Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research

John DeLamater
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Handbook of the Sociology of Sexualities

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Handbook of the Sociology of Sexualities

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We dedicate this Handbook to the scholars and researchers who worked hard, and in some cases, fought, to legitimize the study of sexuality as a topic of sociological inquiry. They created a scientific discourse to supplant the religious and biomedical perspectives that dominated discussion of sexuality until recently. We acknowledge the social, political and economic hardship that some of them endured to lay the essential groundwork for the broad array of scholarship reflected in this volume. We recognize that some contemporary researchers continue to endure social, educational and political harassment for persisting in the study of topics in this field. It is our hope that this collection of superb reviews of scholarship on sexuality will give pause to the critics and facilitate the motivation and work of the next generation of scholars.

John DeLamater
Rebecca F. Plante

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The Sociological Study of Sexuality: An Introduction

1

John DeLamater and Rebecca F. Plante

Sexuality is a major influence on individual health and well being, an important component of many types of social relationships, and an increasingly visible feature of social life. Not surprisingly, it has been the focus of a great deal of scholarly inquiry and research. In the early decades of the twentieth century, much of the "scientific" writing about sexuality focused on what were considered problematic forms of sexual cognitions and behaviors. These works reflected an essentialist view (DeLamater and Hyde 2004) of sex, sexual orientation, and sexual behavior. The empirical base of this work was largely case studies of people seen in therapeutic settings. As a result, the literature had an individualistic, psychological focus.

The first large-scale surveys of "typical" sexual behavior were conducted by Alfred Kinsey and colleagues (1948, 1953). They conducted individual interviews with thousands of men and women, questioning them in detail about sexual behavior and the types of partners with whom they engaged in intimacy. Kinsey was an entomologist and brought a biological perspective to the study of sexual behavior. He focused on the six "outlets" a man or woman could use to experience sexual pleasure, recognizing that only two of the six were heterosexual. However, in analyzing and reporting his results, he systematically considered variation by gender, race and social class, taking into account variation by social structure.

In the 1950s, Winston Ehrmann and Ira Reiss applied survey methods to the study of premarital sexuality. Ehrmann collected surveys from undergraduate students for several years, focused on a model of "stages" of premarital behavior, ranging from kissing to heterosexual intercourse. His major publication was *Premarital Dating Behavior* (1959), which documented the connection between the nature of the relationship and its sexual intimacy. Reiss focused on the role of attitudes ("standards") in premarital sexuality, arguing that attitudes reflected the influence of social institutions, including religion and the family. His book was published one year later (1960), and was subtitled "a sociological investigation." Reiss describes the development of his research and theory in Chap. 4.

In 1974, *Sexual Conduct* by John Gagnon and William Simon was published. Their social constructionist view of sexual behavior represented a sharp break from the then dominant essentialist, biological perspective. They argued that sexual interactions are not "hard-wired." Sexual behavior is influenced by cultural norms, the ongoing interaction of the participants, and each participant's past experiences and current desires. This view laid the groundwork for a truly social psychological analysis of sexuality. This perspective

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and the research and writing it inspired is summarized by Michael Wiederman in Chap. 2.

From these pioneering efforts, a large body of theory, research and commentary has developed over the past 45 years that treats sexual cognitions, behaviors, and relationships as social phenomena that can be analyzed using the theories and methods of contemporary sociology. In this *Handbook* we aim to bring together work reflecting the contributions of sociological analysis to understandings of human sexuality in the contemporary world, with a particular emphasis on North America.

Of course, the organization and content of this *Handbook* reflects the perspective of its editors. We believe that all scientific work is based on theory. As implied above, sociology provides a distinctive set of theories that identify particular issues/questions regarding sexuality and ways of thinking about them. Thus, the first part presents these theories. In addition to script theory (Chap. 2) and macro perspectives (Chap. 4), we present two recent perspectives that are having a major impact. Field theory is developing a meso- or mid-level analysis of the influence of context on social behavior. Adam Isaiah Green (Chap. 3) applies it insightfully to sexuality. The life-course perspective considers the role of earlier experiences on later outcomes, and how lives are structured by the larger society, and Laura Carpenter (Chap. 5) applies it systematically to the study of sexual lives.

Several research methods widely used in social psychology and sociology have been fruitfully applied to the study of a variety of personal and social aspects of sexuality. Part 2 provides thoughtful analyses of three of these. Following the pioneering research by Kinsey and his collaborators, surveys of groups and populations to measure attitudes and behavior have been a staple of the subfield. Anthony Paik provides a very balanced analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of this use of the survey method, and discusses the rapid growth in online surveys to reach certain populations (Chap. 6). A variety of techniques have been used to illuminate the quotidian and often hidden features of sexual interactions in various settings, or 'sex worlds.' Maria Pérez-y-Pérez provides a very insightful analysis of the social and personal dimensions of the researcher's active involvement in a "sexy setting" (Chap. 7). Kate Frank, drawing on her extensive experience, describes the strengths and weaknesses of a variety of observational methods (Chap. 8).

A common criticism of sociological research and writing about sexuality in the late twentieth century was the lack of attention to the biology of sexuality, except in discussions of reproduction and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Particularly missing was thoughtful, critical discussion of the sexual body and how it is implicated in diverse forms of sexual relationships and sexual activities. Fortunately, scholars have turned their attention to the topic in the past 15 years. Part 3 presents three chapters dealing with bodies and sexuality. Breanne Fahs and Eric Swank address two main aspects in Chap. 9, the role of the body in sexuality, and the uses of the body to resist social control efforts. Bodies take center stage when we consider the sexual lives of persons with differently abled bodies ('disabilities'). Amanda Jungels and Alexis Bender carefully review the small amount of research in this area and point to important directions for future work (Chap. 10). Bodies and embodiment also play a major role in the lives of trans* people and their experiences of sexual intimacy and relationships. Skilled contributors to the growing literature in this area, Aaron Devor and Kimi Dominic provide a detailed, nuanced look at the body and sexuality for trans* people (Chap. 11).

The editors share Laura Carpenter's belief that a biopsychosocial model of sexuality is necessary if we are to understand the various influences on sexual expression across the life-course. While Part 3 introduces the *bio-* dimension, Part 4 considers sexuality in the micro-social context, along with the accompanying cognitions, motivations, and emotions (the *psycho* dimension). A major contextual influence on partnered sexual expression is the *nature of the relationship* between participants. The first several chapters in Part 4 consider diverse relational contexts. Justin Garcia, Susan M. Seibold-Simpson, Sean G. Massey, and Ann M. Merriwether discuss sexual activity

in casual or uncommitted contexts (Chap. 12) from three perspectives: casual sex, public health/sexual risk-taking, and sexual pleasure. Elizabeth Sheff and Megan Tesene shed light on several types of consensual non-monogamous relationships, covering both sexual and non-sexual aspects (Chap. 13). Amy Lodge analyzes a range of sexual expressions in long-term relationships (Chap. 14). Scholars studying race were the first to focus attention on *intersectionality*, the fact that each of us has multiple demographic/social characteristics (e.g., race, class, gender) that interact to influence our identities and behavior. Angelique Harris and Susannah Bartlow reflect on how intersectionalities can be better applied in sexualities research (Chap. 15). Carol Haefner and Rebecca F. Plante review the literature on asexuality, a sexual identity that challenges several taken-for-granted assumptions about relationships and sexualities (Chap. 16).

A relatively new topic in sociological analyses is consideration of spatial factors or the built environment. As we think about sexual expression, it is obvious that cities (or suburbs), and distinctive spaces within them, provide important contexts for sexual relationships and lifestyle. In Chap. 17, Phil Hubbard, Andrew Gorman Murray, and Catherine J. Nash summarize the ways in which cities operate to frame or constrain sexualities. Of course, the role of urban environments in providing a base for gay lives and sexualities has been studied for several decades. Those literatures, and recent changes in the "queer metropolis," are comprehensively reviewed by Amin Ghaziani (Chap. 18).

Part 5 deconstructs the *social* dimension. As sociologists, we are particularly interested in how social institutions shape, facilitate, and restrict various forms of sexual expression. We organized this section using a mental image of concentric circles. Closest to the individual in space and time is 'the family'; Lauren Jade Martin reviews the family's role in sexuality and reproduction (Chap. 19). Religion, as Reiss recognized 55 years ago, is a major institutional influence on individuals and families. Amy Burdette, Terrence Hill, and Kyl Myers consider the wide influence of religion on sexuality and sexual health (Chap. 20). Formal sexuality education has been part of social context for about 40 years, and is sensitively analyzed here by Jessica Field, Jen Gilbert, and Michelle Miller (Chap. 21). Perhaps the most prominent feature of sexuality in the contemporary United States is its commodification; sex and exploitation sell. The role of sex work, or "commercial sexual activity," is carefully analyzed by Susan Dewey (Chap. 22). And in Chap. 23, Kassia Wosick addresses the vast scope and impacts of pornography.

A major recent contribution of sociological analysis to the study of human sexuality has been attention to the increasing hegemony of medicine over sexual and reproductive life. More and more aspects of everyday sexual life have been defined as illnesses, in need of medical treatment, including drugs, surgical procedures and various "therapies." Thus, no coverage of institutional influences on sexuality would be complete without a thorough analysis of this phenomenon of the medicalization of sexuality, provided by Thea Cacchioni (Chap. 24).

Last, but by no means least, social movements have played an important role in bringing about change in attitudes, norms and laws governing sexual relationships and sexual expression. Amy Stone and Jill Weinberg explore this ever-shifting topic (Chap. 25).

Our goal was to provide a comprehensive overview of the contributions of social psychological and sociological analyses to the understanding of human sexual expression in much of its diversity. As usual in such an undertaking, the chapters included here reflect the availability of knowledgeable scholars to write them. We were unable to include a chapter on online research methods, though these are covered by Paik, and by several other authors in part. We also were unable to include a chapter on mass media and sexuality. And certainly this handbook reflects the editors' perspectives, blind spots, and omissions.

The alert reader will notice that there are no chapter(s) specifically devoted to sexual orientation. We decided at the outset that we would ask each author to include coverage of literature on sexual orientation as it related to their substantive topic. We believe that there is now enough lit-

erature on diverse aspects of LGB sexuality and relationships to allow integrated coverage, and we think it makes sense to model inclusive ways to address a range of sexual orientations. And although we do have a chapter about intersectionalities, we also asked authors to be attentive to research addressing race, class, and gender. In the cases where these literatures are missing, authors are clear about what future researchers will need to do to rectify the gaps in our collective studies of sexualities.

We are very grateful to Esther Otten, Senior Publishing Editor at Springer, for her enthusiastic support for adding this *Handbook of Sexualities* to the prestigious Springer Handbook Series of Sociology and Social Research. We were thrilled when the American Sociological Association announced that the theme of the 2015 Annual Meeting will be "Sexualities in Society." Our authors, and Springer's production staff, especially Hendrikje Tuerlings, deserve our gratitude for making it possible to have this Handbook published in August 2015, in conjunction with the Annual Meeting.

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Part I
Theories

Sexual Script Theory: Past, Present, and Future

2

Michael W. Wiederman

All the World's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
(Shakespeare, As You Like It)

In their book *Sexual Conduct*, John Gagnon and William Simon (1973) described their *sexual script theory* perspective on human sexual behavior. Its basic premise was that all social behavior, including sexual behavior, is socially scripted. Of course, as the quote from Shakespeare attests, Simon and Gagnon were hardly the first to liken human behavior to scripted performance. Still, their book represented a watershed moment in sex research, and has been deemed one of the top 25 classic works of sexual theory (Weis 1998b). Bancroft (2009) referred to sexual scripting theory as "one of the, if not *the* most frequently cited theoretical models in post-psychoanalytic sexual science" (p. 10), McCormick (2010) declared that "No single theoretical perspective better accounts for the complexity of human sexual motivation and behaviors" (p. 91), and Kimmel (2007) concluded that Gagnon and Simon's book "heralded the new paradigm from which all subsequent readings of sexuality in the social sciences and humanities have sprung" (p. ix).

If the basic tenet of sexual script theory was not novel, why has it proven itself such a pivotal and long-lasting theoretical perspective? An attempt to answer that question requires both an explanation of sexual script theory and consideration of its place in history.

2.1 Sexual Script Theory

Central to sexual script theory is the notion of social constructionism—the interpretation of reality, including human behavior, is derived from shared beliefs within a particular social group (DeLamater and Hyde 1998). In this case, the human behaviors in question are sexual, and the meanings attached to those behaviors, including what makes them "sexual" behaviors, derives from metaphorical scripts individuals have learned and incorporated as a function of their involvement in the social group (Simon 1996; Simon and Gagnon 1986, 1987, 2003). "Scripts are involved in learning the meaning of internal states, organizing the sequencing of specifically sexual acts, decoding novel situations, setting the limits on sexual responses and linking meanings from nonsexual aspects of life to specifically sexual experience" (Gagnon and Simon 1973, p. 17).

Social scripts are conceptualized as the mental representations individuals construct and then use to make sense of their experience, including their own and others' behavior.

> Scripts are a metaphor for conceptualizing behavior within social life. Most of social life most of the time must operate under the guidance of an operating syntax, much as language is a precondition for speech. For behavior to occur, something resembling scripting must occur on three distinct levels: cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts, and intrapsychic scripts. (Simon and Gagnon 1984, p. 53)

Although cultural scenarios are at the most abstract level of scripting, they are necessary for

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providing the context for roles, and contain institutional arrangements and symbols that comprise collective life (Simon and Gagnon 1986, 1987, 2003). Mass media certainly play an important role in conveying cultural scenarios, but sexual norms are conveyed even through the ways in which cultural institutions such as government, law, education, and religion are experienced on a daily basis (Gagnon 1990; Simon 1996). Because particular sexual behaviors are illegal, stigmatized, and warned against, whereas others are instructed, encouraged, and envied, individuals learn the general contexts for sexual activity. In a sense, cultural scenarios lay out the playing field of sexuality; what is deemed desirable and undesirable, and where the broad boundaries lie between appropriate and inappropriate sexual conduct.

As important as *sexual cultural scripts* are, they are not synonymous with sexual behavior. "The enactment of virtually all roles must either directly or indirectly reflect the contents of appropriate cultural scenarios. These cultural scenarios are rarely entirely predictive of actual behavior, and they are generally too abstract to be applied in all circumstances" (Simon and Gagnon 1984, p. 53). So cultural scenarios lay out the general cast of characters (roles) and the relationships among them, yet usually do not provide enough concrete direction to guide actual interpersonal behavior in specific situations. This is where the interpersonal level of sexual scripts enters.

Interpersonal scripts rest on the roles and general circumstances provided by cultural scenarios, yet they entail adaptation to the particulars of each situation. Accordingly, each social actor helps create interpersonal scripts by adapting the general guidelines he or she learned from his or her experiences in the culture to the specifics presented in each social encounter (Simon and Gagnon 1986, 1987, 2003). At the interpersonal level, the script was said to provide "the organization of mutually shared conventions that allows two or more actors to participate in a complex act involving mutual dependence" (Gagnon and Simon 1973, p. 18). When the two or more actors involved share similar scripts, the social interaction may play out with relative harmony. However, there is always room for differences in the interpersonal scripts followed by each actor, with potentially troublesome results (Wiederman 2005). Also, the specifics of each circumstance differ, requiring modification and improvisation of previously adopted scripts. Especially when alternative outcomes are available in a particular scenario, the ability to engage in mental rehearsal is important for choosing among potential behaviors. This internal, individual experience of scripts is the intrapsychic level within script theory.

Intrapsychic scripts may entail specific plans or strategies for carrying out interpersonal scripts, but they are so much more (Simon and Gagnon 1986, 1987, 2003).

> This intrapsychic scripting creates fantasy in the rich sense of that word: the symbolic reorganization of reality in ways to more fully realize the actor's many-layered and sometimes multivoiced wishes. Intrapsychic scripting becomes a historical necessity, as a private world of wishes and desires that are experienced as originating in the deepest recesses of the self must be bound to social life: individual desires are linked to social meanings (Simon and Gagnon 1984, p. 54).

Intrapsychic scripts include fantasies, memories, and mental rehearsals, and it is within the intrapsychic scripts that individuals work out the difficulties involved in enacting interpersonal scripts within the general context of cultural scenarios (Gagnon 1990; Simon and Gagnon 1986, 1987, 2003).

Whereas cultural scenarios and interpersonal scripts may be thought of as more narrative in structure, intrapsychic scripts need not be.

> When dealing with erotic elements in the intrapsychic we are dealing with a more complex set of layered meanings which has much more to do with non-narrative tradition in literary representation and imagery. What is arousing may not be the plan to have sex, but fragmentary symbolic materials taken from mass media or from local experience. (Gagnon 1990, p. 7)

In this way, intrapsychic scripts represent the particulars of each individual's unique sexuality, including those aspects that cannot be formed into words.

As described here, each of the three levels of sexual scripts may seem rather static. For de-

scriptive purposes, it may be necessary to characterize cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts, and intrapersonal scripts as "things" in the sense that each exists on its own. However, Gagnon and Simon viewed all three levels of scripts as dynamically related, and frequently in flux as a result. As actually played out in behavior in the context of peoples' lives, there is potentially perpetual interplay among the three levels of sexual scripts. Unfortunately, this potential complexity is difficult to describe, capture, or examine in all its richness.

Gagnon and Simon also noted that the relevance of each of the three levels of scripting varies across settings. For example, in what they termed "paradigmatic societies," cultural scenarios and a specified set of ritualized variations may be all that is required to provide instructions such that social participants understand their respective roles and the meanings ascribed to their behaviors. In these societies, cultural scenarios and prescribed variations are sufficient to provide direction for successful enactment of scripts. In "postparadigmatic societies," in contrast, there are substantially fewer shared meanings and more disjunctures of meaning across different spheres of life. "As a result, the enactment of the same role within different spheres of life or different roles within the same sphere routinely requires different appearances, if not different organizations, of the self" (Simon and Gagnon 1984, p. 54). Postparadigmatic societies entail so much variability in meanings of sexual behavior that each social situation may require a unique adaptation of the individual to that situation.

Although Gagnon and Simon focused on sexual behavior in application of scripting theory, within their view there is nothing inherently special about sexual behavior or its motivation.

> From a scripting perspective, the sexual is not viewed as an intrinsically significant aspect of human behavior; rather, the sexual is viewed as becoming significant either when it is defined as such by collective life—sociogenic significance; or when individual experiences or development assign it a special significance—ontogenic significance. (Simon and Gagnon 1984, p. 54)

Sexual activities gain their special status simply because the society ascribes such status or because of the individual's own unique experiences.

Sexual scripting theory also entails a developmental or life-cycle aspect. Gagnon and Simon noted that particular scripts, or aspects of scripts, have age requirements, such as "You cannot engage in X until you are Y years of age," or "By age Y you must have done X." Common scripts themselves may have variants based on the relative ages of the actors, or at least the actors within a particular script are evaluated differently based on their respective ages. Adolescence and early adulthood are the most troubling stages for individuals and for the culture to which such individuals belong; it is during these stages that individuals are developing and refining their interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual scripts. "The major cultural scenarios that shape the most common interpersonal scripts tend to be almost exclusively drawn from the requirements of adolescence and early adulthood. There are virtually none tied to the issues of subsequent segments of life" (Simon and Gagnon 1984, p. 58). Accordingly, Simon and Gagnon (1984) noted that the extreme ends of the lifecycle might be thought of as the presexual (childhood) and the postsexual (old age), at least in terms of predominant, shared scripts. "Not that sexually significant events do not occur during these periods, but they are not or only rarely anticipated in prevailing cultural scenarios dealing with the very young and the very old" (Simon and Gagnon 1984, p. 58).

Interpersonal and intrapsychic scripts fashioned in adolescence and early adulthood frequently take on a conservative nature in that, once successful, individuals are motivated to retain them and not stray too far from what has worked in the past.

> Once they have found a formula that works—in other words, the realization of sexual pleasure, as well as the realization of sociosexual competence—there is an obvious tendency on some level to para-ritualize that formula. Variations can occur, but variations generally occur within the limits of a larger, stabilizing body of scripts both interper-

> sonal and intrapsychic. The stabilizing of sexual scripts, often confused with the crystallization of a sexual identity, occurs partly because it works by insuring adequate sexual performance and providing adequate sexual pleasure. It also represents an effective accommodation with the larger self-process, in which sexual practice and sexual identity do not disturb the many components of one's nonsexual identities. (Simon and Gagnon 1984, p. 57)

To contemporary readers, sexual script theory is likely to be non-controversial. If so, this level of comfort attests to how constructionist perspectives have become inherent in Western thought about human experience. Why Gagnon and Simon's ideas took hold when they did remains an open question. They certainly were not the first to describe and discuss the importance of membership in society for providing individual members with explanations for human behavior, or the process of meaning making. Indeed, sexual script theory is a logical extension of symbolic interactionism, a term coined by sociologist Herbert Blumer in the 1930s based on the work of his mentor, sociologist George Herbert Mead. "Symbolic interactionism focuses on how meaning is created, modified, and put into action by individuals in the process of social interaction" (Brickell 2006, p. 94), and has its own history in the study of sexuality (Gecas and Libby 1977; Longmore 1998; Waskul and Plante 2010).

Similarly, Gagnon and Simon were not the first to employ the script metaphor to social interactions. For example, the sociologist Erving Goffman (1959) famously presented dramaturgy as a sociological perspective, likening human social interaction to performance of assumed roles in a theatrical production (see Henslin and Biggs 1971, for an early example of applying dramaturgy to sexuality). If the ideas underlying sexual script theory were not unique, but instead applications and extensions of symbolic interactionism, dramaturgy, and other social constructionist theories, why did the elaboration of sexual script theory come to represent such an important point in the history of sex research?

2.2 Sexual Script Theory in Historical Context

Sexual script theory emphasizes that social context is extremely important for understanding human behavior, including the behavior of widespread adoption of the theory itself. There are several social factors that may have facilitated the proliferation of sexual script theory. First, Gagnon and Simon explicitly applied the sociological principles described earlier specifically to sexual behavior. Although such application seems commonplace decades after the fact, at the time such a perspective was novel. Second, the cultural milieu may have been ripe for such a social constructionist perspective on sexuality. As Simon and Gagnon (1984) noted, their perspective was a reaction to the dominant theoretical views of human sexuality at the time: psychoanalytic and biological (see Plummer 1982, for comparison of social scripting to these then-dominant, perspectives in sex research). Within these dominant perspectives, sexual behavior was seen as essentially determined, either by instincts or drives, inherently tied to human biology. For example, Freud based his psychoanalytic theory on an assumed instinct toward life and procreation—Libido—that may find natural and healthy expression or may be distorted into psychopathology.

Freudian psychoanalytic perspectives on sexuality continued to hold sway even as biological perspectives rose to attention. Perhaps the most famous of the "new" biological perspective on sexuality was Alfred Kinsey and his colleagues (1948, 1953) who catalogued sexual behaviors of respondents and plotted them against such variables as age, sex, and social class. Whereas some variables Kinsey and his colleagues considered relevant were societal in nature (e.g., social class, education), the underlying assumption seemed to be that these social variables distorted otherwise natural expressions of sexuality. Similarly, William Masters and Virginia Johnson (1966, 1970) focused their research and therapy on bodily response to sexual stimuli; work based on the assumption that there is universal, and therefore

natural, sexual functioning. Even casual examination of the titles of the books by Kinsey and his colleagues (1948, 1953), and Masters and Johnson (1966, 1970), reveals the assumption they were working under; that there were inherent sexual universals for humans that could be analyzed and described by researchers such as themselves.

Unlike the psychoanalytic and biological perspectives, Gagnon and Simon believed that nothing could be assumed about sexuality, apart from the notion that anything considered "sexual" arose because those meanings were attached to the stimuli, or situation, or behavior by the individuals so involved. This social constructionist approach may have been especially appealing to a growing number of researchers in the late 1960s and 1970s as cultural events called into question essentialist perspectives that had been taken for granted previously. Similarly, Gagnon and Simon (1973) considered sexual scripts as explicitly interwoven with gender scripts, and feminist movements at the time were calling into question assumptions about male and female, and the extent to which these assumptions were inevitable versus products of culture and socialization (see Simon and Gagnon 2003 for discussion of cultural changes that shaped sexual script theory). So, sexual script theory may have benefitted from coming along at the right time in history as it presented a framework very much in tune with changing cultural values in the United States.

2.3 Similar Theoretical Perspectives in Social Science

The previous section included a brief discussion of the intellectual history from which sexual script theory emerged, including social constructionism generally, and symbolic interactionism and dramaturgy more specifically. Given that sexual script theory took shape through the late 1960s and into the 1970s, there were other theoretical perspectives present at the time (and some developed shortly thereafter) that shared some important features with sexual script theory. The most prominent ones are described briefly here, in hopes of more clearly illuminating both similarities and differences with social scientific perspectives that may be related, at some level, to sexual script theory.

In examining script theories, and those that share similarities with script theories, an important and early distinction becomes apparent based on academic discipline. That is, some script theories, including sexual script theory, emerged out of sociology, thereby resting on the foundations of social constructionism, symbolic interactionism, and dramaturgy. Other script theories, however, emerged out of psychology and psychiatry, thereby resting more on psychoanalytic assumptions or mentalistic models in which the emphasis is on the individual and his or her cognitive experience, created by past experience.

In 1964, psychiatrist Eric Berne published his most famous book, *Games People Play*, popularizing Transactional Analysis (TA). Generally, TA appropriated particular psychoanalytic concepts, renamed them, and embedded them in interpersonal interactions between individuals. Berne's TA provided a framework for analyzing and describing the "moves" within social transactions between two or more people, including the parts of the personality from which particular aspects of interpersonal interactions derive, as well as the psychological "pay offs" for engaging in particular ritualized sets of transactions. It was these ritualized, or scripted, interpersonal interactions that Berne termed "games." One could say that the fact that some games were common enough to be documented implied that such interpersonal interactions are at least loosely scripted, and a specific set of games Berne (1964) described had to do with sexual encounters. Interestingly, Berne (1973) also used the term "life scripts" to refer to overarching patterns of behavior that seemed to characterize some individuals' lives, resulting in repetitive types of interpersonal relationships and ultimate psychological pay offs (also see Steiner 1974). One important difference between TA and sexual script theory, however, is that Berne, perhaps by nature of being a psychiatrist, seemed most interested in games and scripts that were pathological and caused problems in some way.

Similar to Berne, Aaron Beck (1967) focused on pathological experience, primarily with individuals suffering from clinical depression. Beck's model focused on rigid, maladaptive ways of perceiving the world, which subsequently resulted in depressive emotion. Beck (1967) termed the mental mechanism through which people perceive the world as "cognitive schemas," which he defined as: "A (mental) structure for screening, coding, and evaluating the stimuli that impinges on the organism. On the basis of the matrix of schemas, the individual is able to orient himself in relation to time and space, and to categorize and interpret experiences in a meaningful way" (p. 283). In a general sense, cognitive schemas are mental representations individuals construct regarding their knowledge pertaining to a particular concept. Such concepts could be things (e.g., schools, apples), events (e.g., one's 16th birthday, religious services generally), roles (e.g., parents, police officers), and particular people (e.g. one's sibling, a coworker), including oneself (so called "self-schemas"). The importance of cognitive schemas is that they allow us to organize mental material according to the concepts to which that material relates.

The cognitive schemas that seem most closely related to script theory are those pertaining to events, and more specifically, to events as general concepts (e.g., "having sex") rather than specific events that have already occurred. Indeed, some theorists elaborated such cognitive conceptualizations of scripts (e.g., Abelson 1976, 1981). In that way, sociological script theory and cognitive script theory both entail mental material about how to act, what to expect from others involved in the particular scenario, and how to interpret stimuli and happenings within the delineated episode. The primary difference, however, seems to arise out of the emphasis placed on the dynamic and social nature of scripts (sociological perspective) versus the internal and enduring nature of scripts as held by individuals (psychological perspective). Also, sociological scripting perspectives have been applied to human sexuality much more frequently and extensively than have psychological scripting perspectives.

The cognitive schema perspective on scripts has been incorporated into a well-established line of theory and research: attachment theory. Based on the notion that our earliest experiences with caregivers create mental representations of what can be expected in close relationships with others (Bowlby 1969), attachment theory has been a rich source of theoretical and empirical work on a variety of types of emotionally close relationships (Howe 2011). More recently, theorists and researchers in that area have extended the mental representations inherent in attachment theory into the realm of "generalized event representations," or "scripts," that entail what the individual has come to expect in particular kinds of emotional interpersonal relationships (Fivush 2006; Waters and Waters 2006). In particular, attention has been paid to the "maternal secure base script" as the ideal that results from interactions between an infant and a mother who consistently meets the infant's needs (Vaughn et al. 2006). This notion of attachment scripts has apparent relevance for sexual scripts (Dewitte 2012) to the extent that sexual activity occurs within ongoing, emotionally close relationships that provoke caregiving schemas (Peloquin et al. 2014).

A more direct application of mentalistic scripts to romantic relationships was elaborated by Sternberg (1996, 1998), who hypothesized that people each build "stories" about romantic love relationships, based both on personal experience as well as exposure to such stories in one's culture. Based on analyses of both mass media portrayals of romantic love as well as responses from interviews of American adults, Sternberg identified 25 primary love stories, or scripts, that his respondents seemed to follow in their enactments of romantic love relationships. Couples who followed the same or complementary love stories (scripts) were most satisfied with their respective romantic relationships. Although Sternberg did not employ the term "script," or include sexual aspects of romantic relationships, there are apparent conceptual similarities to sexual script theory.

In addition to using script theory to conceptualize mental representation of relationship behavior and meaning, some theorists have extended

the script metaphor into the individualistic realm of personality (most notably, Tomkins 1979, 1987). Within these perspectives, the assumption is that personality is organized around emotionally significant experiences, or "scenes."

> To understand and deal with such emotionally significant experiences [scenes], people cognitively but nonconsciously link scenes based on their similarities. This co-assembling of scenes results in 'scripts,' which are implicit assumptions for anticipating and dealing with life experiences so as to maximize positive emotions and minimize negative emotions. (Demorest 2013, p. 583)

An individual's personality is the collection scenes experienced as well as the set of expectations that result from these past experiences. Of course this is a perspective very much rooted in the cognitive schema tradition in psychology, and although not explicitly tied to sexuality, it presumably encompasses stable aspects of sexuality presumed to be part of the individual's personality.

From this brief review of behavioral science theories seemingly tied by the use of the term "script," we see that most have occurred in the psychological tradition of cognitive schema theory. Sexual script theory, in contrast, emerged and developed from a sociological perspective. That is not to say that the two lines of theory and research are entirely unrelated, but they do appear to maintain important differences, and the identification of one set of theories with psychology and psychiatry and the other with sociology likely discourages integration. Returning to Gagnon and Simon's sexual script theory, the section below is dedicated to consideration of how scripts are typically measured in research that employs their theory.

2.4 Methods and Application in Research on Sexual Scripts

What types of scripts, respondents, and topics have been addressed in research employing sexual scripts theory? How have researchers evaluated or measured scripts? Comprehensive answers to these questions are beyond the scope of this chapter, but general answers, and some exemplars, are offered. Still, any attempt to answer these questions entails particular difficulties. As Gagnon (1990) noted, researchers may explicitly or implicitly employ sexual script theory in their work. In other words, some research and the rationale and explanations offered by the researchers may fit sexual script theory particularly well, even when those researchers never mention or reference such theory. At the same time, researchers may make reference to script theory explicitly, yet interpret or apply the theory in ways that are inaccurate or unjustified. An additional complication is that frequently researchers appear to use the term "script" synonymously with terms such as "socialization," "mass media," "cultural messages," and "social roles." With these problematic issues in mind, the published work reviewed here entails explicit reference to sexual script theory consistent with Gagnon and Simon's work.

2.4.1 Critical Review Approaches

In evaluating sexual scripts, researchers have used two broad approaches. One entails deciphering cultural scripts ("cultural scenarios" to Gagnon and Simon) by critically reviewing either cultural artifacts such as mass media, or the collective research published previously. As an example of the cultural analysis approach, Mosher and Tomkins (1988) drew on numerous cultural sources in making the case that particular sexual and gender scripts defined a subpopulation of hypermasculine ("macho") males. In particular, they examined the socialization of boys to acknowledge particular emotions but not others, male adolescent rites of passage, and mass media as evidence that males are commonly provided hypermasculine scripts that result in machismo.

Other researchers have relied on examination of previously published research for examining sexual scripts. For example, Hill (2006) elucidated a common sexual script for feminine heterosexual males based on what previous research revealed about male-female relationships among men considered feminine. Although femininity

may impair a man's sexual attractiveness to women, Hill concluded that "feminine heterosexual subvert overly restrictive heteropatriarchal sexual scripts, freeing both traditional and nontraditional men to explore ways of being sexual with women outside a dominant-submissive dialect" (p. 145).

Monto and Carey (2014) examined shifts in national data on sexual behavior collected over 25 years to determine whether sexual scripts for young adults in the U.S. appeared to have shifted toward a more casual, "hook-up" orientation. They found that, although the number of sex partners had not changed over time, contemporary young adults were more likely to report having had sex with a friend or acquaintance, thereby demonstrating some changes in normative sexual scripts. Other writers have reviewed published research to make the case that traditional sexual scripts facilitate sexual aggression from men toward women (Beyers 1996), as well as the case that sexual scripts in the US have become more egalitarian over previous decades (McCormick 2010) Also relying on published research, Eaton and Rose (2011) examined the research published in the journal *Sex Roles* over a span of 35 years to determine the ways in which traditional dating scripts and premarital sexual scripts for males and females in the US may have changed. They concluded, however, that dating relationships in early adulthood remained firmly tied to traditional gender roles and traditional cultural scripts.

Other researchers have analyzed mass media in attempts to uncover what may be prevalent sexual scripts. For example, Kim et al. (2007) analyzed episodes from the top 25 primetime television programs broadcast in the US to elaborate what they termed "the heterosexual script." In contrast, Markle (2008) examined episodes from a popular cable television program in the US that featured sexually assertive female characters, and in so doing determined that the primary female characters enacted a traditionally masculine sexual script. Kelly (2010) analyzed dramatic television series aimed at teen girls in the US to describe scripts related to loss of virginity. Kelly identified three primary virginity loss scripts, and elaborated the positive and negative components and implications of each script, as well as the meanings ascribed to virginity and its loss within each script.

2.4.2 Self-Report Approaches

In addition to analyzing published research or cultural artifacts such as mass media, the other broad approach to the evaluation of sexual scripts entails researchers gathering self-report data directly from research participants. In essence, respondents are asked to generate or describe particular sexual scripts, or are asked to validate the existence of particular sexual scripts. This latter approach may involve presenting various possible elements of a sexual script and asking respondents to rate how likely it is that each element would be included in the scenario the respondents are provided (e.g., first date). To the extent that the research participants exhibit consensus, the researchers conclude that the respondents shared a cultural script for the given scenario.

As an example of this approach, Krahe et al. (2007) asked teen respondents to rate the likelihood of several script elements for having sex with a new partner for the first time. Ratings of the individual script elements were compared under instructions to consider adolescents in general versus the respondent him- or herself. Interestingly, respondents' personal scripts contained less risk elements and more positive outcomes compared to their general cultural scripts. Similarly, Littleton and Axsom (2003) asked college student respondents to rate how typical several script elements were for "seduction" and "rape." The researchers found that, although there were clear differences between to two scripts, there were several elements that overlapped, which may explain why some instances of sexual assault are viewed ambiguously, even by the victims.

The second general self-report method entails asking research participants to generate a verbal (written or spoken) description of either what did occur in a defined sexual event, or might occur in a hypothetical scenario presented by the researchers (e.g., Clark and Carroll 2008; Eaton

and Rose 2012; Krahe et al. 2007). The assumption is that themes that emerge from respondents' descriptions of their sexual experiences represent common cultural scripts. With responses to a hypothetical scenario, the assumption is that respondents rely on their cultural scripts to generate the anticipated events and elements comprising the scenario.

There are numerous examples illustrating the primary self-report approaches that have been employed to collect data from respondents concerning sexual scripts. Consider Masters et al. (2013) who conducted individual, face-to-face interviews with heterosexual young adults. The researchers were interested in potential differences between respondents' cultural sexual scripts and personal sexual scripts, and how they negotiated any such discrepancies. They found that respondents seemed to fall into three broad categories: those whose cultural and personal scripts coincided, those who accepted gender-based cultural scripts as reality yet created exceptions for their own such behavior, and those who attempted to either transform cultural scripts or view their own variation on those scripts as equally valid. Whittier and Melendez (2004) conducted multiple interviews with a small sample of gay men, examining how the respondents viewed their own sexuality. "Analysis revealed that intersubjectivity, or what individuals thought others thought of them, is a common process in participants' intrapsychic sexual scripting" (p. 131).

Interviews have been a common method of data collection in sexual script theory research. For example, Karlsen and Traeen (2013) interviewed young adult women regarding their experiences in "friends with benefits" relationships, Mutchler (2000) interviewed gay men about their sexual lives, and Hussen et al. (2012) interviewed African American men regarding their early sexual socialization and subsequent sexual experiences. In each of these studies, respondent narratives were analyzed for themes indicative of what the researchers considered predominant sexual scripts. The interview or focus group approaches to gathering data, with subsequent analysis of themes emerging in responses, has been employed to examine sexual scripts among African American teen girls (French 2013) and women (McLellan-Lemal 2013), Nigerian adolescents (Barnett et al. 2011), women living in urban cities in the US (McLellan-Lemal 2013; Ortiz-Torres et al. 2003), deaf adults (Gilbert et al. 2012), adults with cerebral palsy (Dune 2013), adults with physical impairments affecting sexual functioning (Dune and Shuttleworth 2009; Mitchell et al. 2011), female family clinic clients (Dworkin et al. 2007), HIV-positive men who have sex with other men while under the influence of alcohol (Parsons et al. 2004), and those seeking casual sex partners through web sites designed for that purpose (Sevcikova and Daneback 2011).

2.4.2.1 Innovative Approaches

In addition to the typical means of gathering data on sexual scripts, there have been some particularly novel approaches to measurement. For example, Stulhofer et al. (2010) were interested in the extent to which young adult men had incorporated scripts displayed in mainstream pornography into their scripts for sexual activity with actual partners. Initially, a sample of young men and women were asked to list separately the things, activities, and sensations that are important for (1) pornographic depictions of sexual activity, and (2) personal experience of great sex. A set of 42 elements that emerged from analyses of the free responses was then presented to a large sample of young adult men who were asked to rate the items as to importance, first when the set was presented in the context of "great sex" followed by the context of depictions of sex in pornography. The researchers compared each respondent's rating of each pair of matched items in the two contexts to create a difference score. The lower the overall score, the more similarly the respondent rated the importance of elements required for good sex and for pornographic depictions of sex. The researchers interpreted relatively low scores (high similarity between sets of ratings) as indicative of greater overlap between the sexual scripts respondents maintained for personal sexual activity and for sexual activity in pornography.

Lenton and Bryan (2005) also started by asking college students to generate scripts; however the context was initiation of sexual activity within two types of dating relationships—casual vs. committed. Based on the themes that emerged, these researchers constructed scenarios representing each of the two types of sexual scripts and presented them to a second sample of college students. Lenton and Bryan intentionally left out particular script elements in their constructed scenarios, and respondents were each tested as to whether they remembered particular elements as having been present in the scenarios they read. The researchers assumed that elements that were falsely remembered as having been present must be part of the respondent's script for sexual activity with that particular type of dating relationship. That is, if a respondent incorrectly recalled a particular element as having been included in the scenario he or she read, Lenton and Bryan concluded that the respondent misremembered the element because it is part of the respondent's sexual script pertaining to the given scenario. In this way, the researchers approached assessment of individuals' sexual scripts in an innovative way.

Alvarez and Garcia-Marques (2008), who were interested in the extent to which college students' scripts for casual versus stable sexual relationships included use of condoms, also took a multi-stage approach to examining sexual scripts. These researchers began by asking a sample of college students to each create lists of about 20 typical actions or situations, in sequential order, involved during an episode of sexual intimacy within either a casual or stable relationship. In addition to examining the incidence of condom use in these reported scenarios, Alvarez and Garcia-Marques constructed prototypical scripts from the responses, and presented those to a second sample of college students. The second set of respondents were asked to construct the endings to the presented scenarios, each of which stopped short of sexual intercourse, and the authors examined the incidence of mentioning condoms. Last, Alvarez and Garcia-Marques (2008) presented a series of written scenarios, only some of which were sexual, to a third sample of college students. The sexual scenarios included script-typical and script-atypical elements, and respondents were tested on their memory of the presence of each element subsequent to a cognitive distraction task. The respondents' abilities to correctly remember condom-related elements of particular scenarios were compared to their abilities to remember script-typical or script-atypical elements. From such comparisons, the authors examined whether condom use appeared to be a typical element of college students' sexual scripts in casual versus stable sexual relationships.

The review thus far has featured published research in which sexual script theory was used explicitly to frame the research methodology chosen. However, there are numerous instances in which researchers employed sexual script theory in their interpretation of results that were based on data gathered from respondents with traditional, non-script methods. For example, such research has entailed examining the influence of gender in judgments about casual sex (Reid et al. 2011), the initiation of sexual activity within dating relationships (La France 2010; Vannier and O'Sullivan 2011), reactions to first sexual intercourse (Pinquart 2010), young women's negotiation of cunnilingus in dating relationships (Backstrom et al. 2012), whether oral sex is considered "sex" (Dotson-Blake et al. 2012), and how heterosexual men are able to perform in gay pornography (Escoffier 2003). In each of these examples, the researchers gathered data in conventional ways, yet used a sexual scripts framework for interpreting their data.

2.5 Sexual Script Theory: Critique and Future Directions

Despite its popularity, some important concerns have been raised regarding sexual script theory. A primary criticism involves its status as a formal theory. Ideally, theories facilitate prediction in the form of testable hypotheses. With accumulating knowledge based on those tests, the theories offer the ability to explain causal connections among variables. It is with regard to explaining causal relationships among the variables of inter-

est where sexual script theory is lacking (Bancroft 2009; Weis 1998a). Instead, sexual script theory appears to offer a metaphor; its greatest strength lies in providing a language and way of conceptualizing the cognitive schemas individuals hold, and the exemplary scenarios provided by one's culture, pertaining to sexuality.

Due to its lack of explanatory power, many fundamental questions regarding sexual scripts remain unanswered. In particular, why are particular cultural scripts institutionalized, becoming prevalent or common, whereas other are not? How do we explain cultural shifts over time? What are the mechanisms through which individuals acquire and maintain their respective sets of sexual scripts? How do individuals' sexual scripts exert influence over behavior, and when and why are sexual scripts more or less influential in this regard? And perhaps the most complex question is how do sexual scripts at all three conceptual levels interact dynamically with one another at the level of the individual? These particular concerns about sexual script theory as a full-fledged scientific theory were raised by Weis (1998a), and he provided some provisional answers, or least possibilities. Weis called for research on these and other questions, yet little if any progress has been made along those lines.

With these deficits in conceptual foundation and elaboration through empirical data, sexual script theory's status as a scientific theory is debatable. Indeed, Bancroft (2009) summarized his perspective this way: "What are my conclusions about Gagnon and Simon's sexual script approach? I consider their dramaturgical metaphor to be useful as a way to grasp what are otherwise highly complex psychological processes; in other words, a good example of a simplified model of reality" (p. 12). However, he goes on, "(Gagnon and Simon's) sole use of a dramaturgical model, which has the advantage of being comprehensible in a vernacular sense, effectively puts their work into the folk-theory category" (p. 12).

To be fair, however, Gagnon and Simon were consistent across their writings in stating that they never intended their sexual scripting perspective to be a scientific theory, and perhaps over time became even less concerned about the issues raised here. That is, in their earlier work they relied on principles of social learning to at least partially explain the processes through which individuals acquired scripts (Gagnon and Simon, 1973). However, by 30 years later they noted that their thinking had gradually shifted from social learning to a more social constructionist perspective (Simon and Gagnon 2003). Indeed, when Gagnon (1990) was asked to review the connections between sexual script theory and published research on sexuality, he did so, but questioned the validity of the exercise given that scientific research itself is socially constructed and any results thereby subjectively interpreted. Ironically, as Bancroft (2009, see p. 12) noted, the lack of empirical evidence behind sexual script theory did not prevent Gagnon and Simon from making strong, sweeping statements regarding the existence and power of sexual scripts.

Despite a professed lack of faith in results of supposedly empirical research, Simon and Gagnon occasionally relied on such data for drawing conclusions regarding sexual scripts. For example, Gagnon and Simon (1987) concluded that there had been cultural shifts in the scripts pertaining to oral-genital contact in the United States. What was the basis for their conclusion? Gagnon and Simon reviewed published research results, including the results of surveys on the incidence and contexts of oral sex experience. Similarly, Laumann et al. (1994) conducted the National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLS), an impressive nationally representative survey of sexuality in the US, and sexual script theory was one of only three theoretical models the authors stated as being the basis for their empirical work.

With such an extensive data set as the NHSLS, Laumann et al. (1994) seemed poised to resolve some lingering questions regarding sexual script theory. However, as those authors noted, analyzing scripts directly is difficult in a cross-sectional survey, because doing so entails examining the sequencing of behavior, the interactions between sexual partners, and so forth (see Laumann et al. 1994, p. 7). Instead, the NHSLS contained questions regarding respondents' respective sexual histories, their most recent sexual activity, preferences, attitudes, and so forth, and inferences

were drawn about sexual scripts from those data. Even so, Bancroft (2009, p. 11) noted that sexual script theory played an extremely minor role in the interpretation and presentation of results by Laumann et al. (1994).

Mahay et al. (2001) examined NHSLS data to explicate the intersection of sexual scripts with race, gender, and social class in the U.S. On its face, the endeavor seemed promising for answering some basic theoretical questions regarding the functioning of sexual scripts. However, because of the nature of the NHSLS data, the three levels of sexual scripts were operationally defined in ways fundamentally different from Gagnon and Simon's concepts: cultural scripts/scenarios were represented by respondents' attitudes, interpersonal scripts by actual practices with sex partners, and intrapsychic scripts by respondents' sexual preferences. Depending on each respondent's pattern of responses across these domains, he or she was designated as following one of three scripts determined by the researchers: Traditional, Relational, or Recreational. Bancroft (2009) raised these concerns about the approach Mahay et al. (2001) took:

> No consideration is given to the extent to which such aspects of human sexuality are meaningful illustrations of sexual scripts, and one is left with the distinct impression that this was a post-hoc attempt to use the NHSLS data to support a scripting approach rather than evidence that scripting theory had influenced the design of the survey in the first place. (p. 11)

The difficulties with measurement of sexual script variables is a lingering issue in need of clarification if sexual script theory is to advance. In this chapter I summarized the primary ways researchers have attempted to gather data pertaining to scripts, but there have been other, less frequent approaches that appear more problematic. For example, Sakaluk et al. (2014) set out to construct a self-report scale to quantify sexual scripts in emerging adulthood. These researchers started with small focus groups of college students, asking a wide-ranging set of questions pertaining to sexual beliefs, especially pertaining to men's and women's roles in sexual activity. From the responses, Sakaluk et al. compiled a set of verbatim statements, and administered these to a large sample of college students for their rating of agreement or disagreement with each. Factor analysis revealed six factors, yet it was the individual items that seem problematic from a sexual script perspective. Each item referred to males or females in general and spanned a wide range of beliefs about men compared to women. It's unclear how these disparate attitudinal items relate to the three levels of sexual scripts as defined by Gagnon and Simon.

The critical commentary on the results from Sakaluk et al. (2014) are meant simply as an illustration of a larger problem: researchers appear to have taken great liberty in their conceptualization and measurement of what they consider sexual scripts. Frequently "sexual scripts" seem to be used synonymously for what other researchers might simply call sexual attitudes, beliefs, and norms. One might argue that attitudes and beliefs are aspects of intrapsychic scripts; however, even intrapsychic scripts were conceptualized as more complex, and equating sexual attitudes and beliefs with sexual scripts generally, or even cultural scenarios specifically, does not seem warranted.

Frith and Kitzinger (2001) raised another potentially serious concern regarding how sexual scripts have been studied. Recall that typically sexual scripts are elicited in the context of focus group discussions, or asking respondents to write out scenarios provided a specific context or prompt. Frith and Kitzinger proposed that the narratives that result from such methodology may not reflect pre-existing scripts but may be formulated as the result of the process of asking respondents to generate such narratives. In other words, respondents may produce a narrative script based on assumed cultural norms, yet not carry such scripts with them outside of the research context. Indeed, other researchers have noted an apparent need for people to construct narratives to explain their sexual experiences and identities (Plante 2007; Plummer 1995). To illustrate their point, Frith and Kitzinger (2001) conducted focus groups with female college students, asking them about handling unwanted sexual activity. The researchers analyzed responses with an eye toward how focus group participants

responded to each other in the creation of shared scripts. Frith and Kitzinger concluded that the scripts respondents produced seemed to emerge from a social process, and served the function of alleviating respondents from personal responsibility for unwanted sexual experiences.

The implications of Frith and Kitzinger's proposal are important, as sexual script theory rests on the assumption that sexual scripts, at all three levels, exist as cognitive entities that individuals maintain over time. If instead people produce sexual scripts when asked to do so for research purposes, the importance of such scripts for influencing behavior is called into question. For example, consider Dworking et al. (2007) who examined women's sexual scripts both before and after an intervention designed to promote condom use. At follow-up they found that in both the intervention group and the control group, women introduced condoms earlier in the sequence when asked to generate a sexual script for having sexual intercourse with a new male partner than they had done at initial assessment. The researchers attributed the effect to the fact that both groups had undergone extensive evaluation, regardless of whether they received the intervention, thereby leading the women to become more comfortable with introduction of condoms with new partners. To extend Frith and Kitzinger's (2001) concern, however, it seems possible that the women discerned what was expected of them by the researchers (given their emphasis on safe sex) and thereby constructed a set of sexual scripts to match those expectations. If so, that's an important distinction from having made changes to their enduring personal sexual scripts that, theoretically, influence their behavior.

The issue of differences between cultural scripts/scenarios and interpersonal/intrapersonal scripts is an important distinction in need of further study. Researchers employing sexual script theory tend to focus on cultural scripts, perhaps because a focus on themes and commonalities is more manageable than the potential diversity across individuals and their intrapersonal scripts. However, if those intrapersonal and interpersonal scripts are more relevant for peoples' behavior, beliefs, and so forth, research pertaining to those scripts is all the more valuable. It seems clear that researchers cannot assume correspondence between cultural and interpersonal and intrapersonal scripts, as past research focused on such comparisons has shown important differences (e.g., Allison and Risman 2014; Masters et al. 2013; McCabe et al. 2010).

In addition to examining all three levels of sexual scripts, as well as their relationships to each other and to behavior, further research is needed simply on investigation of sexual scripts across a variety of types of people. Although the published research reviewed in this chapter illustrates a fair degree of variability in the types of people whose scripts have been studied, typically only one study has been published on any one given group. Especially with studies employing focus groups, samples are typically small (e.g., 20–50), making it even less likely that one study on the sexual scripts of a particular demographic group adequately captures the diversity present in the population from which the sample was drawn. Also, although there have been some studies on sexual scripts with samples outside of the US, they are relatively few in nature and typically from Western cultures. In other words, there is tremendous need for research on possible similarities and differences in cultural sexual scripts across ethnic and subcultural groups.

Last, most research on sexual scripts has been focused on heterosexual, cisgender respondents, especially college students. In other words, non-heterosexual and transgender samples have been conspicuously rare or absent in published research on sexual scripts. In searching the published research literature, the rare examples with regard to non-heterosexual respondents involved gay men, with an emphasis on problematic aspects of sexuality such as engaging in risky sex. I was unable to find a single example of published research on sexual script theory with transgender individuals. Gender and sexuality are inherently intertwined in sexual script theory, and notions of a traditional sexual script revolve around male-female sexual interactions (Wiederman 2005). So, investigation of the interactions among gender identity, gender roles, gender pairings of sexual partners, and sexual scripts seems especially important (Iantaffi and Bockting 2011).