expect that in my relationship, romantic love will really last; it won't fade with time;" and "The person I love will make a perfect romantic partner; for example, he/she will be completely accepting, loving, and understanding." Participants rated agreement with each statement, using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*). Higher scores indicate higher romanticism.

## Results and Discussion

### Preliminary Results

To examine if interest in planning the events was driving the effect of my experimental manipulations, I compared participants' ratings of excitement and interest they felt for planning each of the three events. Specifically, I wanted to determine that each of the three events (engagement proposal, surprise party, and wedding) were equally interesting for participants to hypothetically plan. Participants rated planning an engagement proposal ( $M = 2.96$ ) as equally interesting as planning a surprise party ( $M = 3.08$ ) and wedding ( $M = 2.77$ ),  $t(312) = -0.92, p = .36$  and  $t(297) = 1.54, p = .13$ , respectively. In contrast, participants rated planning a wedding as less interesting than planning a surprise party,  $t(315) = -2.51, p = .01, d = -.28$ . These results provide evidence that the level of interest for planning engagement proposals and surprise parties elicited was equivalent; however, planning a wedding was perceived as less desirable than planning a surprise party. Given that people viewed both planning an engagement proposal and surprise party as equally interesting, these results rule out the notion that either type of event (related to the central research question) may be inherently more interesting than the other.

### Main Results

I hypothesized that when gendered relationship scripts—specifically, marriage proposals—are made salient, men would have less positive attitudes and beliefs about committed relationships, sexual/romantic exclusivity, and romance than when marriage proposals are not made salient (i.e., surprise party condition). Moreover, it is plausible that this effect would be more pronounced for men in monogamous relationships than men who are single. In addition, I expected that gendered relationship script salience regarding marriage proposals would not affect women's attitudes and beliefs about committed relationships, sexual/romantic exclusivity, and

romance. Given the conceptual model in development is centered around examining whether gendered relationship scripts account for men's lack of endorsement of monogamy, I did not have clear a priori hypotheses for the effects of gendered relationship script salience unique to women (planning a wedding) on men's or women's endorsement of monogamy.

First, I conducted three separate 3 (salience of gendered relationship scripts: planning an engagement proposal, planning a wedding, and planning a surprise party) X 2 (gender: female vs. male) X 2 (relationship status: single vs. in a monogamous relationship) ANOVAs with committed relationship ideology, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism scores serving as the dependent variables. Tables 4 and 5 provide committed relationship ideology, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism scores for men and women by experimental condition; tables are separated by relationship status.

### **Committed Relationship Ideology**

Main effects of gender and relationship status emerged,  $F(1, 453) = 12.99, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$  and  $F(1, 453) = 10.24, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . On average, men and people in monogamous relationships endorsed the committed relationship ideology to a greater extent than women and people who were currently single (respectively). Across the three gendered relationship script salience conditions, participants reported similar endorsement of the committed relationship ideology,  $F(2, 453) = 1.19, p = .31$  (indicating no main effect of condition). None of the two-way interactions were significant,  $F_{range} = .16 - 1.81, p_{values} > .17$ .

A three-way interaction between gendered relationship script salience (condition), gender, and relationship status emerged,  $F(2, 453) = 4.75, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . To unpack this three-way interaction, I examined people who were single and in a monogamous relationship separately. There was a significant interaction between gender and gendered relationship script

salience among people in monogamous relationships, but not among people who were single,  $F(2, 231) = 6.28, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .05$  and  $F(2, 222) = .67, p = .51$ . Simple effects revealed that partnered men who viewed steps related to planning an engagement proposal (high gendered relationship script salience for men) reported less endorsement of the committed relationship ideology than men who viewed steps related to planning a surprise party (low gendered relationship script salience),  $t(70) = -3.38, p = .001, d = -.80$ ; see Figure 1. Thus, my hypothesis was supported for men in monogamous relationships, but not single men. Surprisingly (and inconsistent with my hypotheses), among partnered men, viewing steps related to planning a wedding yielded similar endorsement of committed relationships to viewing steps related to an engagement proposal,  $t(66) = 1.30, p = .20$ , and less endorsement than viewing steps related to planning a surprise party,  $t(68) = -2.01, p = .05, d = -.57$ .

In addition, as expected, these effects were not found among partnered women. There were no differences in women's endorsement of committed relationships based on gendered relationship script salience (for men, for women, or low),  $F(2, 231) = 1.17, p = .31$ . Moreover, when looking at gender differences, partnered men reported greater endorsement of committed relationships than partnered women in the low gendered relationship script salience (surprise party) condition,  $t(78) = 3.76, p < .001, d = -.88$ . Furthermore, men and women had similar endorsement of committed relationships in the high gendered relationship script salience for men (engagement proposal) and for women (wedding) conditions,  $t(76) = -1.23, p = .22$  and  $t(77) = .88, p = .38$ , respectively.

### **Sexual and Romantic Exclusivity Ideals**

Results revealed a main effect of gender,  $F(1, 454) = 5.12, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . On average, men endorsed monogamy to a greater extent than women. Across the three gendered

relationship script salience conditions and relationship status, participants reported similar attitudes toward sexual and romantic exclusivity,  $F(2, 454) = 1.31, p = .27$  and  $F(1, 454) = .68, p = .41$  (indicating no main effects of condition or relationship status). None of the two-way interactions were significant,  $F_{range} = .08 - .37, p_{values} > .54$ .

There was a significant three-way interaction between gendered relationship script salience, gender, and relationships status,  $F(1, 454) = 5.81, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . To unpack this three-way interaction, I examined people who were single and in a monogamous relationship separately. There was a significant interaction between gender and gendered relationship script salience among people in monogamous relationships, but not among people who were single on endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals,  $F(2, 231) = 3.07, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .03$  and  $F(2, 223) = 2.83, p = .06^6$ , respectively. Simple effects revealed that partnered men who viewed steps related to planning an engagement proposal (high gendered relationship script salience for men) reported less endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals than men who viewed steps related to planning a surprise party (low gendered relationship script salience),  $t(70) = -2.39, p = .02, d = -.53$ . Similar to the results of endorsement of the committed relationship ideology, my hypothesis was supported for men in monogamous relationships, but not single men. Inconsistent with my hypotheses, among partnered men, viewing steps related to planning a wedding (high gendered relationship script salience for women) yielded lower endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals than viewing steps related to planning a surprise party,  $t(68) = -2.21, p = .03, d = -.49$ , but similar to planning an engagement proposal,  $t(66) = .14, p = .89$ ; see Figure 1.

In addition, as expected, these effects were not found among partnered women. There were no differences in women's endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals based on

gendered relationship script salience (for men, for women, or low),  $F(2, 231) = .53, p = .59$ . Moreover, when looking at gender differences, partnered men reported less endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals than partnered women in the high gendered relationship script salience for men (engagement proposal) condition,  $t(76) = -2.15, p = .03, d = -.50$ . Furthermore, partnered men and women report similar levels of endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals in the high gendered relationship script salience for women (wedding) and low gendered relationship script salience (surprise party) conditions,  $t(77) = -1.21, p = .23$  and  $t(78) = 1.23, p = .22$ , respectively.

### **Romanticism**

Results revealed main effects of gender and relationship status,  $F(1, 452) = 9.16, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .02$  and  $F(1, 452) = 7.53, p = .006, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . On average, men and people in monogamous relationships reported higher levels of romanticism than women and people who were single, respectively. Across the three gendered relationship script salience conditions, participants reported similar endorsement of romanticism,  $F(2, 452) = .62, p = .54$  (indicating no main effect of condition). Inconsistent with my hypothesis, none of the two-way interactions or the three-way interaction were significant,  $F_{range} = .44 - 1.76, p_{values} > .17$ .

### **Mediation Analyses**

Second, I examined whether negative affect—specifically, feeling frustrated, stressed, overwhelmed, and annoyed—explained the discrepancy in endorsement of committed relationships and sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals among partnered men who viewed steps related to planning an engagement proposal and surprise party. I hypothesized that negative affect would mediate the association between viewing the common steps to plan a big event (engagement proposal and surprise party conditions) and endorsement of committed

relationships and sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals (outcomes). Following the steps outlined in Hayes (2013; model 4), I tested this hypotheses; significance of the mediation effects were examined through indirect effects with bootstrapped (samples = 5,000) standard errors and bias corrected 95% confidence intervals. The experimental condition variable was coded as 0 = engagement proposal and 1 = surprise party.

Supporting my hypothesis, results showed that negative affect mediated the association between condition (engagement proposal and surprise party) and endorsement of the committed relationship ( $b_{\text{indirect}} = .41$ ; 95% CI [.05, .84]; Sobel  $z = 2.06$ ,  $p = .04$ ) and sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals ( $b_{\text{indirect}} = .71$ ; 95% CI [.22, 1.36]; Sobel  $z = 2.69$ ,  $p = .007$ ). As shown in Figure 2, partnered men who viewed steps related to planning the perfect engagement proposal reported lower levels of endorsement of the committed relationship ideology and sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals (compared to the surprise party condition), as a result of feeling frustrated, stressed, overwhelmed, and annoyed.

Given that the effects of planning an engagement proposal and a wedding yielded similar results for partnered men, I examined whether negative affect would explain the association between the wedding and surprise party conditions and endorsement of monogamy. Thus, I conducted two additional mediational analyses to test whether negative affect mediated the association between viewing steps related to planning the perfect wedding and surprise party (condition) and endorsement of committed relationships and sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals (outcomes) among partnered men. Negative affect did not mediated the association between condition (wedding and surprise party) and endorsement of the committed relationship ( $b_{\text{indirect}} = .09$ ; 95% CI [-.15, .39]; Sobel  $z = .89$ ,  $p = .37$ ) or sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals ( $b_{\text{indirect}} = .16$ ; 95% CI [-.18, .56]; Sobel  $z = .99$ ,  $p = .32$ ).

Taken together, feeling negatively (e.g., frustrated, stressed) explained why partnered men who viewed steps related to planning the perfect engagement proposal reported lower levels of endorsement of the committed relationship ideology and sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals (compared to those who in the surprise party condition). Although salience of weddings (relationship scripts for women) also elicited lower endorsement of monogamy among partnered men, negative affect did not explain this process (when comparing planning the perfect wedding to surprise party).

### **Additional Results: Alternative Explanations**

Finally, I conducted additional analyses to examine three alternative hypotheses, such that 1) the endorsement of traditional values and heterosexual relationship scripts, 2) anxiety, and 3) perceived financial stability could explain the discrepancy in partnered men's endorsement of committed relationships and sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals in the high gendered relationship scripts salience for men (engagement proposal) and low gendered relationship salience (surprise party) conditions. Among partnered men, the experimental condition (engagement proposal v. surprise party) was unrelated to endorsement of the heterosexual dating script,  $r(68) = .06, p = .65$ . Endorsement of the heterosexual dating script was also unrelated to partnered men's attitudes toward committed relationships and sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals,  $r(68) = .12, p = .35$  and  $r(68) = -.06, p = .61$ , respectively. As such, endorsement of the heterosexual dating script did not mediate the relationship between condition and endorsement of committed relationships (95% CI [-.03, .14]; Sobel  $z = .27, p = .78$ ) or sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals (95% CI [-.18, .03]; Sobel  $z = -.24, p = .81$ ).

Anxiety, however, was significantly related to condition; partnered men who viewed steps for planning an engagement proposal reported greater anxiety than those who viewed steps

for planning a surprise party,  $r(72) = -.42, p < .001$ . Anxiety was significantly inversely related to endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals,  $r(72) = -.35, p = .003$ , but unrelated to endorsement of committed relationships,  $r(68) = -.17, p = .15$ . Feeling anxious and worried did not mediate the relationship between condition and endorsement of committed relationships (95% CI [-.20, .24]; Sobel  $z = .10, p = .92$ ). However, the anxiety mediated the association between condition and sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals when examining the confidence intervals (95% CI [.04, .64]), but the Sobel test did not reach significance (Sobel  $z = 1.86, p = .06$ ).

Perceived financial stability was also significantly related to condition; partnered men who viewed steps for planning an engagement proposal felt less financially stable than those who viewed steps for planning a surprise party,  $r(72) = -.32, p = .007$ . However, perceived financial stability was unrelated to endorsement of committed relationships and sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals,  $r(72) = .20, p = .10$  and  $r(72) = -.01, p = .91$ , respectively. As such, perceived financial stability did not mediate the relationship between condition and endorsement of committed relationships (95% CI [-.08, .25]; Sobel  $z = .67, p = .50$ ) or sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals (95% CI [-.33, .05]; Sobel  $z = -.89, p = .37$ ).

## **Summary**

In sum, my hypotheses were largely supported. I expected that men, regardless of relationship status, would report lower levels of endorsement of committed relationships, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism when under high gendered relationship script salience unique to men (engagement proposals) than low salience (planning a surprise party). I found that when engagement proposals are made salient, men in monogamous relationships—but not single men—reported lower endorsement of the committed relationship ideology and sexual

and romantic exclusivity ideals. Conversely, the effects of gendered relationship salience for men did not affect partnered men's attitudes toward romanticism (inconsistent with my predictions). Thus, my hypotheses were supported for partnered men, but not single men—and only related to partnered men's beliefs about committed relationships and sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals (not romanticism).

As predicted, partnered men who viewed steps related to planning the perfect engagement proposal reported lower levels of endorsement of the committed relationship ideology and sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals, as a result of feeling frustrated, stress, overwhelmed, and annoyed. Moreover, alternative explanations, including endorsement of traditional heterosexual relationship scripts, anxiety, and perceived financial stability did not account for the discrepancy in partnered men's endorsement of committed relationships and sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals between the high and low gendered relationship scripts salience conditions. In other words, partnered men's lower endorsement of committed relationships and sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals after their gendered relationship scripts are activated can be attributed to their heightened frustration with these gendered relationship scripts, not their beliefs about traditional relationships, anxiety, or financial stability.

Consistent with my predictions, women's attitudes about committed relationships, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism were unaffected by gendered relationship script salience specific to engagement proposals (high gendered relationship script salience for men). I did not have a priori hypotheses regarding the effects of high gendered relationship script salience for women (planning a wedding). Planning a wedding did not affect women's attitudes toward committed relationships, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, or romanticism.

Interestingly, partnered men's endorsement of committed relationships and sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals were similar after viewing steps related to planning a wedding and engagement proposals (and lower after viewing steps related to wedding planning compared to surprise party planning). This finding suggests that aspects of wedding planning may also be tied to men's relationship scripts. Potentially, wedding planning activated engagement proposals (a precursor step to planning a wedding) or another aspect of relationship scripts unique to men, which led to their decreased endorsement of long-term monogamous relationships. Importantly, negative affect only mediated the relationship between engagement proposal salience (compared to surprise party) and endorsement of monogamy among partnered men. Negative affect did not mediate the relationship between wedding salience (compared to surprise party) and endorsement of monogamy. Moreover, partnered men had higher endorsement of committed relationships than partnered women in the control condition, this is consistent with previous research suggesting that men strongly endorse monogamy (Day et al., 2011). The present results, however, provide new insight that men disapprove of their gendered relationship scripts, which affect their attitudes toward long-term committed relationships.

In terms of the unexpected results regarding men who were single, potentially they were unaffected by salience of engagement proposal ideals because they did not have a clear frame of reference (a romantic partner) or these ideals seemed distant. Thus, single men may not be as frustrated with their gendered relationship scripts, because they are not currently in a long-term relationship. That is, potentially, men in monogamous relationships may be buying into a set of relationship scripts that single men are not. This potentially explains why the hypotheses were supported for men in monogamous relationships, but not men who were currently single (also see General Discussion).

### Footnotes

<sup>2</sup> MTurk participants were, on average, older than volunteer participants ( $M_{age} = 33.22$  and  $25.22$ , respectively),  $t(375) = 9.10, p < .001, d = .94$ . Additionally, a greater number men were recruited from MTurk than volunteer sources,  $\chi^2 = 74.32, p < .001$ .

<sup>3</sup> To examine if relationship length affected the results of Study 3 among people in monogamous relationships, I conducted additional 2 (salience of gendered relationship scripts) X 2 (gender) ANCOVA analyses with relationship length serving as a covariate for endorsement of the committed relationship ideology and romantic/sexual exclusivity ideals. For both analyses, there was no main effect of relationship length (both  $p_{values} > .42$ ). Relationship length did not change the pattern of results for the gender X gendered relationship script salience interaction for the analyses related to the committed relationship ideology; this interaction remained significant ( $p = .009$ ). However, the gender X gendered relationship script salience interaction was not significant after entering relationship length as a covariate for the analyses related to endorsement of romantic/sexual exclusivity ideals ( $p = .36$ ).

<sup>4</sup> To examine if age affected the results of Study 3, I conducted additional 2 (salience of gendered relationship scripts) X 2 (gender) ANCOVA analyses with age serving as a covariate for endorsement of the committed relationship ideology and romantic/sexual exclusivity ideals. For both analyses, there was no main effect of age (both  $p_{values} > .28$ ); however, the gender X gendered relationship script salience interactions were not significant after entering age as a covariate.

<sup>5</sup> To examine possible gender differences in likeliness of enacting each of the twelve steps related to the experimental conditions, I conducted three  $t$ -tests. Men tended to report more agreement that they would enact each of the steps to plan an engagement proposal than women,

$t(135) = 1.77, p = .08$ . Men were significantly less likely than women to report that they were likely to enact the steps for planning a surprise party and wedding,  $t(133) = -4.31, p < .001$  and  $t(122) = -4.36, p < .001$ .

<sup>6</sup> The trending interaction between gender and condition among single people revealed an opposite trending pattern of results: single men reported greater endorsement of romantic/sexual exclusivity ideals in the high gendered relationship script salience for men (engagement proposal) condition than those in the low gendered relationship script salience (surprise party condition),  $t(80) = 1.69, p = .09$ . Single men's endorsement of romantic/sexual exclusivity ideals was similar between the other conditions, both  $p_{values} > .20$ . Single women, on the other hand, tended to report lower endorsement of romantic/sexual exclusivity ideals in high gendered relationship script salience for men condition than single women in the low gendered relationship script salience condition,  $t(72) = -1.68, p = .10$ . When looking at gender differences within conditions, single women reported greater endorsement of romantic/sexual exclusivity ideals than single men in the low gendered relationship script salience condition,  $t(79) = 2.87, p = .004$ , and did not differ from single men in the other two conditions, both  $p_{values} > .30$ .

Table 4. Study 3: Single Men's and Women's Means and Standard Deviations for Committed Relationship Ideology, Sexual and Romantic Exclusivity Ideals, Romanticism, Frustration, and Endorsement of the Heterosexual Dating Script

Dependent Variables	Men			Women		
	Low Script Salience	High Script Salience for Men	High Script Salience for Women	Low Script Salience	High Script Salience for Men	High Script Salience for Women
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Committed Relationship Ideology	4.04 (0.84)	4.04 (0.93)	4.17 (1.03)	3.84 (0.80)	3.63 (1.00)	3.65 (0.90)
Sexual/Romantic Exclusivity Ideals	4.61 (1.05)	5.12 (1.36)	4.71 (1.45)	5.48 (1.20)	4.95 (1.60)	5.05 (1.50)
Romanticism	4.10 (0.78)	3.99 (1.07)	4.00 (1.34)	3.84 (1.16)	3.55 (1.06)	3.51 (0.89)
Negative Affect	3.10 (1.31)	3.22 (1.25)	3.85 (1.09)	3.55 (1.27)	2.66 (1.50)	3.49 (1.17)
Anxiety	3.50 (1.48)	3.74 (1.48)	3.98 (1.33)	3.97 (1.35)	3.17 (1.40)	3.59 (1.40)
Financially Stable	3.28 (1.47)	3.36 (1.39)	2.64 (1.59)	3.34 (1.24)	2.61 (1.42)	2.53 (1.36)
Endorsement of Heterosexual Dating Script	3.32 (0.60)	3.36 (0.98)	3.57 (0.90)	2.67 (0.57)	2.53 (0.61)	2.79 (0.79)

*Note:* Participants viewed steps for planning: a surprise party (low gendered relationship script condition), an engagement proposal (high gendered relationship script salience for men), and a wedding (high gendered relationship script salience for women).

Table 5. Study 3: Partnered Men’s and Women’s Means and Standard Deviations for Committed Relationship Ideology, Sexual and Romantic Exclusivity Ideals, Romanticism, Frustration, and Endorsement of the Heterosexual Dating Script

Dependent Variables	Men			Women		
	Low Script Salience	High Script Salience for Men	High Script Salience for Women	Low Script Salience	High Script Salience for Men	High Script Salience for Women
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Committed Relationship Ideology	4.63 (0.70)	3.95 (0.97)	4.22 (0.75)	3.91 (0.92)	4.19 (0.85)	4.05 (0.90)
Sexual/Romantic Exclusivity Ideals	5.43 (0.99)	4.74 (1.24)	4.78 (1.26)	5.09 (1.31)	5.34 (1.17)	5.12 (1.30)
Romanticism	4.42 (1.13)	4.03 (1.08)	4.19 (1.00)	3.82 (1.08)	4.10 (1.02)	4.07 (1.16)
Negative Affect	2.30 (0.98)	4.41 (1.19)	3.70 (1.41)	3.27 (1.11)	2.69 (1.25)	3.36 (1.24)
Anxiety	3.03 (1.21)	4.21 (1.35)	3.68 (1.55)	3.67 (1.28)	3.25 (1.43)	3.79 (1.23)
Financially Stable	4.19 (1.56)	3.14 (1.61)	2.85 (1.44)	3.06 (1.42)	3.08 (1.50)	2.93 (1.5)
Endorsement of Heterosexual Dating Script	3.52 (0.88)	3.42 (0.88)	3.69 (0.77)	2.82 (0.80)	2.55 (0.93)	2.76 (0.91)

*Note:* Participants viewed steps for planning: a surprise party (low gendered relationship script condition), an engagement proposal (high gendered relationship script salience for men), and a wedding (high gendered relationship script salience for women).

Figure 3. Study 3 Results: Partnered men's and women's mean committed relationship ideology, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism scores as a function of gendered relationship script salience

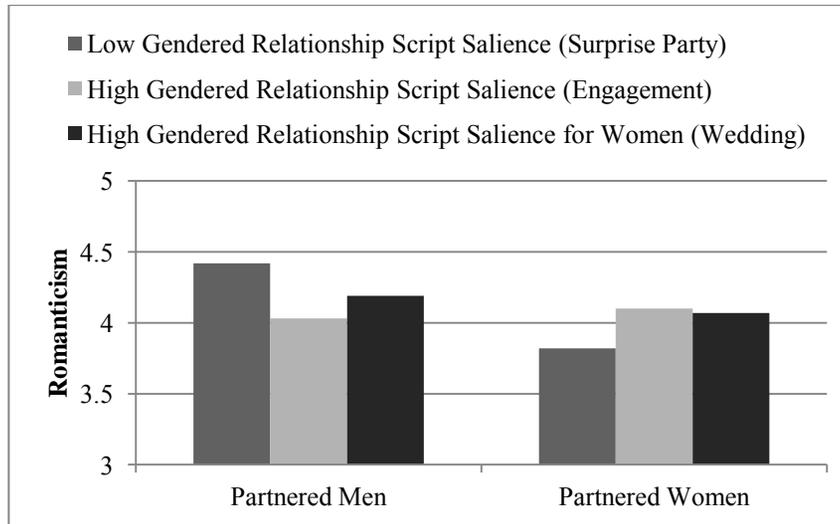
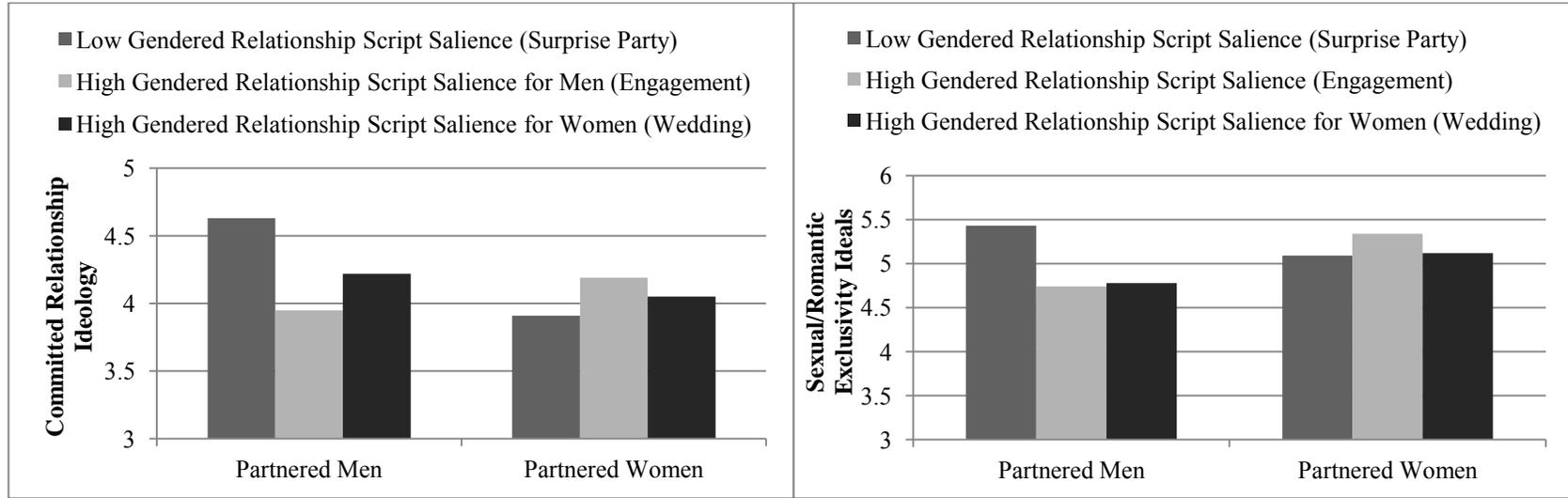
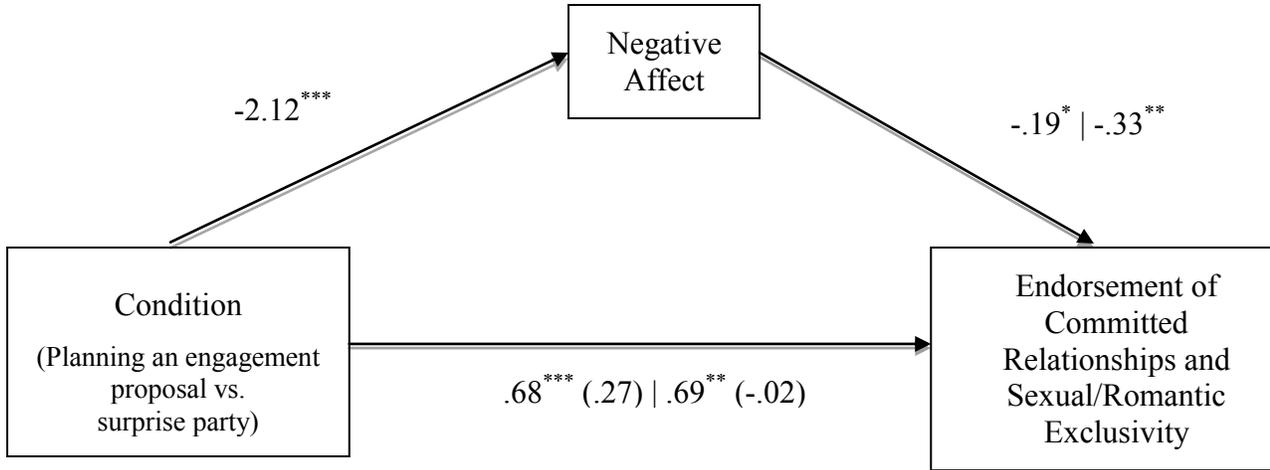


Figure 4. Study 3: Mediational model



*Note.* \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Shown above is negative affect as a mediator between experimental condition and endorsement of committed relationships and sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals among partnered men. Symbol “|” separates unstandardized beta coefficients from endorsement of committed relationships (before) and sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals (after) analyses.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **STUDY 4 - SALIENCE OF ENGAGEMENT PROPOSAL PHOTOGRAPHS AND THE ROLE OF GENDER AND RELATIONSHIPS STATUS**

In Study 3, I used an overt manipulation of gendered relationship script salience by asking people to read over common steps to prepare for a big event (e.g., engagement proposal). To further examine the link between gendered relationship script salience and beliefs about love and romance, I used a more subtle manipulation of gendered relationship script salience in the present study. To test the robustness of the effects of gendered relationship script salience, I manipulated gendered relationship script salience using a different medium: showing participants engagement proposal photographs (and informed participants that the researcher was only interested in aesthetic qualities of the images). Likewise, these types of photographs are a more subtle manipulation of gendered relationship script salience (relative to people imagining they are planning an engagement proposal and reading a dozen common steps to prepare for such event).

In addition, I further examined the role of relationship status (whether participants were single or in a monogamous relationship) in the present study. I anticipated that high gendered relationship script salience for men (engagement proposal photographs) would lead to decreased endorsement of monogamy among men (compared to men in the low gendered relationship

script salience condition)—but not women. As in Study 3, I predicted that this pattern of results would be found among both single and partnered men. However, single men’s endorsement of monogamy was unaffected by salience of gendered relationship scripts in Study 3; thus, in the present study I examine if this finding replicates.

Finally, I included two “feeling thermometer” scales to examine if the effects of gendered relationship script salience also impact beliefs about groups of people based on relationship status (singles vs. partnered) or if these effects are limited to personal beliefs. I hypothesized that gendered relationship script salience will *not* impact men’s and women’s beliefs about single people or people in monogamous relationships, rather the gendered relationship script salience will only affect people’s (specifically, men’s) personal beliefs about committed relationships, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romance.

Thus, the goal of Study 4 is to provide a conceptual replication of Study 3, but also to examine the robustness of the effect of gendered relationship script salience on men’s and women’s beliefs about love and romance. As in Study 3, I anticipated that high gendered relationship script salience would lead to decreased endorsement of committed relationships, sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism among men, but not women (although if consistent with the results of Study 3, these effects may only be found among partnered men).

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A community sample of participants was recruited to take part in Study 4 via online volunteer postings (craigslist.org and Facebook.com). In the present study, I did not indicate that the study was related to beliefs about monogamy nor did I explicitly recruit for men; however, I did over-recruit for people in monogamous relationships (to create an even balance). The study

was framed as related to people's beliefs and attitudes toward photography and social relationships. Given that the purpose of the study was to examine individuals in monogamous relationships, I excluded individuals who indicated that they were part of a consensually non-monogamous relationship ( $n = 11$ ). Another 56 participants were excluded because they did not respond to questions regarding the main study variables (e.g., relationship status, gender).

The final sample included 372 participants; 51% were currently in a monogamous relationship averaging 133.26 months in length ( $SD = 150.84$ )<sup>7</sup> and 50% were currently single. Sixty-four percent of participants identified as female and 36% identified as male. The majority of the sample identified as heterosexual (96%). The sample's racial/ethnic composition was 72% White, 13% Asian/Pacific Islander, 4% multi-racial/ethnic, 3% African American, 2% Latino/a, 2% Middle Eastern American or Arab, and 1% Native American/American Indian; the remaining did not report ethnicity. Participants' age ranged from 18-82 years ( $M = 29.12$ ,  $SD = 14.18$ )<sup>8</sup>.

## **Procedure**

**Gendered Relationship Script Salience Manipulation.** Participants were told that, in the first part of the study, researchers were interested in their interpretation of certain characteristics of photographs. To control for differences between photographer style, the photographs used in the study were taken by the same photographer (Blanchard, 2008). Participants were randomly assigned to view either two photographs of landscapes (low gendered relationship script salience/control condition) or two photographs of engaged couples (high gendered relationship script salience). Each photograph included a caption in the bottom right corner of each photograph. The landscape photographs (low gendered relationship script salience) had the caption "Hello from Cancun! July 21st!!" and the engagement proposal

photographs (high gendered relationship script salience) had the caption “Save the date! July 21st!!”; see Figure 3 for examples.

Prior to viewing the photographs, participants were instructed that, “The following questions will display various landscape photos [engagement proposal photos] and then ask you to rate each photo individually on a series of attributes. Please evaluate each photo based on its own merit.” To make the cover story believable, participants completed four items related to the artistic quality of each photograph (e.g., “Please rate the overall pleasantness of Photograph A on the scale below;” 1 (*extremely unpleasant*) to 7 (*extremely pleasant*)). These items were not used in any subsequent analyses pertaining to the main variables of interest; however, comparisons between the two types of photographs on positive dimensions are discussed further in the preliminary analysis section.

Next, participants were informed that the researchers were interested in their attitudes and opinions about relationships, love, and life (and this part of the study was unrelated to the first segment). At the end of the study, participants were asked which photographs they viewed at the beginning of the study (i.e., landscape photos, engagement proposal photos, or not sure) and probed for the purpose of the study. Four participants incorrectly identified the photographs they viewed (and were removed from analyses) and none indicated awareness of the purpose of the study. Additionally, participants were told the purpose of the study and given an opportunity to send questions to the researchers.

## **Measures**

Participants completed the same measures of committed relationships, beliefs about love, and sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals as in Study 3. In addition to these measures, I included

items related to feelings towards different relationships. The presentation of the dependent measures, as well as the order of items within each scale, was randomized.

**Committed Relationship Ideology Endorsement.** The Committed Relationship Ideology Scale ( $\alpha = .81$ ; Day et al., 2011) was used to assess endorsement of committed relationships as the optimal form of relationship structure.

**Sexual and Romantic Exclusivity Ideals.** The newly created Endorsement of Sexual and Romantic Exclusivity Ideals Scale was used to assess endorsement of lifelong sexual and romantic commitment to one person ( $\alpha = .89$ ).

**Romantic Beliefs.** The Romantic Beliefs Scale ( $\alpha = .84$ ; Sprecher & Metts, 1989) was used to assess the ideology of romanticism.

**Attitudes toward Singles and People in Monogamous Relationships.** To assess attitudes toward single people and people in monogamous relationships, I used two feeling thermometers. Participants indicated their general level of “coldness” or “warmth” that they felt toward singles and people in monogamous relationships (as a group), using a scale from 1 to 7. Higher scores indicate more positive feelings toward the target group.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Preliminary Analyses: Experimental Stimuli**

To examine if positive aspects of the photographs were driving the effect of my experimental manipulations, I compared participants' ratings of how pleasant and interesting they perceived each photograph. I conducted two separate 2 (salience of gendered relationship scripts: engagement proposal photographs/high vs. landscape photographs/low) X 2 (gender: female vs. male) X 2 (relationship status: single vs. in a monogamous relationship) ANOVAs

with ratings of how pleasant and interesting participants viewed the photographs serving as the dependent variables.

For ratings of pleasantness and level of interest, there were no significant three way interactions. However, significant two-way interactions between relationship status and gender emerged for pleasantness,  $F(1, 365) = 4.61, p = .03 \eta_p^2 = .01$  and level of interest,  $F(1, 365) = 5.00, p = .03 \eta_p^2 = .01$ . Specifically, single men rated the engagement photographs as less pleasant and interesting ( $M = 5.81$  and  $M = 5.23$ ) than men in monogamous relationships ( $M = 6.40$  and  $M = 5.94$ ). Women (regardless of relationship status) and men in relationships rated both types of photographs as equally pleasant and interesting across the experimental conditions. These results provide evidence that the positive attributes elicited from both types of photographs was equivalent for women and men in monogamous relationships, but not for single men. These results partially rule out the notion that engagement photographs may be inherently more pleasing or interesting than landscape photographs. However, it appears that single men find engagement photographs less aesthetically pleasing and interesting than men in monogamous relationships.

## **Main Results**

I hypothesized that when gendered relationship scripts—specifically, engagement proposals—are made salient, men would have less positive attitudes and beliefs about committed relationships, sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals, and romance than when engagement proposals are not made salient. Moreover, I expected that gendered relationship script salience will not affect women's attitudes and beliefs about committed relationships, sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals, and romance. I conducted three separate 2 (salience of gendered relationship scripts: engagement proposal photographs/high vs. landscape photographs/low) X 2 (gender: female vs.

male) X 2 (relationship status: single vs. in a monogamous relationship) ANOVAs with committed relationship ideology, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romance scores serving as the dependent variables. Tables 6 and 7 provide the scores of the three measures of endorsement of monogamy for men and women by experimental condition; tables are separated by relationship status.

### **Committed Relationship Ideology**

A main effect of condition and relationship status emerged,  $F(1, 362) = 4.29, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .01$  and  $F(1, 362) = 15.90, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$ . On average, those who viewed landscape photographs and people in monogamous relationships endorsed the committed relationship ideology to greater extent than those who viewed engagement proposal photographs and people who were single (respectively). Men and women reported similar endorsement of the committed relationship ideology,  $F(1, 390) = 1.53, p = .22$  (indicating no main effect of gender). There was a significant gendered relationship script salience X relationship status interaction,  $F(1, 362) = 7.33, p = .007, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . None of the other two-way interactions were significant,  $F_{range} = .14 - 2.43, p_{values} > .12$ .

A three-way interaction between gendered relationship script salience, gender, and relationship status emerged,  $F(1, 362) = 6.22, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . To unpack this three-way interaction, I examined people who were single and in a monogamous relationship separately. There was a significant interaction between gender and gendered relationship script salience among people in monogamous relationships, but not among people who were single,  $F(1, 183) = 7.91, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .04$  and  $F(1, 179) = .45, p = .50$ . Simple effects revealed that partnered men who viewed engagement photographs (high gendered relationship script salience for men) reported less endorsement of the committed relationship ideology than men who viewed

landscape photographs (low gendered relationship script salience),  $t(63) = -3.80, p < .001, d = -.92$ ; see Figure 4. Importantly, this effect was not found among women  $t(120) = -.04, p = .67$ . Moreover, simple effects show that men reported greater endorsement of the committed relationship ideology than women in the low gendered relationship script salience condition,  $t(85) = 2.66, p = .009, d = .60$ , but not in the high gendered relationship script salience condition,  $t(98) = -1.30, p = .20$ . Similar to the results of Study 3, my hypothesis was supported for men in monogamous relationships, but not single men.

### **Endorsement of Sexual and Romantic Exclusivity**

A main effect of gender emerged,  $F(1, 365) = 21.42, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$ ; women endorsed sexual and romantic exclusivity to greater extent than men. Across both gendered relationship script salience conditions and relationship status, participants reported similar endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity,  $F(1, 365) = .73, p = .39$  and  $F(1, 365) = 2.14, p = .15$  (indicating no main effect of condition or relationship status). None of the two-way interactions were significant,  $F_{range} = 2.38 - 3.45, p_{values} > .07$ .

A three-way interaction between gendered relationship script salience, gender, and relationship status emerged,  $F(1, 365) = 10.09, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . To unpack this three-way interaction, I examined people who were single and in a monogamous relationship separately. There was a significant interaction between gender and gendered relationship script salience among people in monogamous relationships, but not among people who were single,  $F(1, 184) = 11.36, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$  and  $F(1, 181) = 1.31, p = .25$ . Simple effects revealed that partnered men who viewed engagement photographs (high gendered relationship script salience for men) reported less endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity than men who viewed landscape photographs (low gendered relationship script salience),  $t(63) = -3.29, p = .001, d = -.68$ ; see

Figure 4. Importantly, this effect was not found among women  $t(121) = 1.21, p = .23$ . Moreover, simple effects show that men reported less endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity than women in the high gendered relationship script salience condition,  $t(99) = -5.62, p < .001, d = -1.13$ , but not in the low gendered relationship script salience condition,  $t(85) = -.74, p = .46$ . Similar to the results for committed relationship ideology, these findings show that gendered relationship scripts were made salient, it decreases endorsement of monogamy among partnered men (and not single men); moreover this pattern of results was not found among women.

### **Romanticism**

Results revealed main effects of gender and relationship status,  $F(1, 366) = 4.75, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .01$  and  $F(1, 366) = 6.06, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . Men and people in monogamous relationships reported higher levels of romanticism than women and people who were single, respectively. Across both gendered relationship script salience conditions, participants reported similar endorsement of romanticism,  $F(1, 366) = 1.89, p = .17$  (indicating no main effect of condition). In consistent with my hypotheses, none of the two-way interactions or the three-way interaction were significant,  $F_{range} = .17 - 2.67, p_{values} > .10$ .

### **Attitudes toward Singles and People in Monogamous Relationships**

In terms of feelings about people in monogamous relationships (as a group), there were no significant two-way interactions or a significant three-way interaction,  $F_{range} = .002 - 1.08, p_{values} > .30$ . In addition, participants who viewed engagement proposal or landscapes photographs reported similar attitudes toward people in monogamous relationships,  $F(1, 335) = 0.04, p = .98$  (indicating no main effect of gendered relationship script salience). The only significant results that emerged were main effects of gender and relationship status,  $F(1, 335) =$

27.32,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .08$  and  $F(1, 335) = 15.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ . Specifically, women and people in monogamous relationships reported warmer feelings than men and single people toward people in monogamous relationships (respectively).

Similar to the results for feelings toward people who are single (as a group), two of the two-way interactions (condition by relationship status and condition by gender) and the three-way interaction were not significant,  $F_{range} = .001 - 2.51$ ,  $p_{values} > .11$ . A significant interaction between relationship status and gender emerged, indicating that women who viewed engagement proposal photographs reported warmer feelings toward single people than men who viewed engagement proposal photographs,  $F(1, 305) = 4.59$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . In addition, women reported warmer feelings toward single people than men,  $F(1, 305) = 4.43$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$  (indicating a main effect of gender). There were no significant main effects of condition or relationship status,  $F(1, 305) = .16$ ,  $p = .69$  (in both cases).

Of importance, across both analyses, positive feelings toward people who are single or in monogamous relationships were unaffected by gendered relationship script salience. These results provide evidence that gendered relationship script salience does not change participants' beliefs about people based on relationship status. Instead, gendered relationship script salience only effects men's personal beliefs about the committed relationship ideology and sexual/romantic exclusivity.

## **Summary**

In sum, I found that when gendered relationship scripts are made salient (specifically engagement proposal photographs), partnered men report lower endorsement of the committed relationship ideology and sexual/romantic exclusivity as compared to men and women in the control condition and women under high gendered relationship script salience. Conversely,

partnered women's endorsement of monogamy (across all three dependent measures) was relatively unaffected by gendered relationship script salience specific to marriage ideals. The results of Study 4 conceptually replicate Study 3 and—importantly—provide support for the robustness of gendered relationship script salience. Moreover, the present study suggests that gendered relationship salience only affects partnered men's attitudes toward committed relationships and sexual/romantic exclusivity, not single men's attitudes.

Additionally, the results of Study 4 provide evidence that the effects of gendered relationship script salience are bound to personal beliefs about monogamy, and does not extend to negatively (or positively) perceiving others based on relationship type. In other words, when gendered relationship scripts are made salient, it negatively impacts men's personal beliefs about committed relationships and sexual/romantic exclusivity (but not women's). Moreover, it does not affect how men or women view others based on relationship status. Taken together, the results of Studies 3 and 4 provide experimental support for the notion that men hold favorable attitudes toward monogamy, but disapprove of proscribed gendered relationship scripts associated with monogamy.

## Footnotes

<sup>7</sup> To examine if relationship length affected the results of Study 4, I conducted additional 2 (salience of gendered relationship scripts) X 2 (gender) ANCOVA analyses with relationship length serving as a covariate for each of the five dependent variables (for partnered people only). For analyses related to the committed relationship ideology and endorsement of sexual/romantic exclusivity, relationship length did not change the pattern of results for the expected gender X gendered relationship script salience interaction (both  $p_{values} < .05$ ). Additionally, relationship length did not predict people's attitudes towards singles or people in monogamous relationships nor were the gender X gendered relationship script salience interactions among partnered people significant (all  $p_{values} > .33$ ).

<sup>8</sup> I also examined whether age affected the results of Study 4. I conducted additional 2 (salience of gendered relationship scripts) X 2 (gender) X 2 (relationship status) ANCOVA analyses with age serving as a covariate for each of the five dependent variables. For analyses related to the committed relationship ideology and endorsement of sexual/romantic exclusivity, age did not change the pattern of results for the three-way interaction (between gendered relationship script salience, gender, and relationship status), both  $p_{values} < .02$ . For romanticism, the three-way interaction remained non-significant ( $p = .22$ ). Additionally, age did not predict people's attitudes toward singles or people in monogamous relationships (both  $p_{values} > .26$ ) nor did it affect the pattern of results related to the two-way and three-way interaction terms.

Figure 5. Stimuli used in Study 4



*Note.* Top photograph was from the control condition (low gendered relationship script salience) and bottom photograph was from the high gendered relationship script salience condition.

Table 6. Study 4: Single Men and Women’s Means and Standard Deviations for Committed Relationship Ideology, Sexual and Romantic Exclusivity Ideals, and Romanticism

Dependent Variables	Men		Women	
	Low Gendered Relationship Script Salience	High Gendered Relationship Script Salience	Low Gendered Relationship Script Salience	High Gendered Relationship Script Salience
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Committed Relationship Ideology	3.90 (0.82)	4.04 (0.90)	3.79 (0.74)	3.76 (0.74)
Sexual/Romantic Exclusivity Ideals	5.21 (1.09)	5.51 (1.20)	5.73 (0.94)	5.66 (1.09)
Romanticism	3.87 (0.92)	3.88 (0.91)	3.68 (.91)	3.72 (0.83)

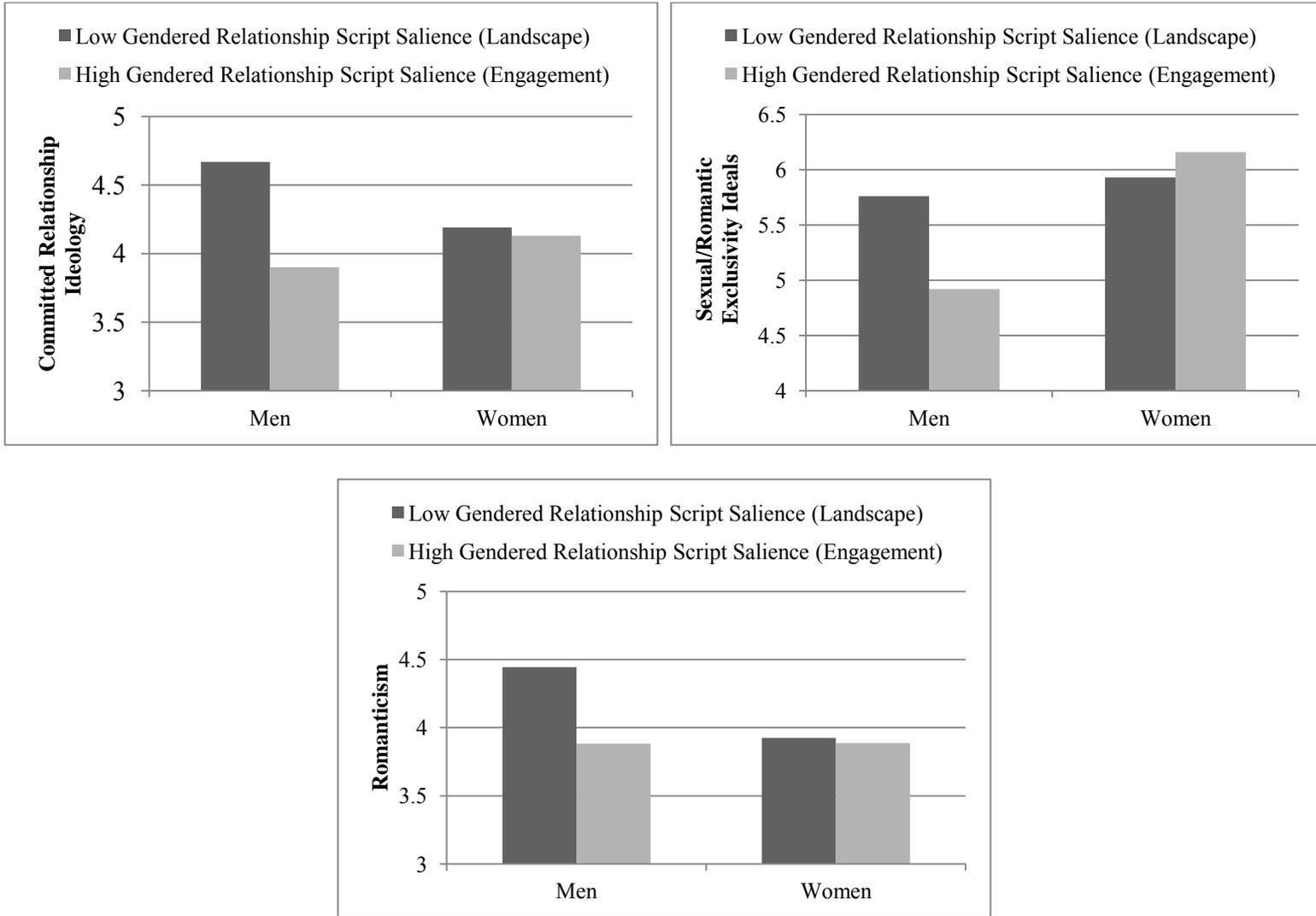
*Note:* Participants in the low gendered relationship script condition viewed landscape photographs and those in high gendered relationship script salience viewed engagement proposal photographs.

Table 7. Study 4: Partnered Men and Women’s Means and Standard Deviations for Committed Relationship Ideology, Sexual and Romantic Exclusivity Ideals, and Romanticism

Dependent Variables	Men		Women	
	Low Gendered Relationship Script Salience	High Gendered Relationship Script Salience	Low Gendered Relationship Script Salience	High Gendered Relationship Script Salience
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Committed Relationship Ideology	4.67 (0.85)	3.90 (0.83)	4.19 (0.75)	4.13 (0.85)
Sexual/Romantic Exclusivity Ideals	5.76 (1.17)	4.92 (1.30)	5.93 (0.96)	6.16 (0.86)
Romanticism	4.45 (0.83)	3.88 (0.80)	3.93 (1.13)	3.89 (0.97)

*Note:* Participants in the low gendered relationship script condition viewed landscape photographs and those in high gendered relationship script salience viewed engagement proposal photographs.

Figure 6. Study 4 Results: Partnered men's and women's mean committed relationship ideology, endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity, and romanticism scores as a function of low or high gendered relationship script salience



**CHAPTER 6**

**STUDY 5 - SALIENCE OF VALENTINE’S DAY IDEALS AND  
THE ROLE OF GENDER**

Building on Studies 3 and 4, in the final study I used a different subtle priming technique to examine the effects of gendered relationship script salience on beliefs about romance and committed relationships among men and women in monogamous relationships. Like engagements proposals, Valentine’s Day celebrations are uniquely linked to men’s relationship scripts. Thus, in the present study, I used a priming technique via a quasi-experimental design: participants took part in the study on a day of the year when gendered relationship scripts are salient for men—Valentine’s Day—or on a day of the year not associated with gendered relationship scripts (April 10<sup>th</sup>).

Consistent with the present studies’ conceptual model, I predicted that when gendered relationship scripts are made salient (taking part in the study on Valentine’s Day) men in monogamous relationships will hold less positive attitudes and beliefs about committed relationships, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism than women in this condition and both women and men when gendered relationship scripts are not made salient (taking part in the study in April). I expect that gendered relationship scripts salience will not

affect partnered women's attitudes toward committed relationships, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism.

## **Method**

### **Participants and Procedure**

A community sample of participants were recruited on Valentine's Day (February 14<sup>th</sup>) or a day in April<sup>9</sup> (April 10<sup>th</sup>) to take part in a study related to people's beliefs and attitudes toward social relationships. Participants were recruited via social networking sites, including Craigslist.org (volunteer sections) and Facebook.com. To minimize selection bias, I did not indicate that the study was related to beliefs about monogamy nor did I specifically target individuals currently in a romantic relationship to take part in our study. As in previous studies, I over-recruited for men to create an even gender balance. Because the purpose of our study was to examine the effect of gendered relationship script salience on beliefs about committed relationships among individuals in monogamous relationship, I excluded individuals who indicated that they were currently single ( $n = 118$ ) or part of a consensual non-monogamous relationship ( $n = 14$ ). Of importance, relationship status (whether people were single or in a monogamous relationship) could not be examined, because a small number of partnered men took part in the present study (i.e., the sample size was too small for adequate statistical comparisons). An additional 26 participants were excluded from the present analyses because they did not respond to questions regarding the main study variables (e.g., relationship status, gender) or identified as part of a same-gender relationship.

The final sample included 158 participants. Two waves of recruitment took place for this study: participants were recruited on February 14<sup>th</sup> (high gendered relationship script salience;  $n = 88$ ; 58% female) or April 10<sup>th</sup> (low gendered relationship script salience;  $n = 70$ ; 51% female).

Both surveys were identical, except for a calendar shown to participants at the beginning of the study. All participants were asked to click the calendar to record the date; participants recruited on Valentine's Day were shown a calendar for the month of February (with a small heart on the 14<sup>th</sup>) and those recruited on April 10<sup>th</sup> were shown a calendar for the corresponding month. To verify that participants took part in the study on Valentine's Day or April 10<sup>th</sup>, the date each participant selected on the calendar was checked against the date recorded by the online survey program (Qualtrics).

Of the total final sample, 55% identified as female and 45% identified as male. The majority of the sample identified as heterosexual (91%). The sample's racial/ethnic composition was 78% White, 6% Asian/Pacific Islander, 5% multiracial, 4% Latino/a, 3% African American, and 1% Native American/American Indian; the remaining did not report ethnicity. Participants' age ranged from 18-87 years ( $M = 33.29$ ,  $SD = 15.96$ )<sup>10</sup>.

## Measures

Participants completed the same measures of committed relationships, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romance as in Studies 3 and 4.

**Committed Relationship Ideology Endorsement.** The Committed Relationship Ideology Scale ( $\alpha = .82$ ; Day et al., 2011) was used to assess endorsement of committed relationships as the optimal form of relationship structure.

**Sexual and Romantic Exclusivity Ideals.** The newly created Endorsement of Sexual and Romantic Exclusivity Ideals Scale was used to assess endorsement of lifelong sexual and romantic commitment to one person ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

**Romantic Beliefs.** The Romantic Beliefs Scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ; Sprecher & Metts, 1989) was used to assess the ideology of romanticism.

## Results and Discussion

Table 7 provides the means and standard deviations for committed relationship ideology, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism scores for men and women by gendered relationship script salience (Valentine's Day v. April 10<sup>th</sup>). I hypothesized that when gendered relationship scripts regarding Valentine's Day are made salient among people in monogamous relationships, men will report less positive attitudes and beliefs about committed relationships, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism than women. I conducted three separate 2 (salience of gendered relationship scripts: Valentine's Day/high vs. April 10<sup>th</sup>/low) X 2 (gender: female vs. male) ANOVAs with committed relationship ideology, sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism scores serving as the dependent variables.

### Committed Relationship Ideology

Overall, men and women reported similar endorsement of the committed relationship ideology,  $F(1, 154) = 0.70, p = .40$  (indicating no main effect of gender). However, results revealed a main effect of gendered relationship script salience,  $F(1, 154) = 6.33, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .04$ ; participants on Valentine's day (high gendered relationship script salience) were less likely to endorse the committed relationship ideology than participants on April 10<sup>th</sup> (low gendered relationship script salience).

This effect was qualified by the predicted interaction between gender and gendered relationship script salience,  $F(1, 154) = 8.60, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .05$ ; see Figure 5. Simple effects revealed, as predicted, men in the high gendered relationship script salience condition reported less endorsement of the committed relationship ideology than men in the low gendered relationship script salience condition,  $t(69) = -3.73, p = .001, d = -.88$ . This effect was not found among women  $t(85) = 0.31, p = .76$ . Moreover, men reported greater endorsement of committed

relationship ideology than women in the low gendered relationship script salience condition,  $t(68) = 2.34, p = .02, d = .56$ , but not in the high gendered relationship script salience condition,  $t(86) = -1.66, p = .10$ . These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that when the gendered relationship script is made salient (activated via Valentine's Day), it decreases beliefs about the committed relationship ideology among partnered men, but not partnered women.

### **Sexual and Romantic Exclusivity Ideals**

Across conditions, women reported greater endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals than men,  $F(1, 154) = 15.43, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .09$  (indicating main effect of gender). There was also a main effect of gendered relationship script salience,  $F(1, 185) = 18.93, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .11$ ; participants on Valentine's day (high gendered relationship script salience) were less likely to endorse the committed relationship ideology than participants on April 10<sup>th</sup> (low gendered relationship script salience).

These effects were qualified by the predicted interaction between gender and gendered relationship script salience,  $F(1, 154) = 15.84, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .09$ ; see Figure 5. Similar to the results of committed relationship ideology (and as predicted), men in the high gendered relationship script salience condition reported less endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals than men in the low gendered relationship script salience condition,  $t(69) = -5.03, p = .001, d = -1.31$ . Importantly, this effect was not found among women  $t(85) = -0.31, p = .76$ . Simple effects also revealed that women and men reported similar endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals in the low gendered relationship script salience condition,  $t(68) = -0.04, p = .97$ . Additionally, men reported less endorsement of sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals than women in the high gendered relationship script salience condition,  $t(86) = -5.30, p = .001, d = -1.22$ . These findings support the hypothesis that when gendered relationship scripts

are made salient, it decreases partnered men's endorsement of monogamy (but not partnered women's endorsement).

### **Romanticism**

Across conditions, beliefs about romanticism did not differ between men and women or on Valentine's day versus April 10<sup>th</sup> (indicating no main effects of gender or gendered relationship script salience),  $F(1, 154) = 0.14, p = .71$  and  $F(1, 154) = 1.85, p = .18$ , respectively.

The predicted interaction between gender and gendered relationship script salience was significant,  $F(1, 154) = 13.71, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .08$ ; see Figure 5. As illustrated in Figure 5, men in the high gendered relationship script salience condition reported less romanticism than men in the low gendered relationship script salience condition,  $t(69) = -3.55, p = .001, d = -.83$ . This effect was not found among women  $t(85) = 1.69, p = .10$ . Simple effects also revealed that men reported greater romanticism in the low gendered relationship script salience condition than women,  $t(68) = 2.25, p = .01, d = .60$ . However, women reported greater romanticism in the high gendered relationship script salience condition than men,  $t(86) = 2.72, p = .01, d = .59$ . These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that when gendered relationship scripts are made salient, it has a pronounced effect on romanticism among partnered men, but not women.

### **Summary**

Taken together, when the gendered relationship scripts are made salient (via Valentine's Day), men in monogamous relationships report lower endorsement of the committed relationship ideology, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism as compared to men and women on another day in the year and women under high gendered relationship script salience. Conversely, partnered women's endorsement of monogamy (across the three dependent measures) were relatively unaffected by gendered relationship script salience. In conjunction

with the results of the previous two studies, these results provide further experimental support for the notion that men hold favorable attitudes toward monogamy, but do not endorse proscribed gendered relationship scripts associated with monogamy. In addition, the results of the present study suggest that gendered relationship script salience impacts men's beliefs about romanticism (a finding that was not statistically significant in the previous two studies).

### Footnotes

<sup>9</sup> In order to increase the sample size of participants that took part in the study in April, I included those who took part in the study on April 10, 11, 12, and 13<sup>th</sup>. For ease of readability purposes, I refer to participants who took part in the study on a day in April as April 10<sup>th</sup> (and, most of the participants took part in the study on this day).

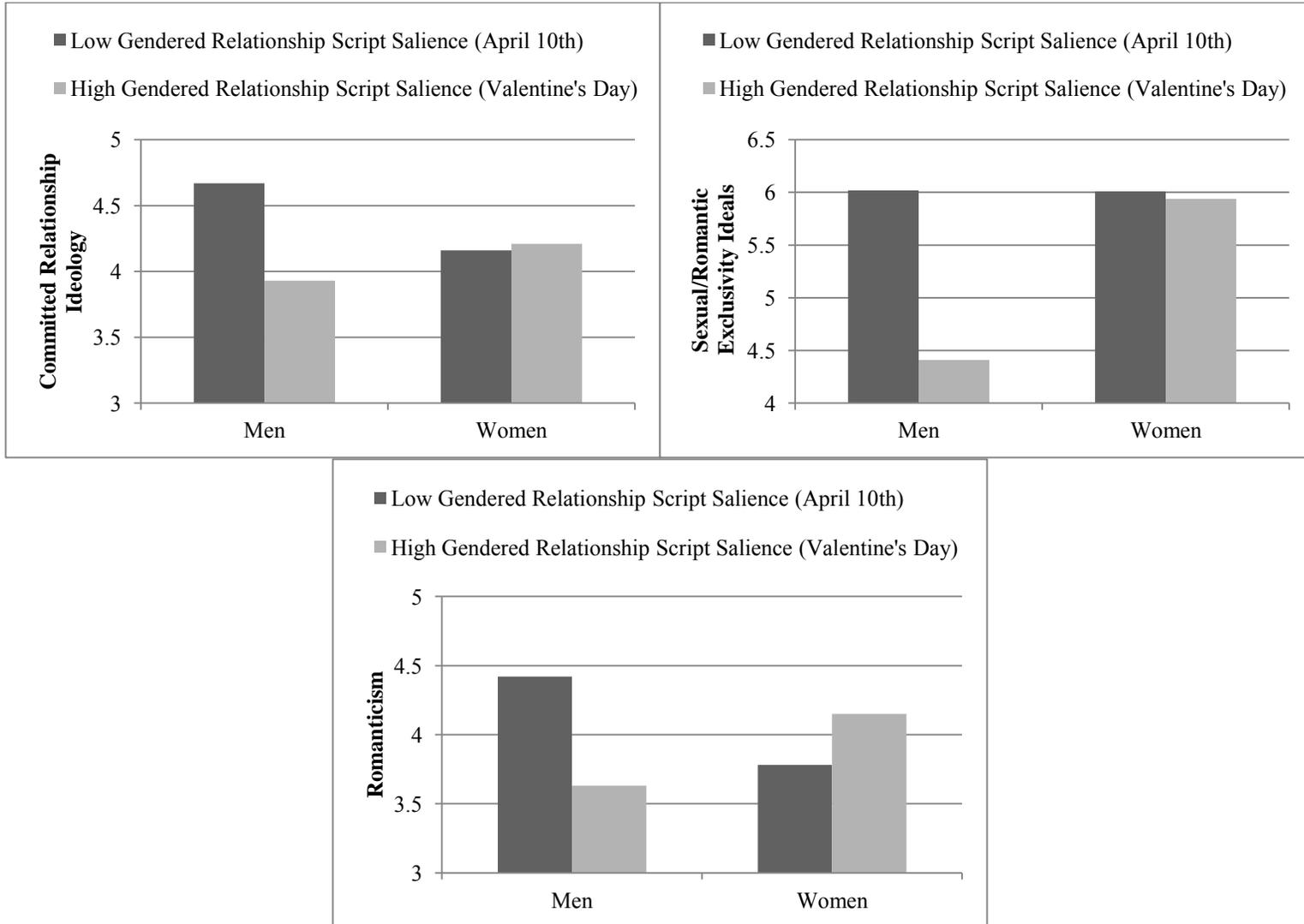
<sup>10</sup> To examine whether age affected the results of Study 4, I conducted additional 2 (salience of gendered relationship scripts) X 2 (gender) ANCOVA analyses with age serving as a covariate for each of the three dependent variables. Across all analyses, age did not change the pattern of results for the expected gender X gendered relationship script salience interaction ( $p_{values} < .004$ ).

Table 8. Study 5: Partnered Men and Women’s Means and Standard Deviations for Committed Relationship Ideology, Sexual and Romantic Exclusivity Ideals, and Romanticism

Dependent Variables	Men		Women	
	Low Gendered Relationship Script Salience	High Gendered Relationship Script Salience	Low Gendered Relationship Script Salience	High Gendered Relationship Script Salience
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Committed Relationship Ideology	4.67 (0.81)	3.93 (0.87)	4.16 (0.99)	4.21 (0.75)
Sexual/Romantic Exclusivity Ideals	6.02 (1.12)	4.41 (1.33)	6.01 (0.88)	5.94 (1.18)
Romanticism	4.42 (1.06)	3.63 (0.82)	3.78 (1.07)	4.15 (0.95)

*Note:* Participants in the low gendered relationship script salience condition took part in the study on April 10th and those in high gendered relationship script salience took part in the study on Valentine’s Day.

Figure 7. Study 5 Results: Partnered men and women’s mean committed relationship ideology, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism scores as a function of low or high gendered relationship script salience



## **CHAPTER 7**

### **GENERAL DISCUSSION**

In the present studies, I examined whether men disapprove of *monogamy* or if men simply disapprove of *gendered relationship scripts* regarding monogamy to which there are expected to adhere. Utilizing a social script framework (Simon & Gagnon, 1986, 2003), I sought to understand men's and women's reactions to socially scripted guides for how they should interact in long-term relationships and how these scripts affect men's endorsement of monogamy. As such, I developed a conceptual model to illustrate how men's attitudes toward monogamy can be parsed apart from gendered relationship scripts. In Studies 1a, 1b, and 2, I expected that initiating romantic events, including engagement proposals and Valentine's Day celebrations, would be uniquely linked to men's scripts in relationships and that these scripts would elicit frustration. In Studies 3, 4, and 5, I hypothesized that men's disapproval of monogamy is influenced, at least in part, by gendered relationship scripts and their frustration with these scripts regarding relationships. That is, I suggest that men truly endorse monogamy as a relationship style; however, their frustration with scripts for long-term relationships contributes to their lack of interest in monogamy.

In support of men's disapproval of their gendered relationship scripts, in Study 1a, I found that men in monogamous relationships reported higher levels of frustration than women

for scripts unique to initiating romantic events and displaying affection. That is, men are frustrated with these scripts in general and the pressure to enact these scripts in their own romantic relationships. Additional support for men's negative associations with gendered relationship scripts comes from Study 1b: when men and women in monogamous relationships were asked to imagine their romantic partner proposing to them or planning a Valentine's Day celebration (relationship scripts unique to men), both felt more frustrated and pressured than when they were asked to imagine their romantic partner doing the same for them. Consistent with qualitative narratives regarding men's expectations for romantic events (Otnes et al., 1994; Rugimbana, Donahay, Neal, & Polonsky, 2003), this finding provides evidence that men's scripts for initiating elaborate celebrations of love elicits frustration and pressure.

Building upon Studies 1a and 1b, in Study 2, I identified several symbols and hallmarks of monogamy, including engagement proposals, Valentine's Day, prom, and wedding anniversaries. Compared to other big life events (e.g., birthday celebrations, graduations), both men and women believed that greater societal pressure is placed on men to do certain things and act a certain way for romantic events. Moreover, both men and women viewed engagement proposals and Valentine's Day celebrations as placing the greatest amount of pressure on men to initiate and perform. Thus, Studies 1a, 1b, and 2 illustrate that engagement proposals and Valentine's Day are two relationship celebrations in which men are responsible for orchestrating and men are particularly frustrated with these gendered expectations.

In Studies 3, 4, and 5, I expected that under circumstances where men's gendered relationship scripts were salient, men would have lower levels of endorsement for beliefs about the committed relationship ideology, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism than when their gendered relationship scripts were not made salient. Additionally, I

hypothesized that women's endorsement of monogamy would be unaffected by salience of gendered relationship scripts (given engagement proposals and Valentine's Day celebrations are unique to men's scripts, not women's scripts). In support of this—across a variety of methodologies—Studies 3, 4, and 5 showed that when gendered relationship script salience unique to men is made salient, partnered men (but not single men) endorse committed relationships and sexual/romantic exclusivity less than when this script is not made salient (however, men's attitudes toward romanticism were unaffected in Studies 3 and 4). Moreover, partnered women's endorsement of monogamy were unaffected by salience of men's relationship scripts.

Study 3 provided an explanation for the difference in partnered men's endorsement of monogamy (who experienced high and low gendered relationship script salience)—feeling frustrated, stressed, overwhelmed, and annoyed. Specifically, partnered men who viewed steps related to planning the perfect engagement proposal reported lower levels of endorsement of the committed relationship ideology and sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, as a result of the effects of negative affect (e.g., feeling frustrated, overwhelmed). Consistent with the notion that both men and women are dissatisfied, to some extent, with their gendered relationship scripts (Close & Zinkhan, 2006; Lottes, 1993; Thébaud, 2010), heightened frustration with gendered relationship scripts explains men's disapproval of monogamy. Moreover, Study 3 ruled out possible alternative explanations for men's disapproval of monogamy, including endorsement of traditional heterosexual relationship scripts, anxiety, and perceived financial stability.

In Studies 4 and 5, I observed that subtle priming techniques used to activate gendered relationship salience—viewing engagement proposal photographs or participating in the study on Valentine's Day—also decreased men's endorsement of monogamy. That is, partnered men

reported lower endorsement of committed relationships and sexual/romantic exclusivity when subtly primed about engagement proposals or Valentine's Day than when not primed about these scripts. Moreover, under circumstances when gendered relationships scripts were not made salient, men expressed greater (or equal) endorsement of committed relationships, sexual/romantic exclusivity, and romanticism than women. Women's attitudes about monogamy were relatively unaffected by gendered relationship script salience specific to engagement proposals and Valentine's Day. Additionally, in Studies 3 and 4, partnered men's attitudes about romanticism were unaffected by gendered relationship script salience (specifically, engagement proposals). However, in Study 5, gendered relationship script salience related to Valentine's Day led to lower endorsement of romanticism among partnered men.

Study 4 also provided evidence that the effects of gendered relationship script salience are bound to men's personal beliefs about monogamy. Gendered relationship script salience did not affect men's (or women's) attitudes towards people who are single or in a monogamous relationship. Although women held more positive attitudes toward both singles and people in relationships, activating gendered relationship script salience did not affect how warmly people felt toward others based on relationship status. Thus, when gendered relationship scripts are made salient, it negatively impacts partnered men's *own* beliefs about monogamy, not how they viewed others based on relationship status. These findings also help reject the notion that men are dissatisfied with their relationship status, rather than their gendered relationship scripts. That is, men in monogamous relationships did not have warmer feelings toward people who were single than people who were in monogamous relationships.

Moreover, Study 5 was instrumental in providing support for a conceptual replication as well as applying the effect of gendered relationship scripts to a new domain: Valentine's Day.

The act of taking part in the study on Valentine's Day, as opposed to a day in April, led to decreased endorsement of monogamy among partnered men. The obligatory pressure to engage in Valentine's Day celebrations, including gift-giving and planning, was arguably felt among men in relationships (Otnes et al., 1994; Rugimbana et al., 2003). Thus, activating their frustration with these scripts and, in turn, decreased their positive evaluations of love and monogamy.

### **Single Men and Monogamy**

Although I expected that gendered relationship salience would affect single men's beliefs about monogamy in Studies 3 and 4, potentially single men were unaffected because engagement proposals are not easily accessible to them. It seems likely that men who were single were unaffected by salience of engagement proposal ideals because they did not have a clear frame of reference—a romantic partner—as men in monogamous relationship did. Men who were single may have had a difficult time thinking about the detailed steps to prepare for planning the perfect engagement proposal, because this elaborate celebration seemed distant or unbelievable at the moment. Moreover, partnered men in Study 3 were not currently engaged or married, this state of relationship status potentially heightened their frustration with gendered relationship scripts regarding engagement proposals.

Related, people tend to see their own relationship status as the universal ideal (Laurin, Kille, & Eibach, 2013). People are motivated to view their relationship status as ideal because of a need to rationalize one's own stable lifestyle (Laurin et al., 2013). However, consistent with the findings of Day and colleagues (2011), Studies 3 and 4 found that both single and partnered men endorse the committed relationship ideology more than women. At the same time, gendered relationship script salience did not affect single men's attitudes toward committed relationships

or sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals (in both Studies 3 and 4). Potentially, viewing steps related to planning an engagement proposal did not affect single men's feelings toward these scripts and, in turn, their attitudes toward monogamy, because these scripts do not (yet) play a role in their single lifestyles.

Taken together, it seems plausible that single men lacked a frame of reference to think about preparing for an engagement proposal; thus, their attitudes towards committed relationships and sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals were unchanged. At the same time, I hesitate to interpret these lack of significant results as a stable finding. Specifically, single men tended to endorse monogamy to a greater extent after viewing steps to plan an engagement proposal than after viewing steps to plan a surprise party (see footnote 4 for marginally significant results). This finding is opposite of my predictions and partnered men's responses. Thus, future researchers may wish to explore the effects of gendered relationship salience unique to men on single men's beliefs about love and relationships.

### **Committed Relationship Ideology, Sexual/Romantic Exclusivity Ideals, and Romanticism**

One interesting pattern of results was that partnered men's beliefs about romanticism were largely unaffected by gendered relationship script salience. Across Studies 3-5, I found consistent evidence that gendered relationship script salience lowered partnered men's endorsement of committed relationships and sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals. In contrast, partnered men's beliefs about romanticism were only affected when gendered relationship salience was specific to Valentine's Day in Study 5 (not engagement proposals in Study 3 or 4).

Although the measures of committed relationship ideology, sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals, and romanticism were moderately to robustly correlated with each another, perhaps idealizations of romantic love are distinct from desiring monogamy as a preferred

relationship style. For instance, the ideology of romanticism was conceptualized by Sprecher and Metts (1989) as a cognitive roadmap for thinking about one's own behavior and the behavior of their romantic partner (or potential partner). The focus on the romantic partner in this measurement is intertwined, but somewhat different from Day and colleagues (2011) and the present author's conceptualizations of monogamy as an optimal relationship structure.

For instance, the items that measure romanticism specifically referred to believing in love at first sight, as the basis for marriage, and for overcoming obstacles—all of which were revolved around a romantic partner (Sprecher & Metts, 1989). On the other hand, the committed relationship and sexual/romantic exclusivity items were related to beliefs that people who are not in committed relationships are missing out, that monogamy is personally important, and understanding that monogamy is a long-term dyadic commitment. Future research could explore how the ideology of romanticism may be different from endorsement of committed relationships and sexual/romantic exclusivity ideals. Previous work has critiqued the field of romantic relationship science for implicitly promoting monogamy as the universally preferred relationship type (Conley, Ziegler, Moors, Matsick, & Valentine, 2013). Even though this measure of romanticism anchors questions to a romantic partner, people may endorse these beliefs about romance, but not support monogamy as a preferred relationship style.

### **Women and Gendered Relationship Salience**

In Studies 4 and 5, I did not test for associations between women's endorsement of monogamy and gendered relationship script unique to women, given that women's interest in monogamy appears to be stable (e.g., Conley, Moors, et al., 2013). Study 3 provided confirming evidence that gendered relationship scripts unique to women (planning a wedding) does not affect women's interest in monogamy. Although women are frustrated with many aspects of

gendered relationship scripts (as found in Studies 1a and 1b and indirectly found in Öun, 2013; Ross & Davis, 1996), it does not appear that this frustration is linked to endorsement of monogamy as an ideological structure or relationship style as it is linked for men. Men stand to gain social, economic and health benefits from a traditional structure of coupling, whereas women do not (Ziegler et al., 2014). Thus, monogamy—as a relationship structure—may be something that men endorse for these reasons, whereas women do not stand to gain the same benefits from monogamy.

Perhaps, women's frustration with gendered relationships scripts affects their satisfaction with their monogamous romantic partners, instead of a larger ideological structure. For instance, research on household labor (a traditional expectation for women to fulfill), shows that women report reduced relationship satisfaction when labor is inequitable (Buunk, Kluwer, Schuurman, & Siero, 2000; Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 1996). This suggests that frustration with gendered relationship scripts affects women's personal relationships, and potentially not the overarching relationship structure of monogamy. Alternatively, planning a wedding (the prime used in Study 3) may not have been as frustrating as daily relationship and household maintenance acts (e.g., child rearing, cleaning) that women are expected to fulfill. Future work should explore whether women's frustration with gendered relationship scripts unique to women affects their relationship quality and opinions about their monogamous partners. This could be one way in which frustration with gendered relationship scripts is manifested among women.

### **Future Directions**

Although the present set of studies have many strengths, this contribution to scientific knowledge about romantic relationships is not without limitations that future research can build upon. For example, I made my best attempts to conceal the purpose of the research in the

recruitment prompts and to avoid targeted recruitment in all six studies. However, it was necessary to target men to take part in the present studies because their response rates were low. There may be unique characteristics associated with men who take part in a study advertising for men compared to men who volunteer to take part in research without being targeted.

Future researchers may want to employ a control condition that involves participants planning a non-romantic event for their romantic partner. For instance, men and women in Study 3 were randomly assigned to either imagine they were planning the perfect engagement proposal (for their partner), wedding (for themselves and their partner), or surprise party (for their same-gendered best friend). The comparison of the other conditions to the surprise party condition provides valuable insight, such that script salience for non-romantic partners does not affect men's endorsement of monogamy. However, this control condition would be strengthened by changing the instructions to have participants imagine they were planning a party for their partner. In this case, comparisons could be made with the understanding that the initiator role (i.e., the planner) was contextualized within romantic relationships. Thus, future research should consider developing gendered relationship script salience manipulations that keep the frame of reference (i.e., romantic partner) consistent across conditions.

Related, researchers should consider whether the pressure of initiating and planning any type of event (not only a romantic celebration) is driving the effect of lower endorsement of monogamy among partnered men. In Study 3, partnered men who imagined planning a wedding for their partner endorsed monogamy less than those who imagined planning a surprise party for their best friend. Given that planning a wedding is not a script unique men, this finding raises the question as to whether planning any romantic event would lower men's endorsement of monogamy. One way to remedy this concern would be to use experimental stimuli that involves

planning a non-romantic event (e.g., surprise party, retirement celebration, vacation) for one's partner. That is, researchers could examine whether this type of planning could also activate frustration, which, in turn, could lead to lower endorsement of monogamy among men. Potentially, men do not enjoy the responsibility of planning events, whether romantic in nature or not, for their romantic partners.

Another avenue for future research is to examine the extent to which the effects of gendered relationship script salience for men last. Arguably, frustration is elicited quickly after (or during) gendered relationship scripts are made salient. In Studies 3-5, endorsement of monogamy was assessed shortly after gendered relationship script salience was activated. Future research, using a longitudinal design, could explore the amount of time in which gendered relationship script salience impacts men's attitudes toward monogamy.

Finally, it would also be a fruitful future direction to examine whether gendered relationship script salience leads to lower relationship quality (e.g., satisfaction, intimacy) or satisfaction with one's partner among men. The central goal of the present studies was to examine men's endorsement of monogamy and did not consider whether gendered relationship script salience affects men's relationship quality. As mentioned previously, endorsement of the committed relationship ideology and sexual and romantic exclusivity ideals assess attitudes toward long-term monogamous relationships as a larger ideological structure (a way of engaging in romance that is deemed culturally appropriate). Thus, it would be interesting to explore whether activating salience of gendered relationship scripts would impact men's attitudes about their own relationships. Related, future research could also examine if gendered relationship script salience affects other aspects of men's lives, including their self-esteem and desire to be unattached romantically.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Gendered discourses on how to act and behave in romantic relationships are embedded within Western culture. The present research illustrated that partnered men endorse monogamy—but not the gendered relationship scripts associated with monogamy in which they are expected to enact. That is, partnered men’s frustration and annoyance with their relationship scripts to initiate and plan elaborate celebrations of love, such as engagement proposals and Valentine’s Day festivities, can explain their disapproval of monogamy. Under circumstances where partnered men are not reminded of their gendered relationship scripts, they regard monogamy highly and, often, more highly than women.

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