

## Psychosexual Correlates of Sexual Double Standard Endorsement in Adolescent Sexuality

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*Endorsement and enactment of the (hetero)sexual double standard (SDS), prescribing sexual modesty for girls and sexual prowess for boys, has been shown to be negatively related to sexual and mental health. To be able to challenge the SDS, more insight is needed into the conditions that shape gendered sexual attitudes. A survey was conducted among 465 heterosexual adolescents (aged 16–20 years), examining the relationship between a number of relevant demographic and psychosexual variables and SDS endorsement. SDS endorsement was assessed using a newly developed instrument, the Scale for the Assessment of Sexual Standards Among Youth (SASSY). Gender (being male) and religiousness were significantly associated with increased SDS endorsement. For both boys and girls, increased feelings of entitlement to self-induced sexual pleasure (e.g., masturbation) were significantly associated with reduced SDS endorsement, whereas higher gender investment was significantly associated with increased SDS endorsement. Furthermore, increased feelings of entitlement to partner-induced sexual pleasure and more frequent talking about sexuality with peers were associated with increased SDS endorsement among boys but not among girls. We conclude that future research should explore peer influence processes through peer communication about sex, gender investment, and feelings of entitlement to both self and partner-induced sexual pleasure.*

Both in Western and non-Western cultures, prevailing pressure toward gender normativity has led to the development of a divergent set of expectations for boys and girls for engaging in romantic and sexual behavior (Vanwesenbeeck, 2009). Boys are expected to be sexually active, to be dominant, and to take sexual initiative, whereas girls are expected to be sexually reactive, submissive, and passive—a pattern of gendered expectations that is generally referred to as the (hetero)sexual double standard (SDS) (Sanchez, Fetterolf, & Rudman, 2012). Endorsement and enactment of gendered expectations derived from the sexual double standard are problematic because they are associated with a multitude of negative sexual and mental health effects (Sanchez,

Fetterolf, & Rudman, 2012; Vanwesenbeeck, 2014). For boys, first of all, SDS endorsement has been related to perceiving dating violence as acceptable, as well as to the display of sexually violent behavior (Shen, Chiu, & Gao, 2012). In a similar vein, it has been shown to be related to rape myth acceptance (Truman, Tokar, & Fischer, 1996). Also, some studies have found SDS endorsement to be associated with early sexual initiation among both boys and girls (Goncalves et al., 2008; Part, Rahu, Rahu, & Karro, 2011), as well as a higher sexually transmitted infection (STI)/human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection risk (Bermúdez, Castro, Gude, & Buéla-Casal, 2010). Young people's overall emotional and relational well-being may be under threat from strict SDS adherence. SDS endorsement hampers sexual experiences for both boys and girls, because doing gender in the bedroom leads to the lack of spontaneity needed for sexual satisfaction (Sanchez, Crocker,

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& Boike, 2005). Specifically for girls, the sexual passivity associated with SDS endorsement is predictive of poor sexual functioning and lower sexual satisfaction (Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007), as well as more sexual problems (Sanchez & Kiefer, 2007). It affects sexual autonomy and agency in girls, and the masculinity norm restricts the development of emotionality, openness, and responsiveness in boys (Vanwesenbeeck, 2011). Therefore, it affects not only romantic relationships but also relationships with friends (Marshall, 2010).

Adolescents appear to be particularly at risk of experiencing serious implications as a result of the SDS. Enactment of the sexual double standard can already be discerned in adolescents' first sexual encounters (Sanchez, Fetterolf, & Rudman, 2012), and the pattern is even apparent in sexuality education (Fine & McClelland, 2006). One reason why adolescents may be particularly vulnerable is that they are just learning to navigate the new and unfamiliar realm of sexuality (Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009). Also, the transition into the romantic and sexual context happens during a life phase that is characterized by a heightened sensitivity toward peer (gender) norms (Fuligni & Eccles, 1993). This puts adolescents in a position where they are likely to feel pressured into following gendered expectations, making them particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of the SDS from the very start of their romantic and sexual lives.

Nonetheless, there has been some debate in the field of SDS research as to whether SDS continues to exist (Marks & Fraley, 2005, 2006; Sanchez, Fetterolf, & Rudman, 2012). It has been argued that a contemporary SDS might still exist, although it is subject to cultural, contextual, and individual differences (Bordini & Sperb, 2013; Crawford & Popp, 2003; Sanchez, Fetterolf, & Rudman, 2012). Thus, it might emerge in one situation, but not in another. This is not a new insight; from its conceptualization onward, the SDS has been described as a mechanism that is heavily dependent upon contextual factors and individual differences, even being labeled a "now you see it, now you don't" phenomenon (Deaux & Major, 1987). A good example of cultural influence is observable in Western societies, where the media in particular have infused the SDS with ambiguity. Girls are simultaneously urged to be sexually reserved but sexy, whereas boys are urged to be sexually assertive but noncoercive (Kim et al., 2007).

Two theories corroborate the "now you see it, now you don't" conceptualization of the SDS (Deaux & Major, 1987): the theory of compulsory heterosexuality (Tolman, 2006) and the "doing gender" approach (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Doing gender refers to the continuous, day-to-day processes by which the enactment and employment of heterosexuality take place. It describes how gender is done through behavior. The revised theory of compulsory heterosexuality states that

heterosexuality is the norm and thus heterosexual relationships are normal and appropriate. The theory describes how various forces propel boys and girls to reproduce heterosexuality in their own social lives (Kim et al., 2007; Tolman, 2006). Shifting the focus of SDS research toward correlates of SDS endorsement is one method that could reveal key factors that help explain the grip that it continues to have on romantic and sexual behavior. Moreover, understanding the individual differences and contextual factors that shape gendered sexual attitudes and behavior among girls and boys is important in view of its detrimental effects on sexual and mental health (Crawford & Popp, 2003; Sanchez, Fetterolf, & Rudman, 2012) and complex relationship with gender equity in general. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to explore the demographic and psychosexual correlates of SDS endorsement.

With regard to demographic correlates, gender is expected to be an important factor, as previous studies have found that boys endorse SDS more than girls (Sprecher, Treger, & Sakaluk, 2013). In the light of the novelty of romantic and sexual relations for younger individuals and the insecurities this can imply, age and sexual experience are also important when investigating SDS. Moreover, SDS endorsement appears to be dependent upon cultural differences, which means that ethnicity should be incorporated as a correlate as well (Crawford & Popp, 2003). Likewise, and because various religions have historically been connected to the endorsement of traditional gender roles (Bryant, 2003; Diehl, Koenig, & Ruckdeschel, 2009; Morgan, 1987), we looked at the association between SDS endorsement and religiousness. Education level appears to be important as well, because one previous study has indicated that effects of SDS may show only among men and women with lower levels of education (Goncalves et al., 2008).

In addition to demographic variables, we explored psychosexual correlates of SDS. A first set of important correlates concerns peer norms. Individual sexual behavior, such as sexual initiation, is actively influenced by adolescent peer networks (Ali & Dwyer, 2011). Presumably, this influence is exerted both through nonverbal processes, such as social modeling (Bandura, 2006), as well as through active verbal communication (Lefkowitz, Boone, & Shearer, 2004). Both perceived peer permissiveness regarding sexuality (Warner, Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2011) and frequency of talking about sexuality with peers (Chambers, Tincknell, & Van Loon, 2004; Lefkowitz et al., 2004) have been associated with the development and assertion of SDS endorsement in previous studies. They are therefore assumed to play a key role in the development and maintenance of SDS and were examined further in this study.

We also investigated some psychosexual correlates at the individual level. In this context, sexual autonomy (as opposed to sexual passivity) is an important factor to

investigate. Sexual autonomy refers to the general sense of control and burden from external pressures that individuals experience in sexual situations (Sanchez, Kiefer, & Ybarra, 2006). It has been negatively related to pressure toward gender conformity for women (Sanchez et al., 2006), as well as to traditional gender-role adherence among men and women (Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007; Kiefer, Sanchez, Kalinka, & Ybarra, 2006). Two related concepts, namely feelings of entitlement to sexual pleasure, provided by oneself (e.g., masturbation) or by one's partner, have been associated with more resilience to SDSs among girls in studies on what Horne and Zimmer-Gembeck (2005, 2006) called female subjectivity in sexual interaction. We therefore studied associations between feelings of entitlement to both self- and partner-induced pleasure and SDS endorsement. Last, it is important to look at gender investment, because its link to SDS endorsement appears to be somewhat ambiguous. Gender investment is defined as the personal relevance attached to approaching specific gender-typed norms. On one hand, research shows that boys high in gender investment experience more positive affect when placed in dominant social interactions, whereas girls high in gender investment indicate more positive affect when placed in communal social interactions (Wood, Christensen, Hebl, & Rothgerber, 1997). On the other hand, research suggests that high gender investment is generally associated with decreased psychological well-being for both boys and girls in the long run (Sanchez & Crocker, 2005). Lastly, to gain more insight into gender differences concerning SDS endorsement, we examined the psychosexual correlates both separately and in their interactions with gender. Boys theoretically reap the most benefit from the SDS, because for them sex presumably increases social status (Meston & Buss, 2007). Therefore the correlates of SDS endorsement could differ for boys and girls, and studying interactions of SDS correlates with gender is relevant.

To recap, this study explored the relationship of several demographic (age, gender, sexual experience, ethnicity, religion, and education) and psychosexual (peer permissiveness, talking about sexuality with peers, sexual autonomy, feelings of entitlement to self- and partner-induced sexual pleasure, and gender investment) correlates with SDS endorsement. We incorporated these correlates into a single design, enabling us to investigate which correlates are particularly strongly associated with SDS endorsement. We used an adolescent sample, because it appears that this group is both more likely to follow stereotypes (because of its sensitivity to peer norms [Fuligni & Eccles, 1993]) and to be vulnerable to their negative effects (because of the novelty of romantic and sexual interaction [Collins et al., 2009]). Moreover, we have employed a community sample of adolescents, because some authors have commented on the fact that earlier studies relied mainly

on homogeneous university student samples (Bordini & Sperb, 2013). An effort was made to include both native Dutch and nonnative Dutch individuals in the sample to adequately reflect the multicultural nature of Dutch society. Last, it is possible that the contemporary SDS differs from when it was first described in the literature. Historically, SDS research has focused on virginity status and premarital sex whereas, particularly in Western countries, those are not the only areas where SDS might be visible today. It has been argued that previous mixed results may have been due to the fact that researchers have continued to use instruments that employ outdated definitions of SDS (Bordini & Sperb, 2013). Therefore, we employed a newly designed, updated instrument to measure SDS endorsement, incorporating several areas of sexuality that are relevant to young people and in which double standards may emerge.

The main research question addressed in this study was: Can adolescent SDS endorsement be explained by a set of demographic and psychosexual correlates (RQ1)? In addition, because we were interested in similarities and differences between boys and girls, the secondary research question asked: Do associations between demographic and psychosexual factors and SDS endorsement differ between adolescent boys and girls (RQ2)?

## Method

### Sample and Procedure

An online community panel (i.e., a large panel of respondents enrolled by a commercial party to fill out questionnaires) was contracted to recruit participants for our study. No financial rewards were offered to the panel, but participants were able to win prizes by participating. Nonnative Dutch individuals, often underrepresented in these types of studies, were included by oversampling. The complete sample comprised 512 adolescents (46.9% boys, 53.1% girls) aged between 16 and 20 years ( $M = 18.12$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) who voluntarily agreed to take part in a survey on "adolescent sexuality." Prior to participation, respondents were assured of anonymity and informed that they could cease their participation at any time. We were mainly interested in SDS endorsement in heterosexual interactions. Therefore, without seeking to imply that the phenomenon does not affect them, we did not specifically aim to reach a large group of nonheterosexual adolescents. This resulted in a relatively low number of nonheterosexual adolescents in our sample. Participants indicated their sexual orientation on a 5-point scale and were excluded if they indicated that they were attracted exclusively or mainly to their own sex, that they were attracted to both sexes equally, or that they were undecided about their sexual

orientation. This resulted in the exclusion of 17 gay boys, five bisexual boys, five lesbians, five bisexual girls, and 14 persons who indicated they were unsure of their sexual orientation. The final sample for analysis consisted of 465 heterosexual adolescents (45.2% boys, 54.8% girls) aged between 16 and 20 years ( $M = 18.08$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ). Descriptive statistics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

## Measures

**Sexual double standard endorsement.** One critique of previous studies on SDS endorsement has focused on the continued use of instruments that employ outdated definitions of SDS (Bordini & Sperb, 2013). Therefore, we opted to assess SDS endorsement using a newly developed instrument that would reflect the multifaceted nature of the contemporary SDS. We aimed to construct a one-dimensional measure, defining SDS endorsement as the degree to which an individual's attitude reflects a divergent set of expectations for boys and girls, in that boys are expected to be relatively more sexually active, assertive, and knowledgeable and girls are expected to be relatively more sexually reserved, passive, and inexperienced. We adapted 35 items from previous instruments—including those found in traditional sexual attitudes (Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007);

Gender-Equitable Men Scale (Pulerwitz & Barker, 2008); Male Role Attitudes Scale (Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1993); Double Standard Scale (Caron, Davis, Halteman, & Stickle, 1993); and Sexual Double Standard Scale (Muehlenhard & McCoy, 1991)—and translated them into Dutch and administered them in our sample. Participants indicated their agreement on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 = *Completely disagree* to 6 = *Completely agree*. We subjected the individual scores to principal axis factoring using oblique rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .88, which is above the recommended cut-off value of .60 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974); and Bartlett's (1954) test of sphericity was statistically significant, supporting factorability. Upon inspection of the scree plot, a break could be seen after the first component extracted, supporting a one-factor solution. We found 11 items that did not load sufficiently on the first factor ( $<.40$ ), and removing an additional four items yielded even higher internal reliability ( $\alpha = .90$ ). The final set of 20 items demonstrated one-dimensionality, with all items loading strongly on a single factor (see Table 2 for English-language item wording, translated for the purpose of international readability, and factor loadings). The overall mean score on the final 20-item instrument, which was named Scale for the Assessment of Sexual Standards Among Youth (SASSY), was used for further analyses in the present study.

**Table 1.** Means and Post Hoc Tests for Differences in SDS Endorsement (range 1–6) for Demographic Variables

Variables	Boys			Girls		
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age						
16	28	2.79	0.94	43	2.91	0.66
17	43	3.06	0.94	58	2.78	0.71
18	49	3.00	0.87	54	2.87	0.81
19	42	3.01	0.80	60	2.77	0.70
20	48	2.93	0.73	40	2.61	0.59
Sexual experience						
No	93	2.99	0.74	88	2.84	0.81
Yes	117	2.95	0.92	167	2.76	0.65
Ethnicity						
Native Dutch	159	2.87 <sup>a</sup>	0.82	178	2.78	0.66
Of other ethnicity	51	3.29 <sup>a</sup>	0.85	77	2.82	0.80
Religious						
No	134	2.86 <sup>b</sup>	0.79	158	2.74	0.65
Yes	75	3.18 <sup>b</sup>	0.92	96	2.87	0.79
Education						
Low	142	2.98	0.88	180	2.82	0.73
Intermediate	50	2.95	0.85	52	2.70	0.65
High	18	2.97	0.53	23	2.78	0.68

*Note.* Different superscripts are indicative of group differences at the  $p < .01$  level. Group differences were tested using ANOVA. Age was handled as a continuous variable in the hierarchical regression analysis, but age breakdown is presented in this table for transparency. Education level appears skewed because most of the participants were still young and in school and could not have obtained intermediate or high education level yet.

## Demographics

**Gender and age.** Participants indicated their biological sex (male or female) and age.

**Ethnicity.** In line with Dutch guidelines (Statistics Netherlands, 2012), ethnicity was based on both parents' countries of birth. Participants were either categorized as *Native Dutch* or *Of other ethnicity* (if one or both parents were not born in the Netherlands).

**Religion.** Participants were asked the question: "Is one of these religions important to you?" Answer choices were as follows: (1) *Religion is unimportant to me*; (2) *Yes, Buddhism*; (3) *Yes, Hinduism*; (3) *Yes, Islam*; (4) *Yes, Judaism*; (5) *Yes, Protestantism*; (6) *Yes, Catholicism*; or (7) *Yes, another religion*. Subsequently, answers were restructured into *Nonreligious* and *Religious* for use in the analyses.

**Education.** Participants answered a question on their current occupation: *Studying* or *Not studying*. They also indicated the highest academic qualification they had attained. If a participant's main occupation was studying, the type of education in which he or she was currently enrolled was used as education level. If participants indicated that they were currently not studying,



**Table 2.** *Scale for the Assessment of Sexual Standards Among Youth (SASSY) Items and Factor Loadings*

Item #	Item Content	Factor Loadings
1	Once a boy is sexually aroused, a girl cannot really refuse sex anymore.	.626
2	Girls like boys who take the lead in sex.	.404
3	I think that a girl who takes the initiative in sex is pushy.	.617
4	I think it is more appropriate for a boy than for a girl to date different people at the same time.	.508
5	Girls should act in a more reserved way concerning sex than boys.	.618
6	I think it is more appropriate for a boy than for a girl to have sex without love.	.456
7	A boy should be more knowledgeable about sex than a girl.	.650
8	I think sex is less important for girls than for boys.	.712
9	I think it is normal for boys to take the dominant role in sex.	.506
10	I think sexually explicit talk is more acceptable for a boy than for a girl.	.562
11	Sometimes a boy should apply some pressure to a girl to get what he wants sexually.	.582
12	It is more important for a girl to keep her virginity until marriage than it is for a boy.	.531
13	Boys are more entitled to sexual pleasure than girls.	.640
14	It is not becoming for a girl to have unusual sexual desires.	.536
15	Sex is more important for boys than for girls.	.548
16	It is more important for a girl to look attractive than it is for a boy.	.449
17	Boys and girls want completely different things in sex.	.413
18	I think cheating is to be expected more from boys than from girls.	.533
19	I think it is important for a boy to act as if he is sexually active, even if it is not true.	.641
20	I think it is more appropriate for a boy than for a girl to masturbate frequently.	.434

*Note.* The instrument was administered in the Dutch language. For international readability the table provides the English translation. Dutch item wording is available upon request.

the highest-level diploma they had obtained was taken as their education level. Education level was categorized as *Lower* (primary school and junior vocational training), *Intermediate* (intermediate vocational training), and *Higher education* (preuniversity training and university).

**Sexual experience.** Participants answered the question “With how many people have you had sex in your life?” on a 5-point scale, with answering choices being (1) *None*; (2) *One*; (3) *Two or three*; (4) *Between three and 10*; or (5) *More than 10*. These answers were then restructured into a binary variable for use in the analyses: *No sexual experience* (for participants who answered *None*) versus *Sexual experience* (for participants who answered *One*, *Two or three*, *Between three and 10*, or *More than 10*).

## Psychosexual Correlates

**Peer attitudes toward relationships and sex.** The social norm concerning sexually permissive behavior was assessed using a scale with five items. A sample item is “My friends would approve of me having sex without being in love” (De Graaf, Kruijer, Van Acker, & Meijer, 2012). Responses ranged from 1 = *Completely disagree* to 6 = *Completely agree*. In our study, we obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of .63 for this scale.

**Talking about sexuality with peers.** We assessed talking about sexuality with peers by asking how often participants discussed related topics with friends. Because peer communication is multidimensional in nature, we included five topics: thoughts and fantasies about sex, love and relationships, masturbation, contraceptive use, and sexual problems and worries (Herold & Way, 1988). A sample item is: “How often do you speak to your friends about love and relationships?” Participants indicated the frequency of talking about each topic using response categories ranging between 0 = *Never* to 5 = *Very often*. In our study, we obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of .80 for this scale.

**Sexual autonomy.** Sexual autonomy was assessed using a 6-item scale adapted from other instruments (Sanchez, Phelan, Moss-Racusin, & Good, 2012; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2003). A sample item is: “When I am having sex or engaging in sexual activities with someone, I have a say in what happens and I can voice my opinion.” Participants reported whether the items described them using response categories ranging between 1 = *Not at all* to 6 = *Very well*. In our study, we obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of .83 for this scale.

**Feelings of entitlement to self-induced sexual pleasure.** Personal feelings of entitlement to self-induced sexual pleasure (e.g., masturbation/sex without a partner) were assessed by indicating agreement on three items. A sample item is: “It is okay for me to meet my own sexual needs through self-masturbation.” Answers ranged from 1 = *Completely disagree* to 6 = *Completely agree*. The items comprised a subscale (Element 2a) of the Female Sexual Subjectivity Inventory (Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006). In our study, we obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of .72 for this (sub)scale.

**Feelings of entitlement to partner-induced sexual pleasure.** Personal feelings of entitlement to receiving sexual pleasure from one’s partner were assessed by indicating agreement on four items. A sample item is: “I would feel very disappointed if a sexual partner were to ignore my needs.” Answers ranged from 1 = *Completely disagree* to 6 = *Completely agree*. The items comprised a subscale (Element 2b) taken from the Female Sexual Subjectivity Inventory (Horne &

Zimmer-Gembeck, 2006). In our study, we obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .81 for this (sub)scale.

**Gender investment.** The degree of gender investment was assessed by asking: "How important is it for you to live up to expectations that exist, especially for girls/boys, concerning sexuality and appearance?" and "To what extent is being a typical girl/boy an important part of who you are?" (Good & Sanchez, 2010). Answers ranged from 1 = *Not important at all* to 6 = *Very important*. We obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .76 for the two items. A calculated mean score of the two items was used in the analyses.

### Analytical Strategy

First, we examined group differences between boys and girls, presenting descriptive statistics separately for boys and girls on the different demographic and psychosexual correlates in our study. Second, we calculated bivariate correlations between the continuous variables in the study for boys and girls separately. Third, using SDS endorsement (measured by SASSY) as the main outcome variable, we conducted a hierarchical regression analysis in three steps, adding (1) demographics, (2) psychosexual correlates, and (3) interactions between gender and the psychosexual correlates stepwise into the model. Finally, some secondary analyses were conducted to gain more insight into the results obtained from the regression analysis. All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 20.

## Results

### Descriptive Analyses

**Means.** Means and post hoc tests for differences in SDS endorsement between different groups based on demographic correlates are presented in Table 1. Compared to native Dutch boys, boys of other ethnicity scored higher on SDS endorsement. Religious boys scored higher on SDS endorsement compared to boys who indicated that religion was unimportant to them. Among the other group comparisons, no significant differences were found.

The means for boys and girls on the outcome and continuous predictor variables are presented in Table 3. Boys scored significantly higher than girls on SDS endorsement. Furthermore, boys perceived a more permissive social norm among peers and experienced more entitlement to self-induced sexual pleasure than did girls. Girls, on the other hand, had a higher mean score on gender investment than boys.

**Correlations.** Correlations are presented in Table 4 for boys and girls separately. For boys, SDS endorsement was negatively related to ethnicity and positively

**Table 3.** *T Tests for Means and Standard Deviations for Boys and Girls on SDS Endorsement and Psychosexual Correlates*

Psychosexual Correlate (Score Range)	Boys		Girls		<i>t</i> (463)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Endorsement SDS (1–6)	2.97	0.85	2.79	0.71	2.50*
Peer permissiveness (1–6)	3.44	0.94	2.84	0.87	7.15***
Talking about sex with peers (0–5)	2.43	1.01	2.61	0.93	–1.93
Sexual autonomy (1–6)	3.60	0.61	3.51	0.61	1.69
Entitlement self (1–6)	4.20	1.10	3.91	1.25	–1.91**
Entitlement other (1–6)	3.80	1.03	3.99	1.06	–1.90
Gender investment (1–6)	3.85	1.20	4.10	1.02	–2.37*

*Note.* Higher scores indicate more SDS endorsement, peer permissiveness, talking about sex with peers, autonomy, feelings of entitlement, and gender investment.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

related to religiousness, talking about sexuality with peers, sexual autonomy, feelings of entitlement to partner-induced sexual pleasure, and gender investment. For girls, SDS endorsement was negatively related to feelings of entitlement to self-induced sexual pleasure and positively related to gender investment.

### Hierarchical Regression Analysis

To test whether and to what extent the various demographic and psychosexual correlates were able to explain the variance in SDS endorsement, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted, adding variables in three steps. All three steps in the model added significantly to the explained variance in SDS endorsement. The final model explained 19.1% of the variance in SDS endorsement. The results are summarized in Table 5.

In the first step we added the demographic variables. In this step, gender and religiousness showed significant main effects on SDS endorsement. Compared to girls, boys scored higher on SDS endorsement. Compared to nonreligious individuals, religious individuals scored higher on SDS endorsement.

In the second step we added six psychosexual variables. The effect of gender on SDS endorsement remained significant. However, the effect of religiousness was no longer significant. Moreover, four main effects were discerned among the added psychosexual variables. More frequent talking about sexuality with peers, more feelings of entitlement to partner-induced sexual pleasure, and more gender investment were significantly associated with more SDS endorsement. More feelings of entitlement to self-induced sexual pleasure were significantly associated with less SDS endorsement.

In the third step, we added interaction terms among the six psychosexual variables and gender. The effect of gender on SDS endorsement remained significant. Three of the four main effects that were significantly correlated in the previous step—namely, talking about

**Table 4.** Correlations Between Demographic and Psychosexual Variables for Girls (Above) and Boys (Below) Separately

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. SDS	—	-.107	-.052	-.027	.088	-.047	-.047	.039	.059	-.125*	.013	.213**
2. Age	.017	—	.265**	-.156*	.019	.505**	.211**	.097	.063	.187**	.223**	-.075
3. Sexual experience	-.023	.286**	—	.026	-.200**	.090	.365**	.416**	.341**	.300**	.262**	.121
4. Ethnicity	-.211**	-.070	.076	—	-.200**	-.096	-.020	-.074	-.011	.041	-.025	.006
5. Religiousness	.180**	-.005	-.140*	-.388**	—	.055	-.350**	-.067	-.041	-.227**	-.130*	.055
6. Education	-.010	.467**	.027	-.122	.144*	—	.188**	.101	.038	.138*	.259**	-.089
7. Peer permissiveness	.013	.127	.263**	.123	-.328**	.007	—	.340**	.144*	.214**	.151*	-.096
8. Talking about sex with peers	.295**	.101	.302**	-.175*	.095	.008	.107	—	.358**	.239**	.334**	.221**
9. Autonomy	.199**	.075	.239**	-.123	.005	.134	.086	.295**	—	.277**	.433**	.181**
10. Entitlement to self-induced pleasure	-.030	.102	.180**	.078	-.219**	.043	.267**	.266**	.343**	—	.507**	.082
11. Entitlement partner-induced pleasure	.380**	.268**	.195**	-.118	.026	.212**	.220**	.389**	.415**	.416**	—	.196**
12. Gender investment	.187**	.060	.082	-.121	.085	.128	.001	.109	.294**	.233**	.308**	—

Note. Categorical variables are coded 0 = male, 1 = female; 0 = no sexual experience, 1 = sexual experience; 0 = Dutch, 1 = non-Dutch; 0 = nonreligious, 1 = religious; 1 = lower education, 2 = intermediate education, 3 = higher education. Higher scores on continuous variables mean stronger SDS endorsement, higher age, more liberal social norms, more talking about sex with peers, more sexual autonomy, more feelings of entitlement to self-induced sexual pleasure, more feelings of entitlement to partner-induced sexual pleasure, and more gender investment. All coefficients represent Pearson correlations, except for coefficients between categorical variables, which represent Spearman correlations.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

sexuality with peers and feelings of entitlement to self-induced and partner-induced sexual pleasure—remained significant in the final model. Of the six added interaction terms, two were significant in the analysis. First, talking about sexuality with peers appeared to

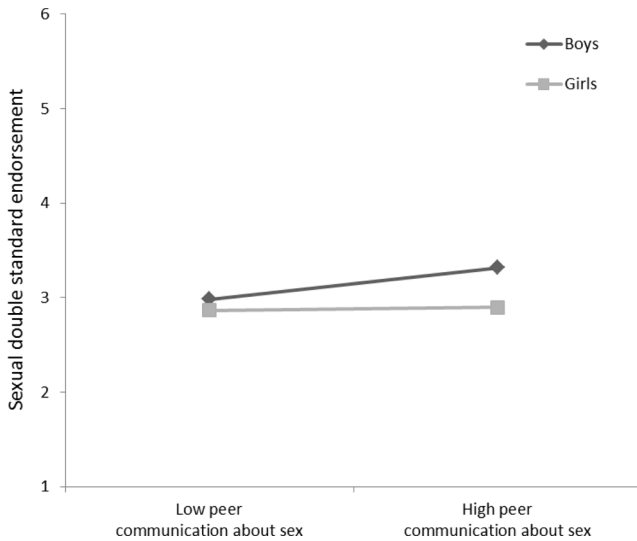
be associated with more SDS endorsement for boys, whereas it seemed to be unrelated for girls (see plotted interaction in Figure 1). Simple slopes analysis confirmed a significant association between talking about sexuality with peers and more SDS endorsement among

**Table 5.** Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for Correlates of SDS Endorsement ( $N = 465$ )

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Step 1									
Gender	-.199**	.073	-.127	-.270***	.076	-.173	-.273***	.075	-.175
Age	-.026	.032	-.045	-.022	.031	-.038	-.030	.030	-.051
Sexual experience	.000	.078	.000	-.151	.082	-.095	-.144	.081	-.090
Ethnicity	-.157	.084	-.091	-.082	.080	-.047	-.074	.079	-.043
Religiousness	.174*	.078	.108	.123	.080	.077	.098	.079	.061
Education	-.029	.064	-.024	-.079	.061	-.066	-.059	.061	-.049
Step 2									
Peer permissiveness				.030	.043	.036	.019	.057	.024
Talking about sex with peers				.103*	.041	.129	.169**	.055	.211
Sexual autonomy				.043	.044	.049	.060	.063	.070
Entitlement self				-.136***	.034	-.209	-.196***	.053	-.300
Entitlement partner				.169***	.041	.227	.312***	.060	.421
Gender investment				.101**	.032	.145	.067	.045	.095
Step 3									
Gender $\times$ Peer permissiveness							.028	.079	.024
Gender $\times$ Talking about sex							-.155*	.078	-.138
Gender $\times$ Sexual autonomy							-.012	.086	-.010
Gender $\times$ Entitlement self							.115	.067	.137
Gender $\times$ Entitlement partner							-.269**	.080	-.271
Gender $\times$ Gender investment							.074	.065	.072
R Square	.041			.151			.191		
R Square Change	.041***			.111***			.040***		

Note. Step 1 values are based on the primary data; Steps 2 and 3 values are based on the data of grand mean centered variables. Categorical variables are coded 0 = male, 1 = female; 0 = no sexual experience, 1 = sexual experience; 0 = Dutch, 1 = non-Dutch; 0 = nonreligious, 1 = religious; 1 = lower education, 2 = intermediate education, 3 = higher education. Higher scores on continuous variables mean stronger SDS endorsement, higher age, more liberal social norms, more talking about sex with peers, more sexual autonomy, more feelings of entitlement to self-induced sexual pleasure, more feelings of entitlement to partner-induced sexual pleasure, and more gender investment.

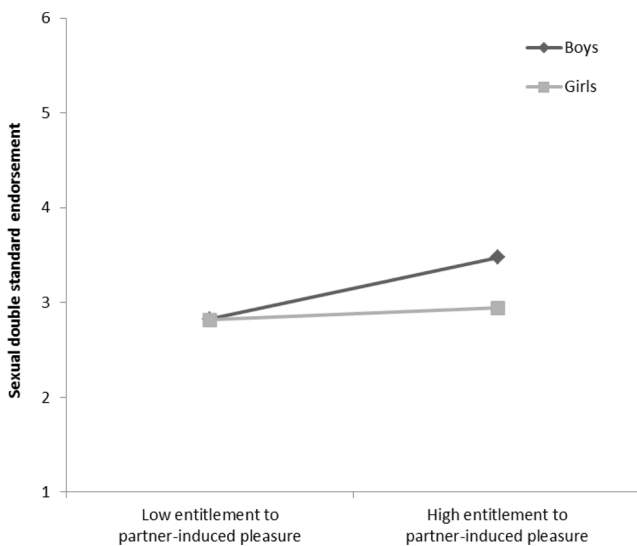
\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**Figure 1.** Interaction between participant sex and talking about sex with peers (separated by low and high frequency of talk) depicted based on standardized values.

boys,  $B = .311, p < .001$ , but not among girls,  $B = .037, n.s.$  Second, feelings of entitlement to partner-induced sexual pleasure appeared to be related to more SDS endorsement for boys but not for girls (see plotted interaction in Figure 2). Again, simple slopes analysis confirmed a significant association with more SDS endorsement for boys,  $B = .167, p < .01$ , but not for girls,  $B = .009, n.s.$

**Secondary analyses.** To provide more insight into the finding that specifically boys’ sexual talk with peers was associated with greater SDS endorsement, we conducted secondary analyses on talking about sexuality



**Figure 2.** Interaction between participant sex and feelings of entitlement to partner-induced sexual pleasure (separated by low and high entitlement) depicted based on standardized values.

**Table 6.** *T Tests for Means and Standard Deviations for Boys and Girls on the Five Sexual Conversation Topics*

Topics	Boys		Girls		<i>t</i> (463)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Thoughts and fantasies about sex	2.42	1.33	2.11	1.20	2.64**
Love and relationships	3.26	1.27	4.20	1.29	-7.88***
Masturbation	2.22	1.30	1.67	1.13	4.91***
Contraceptive use	2.34	1.22	2.87	1.39	-4.31***
Sexual problems and worries	1.92	1.22	2.19	1.31	-2.27*

*Note.* Higher scores indicate that a topic was discussed more often. Score range is 0–5.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

with peers at the topic level. Although both boys and girls talked most about love and relationships, compared to the other topics, sex talk (aggregated over level of SDS endorsement) differed between boys and girls on all five topics (see Table 6). Boys discussed thoughts and fantasies about sex and masturbation more than girls did. Girls, on the other hand, talked more about love and relationships, contraceptive use, and sexual problems compared to boys. The means for low versus high SDS endorsement (established using a median split of the scores) are presented for boys and girls separately in Table 7. Boys who scored relatively high on SDS endorsement spoke more about thoughts and fantasies about sex, masturbation, and sexual problems compared to low-scoring boys. No significant differences between low and high SDS endorsing girls were found.

**Discussion**

To gain more insight into the demographic and contextual factors shaping gendered sexual attitudes, we examined the relationship between a number of relevant demographic and psychosexual correlates and SDS endorsement. The newly designed instrument we used, SASSY, proved to be a reliable, valid, and one-dimensional instrument. By including the correlates in a single comprehensive design, we were able to examine which of these factors was most strongly associated with SDS endorsement. Our study revealed that both demographic and psychosexual correlates were linked to the degree of SDS endorsement, and that some associations were found among both boys and girls, whereas others were found only among boys.

Concerning demographics, both gender and religion were significantly associated with SDS endorsement. First, in line with previous studies (Rudman, Fetterolf, & Sanchez, 2013; Sprecher et al., 2013), we found that boys scored significantly higher on SDS endorsement compared to girls. One possible explanation for this is that boys theoretically reap the most benefit from the SDS, because for them sex increases social status (Meston & Buss, 2007). It could be noted, however,



**Table 7.** *T Tests for Means and Standard Deviations of the Five Sexual Conversation Topics Separated for Boys and Girls*

Topics	Boys ( <i>n</i> = 212)					Girls ( <i>n</i> = 255)				
	Low SDS ( <i>n</i> = 89)		High SDS ( <i>n</i> = 121)		<i>t</i> (208)	Low SDS ( <i>n</i> = 149)		High SDS ( <i>n</i> = 106)		<i>t</i> (253)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Thoughts/fantasies about sex	2.13	1.09	2.64	1.45	-2.86**	2.08	1.09	2.16	1.34	-0.51
Love and relationships	3.24	1.36	3.27	1.20	-0.21	4.32	1.21	4.03	1.38	1.76
Masturbation	1.76	1.00	2.56	1.39	-4.84***	1.60	1.05	1.76	1.23	-1.12
Contraceptive use	2.19	1.15	2.45	1.26	-1.51	2.91	1.27	2.80	1.55	0.61
Sexual problems and worries	1.63	0.92	2.14	1.36	-3.25**	2.14	1.24	2.26	1.40	-0.74

Note. Higher scores indicate that a topic was discussed more often. Scores range from 0 to 5. Scoring Low or High on SDS Endorsement. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

that there is increasing awareness that the masculinity norm may also put detrimental pressures on boys' identity and mental health. For example, traditional male role socialization inflicts harm through the discouragement of emotional attachment, the simultaneous celebration and censorship of violence, and the stimulation of sexual risk taking, alcohol use, and drug abuse (Brooks, 2001).

Second, religious individuals scored higher on SDS endorsement than nonreligious participants. This is in line with what we would expect based on previous findings concerning the relationship between religion and traditional gender-role adherence (Bryant, 2003; Diehl et al., 2009; Morgan, 1987). A closer look at mean differences between the groups indicated that this might be especially the case for religious boys (see Table 1). This might mean that religious boys comprise a group of adolescents that warrants special attention when it comes to prevention of the SDS, for example, by providing them with tailored sexual education.

With regard to the psychosexual correlates, our study demonstrated that more frequent talking about sexuality with peers was associated with more SDS endorsement among boys but not among girls. A possible explanation for this finding could be that girls' peer sexual talk is of a more ambiguous nature concerning sexual standards (Jackson & Cram, 2003), whereas boys' peer sexual talk appears to be more unidirectional (Chambers et al., 2004; Wight, 1994). Previous research has found that when girls talk about agency and gender norms in sexuality, they both carefully challenge the SDS as well as show signs of (self-)silencing concerning sexual desire (Jackson & Cram, 2003). Sexual talk among boys is different, in that most peer talk is relatively strongly and unidirectionally focused on female objectification and male gratification (Chambers et al., 2004; Wight, 1994). However, it seems that for boys there is also a kind of duality, in that they often experience that peer sex talk differs from their personal views (Wight, 1994). If we look at our secondary analyses concerning sexual talk with peers at individual topic level, we see that although both boys and girls talk mostly about love and relationships, there are also differences between

boys and girls. Boys discussed thoughts and fantasies about sex and masturbation significantly more often than girls did. Girls, on the other hand, talked more about love and relationships, contraceptive use, and sexual problems compared to boys. In addition, high SDS endorsement among boys was associated with speaking more about thoughts and fantasies about sex and masturbation; in other words, peer sex talk oriented toward sexual pleasure and gratification, compared to low-scoring boys. This is a good example of how these boys are "doing gender," as their talk about sexuality seems to both reflect and reinforce gendered attitudes.

A second gender difference was observed in feelings of entitlement to sexual pleasure received from one's partner, where increased levels were associated with more SDS endorsement among boys but not among girls. This is in line with what might be expected based on SDSs—namely that for boys, receiving sexual pleasure would be considered more of a right than a privilege, or that girls serving boys' pleasure is considered relatively self-evident. Thus, adolescents are observed "doing gender" in certain aspects of their sexuality, and these individual attitudes are reflected in social interactions. Attitudes are enacted in practices, which in turn reinforce attitudes. This is especially interesting considering that we find evidence for this in our relatively young sample. We found no effect of feelings of entitlement to partner-induced sexual pleasure on SDS endorsement for girls. This does not corroborate previous findings for girls, for whom a moderately positive association between feelings of entitlement to receiving sexual pleasure from the partner was related to resilience to SDS (Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2005, 2006). An explanation for this difference compared with previous work might lie in the age of the sample. We did not look at adult women but at adolescent girls who, because of their increased susceptibility to peer norms and relative inexperience, might not yet have established this resilience to SDS endorsement.

Although some of the correlates differ between boys and girls, others showed equal effects for boys and girls on SDS endorsement. A significant negative association between SDS endorsement and feelings of entitlement to

self-induced sexual pleasure emerged, regardless of gender. This fully corresponds with results previously established in a female sample, where higher scores on feelings of entitlement to self-induced pleasure showed a moderate positive association with resilience to SDS (Horne & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2005, 2006). This is also in line with what we would expect under double standard conditions, and it might be considered a sort of proxy for liberal, in other words, nontraditional gendered attitudes. On one hand, we might conclude that this association reflects relatively more egalitarian views; sex is something that can be enjoyed by both boys and girls. On the other hand, it is unclear whether this association has the same meaning for boys and girls. For boys we might find this link because boys who rate their feelings of entitlement to self-induced pleasure lower may (consciously or unconsciously) feel that they have a sexual right to receive pleasure from their partners, as opposed to providing it for themselves. For girls, on the other hand, we might find that the negative association has more to do with the idea that sexual pleasure and desire is in itself considered less acceptable for girls. Therefore, those girls who rate their feelings of entitlement to self-induced pleasure higher might also find sexual pleasure more acceptable for girls in general.

Last, we found that more gender investment was associated with more SDS endorsement for both boys and girls. This is not a surprising finding. It is plausible that those who find it particularly important to act, look, and be typical boys or girls would have more traditional gender expectations both for themselves and for others. We are aware that our measure of gender investment might reflect the measurement of SDS endorsement to a certain degree; this is also apparent from the moderately strong correlation. However, gender investment is more about considering typical gender roles relevant for oneself, whereas our measure of SDS endorsement also reflects what is considered appropriate for girls and boys in general. In conclusion, we believe that gender investment is an important correlate that might be intricately connected with SDS endorsement but should nonetheless be taken into account in future research on this topic.

### Limitations

We believe that the present study was a good first step to explore SDS endorsement in our sample of interest, Dutch youth. However, there were also some limitations to the study. First, we used a cross-sectional design. Therefore, no causal inferences can be made based on the findings. Second, the study relied on self-report, and therefore socially desirable responses might have been an issue. However, we believe that the risk of socially desirable responses was reduced because participants were able to complete the questionnaire in the

comfort of their own homes. Third, it should be noted that SDS endorsement was not very high in either the boy or girl group; both group averages were in between response categories 2 = *Disagree* and 3 = *Slightly disagree*. There was, however, sufficient variance among the scale scores, and the findings correspond to levels of SDS endorsement found in previous studies (Bordini & Sperb, 2013). A first explanation for the relatively low scores on SDS endorsement found might be that, in general, gender norms may have shifted toward more egalitarianism. However, given considerable variance among the responses, we can still discern (groups of) people for whom the norm may *not* have shifted toward more egalitarianism.

A second explanation for the low levels of SDS endorsement found might be that SDS endorsement is only partly visible in explicit measures, such as the one we used. Other researchers have advocated the use of different methodologies to measure SDS (Crawford & Popp, 2003; Sanchez, Fetterolf, & Rudman, 2012), and it has been argued that gendered SDS enactment and endorsement happen to some extent on an implicit and unconscious level (Sakaluk & Milhausen, 2012; Vanwesenbeeck, 2011). When investigated explicitly (e.g., with questionnaires), mechanisms such as social desirability might also (unconsciously) suppress the respondents' readiness to admit to traditional or even sexist attitudes.

We believe that more research is needed using innovative methodologies to provide a greater insight into the context of SDS endorsement and enactment. This might also help overcome the constraints imposed by using self-report methods. Although efforts have been made aimed at incorporating different methodologies, including implicit measures (Sakaluk & Milhausen, 2012) and experimental research (Hundhammer & Mussweiler, 2012; Sanchez et al., 2006), no definite conclusions can be drawn regarding the mechanisms underlying SDS endorsement.

### Implications

Our findings have contributed to the knowledge on adolescent sexuality in several ways. First of all, based on our findings, future research should investigate adolescent peer influence through peer communication about sex. Our study shows that attitudes reflecting the SDS can be enacted in talk, which in turn reinforces those attitudes, thus maintaining the status quo. This might also be a pointer for health professionals and researchers working to improve sexuality education and intervention. Second, our study revealed relatively low SDS endorsement in our sample, but it remains unclear whether this means that young people are becoming more egalitarian in their views or whether different methods of measurement should be employed in future studies. Furthermore, the (conscious or unconscious) feeling among boys of having a right to

receive sexual pleasure from a partner, combined with the (conscious or unconscious) feeling among girls of *not* having a right to sexual pleasure, is something that needs to be examined more intensively. It might provide a good entry point for gender-transformative interventions. Moreover, it implies that future studies need to focus more on what actually happens on a behavioral and cognitive level with gendered interactions in the bedroom. Based on our findings and on reviews of SDS research (Bordini & Sperb, 2013; Crawford & Popp, 2003; Sanchez, Fetterolf, & Rudman, 2012), we recommend that future studies investigate gendered sexual interaction using innovative designs (e.g., longitudinal or experimental) and measures (e.g., implicit or covert). The findings of our study highlight that the “now you see it, now you don’t” conceptualization (Deaux & Major, 1987) is still relevant in understanding the contemporary sexual double standard; SDS endorsement relates differently to various contextual factors and individual differences. Using innovative designs, employing a situational framework may be better equipped to identify not only how individual differences and attitudes are linked to contextual variables but also what the mechanisms are that produce actual gendered sexual behavior. Last, the findings of our study could also serve as pointers for education and practice. Our results point to some groups that might be more vulnerable to the endorsement of unequal gender norms than others, namely religious boys and boys who are nonnative Dutch. This in fact coincides with interventions already available in the Netherlands that focus on providing knowledge on gendered romantic and sexual interaction. On the other hand, our findings may lead us to conclude that some groups are not adequately reached by gender-transformative education. Future research will need to determine whether these boys, as well as other vulnerable groups, should receive extra attention in standard sexuality education.

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