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# The Power of Prestige: Why Young Men Report Having more Sex Partners than Young Women

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**Abstract** In a survey of 48 men and 61 women from a southwestern US college, the gender difference in reported number of sex partners was mediated by the degree to which individuals felt that men and women who had many sexual partners were prestigious. In addition, men cared about the quantity and quality of their sex partners more than women did and these two factors were also related to reported number of sexual partners. The gender difference in reported sex partners is not veridical; it can be accounted for with attitudinal measures related to status and sex that are more common in men than women. Results are discussed in terms of understanding biased reporting in young American men and women.

**Keywords** Mediation · Number of sex partners · Sexual attitudes · Sexual behavior · Gender differences · Prestige · Attitude-behavior (in)consistency

## Introduction

An accurate assessment of sexual behaviors is important in both applied research (e.g., preventing the spread of STDs)

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and basic research (e.g., understanding how the sex lives of men and women differ). However, gaining such an assessment is difficult because there appear to be systematic biases in how men and women report their sexual histories. The goal of the study presented here was to gain a better understanding of the biases that predispose American college-aged men and women to report inaccurate information regarding their sexual behavior.

Biases in reported sexual behaviors are a common problem in sexuality research because of the reliance on self-report methodologies and the sensitivity of the questions asked (Wiederman 2001). As such, accounting for biases within self-report measures is of particular interest to sex researchers (McConaghy 1999). One of the most troublesome findings that has arisen from the use of self-report measures is that, on average, men report having significantly more lifetime sexual partners than women (Brown and Sinclair 1999; Pedersen et al. 2002). However, men and women should theoretically have equal numbers of lifetime sex partners because most heterosexual encounters involve one man and one woman. This suggests that one or both sexes are engaging in some degree of dishonesty or distortion in their reports of their sexual histories.

Many explanations have been proposed to account for the gender difference in lifetime sex partners. Explanations focusing on behavior have included (1) that men use prostitutes more often than women (Einon 1994), (2) that men start having sex earlier than women (Elo et al. 1999; Kenrick et al. 1996), and (3) that men are more sexually assertive than women (Byers and Heinlein 1989; Grauerholz and Serpe 1985; O'Sullivan and Byers 1993). Respectively, these explanations are inadequate because (1) men who use prostitutes tend to be older than those who do not use prostitutes (Pitts et al. 2004) and, thus, the typical college-student sample should not be unduly affected by

this, (2) women tend to date older men (Buss and Schmitt 1993) and experience puberty earlier, and, thus, should report earlier first intercourse than men (Fisher 2007), and (3) sexual assertion should only lead men to attempt to have more sex than women (Clark and Hatfield 1989), not necessarily to have more lifetime partners. It seems evident that explanations based on behavior alone are inadequate to account for this discrepancy (Jonason 2007).

Some authors have argued that the gender difference is an artifact of reporting biases (Brown and Sinclair 1999). For example, men tend to use large round numbers when estimating their past sexual success (Wiederman 1997). When participants are told that lie detection is possible, which presumably encourages them be honest, the gender differences become negligible (Alexander and Fisher 2003). Similarly, when a question regarding number of sex partners does not specify sexual intercourse or is vague, men tend to report more sex partners because they define more acts as sex than do women (Sanders and Reinisch 1999). But these explanations do not address why men would over-report more than women if not given highly specific instructions or encouraged to be honest.

The social constraints for sex acts are stronger for young women than young men in virtually every society (Baumeister and Twenge 2002). These differing social expectations suggest that young women would be less likely to report the full extent of their sexual experience than would young men (Alexander and Fisher 2003). Because of the logistical issues mentioned previously that require a woman to be present whenever a heterosexual man engages in partnered sexual activity, there is no reason, statistically speaking, to expect young men and women to differ in their sexual behavior. However, they could certainly differ in their attitudes towards sex and these attitudinal differences could in turn predict differences in reported number of sex partners (Schmitt 2005). However, attitudinal explanations of gender differences in reports of sexual behavior have tended to focus on socially normative pressures that drive young women to report fewer partners (Meston et al. 1998) and are therefore better at explaining young women's under-reporting than young men's over-reporting.

The current study examines an attitudinal-mediation hypothesis to explain why young men report more lifetime sexual partners than young women. Young men who were higher in hypermasculinity tended to exaggerate their number of sexual partners when they were (falsely) informed that women now have more sexual experience and more permissive attitudes than do men (Fisher 2007), suggesting that they perceived higher status in having more sexual partners than women. Other authors have argued that men's striving for dominance may be a motive that leads to over-reporting number of lifetime sexual partners (Pratto

1996; Segal 2001). Over-reporting, then, could be the result of strategic self-promotion (D. Schmitt 1996a) in order to appear to have more prestige than other men via exaggerated reports of sexual success. Jonason (2007) found that the relationship between sex of participant and reported lifetime partners was fully mediated by the degree to which individuals perceived sexual success to be prestigious. Sexual success might be a means by which men gain prestige in competition with other men over the limited resource of women's sexuality (Baumeister 2000). In short, the gender difference in reported sex partners among college-aged American men and women may not be veridical; it could be an illusory difference created by the greater likelihood of men, compared to women, holding attitudes regarding sexual success that relate to status and prestige.

In a further examination of this apparently illusory gender difference in number of sexual partners, the current study will replicate the mediation effect (cf. Baron and Kenny 1986) shown in Jonason (2007). To measure the potential mediator of prestige-related attitudes about sex, we used composite measures of participants' ratings of male and female targets with many sexual partners. Unlike Jonason (2007), who used interval data to assess sexual success, we assessed it with ratio data via self-reports of lifetime sex partners. We predicted that the degree of prestige assigned to male and female targets with many sex partners would mediate the relationship between the gender of the participant and their reported number of lifetime sex partners (H1). Evidence for mediation can be seen by comparing unstandardized $B$ values to see if a mediator is responsible for the influence of an independent variable on a dependent variable (Sobel 1982).

Additionally, because we are using a person-perception paradigm wherein participants are asked about their perceptions of an individual, we expected to find some evidence for the sexual double standard in ratings of male and female targets (Crawford and Popp 2003). Prior work on the sexual double standard suggests that it is among women that we should expect to find more derogatory evaluations of targets' sexual histories while it is among men we should find more favorable evaluations of targets' sexual histories (Baumeister and Twenge 2002). We predicted that men with many sexual partners would be rated as having more prestige than women with many sexual partners (H2a) and that the gender of the participant would interact on ratings of prestige, such that men would report the highest rating of the male target, followed by their ratings of the female target. We expected lower ratings of both the male and female target by women (H2b).

The distinction between quality (possessing the traits one looks for in a romantic partner) and quantity (simple numbers) of sex partners could also be useful in under-

standing self-report biases of sexual behavior. Individuals who are more interested in either of these issues may be more concerned with how they reflect on their prestige and, thus may equate sexual success with prestige. We predicted that number of sex partners would be positively correlated with the degree to which individuals care about the quality and the quantity of their sexual partners (H3a).

Because individuals can care about neither, either, or both of these factors, we predicted that the interaction of degree of caring about quantity with degree of caring about quality would additionally predict number of lifetime sexual partners (H3b). To test this we initially created an interaction term of caring about quality and quantity and entered it into a regression. Next we conducted an alternative mediation test (MacKinnon et al. 2002) to test how the degree of caring about both mediates the gender difference in reported number of sex partners by means of a hierarchical regression analysis. We predicted that the degree of caring about quality and quantity and the interaction of caring about both would mediate the gender difference in reported number of sex partners (H3c).

Despite the illusory nature of the gender difference in reported sex partners, there are numerous studies that document other differences in both sexual behavior (Clark and Hatfield 1989) and attitudes regarding sex (Schmitt 2005). In line with Jonason (2007), we expected young men, more than women, to rate male and female targets with many sex partners as having more prestige (H4a). Men tend to be more interested in sex than women (Buss and Schmitt 1993) and, thus, we predicted that young men would be more concerned with the quality and the quantity of their sex partners (H4b). Additionally, we predicted moderation between our study variables and reported lifetime sexual partners, such that the correlations among our study variables would be stronger (more positive) in men than women (H4c). Evidence for moderation can be seen by comparing unstandardized $B$ values across the moderator variable (Cohen et al. 2003): gender of the participant.

Accounting for the gender difference in reported sex partners is of particular interest to sex researchers (McConaghy 1999). To further understand the biases in self-reported sexual behaviors we explored a number of hypotheses. We replicated the mediation effect demonstrated by Jonason (2007) that suggests that the gender difference in reported number of sex partners is mediated by the degree to which participants assign prestige to men and women with many sexual partners. We also provided other mediation evidence (MacKinnon et al. 2002) via the examination of the degree to which individuals care about the quality and quantity of their sex partners. We assessed gender differences in ratings of male and female targets with many sex partners, providing further evidence for the sexual double standard. We also tested gender differences

to determine if young men were more likely to have attitudes about sex that reflect status and prestige compared to young women. Finally, we tested to see if the correlations between our study variables and reported number of sex partners are specific to men via tests for moderation (Cohen et al. 2003).

## Method

### Participants

The sample consisted of 110 heterosexual student-volunteers (44% men; $M_{Age}=22$ years, $SD_{Age}=3.97$, $Age_{Range}=18$–40) from a mid-sized Southwestern United States university who received course credit for their participation. The mean number of vaginal sexual partners was 8 (Median=4), with men reporting 13 (Median=6) and women reporting 5 (Median=3).

### Procedure and Measures

First, participants were given an informed consent form while seated alone at a desk in a room with a closed door. In the informed consent, we provided participants with an overview of the study as well as definitions of what we meant by "quality" and "quantity" of sexual partners. We also assured them of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. After consent was given, participants received a packet that contained all measures discussed below. We explicitly instructed them that by "sexual relationships" we meant only penile–vaginal sexual intercourse (Sanders and Reinisch 1999). When they had completed the packet, they turned it in to a research assistant, were provided a debriefing that detailed the nature of the study, and were thanked for their participation.

### Sexual Success as Prestigious

To measure how much prestige men with many sex partners are perceived to have, participants responded to seven items on a 1–5 scale (1=not at all; 5=very much) to the following questions designed to determine opinions about a man who has had many sex partners: "I respect a man who has had many sex partners," "A man who has had many sex partners is attractive to women," "I respect a man who is good with women," "I want to be friends with a man who has had many sex partners," and "I respect a man who is successful with women." These items were averaged to create a single measure indicating how much prestige participants gave to men with many sex partners (Cronbach's $\alpha=.90$). To measure the perceived prestige of women with many sex partners, the above items were

converted to statements about a woman with many sex partners by replacing the word "man" with the word "woman" in the appropriate places ($\alpha$=.80).

### Number of Sexual Partners

Specifically asking participants the number of penile–vaginal sex partners should address concerns about how men and women define different acts as sex (Sanders and Reinisch 1999). We asked participants to report the number of penile–vaginal sexual partners they had in their lifetime. As indicated above, the reported number of sex partners was skewed. We therefore used a log-transformed version of this variable, following suggestions by Tabachnick and Fidell (2006).

### Importance of Quality and Quantity of Sex Partners

To measure how important the quality of sex partners was to participants, a scale composed of three items was used. Participants were asked how important the quality of their sex partners was to them, how much does the quality of sex partners mattered, and how concerned they were with the quality of their sex partners (1=not at all; 5=very much). These items were averaged to create a single measure for how much the quality of sex partners mattered to them ($\alpha$=.76). To measure how important the quantity of sex partners was to participants, the same items as above were changed from quality-focused to quantity-focused by changing the word "quality" to "quantity" in the appropriate places ($\alpha$=.83). Participants had been previously instructed that "quantity" referred to the number of people they had sex with and "quality" referred to individuals who had the traits that they would like their romantic partners to have.

## Results

Because the measures used were all concerning sexuality and attitudes regarding sexuality, we tested for multicollinearity overall. We had moderate to little concern with multicolli-nearity (Tolerance=.17 –.73) as per guidelines set in Cohen et al. (2003), enabling us to proceed with our analyses.

Table 1 reports overall zero-order correlations between the major variables. Results confirmed H3a that the degree individuals cared about the quality and quantity of their sex partners was indeed correlated with the reported number of sex partners.

### Gender Differences

The overall and by-gender means and standard deviations for reported sex partners (log), degree of caring about the quality and quantity of sex partners, and evaluations of the male and female target with many sex partners are presented in Table 2. To reduce Type 1 error, we ran a MANOVA with gender of the participant as the fixed independent variable, and log-transformed number of sex partners (DV1), caring about quality (DV2), caring about quantity (DV3), ratings of prestige of the male target (DV4), and ratings of prestige of female targets (DV5). There are a variety of multivariate tests that we could report (Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root) but all yielded the exact same results [$F(5, 93)$= 4.36, $p<.01$, $\eta_p^2$=0.19]. Men had higher scores than women on every variable, which confirmed H4a and H4b. The univariate tests are reported in Table 2.

### Mediation Tests

H1 predicted mediation by the degree to which participants assigned ratings of prestige to male and female targets with many sexual partners for the relationship between the gender of the participants and their reported number of sex partners. Using the procedure recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986) and MacKinnon et al. (2002), significant full mediation was found for ratings of prestige for a male target who had many sexual partners (Sobel's $t$=−3.91, $p<.01$; presented in Fig. 1) and significant partial mediation was found for a female target who had many sexual partners (Sobel's $t$=−2.83, $p<.01$; presented in Fig. 2) for the relationship between the gender of the participant and

**Table 1** Pairwise correlations of study variables.

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of sex partners (log) | – | | | | |
| Care about quality of sex partners | .32** | – | | | |
| Care about quantity of sex partners | .36** | .60** | – | | |
| Ratings assigned to a woman with many sex partners | .50** | .48** | .49** | – | |
| Ratings assigned to a man with many sex partners | .67** | .57** | .56** | .82** | – |

$df$=108
1=not at all; 5=very much, for items 2–5
**$p<.01$

**Table 2** Descriptive statistics and univariate gender differences tests.

| | Mean(SD) | | | $F$ | $d$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Men($n$=48) | Women($n$=61) | | |
| Number of sex partners (log) | 1.44 (1.16) | 1.81 (1.29) | 1.15 (0.95) | 8.64** | 0.58 |
| How much prestige assigned to a man with many sex partners | 2.17 (1.03) | 2.65 (1.20) | 1.79 (0.68) | 20.61** | 0.88 |
| How much prestige assigned to a woman with many sex partners | 1.98 (0.79) | 2.26 (0.88) | 1.75 (0.64) | 11.20** | 0.66 |
| How much quality of sex partners matters | 2.55 (1.31) | 2.70 (1.34) | 2.44 (1.28) | 1.03* | 0.20 |
| How much quantity of sex partners matters | 3.49 (1.34) | 3.82 (1.17) | 3.23 (1.41) | 4.81* | 0.46 |

$d$ is Cohen's $d$
1=not at all; 5=very much, for items 2–5
Pilai's trace: $F(5, 93)$=4.36, $p$<.01, $\eta_p^2$ =0.19
*$p$<.05, **$p$<.01

reported number of sex partners. The Sobel test determines if a mediator is responsible for the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable (Sobel 1982).
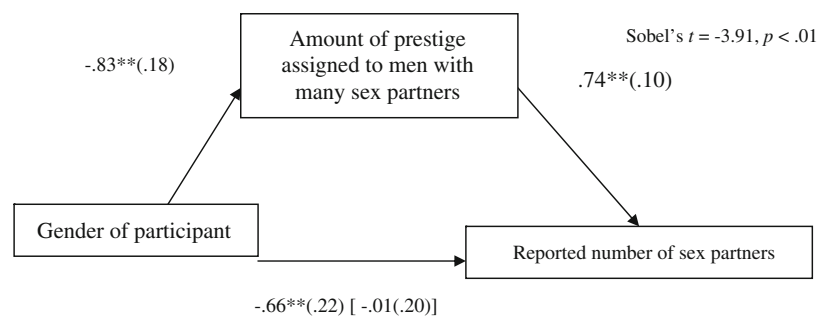
### Sexual Double Standard

Cross-gender evaluations differed in ratings of prestige assigned to men and women who have had many sexual partners. When we conducted a repeated measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with ratings of prestige for the male and female targets as levels in the within-subjects factor, there was an interaction between gender of target and gender of participant [$F(1, 105)$=9.34, $p$<.05, $\eta_p^2$=0.08], such that men reported higher ratings [$t(106)$=3.27, $p$<.01, $d$=0.64] of prestige associated with male targets who had many sexual partners ($M$=2.75) compared to men's ratings of female targets with many sex partners ($M$=2.25). Men's ratings of female targets were greater than women's rating of the female target with many sex partners [$t(105)$=3.23, $p$ <.01, $d$=0.63]. The female target with many sex partners ($M$=2.25) was rated by men as having more prestige compared to the female target ($M$=1.80) with many sexual

partners ($t(107)$=3.03, $p$ <.01, $d$=0.59). No significant differences were found in the rating of male ($M$=1.85) and female ($M$=2.80) targets by female participants. Such results confirmed the hypothesis that sexually active women are more negatively evaluated than sexually active men (H2a) and that positive evaluations would be localized in men, with the male target being rated as having the most prestige (H2b).

### The Quality–quantity Distinction

As shown in Table 1, the amount participants cared about the quality and quantity of sex partners was correlated with reported number of sex partners. Next we investigated how the distinction of quality and quantity mediates the gender difference in reported number of sex partners using a hierarchical multiple regression to predict number of lifetime sex partners. The gender of the participant was entered in step 1. In step 2 we entered the individual effects of caring about quality or quantity as a means of controlling for these effects. In step 3 we entered the interaction of the degree of caring about the quality and quantity of sex partners. Such a

**Fig. 1** How prestige ratings of a male target with many sex partners mediates the relationship between gender of the participant and reported number of sex partners.



−.83**(.18)

Amount of prestige assigned to men with many sex partners

Sobel's $t$ = −3.91, $p$ < .01

.74**(.10)

Gender of participant

Reported number of sex partners

−.66**(.22) [ −.01(.20)]

Note: Men coded 1; women coded 2.
Note: We report unstandardized $B$ values; in the parentheses are the corresponding $SE$s; in the bracket is the unstandardized $B$, demonstring mediation.
Note: * $p$ < .05; ** $p$ < .01.
Note: Direct effect of gender: $R^2$ = .08, Indirect effect of gender through the mediator: $R^2$ = .43.

**Fig. 2** How prestige ratings of a female target with many sex partners mediates the relationship between gender of the participant and reported number of sex partners.
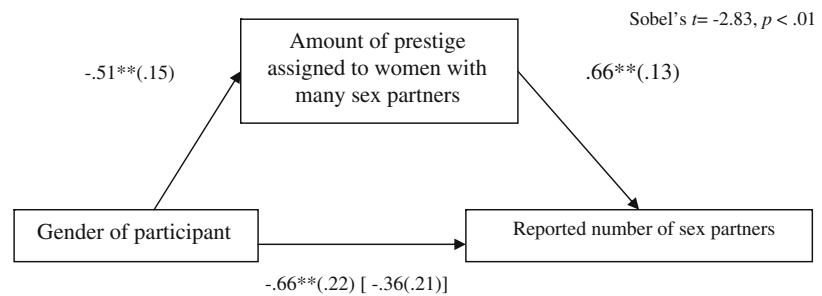


Note: Men coded 1; women coded 2.
Note: We report unstandardized $B$ values; in the parentheses are the corresponding $SE$s; in the bracket is the unstandardized $B$, demonstring mediation.
Note: * $p$ < .05; ** $p$ < .01.
Note: Direct effect of gender: $R^2$ = .08, Indirect effect of gender through the mediator: $R^2$ = .27.

regression model allowed us to assess the direct effects of the interaction (Gorsuch and Figueredo 1991) and to further understand how attitudes regarding sex can mediate the gender difference in reported number of sex partners, using an alternative means of testing mediation (MacKinnon et al. 2002). If mediation is present, gender of the participant should be significant in step 1 but not in step 2 or step 3. In step 1, gender of the participant was a significant predictor of reported number of sex partners. In step 2, the degree to which participants cared about the quantity of their sex partners and the gender of the participant predicted number of lifetime sex partners but not the degree to which participants cared about the quality of their sex partners. When the interaction term (calculated by the degree of caring about quality multiplied by the degree of caring about quantity) was included in step 3, only the interaction term and the degree of caring about the quality of sex partners significantly predicted number of sex partners, but not

**Table 3** Results from hierarchical multiple regression predicting the number of lifetime sex partners (log).

|  | $\beta$ | $t$ |
|---|---|---|
| **Step 1** | | |
| Gender of the participant | −.28 | −2.87** |
| **Step 2** | | |
| Gender of the participant | −.22 | −2.31* |
| Degree of caring about quality of sex partners | .20 | 1.92 |
| Degree of caring about quantity of sex partners | .23 | 2.22* |
| **Step 2** | | |
| Gender of the participant | −.16 | −.01 |
| Degree of caring about quality of sex partners | −.27 | −2.00* |
| Degree of caring about quantity of sex partners | −.04 | −.32 |
| Interaction of caring about quality and quantity | .80 | 4.86** |

Men coded 1; women coded 2.
Step 1 $R^2$ =.08**, Step 2 $R^2$ =.21**, Step 3 $R^2$ =.37**
*$p$<.05; **$p$<.01

gender or caring about quantity of sex partners. For a summary of these regression results see Table 3. These results partially confirmed H3c; attitudes related to quality and quantity of sex partners work together to mediate the gender difference in reported number of sex partners. Specifically in this regression model, we had moderate to no concern with multicollinearity (Tolerance=.25–1.00) according to guidelines in Cohen et al. (2003, p. 425). The highest Tolerance was, understandably associated with the interaction term. On its own, the interaction term predicted number of lifetime sexual partners [$\beta$=.58, $t$(106)=7.01, $p$<.01], confirming H3b.

Moderation Tests

To begin to assess the role of gender as a moderator, we examined correlations as a function of gender of participant as reported in Table 4. Results suggested moderation by the gender of the participant inasmuch as the correlations were generally stronger for men than for women. However, comparing zero-order correlation does not adequately test moderation because there is not necessarily equal variance at both levels of a dichotomous moderator (Baron and Kenny 1986). Therefore formal moderation tests for a dichotomous moderator variable were done by comparing unstandardized $B$ values, along with their respective standard errors, across men and women (Cohen et al. 2003). Generally, significant moderation was found, as reported in Table 5. The correlations were stronger in men than in women for the attitudinal measures, confirming H4c.

**Discussion**

We replicated and extended the attitudinal-mediation hypothesis advanced by Jonason (2007) to account for the

**Table 4** Correlations by gender of the participant.

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ratings assigned to a man with many sex partners | – | .84** | .08 | −.14 | .25 |
| Ratings assigned to a woman with many sex partners | .78** | – | −.13 | −.11 | .24 |
| Care about quality of sex partners | .51** | .64** | – | .32* | .05 |
| Care about quantity of sex partners | .62** | .47** | .39** | – | .28* |
| Number of sex partners (log) | .82** | .60** | .54** | .39** | – |

Men ($n$=48) below, women ($n$=61) above diagonal
*$p$<.05, **$p$<.01
1=not at all; 5=very much, for items 1–4

discrepancy in reported number of sexual partners between college-aged American men and women. As found previously, it was not the gender of the participant that best predicted number of reported sex partners, but rather, the amount of prestige individuals assigned to others who have had many sex partners. In addition, the employment of alternative measures of sexual success (reported lifetime sexual partners) and sexual success as prestigious (ratings of targets with many sex partners), suggested that, whether reported as ratio or interval data, the amount of sexual success one reports is not as well explained by gender of participant as by the degree to which individuals hold sexual success to be related to prestige and status.

The results of prior work reporting the gender difference in number of lifetime sexual partners were likely caused by the fact that more young American men hold an attitude that sexual experience is prestigious than do young American women, perhaps because sexual success among young men advertises access to a limited resource: women's sexuality (Baumeister and Vohs 2004). Men are not a limited resource when it comes to sex acts because they are generally more willing to have sex than women (Clark and Hatfield 1989). Evolutionary psychologists argue that men are the more willing sexual partner because they have a lower level of obligate investment in each sexual encounter (Buss and Schmitt 1993). Women are not as likely to view sexual activity as prestigious because of men's constant and higher levels of sexual availability and willingness (Clark and Hatfield 1989).

There are additional reasons that sexual success may be perceived differently by young American women and men. The proximal reasons are most likely the sexual double standard (e.g., Marks and Fraley 2005) and social desirability issues (Meston et al. 1998) leading to women's underreporting. However, ultimate levels of explanation are likely to bear more fruitful understandings (Pinker 2002). Ultimately, men may report more sex partners than women because (a) they are more concerned with their status than women (Buss 1999) and (b) sexual success is a means by which men can gain status among other men (Jonason 2007).

In support of the attitudinal-mediation hypothesis, number of lifetime sexual partners was correlated with the degree to which participants cared about the quantity and quality of their sexual partners. Additionally, those who cared about both reported the most partners of all, as evidenced by the results of the hierarchical multiple regression where the interaction of caring about quality and quantity was the strongest predictor of number of reported lifetime sexual partners. Because men tended to score higher on both quality and quantity measures, these results suggest that it is men's greater belief in the prestige of sexual success that underlies their tendencies to over-report their number of sex partners.

In the regression analysis, the beta for degree of caring for quality was positive and borderline significant in step 2 and negative and significant in step 3. This may be an example of a suppression effect (Little et al. 2007) and is likely the result of either the moderate level of internal

**Table 5** Gender moderation for correlates of number of reported sex partners (log).

|  | $B$ (SE) | | $z$ |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | Men | Women |  |
| Ratings assigned to a man with many sex partners | 0.89 (0.10) | 0.35 (0.19) | 2.51** |
| Ratings assigned to a woman with many sex partners | 0.87 (0.18) | 0.35 (0.20) | 1.93* |
| Care about quality of sex partners | 0.53 (0.13) | −0.03 (0.10) | 3.41** |
| Care about quantity of sex partners | 0.41 (0.15) | 0.20 (0.09) | 1.20 |

1=not at all; 5=very much
*$p$<.05, **$p$<.01

consistency ($\alpha$=.76) or the moderate level of multicollinearity (Cohen et al. 2003) present for the corresponding measure (Tolerance=.37).

We also found evidence for the sexual double standard. We replicated work by Jonason (2007) that demonstrated that women rated men and women with many sex partners as having the least status and men rated those same targets more favorably. We found that it was men who had many sex partners who were rated the most favorably of all. This suggests that the contention that Jonason (2007) made about men deriving intragender status through sexual success was correct. On the other hand, in the context of dating relationships, cross-gender ratings show that that men and women can have too many sexual partners to be accepted as a dating partner (Sprecher et al. 1987). If women, but not men, evaluated the target male as a potential suitor, this may have driven down the ratings of prestige offered by women.

The current study was designed to replicate the mediation effect of Jonason (2007) to better understand biases in self-reports of sexual behavior, and, thus, the scope was limited, involving a modest-sized college-student sample from the southwestern USA. Generally speaking, the research that this study was designed to explain has been largely conducted with college students and, thus, we feel this convenience sample is appropriate. A more serious limitation of the present study was the use of author-constructed scales. More well-known scales (e.g., sociosexuality) may be useful in studying men's tendency to over-report because their validity has already been established. Some of our scales had moderate to low levels of internal consistency, despite the fact that we provided participants with definitions of our terms (i.e., what we meant by quality and quantity). However, the estimates of internal consistency are in line with more established scales like sociosexuality (Simpson and Gangestad 1991) and are at reasonable levels for research (N. Schmitt 1996b).

In conclusion, the attitudinal-mediation hypothesis offered by Jonason (2007) to account for the gender difference in reported number of sex partners was replicated and extended by means of alternative measures, as well as a related variable: quality of partners vs. quantity of partners. Evidence clearly points to the fact that the gender difference in reported sex partners between men and women is an illusory difference created by attitudes related to sexual success as prestigious which in turn impact self-reports.

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