



# Reality Television Shows Focusing on Sexual Relationships and College Students' Engagement in One-Night Stands: A Replication Report

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The present study is a close replication and extension of the research conducted by Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) on the association between viewing reality television (TV) and engaging in one-night stands among college students. Using an online survey, a total of 686 Canadian university students provided comprehensive data on their reality TV consumption patterns, sexual attitudes, motivations, and behaviors. Our results replicated several findings from Fogel and Kovalenko (2013), such that participants who reported engaging in one-night stands within the past year demonstrated higher scores on measures of sexual empowerment, sexual permissiveness, and perceived realism of the reality show content. Demographic factors such as ethnicity and relationship status were also associated with one-night stand engagement. Additionally, compared to viewers of dating reality TV, viewers of sexual reality TV reported stronger parasocial connections, greater interest in characters, and perceived the show as more realistic. Our results suggest that while reality TV consumption is associated with one-night stand engagement, there are additional factors associated with this outcome and the causal relationship cannot yet be established. We conclude that a broader perspective is needed when assessing reality TV viewership that includes individual and contextual factors.

**Keywords:** reality television, sexual behaviors, one-night stands, replication, open science

## Introduction

Reality television (TV) has become a significant cultural phenomenon in recent decades (Hill, 2015), garnering increased academic interest. Guided by social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001), some researchers have argued that exposure to reality TV may reflect and shape societal attitudes toward sexuality and relationships (e.g., Ferris et al., 2007; Fogel and Kovalenko, 2013; Ward et al., 2022). Specifically of interest for this replication study, Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) explored the link between exposure to sexual reality TV and increased engagement in one-night stands in a sample of university students in the United States. Based on their findings, Fogel and Kovalenko suggested that sexual reality shows may influence viewers' sexual behaviors through mechanisms such as social learning and parasocial interactions.

The present study replicated and extended Fogel and Kovalenko's (2013) findings with a sample of Canadian university students. In this study we directly replicated the original methods of Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) and added several measures to further assess factors

that may be associated with both reality TV consumption and sexual behaviors.

Reality television features people, rather than actors, portraying themselves in narrative, unscripted episodes. Viewers report watching reality TV because they find it entertaining, suspenseful, "real," and relatable (Nabi et al., 2003). This genre has become increasingly popular, with one study reporting that college-aged women watch approximately 14 hours of reality television per week (Behm-Morawitz et al., 2016). A sub-genre of reality television includes shows that focus on romance in either dating or sexual contexts (Tsay-Vogel & Krakowiak, 2017), such as *The Bachelor*, *Love Island*, and *Too Hot to Handle*. Content analyses of romance reality shows found that women are often depicted as sex objects and men as sex-driven, with up to 37.3% of scenes featuring sexual content, such as passionate kissing, touching, and discussions of sexual interest (Ferris et al., 2007; Kim & Wells, 2017). The prevalence of sexual messaging in romantic and dating reality TV has led some researchers to examine its potential influence on viewers' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Social psychologists investigating reality television have demonstrated a link between viewership of romantic reality television and an increased willingness to engage in casual sex (Cato & Carpentier, 2010; Taylor, 2005; van Oosten et al., 2016), as well as other sexual behaviors. Much of the existing research on reality television and sexual behavior has focused on adolescents and college-aged students, who are still forming their sexual attitudes and behaviors and may be particularly susceptible to social learning through media exposure (Peterson et al., 1991). Some studies have found that adolescent girls who view sexual or dating-focused media are more likely to discuss sex with their friends and have permissive attitudes towards sex (Cato & Carpentier, 2010; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2011; van Oosten et al., 2016).

In a national longitudinal study of adolescents aged 12 to 17 years by Collins et al. (2004), participants reported their exposure to sexual content on television at baseline and were followed one year later to assess whether they had initiated sexual intercourse or progressed to more advanced noncoital sexual behaviors (e.g., kissing, genital touching, oral sex). Using multivariate regression analyses that controlled for a wide range of demographic, psychosocial, and family factors, the researchers found that adolescents with higher baseline exposure to televised sexual content were significantly more likely to initiate intercourse and to advance in noncoital sexual activity over the following year compared with peers with lower exposure. Other evidence suggests that college students who perceived sexual content on television to be highly realistic had more permissive attitudes toward premarital sex (Taylor, 2005). While a variety of evidence suggests a link between one's perceptions of sex and sexuality and their tendency to view romantic reality TV, these findings are not always consistent (Collins et al., 2004; Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006).

Additionally, many studies fail to assess additional individual and contextual factors that may contribute to both romantic reality TV consumption and sexual behaviors. For example, research on casual sexual encounters highlights the role of relationship status (single vs. partnered), gender and sexual scripts (e.g., women's gatekeeping norms; Hyde et al., 2018), and age within emerging adulthood as predictors of one-night stands (Fielder et al., 2013; Jonason et al., 2015). Broader sociocultural context (e.g., race/ethnicity and cultural attitudes toward casual sex) and sexual attitudes such as permissiveness and empowerment are also associated with individuals engaging in casual sex and how they interpret these encounters. Parasocial involvement with media figures and the perceived realism of media

portrayals have likewise been linked to sexual decision making (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000; Rubin, 1981).

This research therefore incorporated measures of sexual permissiveness, sexual empowerment, parasocial processes (identity, interest, group belonging, and problem solving), social learning motives, perceived realism, social media engagement with reality TV, and general well-being (life satisfaction) to provide a fuller account of how individual dispositions and media contexts are jointly associated with sexual behavior. Including these factors allows a more nuanced test of whether the link between sexual reality TV viewing and one-night stands holds when theoretically relevant individual differences and situational contexts are considered.

### Overview of Original Study

Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) examined whether exposure to dating and sexual relationship-focused reality television was associated with casual sexual behaviors among college students, in particular their engagement in one-night stands. The authors did not clearly define or provide examples of specific reality TV shows to distinguish the subgenres in their paper, or in their instructions to participants. For example, although the original research had two separate variables to assess "dating shows" and "sexual relationship shows," the authors did not clearly articulate the theoretical rationale for why these genres might differentially be related to sexual attitudes and behaviors. The distinction was primarily descriptive (e.g., *The Bachelor* vs. *Temptation Island*) rather than conceptually grounded in media or social psychological theory. Moreover, their framework appeared largely linear (exposure → permissiveness → behavior), without consideration of developmental factors (e.g., late adolescence vs. emerging adulthood), sociocultural moderators (e.g., gendered sexual scripts, racial or ethnic norms), or the potential roles of parasocial involvement and perceived realism in shaping media effects.

When examining how viewing dating and sexual reality TV may influence one's behavior, Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) followed social cognitive (Bandura, 2001) and sensitivity (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004) theoretical perspectives. Social cognitive theory suggests that people learn by observing others, particularly when the observed behaviors are socially rewarded (Bandura, 2001). They argued that in reality television, sexual behaviors are often portrayed positively, with individuals who engage in these behaviors gaining attention, status, or romantic success, therefore reinforcing these behaviors as desirable. Through the lens of sensitivity theory, which proposes that people are motivated by their need to satisfy basic desires and range in sensitivity to

these desires, media consumption is driven by individual needs, such as romance, status, or social connection (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004). Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) suggested that watching reality TV may satisfy one's individual needs (e.g., if the need is for social connection), especially for those who have strong parasocial relationships with the characters. Thus, they expected that viewers who identified with characters who were rewarded for having casual sex may be more motivated to engage in similar behaviors themselves.

In their research they surveyed 578 undergraduates (63% women;  $M_{\text{age}} \approx 22.85$ ) at a large urban commuter college in New York City about their reality TV viewing, parasocial involvement with media characters, sexual attitudes, and whether they had engaged in a one-night stand in the past year. Those who reported having watched sexual relationship-focused shows had significantly higher odds of reporting a one-night stand than non-watchers (OR = 2.60, 95% CI [1.60, 4.23]; OR = 2.16, 95% CI [1.21, 3.83]), whereas viewing dating-focused shows was not significantly associated with reports of one-night stands. Fourteen percent of their participants ( $N = 81$ ) reported having had a one-night stand in the past year.

Those who had one-night stands scored higher on sexual empowerment ( $M = 8.5$  vs.  $6.6$ ,  $p < .001$ ), permissiveness ( $M = 33.8$  vs.  $22.4$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and perceived realism ( $M = 10.0$  vs.  $9.0$ ,  $p = .02$ ). Men (80%) and White students were more likely to report one-night stands than women (20%) and Asian students ( $ps < .05$ ). Watching sexual-relationship reality shows was associated with greater odds of reporting a one-night stand (63% vs. 37%,  $p < .001$ ), whereas watching dating shows was not ( $p = .15$ ). In multivariate logistic regression, viewing sexual-relationship shows remained a significant predictor (adjusted OR = 2.16, 95% CI [1.21, 3.83],  $p = .01$ ), along with permissive sexual attitudes (OR = 1.12,  $p < .001$ ) and perceived realism (OR = 1.11,  $p = .01$ ). Sexual empowerment was no longer significant (OR = 0.90,  $p = .07$ ), and women and Asian students had lower odds than men and White students (ORs = 0.37 and 0.34, respectively,  $ps = .01$ ).

### The Current Replication Research

The present research is a close replication of the study conducted by Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) and includes an extension of the original research by investigating sexual motivations, additional reality TV viewership information, and life satisfaction. It has been over a decade since the original study's publication and romance-focused reality television has risen in both popularity and availability (Butler, 2020). Therefore, we sought to test the original study hypotheses

within the current sociocultural context. The main research goal, as per the original article, was to examine the associations between reality dating and sexual TV show viewership with the occurrence of one-night stands, while accounting for demographic variables and attitudes towards media and sexuality.

Replication studies are crucial for bolstering our comprehension and confidence in psychological findings and are recognized as foundational for advancing science (Martin & Clarke, 2017; Zwaan et al., 2018). Stemming from the replication crisis of 2012, replication studies have gained acceptance in psychology (Makel et al., 2012; Zwaan et al., 2018). While there is no universal method for replication research, certain key standards have been established (LeBel et al., 2019; Nosek & Errington, 2017). That is, close replications should meticulously adhere to the procedures and methodologies of the original study, with any deviations documented and explained. Replication studies in social psychology are often regarded as more credible when conducted by independent research teams, as investigator independence reduces the likelihood of shared biases or conflicts of interest. At the same time, involvement of the original authors can still add valuable methodological insight when implemented alongside bias-mitigating practices such as preregistration, independent replication oversight, or adversarial collaboration to ensure objectivity (LeBel et al., 2019).

### The Present Study

We undertook a close, thorough, and transparent replication of Fogel and Kovalenko's (2013) study on reality television viewing and its associations with sexual experiences. Though we sought guidance from the original authors to ensure the fidelity of our research to their own, they were not involved in data collection or analysis. We aimed to recreate this association in a new sample and to explore how additional variables may help explain it. Data were collected using Qualtrics survey software (<https://www.qualtrics.com>). The hypotheses and analytic plans were preregistered and are available at (Schaffer et al., 2022a). Additionally, this research adheres to open science practices with study information, materials, data, analytic code, and our preregistration publicly available on the OSF (Open Science Framework; (Schaffer et al., 2022b).

### Replication Hypotheses from Original Research

1. A larger percentage of individuals who report watching sexual reality TV shows will report engaging in one-night stands compared to those who did not watch that genre of TV.

2. There will be no differences in one-night stand engagement between those who have or have not watched dating reality TV shows.
3. Individuals who report watching sexual reality TV shows will score higher on all media variables than those who did not watch that genre of TV.

### Extension Exploratory Hypotheses

4. We will explore whether there is a difference in satisfaction with life between those who have engaged in a one-night stand and those who have not.
5. We will explore sexual motivations as a moderator between watching reality TV and engagement in one-night stands.

### A Priori Power Analysis

An a priori power analysis was conducted to guide our decision on sample size. The primary focus of Fogel and Kovalenko's (2013) research was examining the differences between individuals who do and do not watch sexual reality television in relation to one-night-stand behavior. We therefore used the *pwr* package in R (Champely, 2020) to estimate the sample size needed to detect a small-to-medium effect ( $d = 0.30$ ) with high statistical power in a comparison between two groups. Results indicated that a total of 600 participants for analyses (300 in each group) would provide 95.6% power to detect an effect of this magnitude at a two-tailed alpha level of .05. This minimum sample size was selected to ensure the study would be sufficiently sensitive to detect a small to medium effect size.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

A total of 686 undergraduate students at the University of Western Ontario completed an anonymous online survey via Qualtrics. Participants were recruited by a mass email that was sent to all undergraduate students in the university and an undergraduate research participation pool where students are awarded course credits for their participation in research studies. Students recruited through mass email had the option of entering a gift card draw (five gift cards valued at \$10 for Tim Hortons were available to win in the draw). Most of our sample identified as White ( $n = 385$ , 56.1%), single ( $n = 438$ , 63.8%), and as cisgender women ( $n = 459$ , 66.9%). Information on our sample's full demographic characteristics can be found in Table 1. Ethics approval

was granted by the University of Western Ontario's research ethics board and all data collection occurred from March to April 2022.

While in the original study researchers approached students in person on a college campus, we used an email invitation that we sent to students at our campus because it provides access to a similarly broad undergraduate population. Also, data collection occurred during a period when there were COVID-related restrictions for in-person data collection. This approach preserves the key characteristics of the original sample (college students at a large urban university) while allowing efficient recruitment at scale. This method provides an equal opportunity for participation, is anonymous at the point of invitation, and avoids potential bias in who is invited to complete a survey on sexual attitudes and behaviors. We did not consult the original authors regarding this procedural adaptation as in-person data collection was not feasible at the time.

### Replication Measures

#### *Brief Sexual Attitude Scale – Permissiveness Scale (BSAS-PS; Hendrick et al., 2006)*

Participants were asked to rate their agreement on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) with 10 statements that assessed feelings and attitudes towards casual sex. For example, "It is possible to enjoy sex with a person and not like that person very much" and "I do not need to be committed to a person to have sex with him/her." The Permissiveness subscale of the BSAS showed good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .86$ ). Items were averaged for a total score, with higher scores indicating more permissive attitudes.

#### *Motive Social Learning Scale (MSLS; Godlewski and Perse, 2010)*

Participants were asked to rate their agreement on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for six items that assessed motives for watching reality TV to learn (e.g., "I watch reality TV because it helps me learn about myself and others"). The Motive Social Learning Scale yielded good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .86$ ). Items were averaged for a total score, with higher scores indicating more social learning motives overall.

#### *Sexual Empowerment Scale (SES; Cato and Carpentier, 2010)*

Based on Fogel and Kovalenko (2013), we used three items from the Sexual Empowerment Scale: "Using sex to get what you want is OK," "Using sex to get what you want is powerful," and a third item that was modified

to say individuals instead of women: “It is okay for attractive individuals to use sex appeal to get what they want.” Participants responded on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The SES had acceptable reliability ( $\alpha = .71$ ). Items were averaged for a total score and higher scores indicated greater sexual empowerment.

#### ***Audience Persona Interaction Scale (APIS; Auter and Palmgreen, 2000)***

Participants were asked to rate on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) their agreement with 22 statements regarding parasocial behaviors. Items were modified to state “reality TV program” instead of only “TV,” as was done by Fogel and Kovalenko (2013). This scale consists of four subscales: the Parasocial Identity subscale (e.g., “I seem to have the same beliefs or attitudes as my favorite reality TV program character”), the Parasocial Interest subscale (e.g., “I enjoyed trying to predict what my favorite reality TV show character would do”), the Parasocial Group subscale (e.g., “My friends are like the characters from the reality TV program I watched”), and the Parasocial Problem subscale (e.g., “I like the way my favorite character from the reality TV program handles problems”). All four subscales of the APIS had acceptable to good reliability with alphas ranging from .79 to .88; items were averaged for a total score for each subscale and higher scores indicated greater endorsement of parasocial behaviors.

#### ***Perceived Realism Scale (PRS; Rubin, 1981)***

Participants were given five questions and asked to rate on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (always) how realistic reality TV is to their real-world experiences (e.g., “The people I see on reality TV are just like the people I meet in real life,” “The programs I see on reality TV tell about life the way it really is”). The PRS showed good reliability ( $\alpha = .81$ ). Items were averaged for a total score, and higher scores represent greater perceived realism.

#### ***Social Media Scale (SMS; Godlewski and Perse, 2010)***

Participants were asked to rate their agreement with eight statements that assess usage of social media for content relating to reality TV on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (always). This scale was modified from the original “online” Facebook scale to refer more broadly to social media, and from “program” to more specifically “reality TV program.” A sample item is “On social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.), I read advertisements about the reality TV programs on news feeds.” Our Social Media Scale yielded good reliability with an alpha of .87. Items were averaged for a total score and

higher scores indicated that participants used social media platforms to further engage with their preferred reality television shows.

#### **Demographics and Behavioral Variables**

Participants were asked to report their age, racial identity, gender identity, sexual orientation, what country they were born in, and their current relationship status (if they were currently in a relationship they were also asked if they were in an exclusive relationship).

#### ***One-Night Stand Behavior***

Participants were asked a single item: “Have you engaged in a one-night stand within the past year?” Responses were coded as 1 = no and 2 = yes. This dichotomous variable served as the primary outcome for all replication and extension analyses.

#### ***Reality TV Hours***

Participants were asked to provide a numerical response to the open-ended question, “On a typical week, how many hours of reality TV programs do you watch?”

#### ***Reality Television Shows***

Identical to Fogel and Kovalenko’s (2013) study, participants responded to the questions “In the past year did you watch a reality TV program that focused on dating?” and “In the past year did you watch a reality TV program that focused on sexual relationships?” using a dichotomous response scale of “yes” or “no.”

#### **Extension Measures**

#### ***Sexual Motivation Scale (SMS; Cooper et al., 1998)***

To assess potential motives for sex, we used the 29-item Sexual Motivation Scale created by Cooper et al. (1998). Rated on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (always), participants are asked to indicate how often they have sex for various given reasons. This measure has six subscales: enhancement (e.g., “because it feels good”), intimacy (e.g., “to feel closer with my partner”), self-esteem (e.g., “to feel better about myself”), to alleviate negative emotions (e.g., “to feel better when I’m lonely”), partner’s pleasure (e.g., “because I fear my partner won’t love me if I don’t have sex”), and peer influence (e.g., “because my friends are having sex”). All subscales had high reliability in this study, with Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .91 to .96. Responses were averaged and higher scores indicated greater endorsement of the type of sexual motivation.

### **Satisfaction With Life (Diener et al., 1985)**

To assess general well-being, we used the 5-item Satisfaction with Life Scale by Diener et al. (1985). Rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), an example item is “So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.” Responses were averaged, with higher scores indicating greater overall life satisfaction. This measure had good reliability ( $\alpha = .86$ ).

### **Reality Television Show Information**

After asking participants whether they watched reality TV programs that focused on dating or sexual relationships, we provided a detailed list of shows such as *The Bachelor*, *The Bachelorette*, *Bachelor in Paradise*, *Love Island*, *Love is Blind*, *Too Hot to Handle*, *FBoy Island*, *Love on the Spectrum*, *Married at First Sight*, and *90 Day Fiancé*. The shows listed were generated by the authors of this article. We also included an open text option for participants to list any other shows they feel represent dating and sexual reality TV shows. Participants could select as many shows as they had watched and were then asked to rank their choices from most to least watched. This information was not collected in the original research, and we decided to collect this information for descriptive purposes to get a sense of the diversity of shows participants were viewing. The frequencies for shows watched, grouped by those who had and had not engaged in a one-night stand in the past year, are provided in Figure 2a Figure 2b.

### **Data Analysis**

All analyses were conducted using jamovi (Version 2.4.14.0; The jamovi project, 2024) using the built-in Rj editor with R (Version 4.1.3; R Core Team, 2022). Package versions were: *jmv* 2.4.11, *jmvcore* 2.4.7, *ggplot2* 3.4.2, *dplyr* 1.1.1, *magrittr* 2.0.3, and their dependencies (see OSF for a complete list). The full R session information (R version and package versions) was exported and is available on the OSF (Schaffer et al., 2022b).

First, descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables. Similar to the original research, means and standard deviations were reported for continuous variables, while frequencies and percentages were presented for categorical variables. For inferential analyses, we followed the approach of the original researchers and used one-way ANOVAs (equivalent to independent samples *t* tests) to examine the association between our variables of interest and the likelihood of having a one-night stand. Mann–Whitney *U* tests were employed for skewed continuous variables (skewness > |2|, as per Fogel & Kovalenko’s procedure). We used chi-square tests

to compare groups on categorical variables.

## **Results**

### **Preliminary Analysis**

Regarding data cleaning, we initially recruited 835 students; of these, 128 did not consent or submit the survey and therefore could not complete the study, leaving 707 participants who began the survey. Data cleaning procedures were not explicitly preregistered but followed both ethical requirements and our preregistered analytic plan. Participants who did not provide consent were automatically excluded as per ethical policy. Because our main outcome (one-night-stand behavior) appeared at the end of the survey, participants who did not complete this section were removed from analyses. Finally, consistent with our preregistration, responses that did not meet the criteria for case-mean substitution were excluded (Fox-Wasylyshyn & El-Masri, 2005).

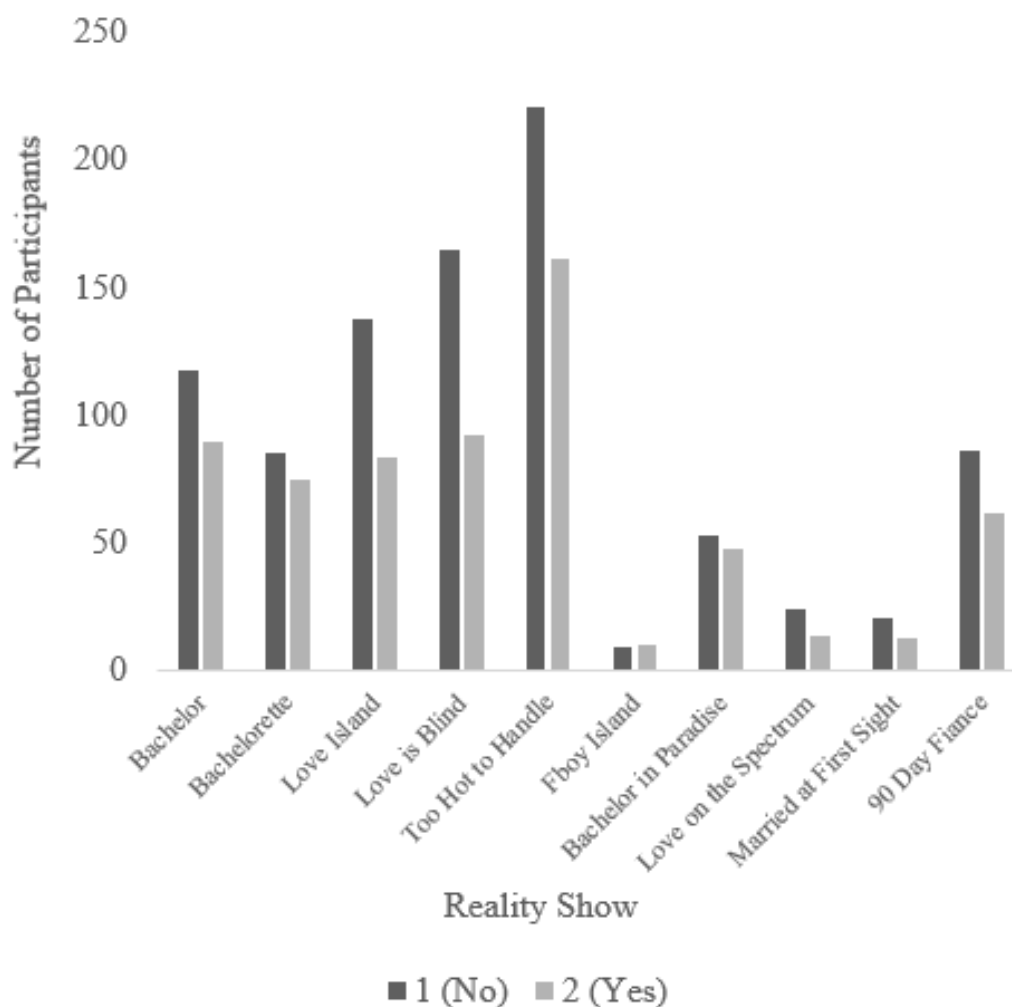
After applying these criteria, the final analytic sample included 686 participants. We attempted to recreate the data analyses of the original article (Fogel & Kovalenko, 2013), however, we did make some independent choices as the original article did not provide enough information to replicate all statistical procedures. As per Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) we did not remove any outliers and used case-mean substitution for missing data. To qualify for case-mean substitution, the missing data must have met the following criteria outlined by Fox-Wasylyshyn and El-Masri (2005) for self-report measures: (1) fewer than 60% of the items on a given measure for a given participant are missing, and (2) fewer than 15% of cases within a given measure are missing. Item-level missingness was low (< 5% of all responses). Following the original study and our preregistered plan, we used case-mean substitution to replace occasional missing item responses within multi-item scales when participants had answered most items. A summary of the number of substituted values per scale is available on our OSF project page (Schaffer et al., 2022b).

### **Post Hoc Power Analysis**

We conducted a post hoc power analysis, keeping constant the power level obtained in our original power analysis (i.e., .956), to determine the effect size that our current analyses could detect. Specifically, we focused on the effect size that could be detected in a  $2 \times 2$  chi-square test. Given our sample size, we estimated that we could detect an effect equal to or greater than  $\phi = .19$  (Cramér’s  $V = .19$ ). This post hoc power analysis is also available on our OSF in our supplemental files (Schaffer et al., 2022b).

**Figure 1**

Number of participants who watched each reality television show. Bars represent the number of participants who reported having watched each show, separated by one-night-stand status (1 = No, 2 = Yes).



### Prevalence of One-Night Stands Across Demographic and Media Variables

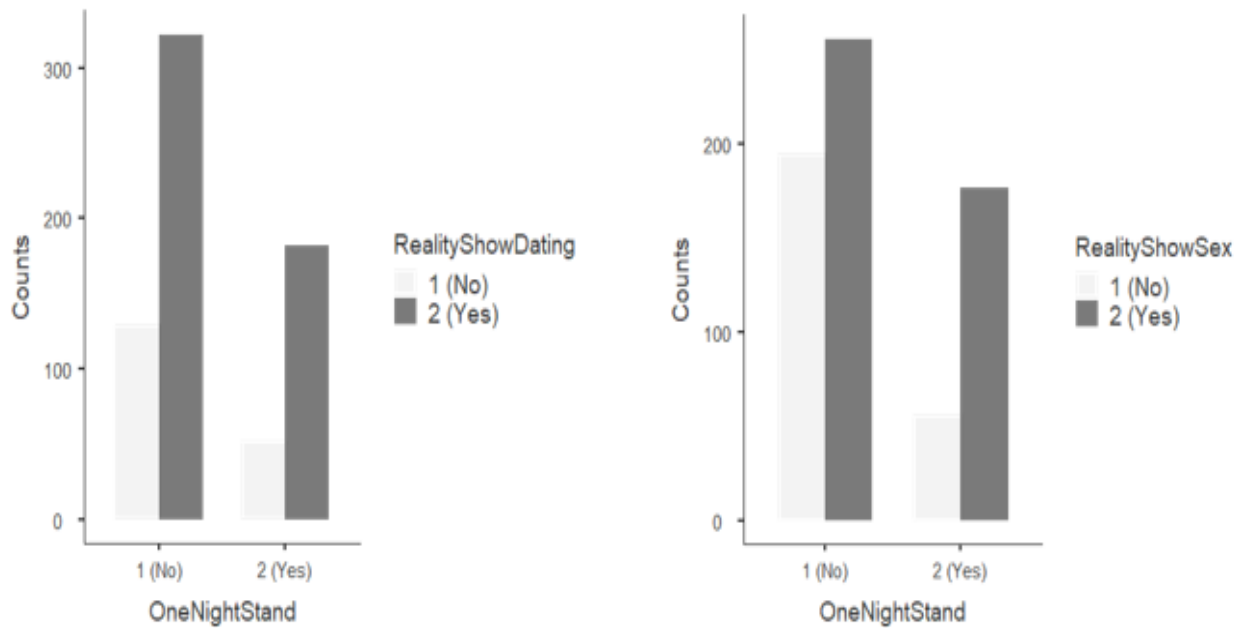
Following the original study's analyses, we first examined the prevalence of one-night stands across different categorical and continuous variables (see Table 1). Groups compared across categorical variables (i.e., gender, race, relationship status, and type of reality TV show watched) were assessed using Pearson's chi-square analyses. Individuals who reported a one-night stand within the past year were more likely to be White,  $\chi^2(18, N = 686) = 48.63, p < .001$ , and single,

$\chi^2(4, N = 686) = 40.10, p < .001$ , compared to those who did not.

We compared mean differences between participants who had or had not engaged in a one-night stand on the continuous variables of age, hours of reality TV viewed, sexual permissiveness, sexual empowerment, parasocial attitudes, social learning motives, perceived realism, and social media use. As discussed, one-way ANOVAs were used for variables with acceptable normality, and Mann-Whitney *U* tests were used for skewed variables. Before conducting the ANOVAs, we also assessed the homogeneity of variance assumption using Levene's test.

**Figure 2**

*One-night-stand behavior by reality television viewing. Panel (a) displays one-night-stand responses by dating reality television viewership, and panel (b) displays one-night-stand responses by sexual-relationship reality television viewership.*



Sexual permissiveness ( $p = .025$ ) was found to have unequal variance across groups (those who did vs. did not engage in one-night stands) as well as the APIS parasocial group subscale ( $p = .016$ ), therefore we used Welch's ANOVA for those analyses. The other variables were compared across groups using standard one-way ANOVAs.

Table 1

*Prevalence of One-Night Stands Across Demographics and Media Variables*

Variable	No one-night stand <i>n</i> = 452 <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> ) or % (#)	Yes one-night stand <i>n</i> = 234 <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> ) or % (#)	<i>p</i>	Effect Size
Age (years)	19.38 (2.79)	18.71 (1.37)	< .001	$\eta^2 = .017$
Gender (cisgender)			.09	Cramér's <i>V</i> = .11
Man	58% (126)	42% (92)		
Woman	69% (317)	31% (142)		
Other gender identity	< 1% (7)	< 1% (1)		
Race			< .001	Cramér's <i>V</i> = .27
White	58% (223)	42% (162)		
Black	77% (24)	23% (7)		
Hispanic	72% (13)	28% (5)		
East/Southeast Asian	79% (109)	21% (29)		
South Asian	67% (76)	33% (37)		
Mixed	73% (8)	27% (3)		
Other	79% (33)	21% (9)		
Relationship status			< .001	Cramér's <i>V</i> = .24
Single	37% (253)	27% (185)		
Dating	26% (176)	6% (43)		
Engaged	1% (4)	0 (0)		
Married/Common law	1% (9)	0 (0)		
Other	1% (10)	1% (6)		
Reality TV (hours)	3.68 (5.72)	4.40 (8.18)	.186	$\eta^2 = .003$
Sexual permissiveness	2.81 (.82)	3.54 (.60)	< .001	$\eta^2 = .157$
Sexual empowerment	2.21 (.95)	2.49 (.99)	< .001	$\eta^2 = .019$
Parasocial identity	2.55 (.99)	2.78 (.91)	.004	$\eta^2 = .012$
Parasocial interest	3.52 (.96)	3.49 (.79)	.715	$\eta^2 = .000$
Parasocial group	2.63 (.88)	2.83 (.78)	.003	$\eta^2 = .013$
Parasocial problem	2.86 (.97)	3.00 (.88)	.074	$\eta^2 = .005$
Motive social learning	2.34 (.89)	2.62 (.92)	< .001	$\eta^2 = .022$
Perceived realism	2.00 (.65)	2.15 (.65)	.003	$\eta^2 = .013$
Social media	2.22 (.83)	2.39 (.75)	.011	$\eta^2 = .009$

Note. Chi-square tests were performed for categorical variables. ANOVAs and Mann–Whitney *U* tests were conducted for continuous variables. Effect sizes are eta squared for continuous variables and Cramér's *V* for categorical variables. Percentages are row percentages.

We performed chi-square tests to assess if there was greater engagement in one-night stands among those who watch sexual reality TV shows (an effect that emerged in the original research), as well as those who watch dating reality TV shows (an effect that did not emerge in the original research). Consistent with the original research, we also found a significant difference in one-night stand engagement between those who did or did not watch sexual reality TV (see Table 2). Specifically, a greater proportion of individuals who reported watching sexual reality TV shows also re-

ported engaging in one-night stands compared to those who did not report watching sexual reality TV shows,  $\chi^2(1, N = 684) = 24.39, p < .001$ . Also consistent with the original research, there was not a significant difference in one-night stand engagement between those who did or did not watch dating reality TV during the past year.

**Table 2***One-Night Stand Engagement Across Reality TV Show Type*

Variable	No one-night stand <i>n</i> = 452	Yes one-night stand <i>n</i> = 234	<i>p</i>	Effect Size
Sexual reality TV			< .001	Cramér's <i>V</i> = .19
No	43.2% (195)	24.0% (56)		
Yes	56.8% (256)	75.6% (177)		
Dating reality TV			.073	Cramér's <i>V</i> = .07
No	28.6% (129)	22.2% (52)		
Yes	71.4% (322)	77.8% (182)		

Note. Percentages are column percentages. Chi-square tests were used to compare one-night-stand engagement across reality TV show type. Effect sizes are reported as Cramér's *V*.

The original study by Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) presented a table comparing media-related variables by sexual reality TV viewership but did not specify the statistical tests used or whether these analyses were conducted within a single model or independently for each variable. To closely mirror their approach, while maintaining transparency, we conducted independent *t* tests to examine whether participants who reported watching sexual reality TV differed significantly on each media-related variable compared to those who did not. Individuals who reported watching sexual reality TV within the past year scored significantly higher on parasocial identity, parasocial group, social learning motives, perceived realism, and sexual permissiveness (all *ps* < .01), but not on parasocial problem, parasocial interest, social media engagement, or sexual empowerment variables (see Table 3).

### Extension Analyses

In addition to recreating the original authors' analyses, we examined correlations among the primary study variables (see Table 4). Hours spent watching reality television was positively associated with perceived realism,  $r(674) = .19$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.11, .26], and with social media engagement related to reality shows,  $r(674) = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.08, .23]. Hours of viewing was negatively associated with sexual permissiveness,  $r(674) = -.10$ ,  $p = .011$ , 95% CI [-.17, -.02], and was not significantly related to sexual empowerment,  $r(674) = .02$ ,  $p = .681$ , 95% CI [-.06, .09]. Consistent with our main findings, there was no association between hours of reality television and one-night-stand engagement,  $r(674) = .05$ ,  $p = .186$ , 95% CI [-.03, .13]. Sexual reality television viewing was positively associated with one-night-stand engagement,  $r(682) = .19$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.12, .26], whereas dating reality television viewing was not,  $r(683) = .07$ ,  $p = .073$ , 95% CI [-

.01, .14]. The full correlation matrix, including degrees of freedom and sample sizes for each variable, is available on our OSF page in our supplemental files (Schaffer et al., 2022b).

Additionally, we were interested in examining potential differences between groups on life satisfaction, as the original authors discussed potential harmful effects and implications of one-night-stand engagement. First, an independent samples *t* test revealed no significant difference in the life satisfaction scores between participants who had a one-night stand ( $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) and those who had not ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ),  $t(683) = -0.56$ ,  $p = .575$ . A second independent samples *t* test found no significant difference in life satisfaction scores between participants who did ( $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ) or did not ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) watch sexual reality TV,  $t(681) = -1.13$ ,  $p = .260$ .

We were also interested in examining whether sexual motivations (as assessed by the Sexual Motivations Scale across six subscales) were associated with participants' one-night-stand status and sexual reality TV viewing. Although our preregistration specified case-mean substitution for missing values for the variables in our study that were also included in the original research, for this extension study we chose not to use that approach for the Sexual Motivation Scale. Instead, we relied on jamovi's default handling of missing data, which excludes participants listwise when values are missing on any predictor.

A binary logistic regression examined whether the six sexual-motivation subscales (i.e., intimacy, enhancement, self-affirmation, coping, peer approval, and partner approval) predicted the likelihood of reporting willingness to have a one-night stand and whether these effects were moderated by exposure to reality dating shows. The overall model fit the data adequately, Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .19$ , indicating a moderate reduction

in prediction error. Three sexual-motivation subscales significantly predicted one-night-stand intentions. Enhancement motives were positively associated with willingness to engage in a one-night stand,  $B = 1.09$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ , Wald  $z = 7.91$ ,  $p < .001$ , OR = 2.98, 95% CI [2.29, 3.93]. Intimacy motives were negatively associated,  $B = -0.76$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ , Wald  $z = -6.78$ ,  $p < .001$ , OR = 0.47, 95% CI [0.37, 0.58]. Peer motives were also positively related,  $B = 0.35$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ , Wald  $z = 2.51$ ,  $p = .012$ , OR = 1.42, 95% CI [1.08, 1.86]. No interaction terms between reality-dating-show exposure and the sexual-motivation subscales reached conventional significance (all  $ps \geq .060$ ), suggesting that the associations (e.g., of enhancement, intimacy, and peer motives with one-night-stand intentions) did not vary by exposure to reality dating shows.

Following the guidelines outlined by LeBel et al. (2019), comparisons between the original and replication studies indicated a strong pattern of signal detection and effect-size consistency. In this framework, signal detection refers to whether the replication effect size estimate's 95% confidence interval excludes zero, and effect-size consistency refers to whether the replication estimate is similar in direction and magnitude to the original (that is, whether the replication confidence interval includes the original study's point estimate). Most effects replicated directionally but with somewhat attenuated magnitudes, a pattern typical of independent replications using larger, more diverse samples (McShane et al., 2019). The association between viewing sexual-relationship reality television and one-night-stand behavior remained robust and slightly stronger, whereas dating-reality-show exposure continued to show no reliable relation. Small but significant associations for parasocial processes also emerged (see Table 5).

**Table 3***Sexual Reality TV Show Viewership Across Variables*

Variable	No, watch sexual reality TV n = 251		Yes, watch sexual reality TV n = 433		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i> [95% CI]
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Parasocial Identity Subscale	2.47	0.96	2.72	0.97	-3.31	< .001	-0.26 [-0.42, -0.11]
Parasocial Interest Subscale	3.34	0.89	3.61	0.80	-4.11	< .001	-0.33 [-0.48, -0.17]
Parasocial Group Subscale	2.53	0.87	2.80	0.83	-4.11	< .001	-0.33 [-0.48, -0.17]
Parasocial Problem Subscale	2.89	0.97	2.92	0.93	-0.44	.662	-0.03 [-0.19, 0.12]
Motive Social Learning	2.24	0.87	2.54	0.91	-4.23	< .001	-0.34 [-0.49, -0.18]
Perceived Realism	1.97	0.67	2.10	0.64	-2.44	.015	-0.19 [-0.35, -0.04]
Social Media Items	2.05	0.81	2.41	0.78	-5.81	< .001	-0.46 [-0.62, -0.30]
Sexual Permissiveness	2.92	0.87	3.14	0.86	-3.18	.002	-0.25 [-0.41, -0.10]
Sexual Empowerment	2.25	0.95	2.34	0.98	-1.14	.255	-0.09 [-0.25, 0.07]

Note. Negative *d* values indicate that participants who watched sexual reality TV scored higher than non-viewers (because group coding was No = 1, Yes = 2). All tests had 682 degrees of freedom.

## Discussion

The present study aimed to replicate the findings from Fogel and Kovalenko's (2013) study on reality television viewing habits and sexual attitudes and behaviors. We collected data through an online survey administered to Canadian university students where we asked about their sexual and dating reality TV watching habits. We then asked participants about their engagement in one-night stands over the past year, as well as several questions relating to media attitudes, specifically relating to reality TV.

### Consistent Findings

Firstly, when comparing participants who have and who have not had a one-night stand in the past year, consistent with Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) we found that participants who had a one-night stand in the past year had significantly higher mean scores on sexual empowerment, sexual permissiveness, perceived realism of reality TV content, and motivations to learn from reality TV. Also aligning with the original study, White participants reported higher rates of one-night stands compared to other racial groups, though the majority of both study samples were White, which limits comparisons across racial demographics.

Regarding specific content watched, individuals who watched sexual reality TV shows (compared to those who did not) were more likely to identify with and show interest in their favorite character, feel like they are a part of the TV "family" group, watch reality TV to learn about themselves and others, perceive the reality show as more "real," and use social media to access additional show content. Despite the similarities in findings, caution must be exercised in drawing causal conclusions from these data. Unlike the original study, we do not assert that viewing sexual and dating reality TV directly influences one-night-stand behavior. Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) interpreted their findings as evidence that viewing sexual relationship-focused reality television can shape sexual scripts and increase the likelihood of engaging in one-night stands. However, their cross-sectional design could not establish whether reality TV viewing preceded these behaviors or whether individuals with more permissive sexual attitudes were simply more drawn to sexual reality programming. This limitation is important to consider when evaluating their causal interpretation.

Moreover, we found no association between the amount of reality TV watched and one-night-stand behavior. This contrasts with the rationale that greater exposure would increase the likelihood of engaging in casual sex. Instead, this pattern suggests that the link

between sexual reality TV and one-night stands is not dose-dependent and challenges the notion of a direct causal relationship between viewing sexual reality television and sexual behavior.

### Inconsistent Findings

Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) reported no significant differences between participants who have and have not had a one-night stand in the past year on any parasocial variables; however, our results only partially replicated this finding. While we found no significant differences in scores on the parasocial problem and parasocial interest subscales, participants who had a one-night stand demonstrated higher scores on the parasocial group and parasocial identity subscales. We also found that more women reported having a one-night stand in the past year than men. This contrasts with Fogel and Kovalenko's (2013) finding that more men compared to women reported one-night-stand activity.

The present replication was conducted online and thus anonymously, which contrasts with the original study where participants were approached on a college campus and filled out the surveys by hand. In-person data collection regarding such a sensitive topic has limitations and may have led to social desirability bias. For example, in the original study, women may have felt the need to conform to gender roles and thus not confirm one-night-stand behavior. According to traditional sexual scripts, women are expected to be gatekeepers of their sexuality and not show any interest in sex (Hyde et al., 2018). In the present anonymous study, there is less risk for social desirability and women may have felt freer to declare their sexual experiences, a potential explanation for this difference between the original study and our replication.

### Additional Findings

The original study did not provide a table of correlations for study variables, but this analysis was included in our study to provide a more comprehensive test of the proposed relations and to align with the theoretical rationale for the replication-extension. The correlations among the variables in our sample present a complex picture overall. To begin, the number of hours spent watching reality television was associated with media variables such as perceived realism, indicating that viewers who found the shows more realistic and less dramatized tended to watch more, which is in alignment with sensitivity theory (Reiss & Wiltz, 2004). Additionally, the use of social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook to follow reality shows and their stars was positively associated with television viewing hours. The motive of social learning was also positively

**Table 4***Correlations Among Major Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Perceived realism	–									
2. Social media	.42***	–								
3. Sexual permissiveness	-.05	.03	–							
4. Motive: Social learning	.47***	.40***	.01	–						
5. Sexual empowerment	.05	.09*	.40***	.06	–					
6. Age	-.07	-.10*	-.04	-.10*	-.03	–				
7. Dating show	.09*	.17***	.06	.18***	.07	-.04	–			
8. Sexual show	.10*	.22***	.12***	.16***	.04	-.10*	.59***	–		
9. One-night stand	.12**	.10*	.40***	.15***	.14***	-.13***	.07	.19***	–	
10. Reality TV hours	.22***	.19***	-.11**	.23***	-.01	-.07	.11**	.11**	.06	–

Note. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ . Dating reality show, sexual reality show, and one-night stand variables were dichotomous (No/Yes). Reality TV hours reflects participants' self-reported weekly hours of dating and/or sexual reality television watched. Case-mean substitution was not applied to all variables (e.g., dichotomous items). Variation in  $N$  was minimal (660–686). The complete correlation matrix is available on the OSF page. The original study (Fogel & Kovalenko, 2013) did not report a full correlation matrix; therefore, original correlations could not be included for direct comparison.

**Table 5***Signal Consistency of Effects Between Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) and the Present Replication*

Measure	Effect size comparison (Original → Replication)	Interpretation
Sexual permissiveness	$d = 1.19 [0.98, 1.40] \rightarrow d = 0.91 [0.69, 1.12]$	Signal – consistent
Sexual empowerment	$d = 0.62 [0.42, 0.82] \rightarrow d = 0.29 [0.06, 0.51]$	Signal – inconsistent (smaller)
Perceived realism	$d = 0.26 [0.06, 0.46] \rightarrow d = 0.24 [0.01, 0.46]$	Signal – consistent
Parasocial identity	$d = 0.16 [-0.04, 0.36] \rightarrow d = 0.23 [0.08, 0.38]$	New signal – consistent
Parasocial group	$d = -0.08 [-0.28, 0.12] \rightarrow d = 0.24 [0.08, 0.40]$	Signal – inconsistent (opposite direction)
One-night stand × dating reality TV	OR = 1.41 [0.82, 2.44] → OR = 1.40 [0.97, 2.03]	No signal – consistent
One-night stand × sexual reality TV	OR = 2.16 [1.21, 3.83] → OR = 2.41 [1.69, 3.44]	Signal – consistent

and significantly related to increased viewing hours, which supports social learning theory by suggesting that greater exposure leads to more ingrained learned behaviors and imitation (Bandura, 2001).

Contrary to Fogel and Kovalenko's (2013) findings, however, television viewing hours were negatively and significantly associated with sexual permissiveness and had no significant correlation with sexual empowerment. These findings suggest that despite increased exposure to reality TV content, viewers may not necessarily adopt more permissive attitudes toward casual sex or that viewing this content may not impact viewers' sense of sexual agency or empowerment, as the associations were nonsignificant. Therefore, while reality TV content

may be influential, this does not necessarily translate into or relate to a more permissive attitude or behavior regarding sex. These findings highlight the notion that factors influencing sexual behavior and empowerment are more complex and may not be solely driven by media consumption. However, consistent with our other findings where dating and sexual reality television viewership is compared, we found that sexual reality television (but not dating reality television) was positively correlated with one-night-stand engagement.

Overall, these correlations suggest a complex web of associations between our study variables, and the ambiguity of these findings underscores the need for further research aimed at clarifying the nature of these associ-

ations. Finally, despite some perceptions that one-night stands are harmful to an individual, the findings indicate that individuals who engage in such behaviors experience similar levels of life satisfaction as those who do not. The study highlights that regardless of how these behaviors are perceived, the actual impact on life satisfaction is minimal, emphasizing the importance of focusing on personal values and meaningful reasons for engaging in sexual behavior.

### General Discussion

The societal relevance of this research lies in how popular media can reflect and shape collective conversations about sexuality, gender norms, and empowerment. However, it is important to interpret these associations cautiously: the findings from both the original research and this replication study are associative, not causal. The data do not imply that viewing reality television causes one-night stands or sexual permissiveness, but rather that individuals with certain sexual attitudes or motivations may be more drawn to such content. This means that the association could equally reflect that individuals with more permissive attitudes and behaviors are drawn to sexual relationship-focused reality programming. Thus, while the pattern is robust across samples, it challenges the causal interpretation offered by the original authors and highlights the need for longitudinal or experimental research to clarify directionality.

Misinterpreting these relationships as causal could reinforce moral panic or lead to oversimplified policy responses. In light of this, the original argument by Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) for public health interventions aimed at limiting reality TV exposure may be misguided. A more constructive approach would emphasize media literacy, open sexual communication, and the promotion of informed, safe sexual choices rather than censorship or restriction.

Despite observing similarities with Fogel and Kovalenko's (2013) findings, our results indicate that individual differences and situational factors also play significant roles in influencing sexual behavior. One significant finding is that most participants who reported engaging in one-night stands within the past year were single, suggesting a predominant role of relationship status in predicting one-night stands. Understanding typical behavior of college students is also important to consider, as single individuals, particularly among college students, are found to naturally be more inclined to engage in casual sexual encounters, independent of their media consumption habits. Numerous scholars have proposed that "hooking up" is a new culture among college students (Fielder et al., 2013; Jonason

et al., 2015). Our data support this notion, as age was negatively associated with one-night-stand engagement and our findings also indicate that relationship status, gender, and race/ethnicity play substantial roles in determining one-night-stand behavior.

Furthermore, as stated by the original authors in their introduction, reality television shows, particularly those featuring sexual content, are designed to appeal to a young adult audience, especially women aged 18 to 34 years (Ferris et al., 2007). Given this target demographic, research should ideally focus on recruiting young adult single women. This approach would allow for a more precise comparison of sexual behaviors among viewers of sexual reality television shows versus non-viewers. Additionally, examining whether greater exposure to such shows, measured by frequency and duration, correlates with more permissive sexual attitudes and behaviors could yield valuable insights.

Although Fogel and Kovalenko (2013) utilized theories such as Bandura's social cognitive theory and Reiss and Wiltz's sensitivity theory (2004), their study lacked explicit research questions and hypotheses, resulting in an unclear rationale. While social learning theory suggests that media exposure influences behavior through imitation, our data indicate that individual differences and contextual factors may be more influential in motivating people to consume media that aligns with their self-concept (Ickes et al., 1997). We observed positive associations between television viewing hours and perceptions of realism within reality shows, however, there was no significant correlation between viewing hours and engagement in one-night stands, sexual permissiveness, or sexual empowerment. This discrepancy raises questions about the validity of the original study's conclusions and replicates Collins and colleagues' (2004) findings where they did not find an association between sexual behavior and average hours of TV viewing. Future research should adopt a more precise and specific rationale, along with clearly defined research questions and hypotheses, to better understand the complex associations between media consumption and sexual behavior.

### Limitations and Future Directions

Despite being designed as a close replication, this study was not a direct replication of Fogel and Kovalenko (2013). The original study was conducted in a controlled, in-person setting, whereas our data were collected through an online survey, which may influence participant engagement, self-disclosure, and sampling characteristics. Nevertheless, the present study maintained the same core variables, measures, and analytic structure, constituting a sufficiently close concep-

tual replication to evaluate the robustness of the original effects.

Our sample primarily consisted of university students in Canada, representing a WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) population. This demographic homogeneity limits the generalizability of our findings to more diverse or culturally distinct groups. Social norms, sexual attitudes, and media consumption patterns may vary across cultures, and it is possible that the associations between reality TV viewership, sexual attitudes, and behavior would differ in other sociocultural contexts. Cross-cultural replications and samples drawn from the broader public are needed to assess the universality of these findings.

While our study included an extension, we originally sought to include a questionnaire regarding safe sex practices which was not shown to participants due to a display logic error. Future research should investigate whether people who report having one-night stands also report safe sex practices to further understand the implications of these sexual behaviors. While most of the findings from the original study were replicated by the present investigation, further steps should be taken to unpack the association between viewing reality TV and sexual experiences before conclusions are drawn.

Considering these insights, Fogel and Kovalenko's argument for public health interventions to limit reality TV viewership based solely on its potential impact on sexual behaviors appears to be oversimplified. If individuals are sexually empowered, practicing safe sex, and making informed choices, the call for restricting media exposure becomes less practical and more ethically ambiguous. Instead, public health efforts could focus on fostering media literacy and promoting safe sex practices, which may be more effective in addressing sexual health concerns.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, while our replication confirmed several of the original study's findings, it also highlighted the importance of considering a broader range of variables in understanding the association between reality TV viewing and sexual behavior. The interaction between individual differences, situational factors, and media consumption is complex, and future research should explore these dimensions more precisely to develop a comprehensive understanding of their interplay.

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### Open Science Practices



This article earned the Preregistration, Open Data, Open Materials, and Open Code badge for preregistering the hypothesis and analysis before data collection, and for making the data, materials, and code openly available. It has been verified that the analysis reproduced the results presented in the article. The entire editorial process, including the open reviews, is published in the online supplement.

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