

# How to Keep the Sexual Spark Alive?

## The Role of Sexual Assertiveness in Heterosexual Relationships

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### Background

The sexual spark typically reaches its peak in the early stages of a relationship and decreases over time [1,2]. Since sexuality remains an important factor in romantic relationships, the question is how to keep the sexual spark alive.

Sexual assertiveness could be a factor that promotes the sexual spark in romantic relationships, since it is associated with greater sexual functioning and satisfaction [3,4].

Sexual assertiveness involves per definition an interpersonal interaction. However, previous studies have mainly focused on individual rather than couple's level. To fill this research gap, a dyadic format was adopted.

### Aim

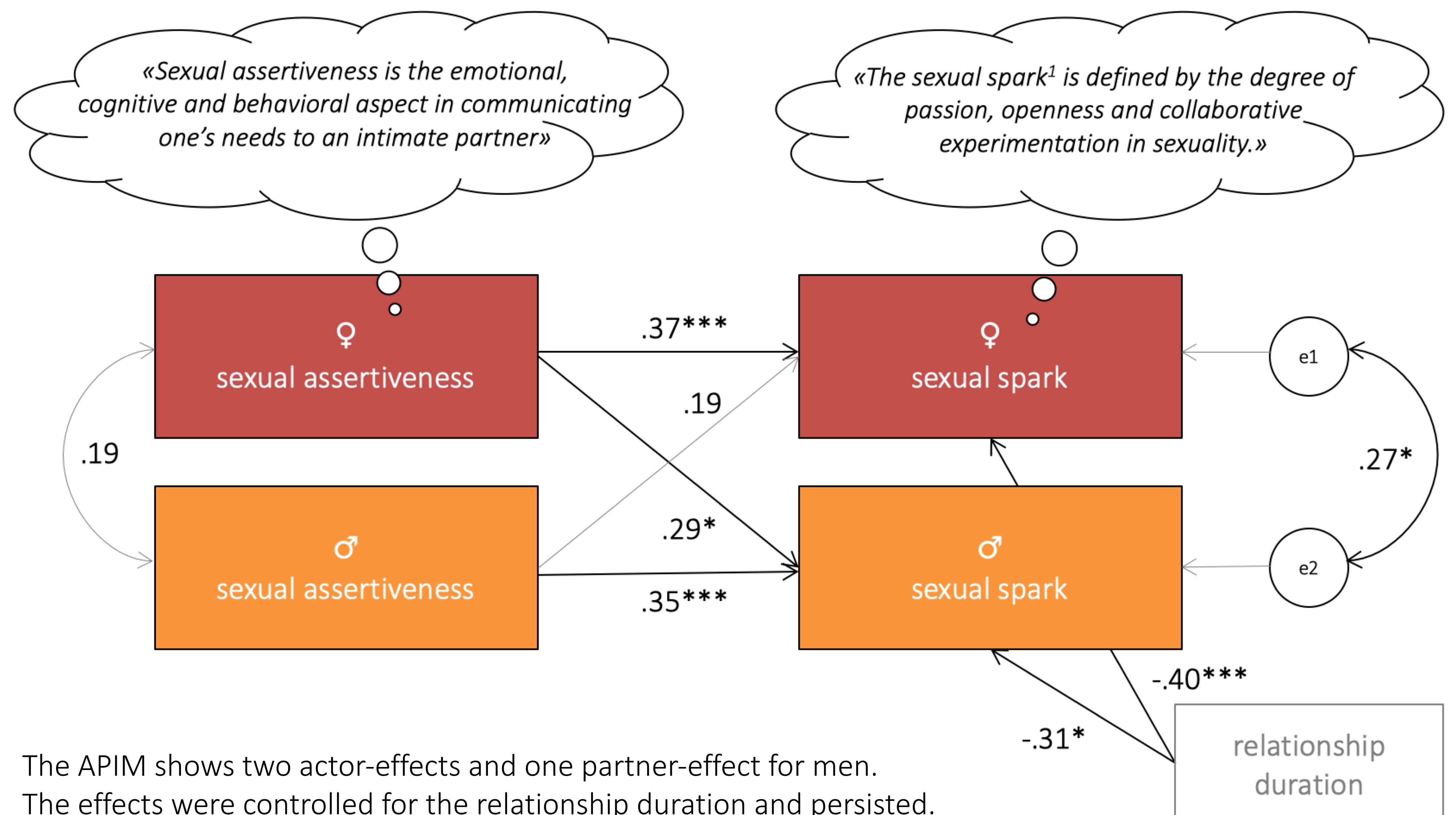
The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of women's and men's sexual assertiveness on their perceived sexual spark in a romantic relationship.

### Methods

- Between June 2018 and March 2019
- Online questionnaire about sexuality, relationships and well-being
- 60 heterosexual couples between 18 and 75 years (M=36, SD=13)

- An Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) was calculated to test actor effects (horizontal paths) and partner effects (vertical paths).
- The multidimensional sexuality questionnaire (MSQ) for sexual assertiveness [5] and the questionnaire of sexual experience in close relationships (FESP) for the sexual spark [2] were used to assess the two constructs.

### Results



<sup>1</sup> original name of scale: physical attraction

### Discussion

- How sexual assertiveness predicts the sexual spark in a relationship differs between women and men. If a woman can communicate her sexual needs in the relationship, both her and her partner will perceive their sexual spark as greater. Yet, if a man can communicate his needs in the relationship, only he will perceive the sexual spark as more intense.
- One reason for this could be the stereotypical gender roles according to which sexual assertiveness is rather associated with male roles [6]. Sexual assertiveness is assumed to be normal for men and therefore has no special effect on women, whereas it is exciting for men when women say what they want, because historically this was not common practice for many centuries [7].
- Through fostering sexual assertiveness – especially the women's – our results could be put into practice.

### References

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